



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

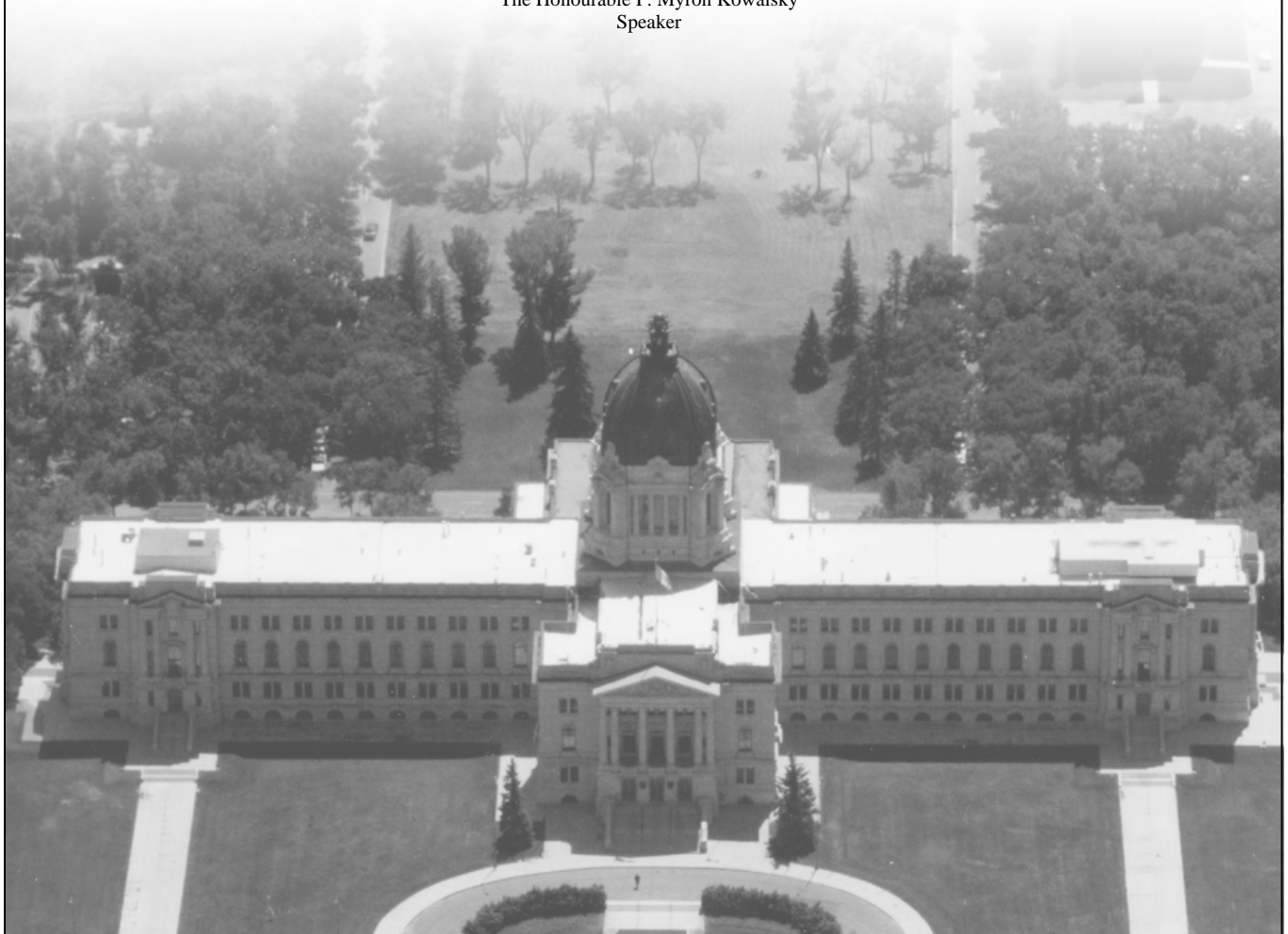
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Hon. Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Weyburn-Big Muddy

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning it's a pleasure for me again to rise in this Assembly to present a number of petitions to the Assembly on behalf of people from the communities of Prince Albert and Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer into the record, and the prayer has to do with the cancer drug Avastin. I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege once again to present a petition on behalf of my constituents and individuals from other communities around the Southwest concerned about the condition of Highway 32, especially the stretch from the community of Leader through to Cabri. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 32 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's petition is signed by individuals from the community of Cabri and the city of Swift Current. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a very timely petition regarding the situation of agriculture as farmers around the province are going into the field to seed a crop and questioning the safety nets that are available. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the provincial government works closely with the federal government to develop a simple and effective farm income assistance program that will adequately serve both Saskatchewan and Canadian agriculture producers.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Wolseley area. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of people concerned that the government will not fund the new cancer drug. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition come from the communities of Prince Albert, St. Louis, Paddockwood, Chapman. And I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased again today to rise on behalf of people who are concerned about the cancer drug Avastin and the fact that it's not being funded:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

The people that have signed this petition are from White Fox, Tisdale, Arborfield, Prince Albert, and Codette. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition for widening of Highway No. 5. And this is signed by people who want to survive the drive down Highway 5. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from three communities: Kamsack, Davidson, and Saskatoon. And I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today to do with the inadequacies of the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program. The

prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the provincial government work closely with the federal government to develop a simple and effective farm income assistance program that will adequately serve both Saskatchewan and Canadian agriculture producers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Wolseley, Montmartre, and Glenavon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the lack of funding for the cancer drug Avastin. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition appears to be signed by individuals all from the city of Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I too present a petition with citizens concerned with the funding of Avastin. These signatures on this petition are from Saskatoon. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

I so present on behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to deliver a petition with the purpose of funding the drug Avastin. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Martensville and Saskatoon. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who are concerned with the lack of funding for the cancer drug Avastin. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the city of Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today I have several petitions on citizens concerned about the safety of Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, again demonstrate how well-travelled this highway is because they're from Saskatoon, Naicam, Quill Lake, Watson, Kamsack, Sturgis, P.A. [Prince Albert], Viscount, and Muenster. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition from constituents of Meadow Lake who are concerned about the safe driving conditions on Highway No. 3:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to resurface and properly maintain Highway No. 3 from Fairholme to Turtleford and the Livelong access road.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Livelong and district. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present another petition on behalf of the 600 children under 6 years old and their parents in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency regarding a much-needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build an elementary school in Arbor Creek.

The petitioners today live on Sears Cove, Wright Crescent, and Hinnit Place in northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens that are concerned about the lack, this NDP [New Democratic Party] government's lack of commitment to the agricultural sector in Saskatchewan. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask Crop Insurance reverse the 2006 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premium to our struggling farmers.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by good citizens from Shell Lake, Shellbrook, and Hafford. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of the crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2006 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to the petition are from Shell Lake and Rosthern. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to read a petition on behalf of our friends in the neighbouring constituency of Arm River-Watrous. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who would be affected by such a possible closure.

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

And it is signed by the good people of Watrous and Manitou Beach. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition from the struggling farm community:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2006 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by good citizens from Parkside and Shellbrook. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the Assembly today and present a petition regarding the funding of the drug Avastin, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by citizens from the lovely town of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition that this is the first time in the province's history that the government has denied coverage of a cancer drug recommended by the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition regarding autism spectrum disorder. I will read briefly from the petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to act upon the recommendations made by the Government of Saskatchewan caucus committee on human services, and the recommendations include to coordinate among the Departments of Health, Learning, and Community Resources with input from stakeholders to formulate a provincial comprehensive autism spectrum disorder

treatment program and to provide adequate and effective early treatment based on intensive behavioural intervention, and it includes speech, communication, occupational and physical therapy, and medical attention for ASD-related conditions.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by good citizens from Saskatoon. I so present on their behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the high rate of autism spectrum disorders being diagnosed in Saskatchewan and the alarming rate of increase at 159 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the prayer is lengthy, but I'll just read a couple of points from what the petitioners are asking for and they're asking:

To have respite and family support accessible based on need, make access to specialized equipment and supplies based on need, and encourage and support autism-related research in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to present on behalf of citizens from Saskatoon and Muskeg Lake.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14 are hereby read and received:

A petition calling on the provincial and federal government to work on a farm income assistance plan, that's sessional paper 738;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 7, 64, 639, 644, and 669.

[13:45]

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Rosemont.

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to introduce to the legislature today 29 students from St. Josaphat School along with their teacher, Steve Bradley. And if they'll give a wave, all my colleagues will know who they are. There they are. Oh they're a little shy. We'll have to have a chat at 2:30 when we get together on the stairs for our photo. Thank you very much for attending the legislature today, and I ask everybody here to join me in welcoming you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House 23 students from the combined grade 11 and grade 12 classes from Eastend high school today. They're sitting in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they're accompanied today by teachers Marie Hanson and Shelley Morvik and were driven here by Curt Humphrey — that's a name you might recognize, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome this group of students here particularly today because the grade 11's is the same group of students that my daughter started school with, and I can't believe how fast they've grown up. They're a wonderful group of mature young adults. And maybe that says more about how time passes for us as we get older than it does for them. But I really want to welcome this group here.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I want to acknowledge the special effort that teachers Marie Hanson and Shelley Morvik put into arranging this trip on an annual basis. It's a real commitment on their behalf. I appreciate the effort they put out to make these annual pilgrimages to Regina, and I think that we need to acknowledge that effort on their behalf today.

And as I indicated, Curt Humphrey, their driver, he didn't show up in the legislature gallery today because I've accused him of being the best backhoe operator in the Southwest a couple of times, and I don't think he wanted to suffer that same fate today. Please welcome this group of students to the House.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my summer student for this year. He's a young fellow with lots of enthusiasm, and I know we're going to be looking forward to working with him over the course of the summer. His name is Steve Ryan. And Steve is accompanied by his friend, Morgan Reed. And I'd like to have all members join with me in welcoming Morgan and Steve to the legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

International Youth Week

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 1 to 7 is International Youth Week. On behalf of the official opposition, I want to express our support for the positive impact that youth make in our province and the ongoing commitment of the Saskatchewan Party to build a better province that will provide improved opportunities for young people to realize

their dreams and fulfill their promise. The excitement, the enthusiasm, and the ideas of youth are the hope for tomorrow for all of us.

International Youth Week is an occasion for the governments of all levels to join with youth, community organizations, and schools to celebrate the positive impact that young people make in our communities, whether it be through academic achievement, volunteerism, excellence in sports and recreation, or a commitment to personal and community development. To the arts and culture, youth play a pivotal role in our communities.

I would like to ask all members of the Assembly to join me in thanking the people and the youth organizations across the province who have worked hard to make this week a success and wish you success in all your activities this week.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkton.

Yorkton Citizen Awarded Papal Medal

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday was a memorable day in our city, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, Mr. Stan Kyba of Yorkton received the Vatican's highest decoration. Not since 1964 has a resident of our region of east central Saskatchewan received such a distinction.

The name of the medal means, for the church and the Pope. The award has been presented since 1888 to individuals engaged not only within the church but also beyond its walls. Mr. Kyba's church and community commitments have been long-standing and varied. He has been involved in countless groups in the constituency of Yorkton. Many of these groups have been particularly active in promoting the Ukrainian community — a community which has long called Yorkton home, a community which contributes greatly to the vibrancy and vitality of Yorkton and region, and a community which I am proud to call my own.

Among many other things, Mr. Kyba has been a long-time member of the Knights of Columbus, active in the St. Volodymyr's branch of the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Canada, a member of the Yorkton Ukrainian Catholic and Roman Catholic school board, and a board member of the St. Mary's parish, Ukrainian Catholic Cultural Centre.

As with many of the most accomplished citizens, Mr. Kyba did all this without any thought of being given any kind of award. When asked what motivated him, he responded selflessly, "A sense of duty and obligation to serve my fellow man." A model for all to follow. Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Mr. Kyba and his distinction that he received in Yorkton this past weekend. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Canadian Senate Reform

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the official opposition Saskatchewan Party has long been in favour of democratic reform in Saskatchewan and Canada. Our party's sixth founding principle reads, "Democratic reform to make government more responsive to the people it serves."

During the last federal election campaign, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said that his party would move toward an elected senate. The Saskatchewan Party is supportive of this initiative because it will bring greater and more legitimate representation for Saskatchewan into the national capital. Our party believes the current appointment process is antiquated and undemocratic. Senators number over one-quarter of our parliamentarians, and they should be duly elected by the people they represent. There are several provinces in Canada that have announced support for the idea of an elected senate. Support for an elected senate is strong in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Party eagerly awaits the federal government's plan for a revitalized Canadian senate.

After years of enduring a disastrous national energy program, a wildly expensive gun control system, and national farm support programs that don't work in our province, we believe the time is now to move forward with senate reform. Members of the Saskatchewan Party hope that the NDP provincial government will publicly support an elected senate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Athabasca.

Red Earth Cree Nation Returns Home After Flood Evacuation

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the residents of Red Earth Cree Nation are home after being away from their community for 11 days due to flooding. Evacuating nearly 1,000 people and looking after their basic needs, their medical needs, their comfort, their security, and their general well-being was no small task.

The list of organizations that stepped up to the plate to participate in this extraordinary effort is long, but I do want to recognize a few that played a major role, Mr. Speaker: the Salvation Army; the Red Cross; St. John's Ambulance; the city of Saskatoon, including the Field House staff; the police and fire and protective services; the Saskatoon Health Region; SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Kelsey Campus; Prairieland Park; the city of Prince Albert; the town of Nipawin; the Prince Albert Inn; and the Marlboro Inn in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the many provincial public servants who spent long days and long nights looking after the needs of the evacuees and helping with the efforts at Red Earth.

And I want to make special mention of the Department of Community Resources staff who provided direct support to the people of Red Earth and who helped coordinate the evacuation

and reception services.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank Chief Nawakayas, the council and elders from Red Earth for their strong leadership, and the Prince Albert Grand Council and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. I especially want to commend Vice-chief Elton Head who spent the nights and all the nights with his people — a very incredible individual that done a lot of great work.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the residents of Red Earth who made the most of a very difficult situation, who stayed in high spirits, and who were very gracious for all the support and services that they received. I wish them well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Benefit Dance in Melfort

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, 13-year-old Janel Tiefenbach is a cheerful grade 8 student who attends MUCC [Melfort and Unit Comprehensive Collegiate] in Melfort. Janel maintains a high standard of achievement academically and delights in many friends, interests, and aspirations.

In March 1996 at the age of three, Janel was diagnosed with cancer when a tumour was discovered on the left side of her rib cage. A gruelling year of chemotherapy, surgery, blood transfusion, and radiation followed. With Janel's spirit of determination and resilience, she conquered the odds and won a 10-year reprieve.

Over these years Janel has continued to see many specialists to address other health problems caused by her cancer treatments and surgery. Janel's sunny disposition and positive outlook was undaunted by the relentless treks to appointments and restrictions placed on her physical activities. Janel's focus has been to live life normally and to the full.

Almost 10 years to the day of her first diagnosis, Janel was again diagnosed with a tumour in her rib cage. Janel has started chemotherapy and has undergone surgery and will continue with further cancer treatments.

The Tiefenbach family has and will be experiencing many stressful, emotional, and financial challenges in the hours, days, and weeks to come. Janel's mother, Laurie, has taken a leave of absence for work to be with Janel. Her family will be making many trips to Saskatoon to provide Janel with their love and support.

Many people wish to help. Mr. Speaker, friends and neighbours of this Tiefenbach family have organized a benefit dance this Saturday in Melfort, and I urge the community to support in any way they can. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Code of Ethics

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on February 12 of this year the Saskatchewan Party adopted a code of ethics. Mr. Speaker, apparently this document is not worth the paper it is written on. The members across the way have already contravened their code of ethics more times than I can count.

The latest violation comes from the member from Humboldt. Yesterday she stood in this House and attacked the Minister of Finance, not just by misquoting him but by misquoting him out of context. The member opposite alleged that the minister had somehow demonstrated a lack of concern about a specific health case.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the minister was responding to the member from Cannington who was also in violation of their code of ethics. The opposition member claimed that people were dying when they were not. Now if the member from Humboldt had listened to the tape as she claimed she had, she would have quickly realized that her allegation was unfounded.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that we have pointed out that the Saskatchewan Party routinely dishonours their own code of ethics. Isn't it about time that the Leader of the Opposition either starts enforcing the code or admits that it is nothing but a cheap publicity stunt designed to distract attention from the routinely unethical actions of his caucus? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Provincial 4-H Public Speaking Competition

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now for something of interest to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last Saturday in Carnduff was the 4-H provincial public speaking competition, and there was 31 contestants from across the province, Mr. Speaker, ranging in age from 8 to 22.

Mr. Speaker, normally when I think of 4-H, because of my past experience only a few years ago, I think of beef, but there was also horses and grain at the time. Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a broad range of activities, both in rural and urban Saskatchewan, involved in 4-H. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this public speaking event, the judges there were very, very impressed with the overall quality and ability of all of the speakers.

And to show just how broad range this was, Mr. Speaker, the following communities participated: Arcola, Battleford, Bracken, Codette, Elrose, Estevan, Eston, Foam Lake, Glaslyn, Gronlid, Hudson Bay, Ituna, Kelliher, Leoville, Macoun, McCord, Melville, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Radisson, Rosthern, Sceptre, Sedley, Spiritwood, Storthoaks, Vanguard, Wishart — and I've been everywhere, sir.

First place in the senior was Joshua Klarholm of Macoun;

second place, Shaylynn Coates of Radisson. Intermediate was Ryan Luciuk of Wishart. Junior champion was Natalie Pouliot of Leoville; and the Cloverbud — a very interesting name — Rikki-Jean Wilson of P.A. [Prince Albert].

Congratulations to all the participants in the 4-H community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Interprovincial Trade Agreement

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one thing we've found out about this NDP government, the people of the province have found it out, is that they never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. The most recent, Mr. Speaker, is the trade agreement that has been reached between our fellow Western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, a trade agreement an arrangement between those provinces within a new and emerging West that will result, they believe, in billions of dollars of new investment activity and new jobs.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan under the NDP we are losing jobs and losing population — losing our young people — in the middle of a boom. So with that context set, why in the world would this Premier choose, Mr. Speaker, to leave Saskatchewan behind, to not be proactive, to not know at least something about what was going on to the west of us, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that one thing that Saskatchewan people have also learned is that the rhetoric by the member, or the Leader of the Opposition, greatly exceeds his understanding of issues.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, let me again point out that this is an issue that all of the provinces have been working on through the Council of the Federation. Part of what they have asked Alberta and BC [British Columbia] to do is to come back with two models for interprovincial agreement on trade issues and this is one of the models I guess that these two provinces have chosen to make public in anticipation of a meeting that is going to be held in Halifax within a month's time. We look forward to reviewing that agreement. All the provinces would look forward to reviewing that agreement to see how that can be made applicable to all of the jurisdictions in Canada. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's amazing. Is it the minister's understanding then, or the Premier's understanding that this isn't actually an agreement, it's just a model for other members of the federation to consider? Because if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, he ought to do a little bit of homework.

What we know today is that these two provinces have agreed to an interprovincial arrangement with respect to interprovincial trade that has the potential to attract money and people through new job creation to their areas. Where might those people come from, Mr. Speaker, if we can't get rid of this NDP government? Well they might come from our province.

My question to that minister or anyone over there that cares to answer is very simple. Did the Government of Saskatchewan not know about these discussions between our two western neighbours, BC and Alberta? Did they not know about the arrangements? If they did know about them, why didn't they get to that table and represent Saskatchewan that deserves to be a leader within the new West, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Again, Mr. Speaker, the Council of the Federation and the committee of the internal trade ministers has asked various jurisdictions to head up various areas of investigation with respect to interprovincial trade and the member, the Leader of the Opposition, should know this. One of the tasks that we have asked Alberta and BC to pursue is to develop two models that we might all look at with respect to interprovincial trade. They have chosen to make public one of the models. We look forward to reviewing both models with these jurisdictions, as we look forward to reviewing any number of contributions by provinces individually or jointly, Mr. Speaker, at this meeting in Halifax.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, that response from the government is ridiculous, and it's unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, we know that two provinces, Alberta and BC — major sources of energy, major sources of fossil fuel for the continent and for the energy-starved world — have decided that there's a lot of merit in sitting down as economic partners, harmonizing where they can in terms of interprovincial barriers to trade and investment. They've decided to do that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our government has decided to opt out and maybe look at this as an example of what they could have done. I think the people of this province want and deserve a government that is prepared to show leadership, that is prepared to get at that table and ensure that we are attracting investment, that we are creating jobs. Mr. Speaker, BC attracted 54,000

more people last year; Alberta, 80,000 people.

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to just put his question once more please.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the question is this: why is this NDP government refusing to be proactive on this issue? Why are they refusing to show leadership at a time when we're losing jobs and population in a boom? Why aren't they doing their job on behalf of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, speaking of leadership, speaking of trade, and speaking of real impacts on the Saskatchewan economy, I'm surprised that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't take the opportunity in question period to raise issues such as the deal that has been struck between Ottawa and Washington with respect to the softwood lumber industry. This is a deal that will have a real negative impact on Saskatchewan. Why is it that the Leader of the Opposition isn't raising these questions? Could it be that he chooses to support his cousins in Ottawa over and above any real issues in trade for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, in *The StarPhoenix* today a major chartered bank in this country is predicting parity — the Canadian loonie with the US [United States] dollar — by 2007. Certainly that government understands the pressure that's going to put on an export-dependent economy like our province, like Saskatchewan. Now, right now in the middle of an oil and gas boom, we're already losing jobs and people under the NDP. We need to be doing whatever we can, Mr. Speaker, within Western Canada to ensure that this economy is competitive, to ensure that we're creating jobs, to ensure that we're keeping our young people in this province.

And we hear from this government, Mr. Speaker, that they were apparently completely unaware of these negotiations happening just to the west of us, which speaks to incompetence. And if they were unaware, they did nothing about it which speaks to incompetence, Mr. Speaker.

Why won't this government now accept the invitation of the Premier of Alberta for other provinces to get on board, for this province, Saskatchewan, to be a leader in the new West, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, all provinces will have an opportunity to review the agreement between BC and

Alberta to see what applicability it has for the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of the economy, I find it interesting to note that notwithstanding the member's doom and gloom about what has taken place in the Saskatchewan economy, that as recently as March the Royal Bank of Canada, the RBC Financial Group, highlighted Saskatchewan in its latest economic outlook, calling it one of Canada's top performers and predicting the province's economy will grow at a healthy pace of 3.9 per cent in 2006. Mr. Speaker, they particularly looked at industries such as oil, potash, and uranium, notwithstanding what the member of the opposition had said, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Employment Prospects for Teachers

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Learning minister admitted that some tough choices will have to be made by school boards in the coming weeks. She admitted that declining enrolment means teachers will have to be cut.

Mr. Speaker, this top-performing province will lose 10,000 students over the last three years. The Learning minister believes that 300 classrooms will need to be cut. Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a black mark on this top-performing NDP government. They have failed to grow this province. They have failed to grow the economy. And they have failed to grow the population. And now teachers and students and parents are going to have to suffer as a result.

Mr. Speaker, how many teachers does the minister expect will be cut across the province of Saskatchewan this year?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, one thing I would like to say right off the bat is I have never said the number of 300 classrooms, so I don't know where the member opposite is getting that. Here again, Mr. Speaker, they are distorting the facts and inserting words that they feel are appropriate, that are in no way to do with anything that I have said, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have until May 8 when the mill rates will be set, when divisions will have their budgets finalized. We will have a better number and assessment of what changes will take place at that time. Mr. Speaker, we know that there has been a decline in enrolment over the last three years of 10,000 children, and that will mean changes to the system. What those numbers will be, Mr. Speaker, we will find out in the coming weeks.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, school boards are now in the

process of finalizing their budgets. They could use some guidance from this minister. They need to know if she believes teacher cuts are the answer to make up for the drop in funding and the declining enrolments.

Mr. Speaker, again to the minister: if 300 isn't the right number, can she tell us how many teachers she expects to cut across the province this year?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, in fact here again another correction. Funding has not been reduced. The foundation operating grant has increased \$10.8 million this year.

Mr. Speaker, it's never-ending. These folks can't keep their facts straight. They know that the school boards have the authority at the local level. We rely on our elected officials at the local level to know what's needed within their community and within their divisions. And, Mr. Speaker, those decisions will be made.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now students in the College of Education are finishing up their classes and are looking for teaching jobs. What kind of a signal does this send to students? Teaching jobs are going to be cut across this province as we have lost 10,000 students. And these students will have no choice but to find a job, Mr. Speaker. They have student loans. They need to get on with their careers and their dreams. They have top-notch skills. They have top-notch training and education. And they're very portable, Mr. Speaker. It looks again like other provinces will reap the benefits of Saskatchewan's top-quality grads as they leave this province to build another one.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government are job-killing monsters. They've killed 6,300 jobs this year, and now they will be adding more to the total. Mr. Speaker, what will the minister say to this graduating class of teachers who will have no choice but to leave the province to find work?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here the member opposite realizes that the boards have the authority at the local level. Now he expects me to make decisions for them, just like the former leader of the Saskatchewan Party wanted the minister of Justice to meddle into the justice system and make suggestions and make direction of how decisions should be made. Mr. Speaker, this opposition is meddling in areas where there is authority to do that. They expect us to do it. But, Mr. Speaker, that's not the way the system works.

There is school boards in place that were duly elected within their communities. They know what's needed in those communities and they'll make the decisions.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister is accusing us of meddling, then we're meddling because we are going to meddle to grow this province and then grow, increase . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud to meddle in the economy so that the economy will grow in comparison to the NDP's record of losing 6,300 jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that minister is responsible as a part of that government for these loss of jobs and the loss of population and the loss of hope for our students and our teachers and the parents of the future.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister explain how she expects to be resolved of any responsibility for declining enrolments, to blame local school boards for the economy that this NDP government has created? How will she explain to students that they have no future here under this NDP government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here we go; we're just stretching it out, forever off the line. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite, all he has to do is look at a Friday and a Saturday night paper, look at the jobs that are listed and the help wanted ads that are in the papers. All he has to do is drive around the city and look at the help wanted signs.

Mr. Speaker, we met with the consulting engineers this morning. They are looking for people. There is lots of opportunity here in the province of Saskatchewan. And the Minister of Immigration is working hard to promote immigration into our province. There are many opportunities. And for young people that are graduating, I would say, look to Saskatchewan first because we're on a roll. Our economy's doing well, and we'll continue in that direction.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Crop Insurance

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in the session we asked the Minister of Agriculture to show some compassion, extend the deadline for crop insurance. A number of producers were telling us that they simply didn't have the cash flow to meet all the demands of the new crop cycle and, in turn, the deadline. Many told us they only needed a month or less than that. But what did the minister do? He refused. And 500 crop insurance contracts were cancelled this year, up from 350 from last year.

Mr. Speaker, given the crisis and tough economic times facing a

number of farm families this year, can the minister tell this Assembly why he's not prepared to look at making some changes?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the assumption that we're not looking at any changes is completely wrong. We're always looking at how to make this industry stronger, Mr. Speaker.

And in Crop Insurance they are now investigating the spot loss hail which I expect we'll probably have a recommendation on whether that will be implemented for next year.

Are we making changes? You bet we're making changes. We're making investment in research and development that is going to move agriculture forward.

Are we making changes? Yes we are. Mr. Speaker, we're supplying support to help build the feedlot and the meat processing industry.

Mr. Speaker, we're making changes. We're working with producers. And we will see a strong agriculture industry in the years ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Darryl Perry's is a producer who's farmed and owned land in Hawarden for more than 30 years. He has rented out his land for the last two years. Unfortunately this year the deal with his renter fell through at the last minute and now he must farm the land himself. This happened just days after the crop insurance deadline. Crop Insurance told Mr. Perry that he can't get insurance this year because the deadline is past.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government start showing some sympathy for the plight of our farmers and when will this government take in account the crisis and some of the unforeseen circumstances producers are facing? If you want to make some changes, you look at that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, compassion, it seems to me from my understanding of the word, means that you feel with and work with and work for other people. Mr. Speaker, compassion also has within it the understanding that there are limits and there are guidelines, Mr. Speaker.

And when we look at this system, we are working for the bulk of the farmers in the province who want a good, strong crop insurance program, Mr. Speaker one that has integrity, one that is fiscally responsible. Mr. Speaker, that means deadlines.

Mr. Speaker, we kept the deadlines compassionately for those who need a good, solid crop insurance program.

Mr. Speaker, as well as that, we are investing in agriculture. We are looking at the biofuels as one of the really high potentials for the future. We're investing, Mr. Speaker. We've got ethanol developments. We've got biodiesel moving ahead, Mr. Speaker. We are investing. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think Mr. Perry of Hawarden is alone. Landowners across the province are facing difficulties in finding farmers to rent their land. That's because long-term renters are giving up on farming due to financial hardships. That means landowners are suddenly finding themselves having to farm the land at the very last minute. And, Mr. Speaker, they're finding now . . . they're finding themselves uninsured. Without insurance, it's next to impossible to get a bank loan. Again to the minister: doesn't he recognize that the crop insurance program must be more flexible to meet the needs of today's farmers? Will he commit today to ensuring producers facing difficult circumstances will obtain crop insurance?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll stick to good policy in terms of crop insurance and the development of good, solid program.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is very little credibility on the subject of compassion for farmers, Mr. Speaker. Not too long ago the members opposite had opportunity to join with myself and agricultural leaders in this province to go and speak to their federal cousins, Mr. Speaker, to try and make sure that we could get more support for the farmers of Saskatchewan to help them with this seeding season. Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They stayed here, Mr. Speaker. Did nothing, Mr. Speaker. Talk about a lack of compassion and a lack of credibility, Mr. Speaker — they got it all.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Support for Agriculture

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Agriculture minister reminds me of a steer I used to have. He made a lot of noise. He kicked up a lot of dirt. But when it come

right down to it, he produced absolutely nothing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the federal budget is out today and there are . . . some of the numbers are starting to come out, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure the Agriculture minister is aware of them. The federal government says they are going to produce or put in an additional \$2 billion into the farming sector over the next two years. Of that, 1.5 billion will be provided this year and 500 million will be an additional 500 million for farm support. My question to the minister: if any of these programs are cost shared or asked to be cost shared, will that government just once come to the table for Saskatchewan farm families?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the member opposite at least needs a history lesson. He talks about this government coming to the table once for farmers. Every time we have had need, every time we have been asked, we have been there, Mr. Speaker. We've been there in spades, Mr. Speaker. We have provided significant funding through the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis, Mr. Speaker. We have been there for farmers on every front with new programs coming in, Mr. Speaker — fully funded those programs. Mr. Speaker, this government cannot be faulted on that front. We have been there, and we will be there in the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, that minister says they keep coming to the table. Well what farmers ask this spring — unlike the last two or three years — they've asked them to fully fund the CAIS program so they can go to the banks and maybe get an operating loan.

What did that minister say at the cabinet table over there? He said we don't need to fully fund CAIS. We'll just put the base in and maybe later we'll think about fully funding it. Well, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't fly with the bankers in Saskatchewan. They won't give operating loans under the whim that that government and that minister may fund it sometime later, maybe in December. It's time for that government to come to the table, help Saskatchewan farmers — not just talk about it — actually pull out the purse strings and help Saskatchewan farm families.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, clearly it doesn't matter how loud the member opposite gets. It doesn't change the fact that we have been there, with money,

fully funding the programs as they've come forward.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to CAIS this year, we're six months ahead of the schedule, Mr. Speaker. And when we announce the funding in the third quarter, Mr. Speaker, we'll be in time for any of the applications which start to come in, start to come in January 2007. And the deadline isn't until June 15 and June 30 for those applications, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are there. We do have money on the table. And, Mr. Speaker, with the federal funding that we are counting on coming through, Mr. Speaker, we will be there to support our farmers. I just hope that that funding is adequate to meet the needs because I'm counting on more funding from those federal partners. I'm sure that there is concern there. I'm counting on it coming today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another rumour here coming out of the federal government is that they may increase the spring cash advance from \$50,000 to \$250,000. This is great, Mr. Speaker, for the farmers that are in the crop insurance program.

And as my member and my colleague from Arm River-Watrous said today, 500-plus farmers have been excluded from crop insurance. That's this year. Three hundred were excluded last year. Maybe it's time that minister and that government give those farmers an amnesty. Give them a chance to get back into crop insurance so they can qualify for this spring cash advance. Mr. Speaker, where it was 50,000 before if they do increase it to \$250,000, it could be the thing that helps carry our farmers through until this fall. Will that minister consider doing that, helping Saskatchewan farmers get back into crop insurance so they can qualify for things like this spring's seeding cash advance?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I've already said clearly that we will maintain the crop insurance program's integrity. And, Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the member opposite would be encouraging greater loans for farmers. I would also find it passing strange that the member opposite is now talking about cash advances and kind of talking about that in a positive way. Seems strange from a party that seems bent on undermining the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker. That is an absolutely essential component of cash advances.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know, really, what is the credibility of those members opposite, Mr. Speaker? Do they actually care or is it just rhetoric they're interested in? No credibility, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I ask leave of the House to go to motions for returns (debatable) to deal with returns no. 572 and 573.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move to motions for returns (debatable) on page 5 of the blues. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Return No. 572

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member for Melfort, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 572 showing:

A copy of the Government of Saskatchewan's funding and service agreement with the File Hills Tribal Council with regards to the Oyate Safe House.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Northwest, seconded by the member for Melfort, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 572 showing a copy of the Government of Saskatchewan's funding and service agreement with the File Hills Tribal Council with respect to the Oyate Safe House.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I will be tabling response to return no. 572.

The Speaker: — Response to 572 has been tabled.

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Return No. 573

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 573 showing:

A copy of the Government of Saskatchewan's funding and service agreement with the Oyate Wankanyeaja Owicakiyapi Inc. with regards to the Oyate Safe House.

The Speaker: — On the motion by the member for Saskatoon Northwest and seconded by the member for Melfort, will the members take it as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I'll be tabling response to return no. 573.

The Speaker: — Response to 573 has been tabled.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, leave to return to orders of the day.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested to return to orders for the day. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I'll be tabling response to written questions no. 1,064 and 1,065.

The Speaker: — Responses to 1,064 and to 1,065 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 55

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 55 — The Reclaimed Industrial Sites Act** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Bill that we have before the Assembly, Bill No. 55, deals with the monitoring of closed industrial sites — particularly mine sites in northern Saskatchewan. It's a new Bill. It's not an amendment to an existing piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and therefore it has the required sections to it and outlines the intent of the Bill, the powers of the minister, and so on, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

And it's a Bill that certainly seems to be . . . The intent of the Bill seems to have the right purpose in that there is a need to outline mine sites that are no longer in production, how they need to be closed down so that the environmental footprint is minimized. It's been identified that these sites need to be monitored over a long period of time. In fact there's language . . . The minister in his second reading remarks talked about monitoring these sites into perpetuity.

There are a number of sections within the Bill that need to have some consideration given to them, and we as the opposition intend to do that. I might just, for your information, Mr. Speaker, and those who may be watching our proceedings this afternoon, just briefly outline what is contained in the Bill and make some remarks as to some of the concerns that we may have with certain sections of the Bill.

Section 5 of the Bill talks about the acceptance of a closed mine site, and it talks about establishment of two funds that will be set up. And the site holder must pay a deposit into these two accounts for the purposes of monitoring the mine site and any additional cost that may be incurred. The one fund is called the institutional control and monitoring maintenance fund which is a fund set aside for the routine monitoring and maintaining of the closed site.

There's another fund set up, Mr. Speaker, the Institutional Control Unforeseen Events Fund. And I'm guessing by the name of the fund that it's for the very purpose if something unforeseen should happen at the site, that there's additional funding to deal with that.

On first examination of this idea of two funds, I don't think we have any problems with that. I guess problems that we may have — and it's something that we need to discuss with stakeholders — is the amount of the deposit, if they're fair and not overburdensome but still adequate to maintain the environmental integrity of the site. And so we need to have some discussions with stakeholders in that particular area.

The Bill the minister is proposing to establish a registry of the various sites that qualify for this program — the institutional control program — so that in the future there will be a permanent registry of where these sites are and, I would presume, some of their history as far as what type of a mine it was and so on. And as I said, most of this at least I understand it to pertain to Crown land in the northern part of our province which houses the vast mineral resources or many of the vast mineral resources that we have in our province.

Section 7, Mr. Speaker, talks about the minister's ability to monitor closed sites and it mentions in one of the subsections that the minister may amend monitoring requirements in the

future. And I suppose I would think, Mr. Speaker, that the companies who are entering into this program and people of the province would want to know what ability the minister has to amend. Is it wide open? Are there guidelines as far as minister's ability to amend requirements after an agreement has been reached with a company with regards to a particular site? Some of those sections need to be clarified, Mr. Speaker.

It talks about the minister's . . . the requirements as far as maintenance and again giving the minister some flexibility to make some changes. And we realize that that ability needs to be there but it needs to be used with caution. It's not something that we feel the minister should use indiscriminately and we would hope that regulations that I am assuming will be attached to this particular Bill will set out clearly what conditions must be present before the department, through the minister, can change the initial agreement as far as the long-term monitoring and maintenance of sites.

There's one section, Mr. Speaker, section 9, that talks about the ongoing responsibilities that the minister has under this program. It talks about the ability to use qualified people to carry out certain duties and accept certain responsibilities. It also talks about the option to use qualified employees of the Government of Saskatchewan. And the third option is it gives the minister the ability to engage outside services, professional services and technical services for certain requirements.

And I would just like to make a few remarks, Mr. Speaker, with regards to a couple of these points. In Saskatchewan, and particularly under the current government, it seems that whenever the government of the province needs to perform certain duties it seems these people look normally to enlarge the bureaucracy and enlarge the number of civil servants that we have. And that is only one option. And sometimes it may be the best option, Mr. Speaker, depending on the circumstances. But on the other hand it may not be the best option. Perhaps a better option may be to contract outside qualified individuals or companies or service agencies that can provide the expertise, who have the knowledge and have the ability to deliver the service and take the responsibility and the consequences of their actions. And I would encourage the minister to look at all options.

I have been made aware that in some cases we have civil servants, particularly dealing in the environment and in the northern part of our province, who have been asked to take on responsibilities in the environmental area but really don't have the training and the professional background to adequately perform their duties. And I'm certainly not faulting those individuals within the civil service who have been asked to do these, perform these duties. I think where the fault lies is with the ministers and the Public Service Commission, and I think policies of the government, where adequate training and foresight hasn't taken place and therefore sometimes we're caught short.

There's a need for people to conduct inspections, do environmental impact studies, those sorts of things, and we don't have the trained personnel within our civil service. And that's an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, where the government needs to look outside the civil service and to make sure that the work being done is the very best that it can be so that the people of

the province, 2 or 3 or 5 or 10 or 15 years down the road, aren't left with a huge mess to clean up because the work wasn't done in a proper fashion. And so therefore in section 9 it does give the minister the opportunity to get the job done with whatever method is best suited for the conditions of the day.

Section 10, Mr. Speaker, talks about controlling access to these closed sites. And I don't certainly have a problem with that because it would seem to me that in some of these sites there may be toxic substances that are contained within a pond area or stockpiled and covered with earth, of various methods that are used today to contain these toxins and minimize their effect on the environment. And we really don't need to have individuals or companies or what have you going into these sites unbeknown to the people who are responsible for monitoring them and disturbing the sites and causing some future damage down the road. So the Bill does give the minister and the department the authority to prevent access to the closed sites, and it also later on in the Bill there is an area which outlines the penalties for unauthorized access to the sites.

There's another section, Mr. Speaker, section 11, which talks about how the minister is to deal with the monies that are put into the two funds. It talks about the areas of investment that are authorized. You know, I think that's pretty straightforward and unless someone who is more familiar with the whole investment area and the general practice brings something to our attention, I don't think we really have a problem with that whole area.

So that, Mr. Speaker, and then of course the Bill has its normal clauses as far as coming into force and regulations, talks about regulations and so on and those sorts of things. Now I listened closely when the minister made his remarks upon second reading, and he said that this Bill has been in the making for several years. There was extensive consultation with the industry, with environmental groups, and that is a process, Mr. Speaker, I think that needed to take place.

Now having heard the minister, we certainly need to do our due diligence and consult with the stakeholders to see if the provisions of the Bill meet their requirements. But certainly I mean we're not going to give away environmental protection and regulation to industry without a very good reason. And in fact that would be by far the exception rather than the rule.

But still, if there was input from stakeholders as the minister said, we want to know if the stakeholders' advice and recommendations have been accepted because it seems to me that we can accomplish much more through a process of consultation and co-operation rather than the adversarial process. And this is an area that we need to have the experience and expertise from all these stakeholders to make sure that what we are doing is in the best interests of the environment and the people of the province because what this Bill does is sets up a regime to deal with closed mine sites as to how they are to be prepared and how they are to be monitored and maintained for many, many years, and in fact as I said, the minister used the term into perpetuity.

So we better get it right when we set this whole process up because it's a long-term process. And if we don't do it right, we're going to experience the negative effects sometime down the road, perhaps not in our generation but the next generation.

And so therefore, Mr. Speaker, until we have had an ability to talk to the stakeholders and discuss the clauses of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood that debate on second reading of Bill 55 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 48

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 48 — The Parks Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to stand in this Assembly today and speak to The Parks Amendment Act, Bill No. 48. Mr. Speaker, as we look through the Act as has been presented to us, we have a number of concerns regarding the Act. And while the Act maybe seem somewhat simple and to the point, it raises some significant questions especially when it comes to lease fees and the amount of consultation that has actually taken place.

[14:45]

So the government indicates that they've had long-time consultation. They've had a broad consultation with affected lease owners and the impact that these changes in legislation may have in regards to current leases and . . . As well, Mr. Speaker, it almost appears the legislation as well is a bit of a threat to cottage owners and lease owners to pay up their leases before the end of April. Otherwise they may face major changes at which time they would be directly impacted; whereas if they paid their leases by April 1, the new lease fees would not come into effect till next year.

Mr. Speaker, the reason we raised some of the concerns is because we've seen the record of this government when it comes to consultation and how they consult with landowners, with leasehold owners. And I think, Mr. Speaker, just have to look at some of the debate we've had in the most recent time and in regards to Kenosee park.

Now we talk about Kenosee park, and I want to talk a little bit about . . . Monday morning, the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Environment talked about a new strategy for provincial parks. And he said that "Provincial parks will be getting greener as the government uses them to illustrate its vision of a 'green and prosperous economy' . . ." The minister went on to say, Saskatchewan:

" . . . parks can serve as important models of sustainable development and contribute to the public understanding and support for the implementation of the Green Strategy"
 . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I've looked through reports and looked through the paper in regards to some of the comments made by the minister responsible, I certainly can agree that there are some real opportunity and potential. However on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, as we have seen through past involvement of this government, when it comes to changing lease fees and leaving it in the hands of the minister, there can be some significant impact to leaseholders and certainly cottage and business owners in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, you're probably aware of, as are most members of the Assembly, a debate that took place — about three years ago I believe it was — when the significant change took place in parks. And the government attempted to move forward with an assessment that SEIMA [Saskatchewan Environmental Industry and Managers Association] had come down with and the impact it had on cottage owners.

And at that time, Mr. Speaker, we saw . . . many cottage owners found themselves in a situation where the lease fees that they were facing were jumping any three and fourfold the current lease fee. And for a lot of cottage owners, it basically put them in a position where they were looking at a lease on their cottage that they might use for maybe two or three months of the year, lease fees that are actually higher on their principal residences which were in communities not that far from the current park or the park that they had their cottage in. In fact in the case of Kenosee, we see the situation where there was quite a disparity between even the village of Kenosee and the cottage owners in the park.

Mr. Speaker, as we look back and we saw what took part in the past and the debate — and at that time I remember a meeting with cottage owners, both individually and a couple of public rallies — there was a real question raised as to, well on one hand, government indicated that they had long and deliberate consultation with cottage owners. The sense we got from the cottage owners is that that really didn't take place at all. Cottage owners had no knowledge of what was happening until they received notices in regards to their lease fees and how those lease fees had jumped dramatically.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, we have some real questions in regards to the current legislation that is before us at this time. And we have concerns, Mr. Speaker, because of a number of things. As the minister said, they've done consultation. Mr. Speaker, as well the minister talked about a green and prosperous economy and talked about Saskatchewan's parks playing a role in that green and prosperous economy.

And I quite proudly stand here and talk about Kenosee park because . . . Moose Mountain Provincial Park and Kenosee Lake because that's a park that I'm quite familiar with. And I know that it . . . As we've looked through the estimates through the years, Kenosee park or Moose Mountain Provincial Park has through the years been one of the leading parks in the province of Saskatchewan when it comes to tourism, when it comes to visits, when it comes to revenue generated by provincial parks for the economy in the province of Saskatchewan — not only in the southeast part of the province, but certainly in the province in general.

So when we talk about lease fees and how they impact

individuals and how it impacts individuals such as Kenosee park, it's important that the government indeed take the time to consult with people appropriately and that the changes in the legislation don't dramatically impact the lessees to the point that the lessees really question whether or not it's really worth maintaining their lease.

And I know that, Mr. Speaker, a lessee like Golf Kenosee for example who have spent an awful lot of time and money to enhance the golf course at Moose Mountain Provincial Park, if this . . . these changes to the legislation would impact them significantly, Mr. Speaker. It may put them in a position where they find it very difficult to continue to operate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've had individuals in the last little while, and certainly last fall even from the community in Regina who haven't actually taken the time to go out to Moose Mountain Provincial Park and enjoy the golfing out there and at White Bear, commented about going out last fall and they were quite surprised at the changes that had been made to Golf Kenosee, the golf course at Kenosee. And they basically said with what they had seen being done, the changes that were being made, it made the course much more interesting to golf on.

There were a number of issues in the past that golfers had looked at, issues that had turned golfers away from using the course. And as they were out there last fall, and they were golfing on the course, and they were seeing the developments that were taking place as a result of a lot of intensive work by the management of Golf Kenosee. They were indicating to me that they were looking forward to going back because they wanted to see how the changes would impact the golf course over the years. The impact . . . and the fact that they really appreciated, they enjoyed golfing the course because of the initiatives that had been taken by Golf Kenosee and the management in enhancing the course.

And, Mr. Speaker, through the enhancements at the park, through the enhancements being made to Golf Kenosee, what it does, Mr. Speaker, it also contributes to the province — to the well-being of the province — and through the tourism to this province as well. So, Mr. Speaker, there are some issues and some concerns that we've had raised with us. We certainly want to ensure that individuals who continue to buy property in the park and in the village of Kenosee . . . And not just as I indicated earlier, not just in this park, all across the province of Saskatchewan.

Because as we see the dollar rising against the American dollar, we know, Mr. Speaker, that outside of the cost of fuel, that people will start looking again to go outside of the province to places in the United States as that dollar value gets closer and it's much more reasonable. And in fact it becomes even an enticement to move across the border to spend your money.

We want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that people not only in Saskatchewan but outside of the province and certainly North Dakota or states along the American border continue to come to our province to enjoy the tourism that we have in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, while there are a number of issues that we feel need to be looked at very carefully, it's imperative that we take the time to discuss some of these issues, make sure we've got a

good handle on what the government's intent is in regards to the parks Bill and the parks Act, where the government intends to go and how it's going to enhance the use of our parks in the province of Saskatchewan. It's imperative that we do proper consultation, and therefore at this time, I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Moosomin that debate on second reading of Bill No. 48, The Parks Amendment Act, 2006 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Bill No. 30

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 30 — The Film and Video Classification Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: —The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this Bill, Bill No. 30, An Act to amend the Film and Video Classification Act.

Mr. Speaker, I understand in general that this Bill introduces new provisions to cover video games which were not included in the classification Bill before and updates penalties under the Act. It also provides new powers to Executive Council for establishing classification schemes for films.

A little more specifically, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 30 introduces provisions into the Act to cover video games and defines the provisions governing adult video games. The Act also deals with the classification, exhibition, and distribution of video games separate from those of films.

As I see it, Mr. Speaker, there are five main provisions in the Act that deal with video games, and they are that video games are to be classified under the Act unless an exemption applies. The government would be authorized under this Bill to designate other bodies to classify video games. A new section is introduced that would deal with adult video games. Basically it would state that all adult video games are to be approved before being exhibited, rented, or sold in the province.

Another provision deals with procedures for approval and reconsideration of approval for classifying video games, Mr. Speaker, and one that deals with businesses that distribute only computer or video games and no other types of films, and that they would not have to be registered with the Film Classification Board, Mr. Speaker.

Under this Act, penalties are also dealt with, Mr. Speaker, and very substantially increased — up to, in fact, a fine of \$500,000 for corporations who would contravene this Act.

Regulatory authority is given to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, Mr. Speaker, under this Act under two main points, I would say, Mr. Speaker. One that sets out the classes of video games not included in the definition of video game under the Act. And two, regulations setting out a classification scheme to be used for classifying films including provisions establishing different classifications for different classes of films, and that adopt by reference a classification scheme established by another person or body subject to changes the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers appropriate. And thirdly, regulations that prescribe the process to be followed in making appeals pursuant to renting of films.

And for the purposes . . . regulations, Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of classifying video games, deal with prescribing the criteria to be followed by a person or body in the classification of video games.

I'm concerned that not enough consultation has been held with the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. The process was not adequate. The consultation process was not adequate. And we believe that further review is required to address the concerns of impacted stakeholders.

Business and organizations that comprise the LAN [local area network] gaming industry in Saskatchewan have not been consulted, to the best of my knowledge and according to my most recent information. And, you know, this Act can impact the viability of that fledgling but growing industry in the province, Mr. Speaker.

It appears that government doesn't understand particularly well the nature and evolution of the video game industry and its distribution channels and the futility of this proposed legislation as it relates to restricting access to video games. It would facilitate a process for constructive dialogue. I think that that's what's required, Mr. Speaker, and feedback that would enable the industry and government to work together to consider and develop possible solutions that may address concerns of both government and industry.

[15:00]

And to my most recent knowledge, Mr. Speaker, the stakeholders that have not been adequately consulted are members of the LAN gaming industry, parents that support and patronize the LAN gaming industry, and youth that support and patronize the LAN gaming industry, Mr. Speaker, as well as fundraising groups.

So accordingly, Mr. Speaker, until such time as further consultation is held with the stakeholders, I would move that this Bill be adjourned.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek that second reading debate on Bill 30 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 53

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 53 — The Economic and Co-operative Development Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and talk on this particular Bill today. It comes from the economic and co-operative development end of it. It's one of . . . the only Bill that's probably come through there. It's kind of funny, I kind of thought that Economic and Co-operative Development should be helping to grow the province at that end of it and Bills that would help to grow private sector or things there instead of just a Bill that's going to, I think, grow the government ITO [Information Technology Office] a little bit the way I understand this Bill at that end of it.

You'd think with coming from The Economic and Co-operative Development Act it would be pertaining more to the growth of Saskatchewan which has been suffering over the last many, many years under this with population loss and job loss. It's an issue, it's a huge issue in rural Saskatchewan and it's getting to be an issue in the cities. The young people are leaving this province unfortunately, which is very sad with that.

Dealing with this particular Bill, I think, from what I understand, this agency's requesting to do more IT [information technology] government services, that agencies can use the government agency. My question would be that, why wouldn't they maybe just put that out to the private sector rather than trying to grow the in-house end of it services?

And it's just not on this. Is another example is with engineering. I know we've met with a consulting engineering which government has . . . they've met with them. I believe this morning they had a breakfast meeting with them. And one of the concerns that they raised, that a lot of the services are being provided by in-house. And some of it has to be. You always need some in-house services, whether it's on the engineering or whether it's on the ITO end of it. But why not, when you can, promote it out to the private sector? We have a very excellent consulting engineering department or department in Saskatchewan that looks after that. I think there is something like 50 members, 50 firms that do it, plus 11 or 12 that are associate members that provide a service.

And also when it comes to providing technical, computer IT services — which this Bill pertains to — I would imagine that there is services that can be provided from the private sector at that end, that you can contract a lot of this out rather than doing some in-house, growing your in-house services at that. Because to me that's how you're going to grow this province. If you're going to grow it at any amount, it has to be grown through the private sector, and it has to be grown through the businesses. It has to be by handing out contracts rather trying to build it on the particular in-house.

I know the member from Cannington had raised up quite a few issues on this particular Bill. And that was one of his main

concerns was, why grow the in-house services of it if there's places that you can contract it out for IT services? I know that we have an ITO department here, and they do a very capable job. But I think they can also, for other department agencies, if there's need for them to develop their computer and their IT technology, to expand it through the private sector at that end of it.

Another concern that the member from Cannington had raised is also, is this going to be done at a cost recovery service? Provide services not only to the private sector, it's also going to provide some services to some government agencies that they do back and forth. Is it going to be basically on a cost recovery, or are they going to look at charging and what are the rates of it? And also is government agencies, are they — this particular Bill — are they being forced to deal with the ITO services? If they have some ITO work that needs to be done will it have to be done through this particular department? Or if they can, will they be able to do it outside if they can contract it cheaper? That's some issues that are going to be raised on, coming up on . . . we'll be asking also in committee.

But these are concerns when you look at a Bill that is dealing with ITO services at that end is, are they setting it up to benefit financially or are they going to do it at a cost recovery? Because I'm hoping that all the computer and ITO services, when it's done intergovernmental, should be done on a cost recovery. It shouldn't be looking at trying to charge one government agency, moving money to another government agency at the other end of it.

Because basically all you're doing is it's the taxpayer, you have to remember it's the taxpayer that's paying this at the end of the day, that's paying for these services here. And every time, even if you're over billing or billing from one department to the next, you know, there's always the costs that are added and that.

We always believe that a lot of these services that if they can be contracted out can be a huge benefit to the government. Because there, not only do you get a different perspective on expertise — which you can do in the private sector rather . . . you get that in government — but it's always nice to do the mix. Because when you're working with somebody different, sometimes you always pick up a lot of different ideas and you trade ideas back and forth and at that end of it.

On another dealing with that, the same thing, when you contract it also then there is . . . You can look at money savings at the end of it. You put it out to the lowest tender at that particular end.

Be quite a few questions, I believe, in committee because at one end of it, it was raised by me by one person at I think it's, I think RMs [rural municipalities] and school divisions . . . I think if they want to they can use these services through the government. IT services, right now it's set up as a voluntary service of if they want to hire them they can hire them, voluntary services.

But what was pointed out to me by one member, he says, you know, what happens if further down the road that they make it mandatory that if you're dealing with the government, like a school division that gets funding from the government, that they

have to get all your IT services provided through the . . . If your funding comes from the government you have to get all your IT services through the economic co-operative, through this particular Bill at that end of it.

And I mean, I couldn't assure him that no, the government wouldn't do that. These are questions that we will be raising in committee at that end of it. But does that open up down the road? And I think it does allow — and I could be wrong at that end of it — I think it does allow school divisions, RMs, or private people to hire the IT services in the government right now if they prefer to. I know back home, municipalities, if they were setting a computer program they, I think they hire a firm. They don't hire the government. But there might be an odd one that does. I may have to check on that. And I think that service is available through the government for them to hire.

But I'm also wondering of the cost of it too, whether, where the government actually enters in tendering out if an RM or . . . Well right now with the school divisions, the size of the school divisions right now, the computer network and IT service on it is going to be quite huge. It's not going to be like the smaller divisions where . . . of years ago, I mean, where you had one little office, a couple of office staff. Now, you know, my school division stretches from Craik, basically the edge of Craik all the way to the Alberta border. You know, it covers, basically covers an area that it's bigger than some of the eastern United States — some of the states in the eastern part of the United States — an area almost that huge, at that end of it. So there's going to be quite a few services that are going to need to be provided at the IT end, whether you're setting up school programs at the end of it. So it's going to be quite extensive for the computer and the IT services at that particular end.

So I was wondering if the government is going to try to get in competition with some of the companies out there that are going to provide it, that provide servicing and setting up computer programs that are going to be stretching from, you know, halfway across Saskatchewan at that end of it. Some of the questions that we will be asking in committee at the particular time when this Bill does come up . . . Because I hope that this government isn't planning on competing with private businesses. Because unfortunately when that happens it seems like private businesses always seem to come out on the losing end of it because they just don't have the resources the government has, and also the government's also making the rules at that particular end.

We should be encouraging businesses to be growing in this province. And I know coming from this particular department, the Economic and Co-operative Development, the only thing that they've brought forward so far is just how to grow the government. They haven't brought one initiative in anything forward at this particular session and this — they've only brought one Bill forward — and this doesn't deal with growing the province.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is a shame because this government . . . The way Saskatchewan is right now with losing people and losing population is, you know, that's something that should be addressed. And they should be looking at trying anything they can on growing the province, making initiatives, changing some of the rules, working on stuff.

But this is the only Bill that came from the Economic and Co-operative Development. That basically replaced the old Rural Development ministry which that replaced the old Rural Revitalization ministry. And then three ministries now, in the last I think four years have . . . this is their third name change you know, and they did nothing.

I've seen nothing that came out of them three departments, yet that is going to help promote rural Saskatchewan, at that end of it. And I think that's a shame. The only expenses I've seen is changing the name of these three departments. I don't know what the cost of that is. You know, that's the only thing that they've done.

And you keep wondering why they keep changing their name, if they're trying to fool the people out there, like they've got all these different departments that are actually trying to do something when they're actually not, not out there. But the people, at least they see what's going on in rural Saskatchewan. They see how the jobs are lost, population going, your highway deteriorating.

I had a constituent from . . . he's not a constituent. He delivers the newspapers to the towns. He comes from Regina. And he tore his gas tank out on No. Highway 44 on Saturday. You know, that highway is that broke up. I've got highways now that people can't even travel on. And one of them's 44, and another one is around Semans is Highway 15. Highway 20 is also . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. I would like to remind the member that the question before the Assembly is second reading of Bill No. 53, The Economic and Co-operative Development Amendment Act, 2006 and that issue of relevancy here is paramount. So I invite the member to relate his remarks to Bill No. 53.

Mr. Brkich: — When I start talking about my constituency in rural Saskatchewan, I kind of digress from the Bill. But on this particular . . . I guess I was trying to tie it in to the ministry that has presented the Bill which is Economic and Co-operative Development, that there has been very little done out there in rural Saskatchewan.

And this particular Bill dealing with IT services, I don't think, Mr. Speaker, is going to help to grow Saskatchewan. I can't see anything in this Bill coming from this particular ministry, from Economic and Co-operative Development, where, Mr. Speaker, that it's not going to grow, help to grow rural Saskatchewan, and not going to grow Saskatchewan at all because that should be our objective here in the legislature, especially with the things that have been happening in Saskatchewan.

That should be the focus. It is for the opposition. And I'm not sure if it's a focus for this government when I see a particular piece of legislation like this. In fact this may even hurt some businesses throughout Saskatchewan. You know, I imagine in Saskatoon and Regina there are some major IT firms that are looking forward to . . . that do contract work. And this, I don't know if this Bill allows this department to actually start bidding against that, at that end of it.

[15:15]

Now we have sent the Bill out. And like I say, in the reading of it, you hope that it doesn't, but you can never be too sure because how you word a Bill is . . . does it open things further down the road? And this Bill when you look at it, it does, it does leave the wording further down the road to actually where the government can actually start competing against IT services in the private sector, at that particular end of it.

But like I say we have numerous questions in committee which we will be asking, and those are the main concerns which we'll addressing with committee, at that end of it, that it's not going to be competing with it, because any piece of legislation that comes forward through here should not be to hurt Saskatchewan. It should be to help it grow, at that particular time. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move that this Bill go on to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 53, The Economic and Co-operative Development Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be referred to the policy Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 53, The Economic and Co-operative Development Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 28

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wartman that **Bill No. 28 — The Veterinarians Amendment Act, 2005** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on The Veterinarians Act. As we all know, on both sides of the House, it's created

somewhat of a controversy out there, whether it be with the veterinarians or whether it's the producers out there, whether it's horse owners, or stock growers, cattle owners out there that are affected by the contents of what the original Bill had brought out. We have I think on both sides — the minister has and we have on this side — met with many of these groups and listened to their concerns. And I believe everything that . . . or pretty well everything that they have been concerned with will be dealt with in committee, and we'll make amendments and changes at that point.

I guess one of the concerns that many of the producers out there that we have talked to, Mr. Speaker, are not only concerned with what is in this Bill. But I think they are concerned with what some of these changes may lead to down the road and where we will go at that point and what controls are taken out of their own hands as owners and producers and the people that actually raise the livestock and deal with the livestock on a day-to-day basis, and what are the changes that may come about that actually end up costing them more money and taking some of their autonomy away from decisions that they would normally make themselves and are handed to somebody where they have to pay for this service on an ongoing basis whether they agree with it or not.

And I think that's one of the concerns that was brought to us over and over again is, not just the changes that were originally intended in this Bill when it was first brought forward, but what will the changes lead to down the road? What additional changes will it lead to down the road? And I think that's what many of the stock growers, the horse owners, and many of the farmers and ranchers out there were very, very concerned with.

And I think we have those same concerns that many on this side are actually involved in farming or have been involved in farming and know exactly how costly many of these procedures can be and some of the things that we . . . such as preg testing out there where you have someone in your area that is very, very good at it, takes care in doing this job, and is very accurate and reliable. And things like that may be taken away where we have to on a case-by-case basis. And many do this every year, Mr. Speaker, for productivity reasons and for things where they need to know whether a cow is in calf and will be having a calf in the next upcoming year.

Mr. Speaker, many of these things I think we take for granted that they will be cheap and down the road they won't cost us that much money if we make many of these legislative changes. And I'm very concerned if we did that, that would not be the case. And I know many producers are, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've talked to equine ranchers that actually employ equine dentists in preference of . . . or instead of actually getting a vet out to deal with the teeth and horses. And many of these people are very well trained and have spent many, many dollars on equipment that they use. And I know the horse owners that we've talked to and that I talked to said that the last thing they would do is get somebody in that could actually hurt the animal or cost them dollars down the road where they have to have a follow-up case — somebody come in to actually deal with the problem created by the person that was actually doing the dentistry. And the people that they're getting in, in their words, were very good at what they did and were

very adequate in doing the job that they've been asked to do.

Mr. Speaker, many of the farmers — in fact all the farmers that we talked to — said their first concern is for the animal's health and well-being, and they certainly weren't just for the sake of a dollar not putting into that animal what they need because these animals are actually their livelihood and would cost them down the road.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, we have found and I've been told that equine dentists actually were more expensive to get out than a veterinarian was to do the same work. So it isn't a cost saving measure. Again it's the quality of the care that these people are receiving from these equine dentists.

So, Mr. Speaker, we feel that the changes that we hope are going to be removed from . . . they're amended in this legislation. We can do in committee. And at this point having talked to the minister and having an agreement that in committee we will make the adjustments we need to this Bill, and go back to just the housekeeping measures that were originally planned to be part of the Bill, would all that . . . the changes that we would see within this Bill and we would remove the other parts in committee. So, Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to let this Bill go to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food that Bill No. 28, The Veterinarians Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be referred to the policy field Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 28 be referred to the policy field Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Bill 28 is referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I do now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go into Committee of Finance.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Deputy Chair: — I propose a short recess while we wait for officials to enter.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

General Revenue Fund Environment Vote 26

Subvote (ER01)

The Deputy Chair: — The committee will come to order. We're dealing with Environment estimates. But just before we start those, I'm going to recognize the member for Batoche with a request to introduce visitors in the gallery. So I recognize the hon. member for Batoche.

[15:30]

Mr. Kirsch: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would request leave to introduce guests.

The Deputy Chair: — The member for Batoche has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That is carried. Please proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I would like to introduce 26 students from the East Central School in Prince Albert, grades 7 and 8, and with them is Lynn Phaneuf, their teacher. And glad to have you here and welcome to your Assembly. And I'd like all members to welcome you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Environment Vote 26

Subvote (ER01)

The Deputy Chair: — Members of the committee will come to order. The estimates before the committee are the estimates for the Department of Environment. I think there are other members who are ready to ask questions.

So the estimates before us are the estimates for the Department of the Environment. And we'll go to central management and services, item 1. And I would invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Deputy Chair. I'm pleased to have with me three assistant deputy ministers, Dave Phillips and Alan Parkinson and Bob Ruggles. And I look forward to the questioning this afternoon.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome the minister and his officials here today. The question I have is related to the provincial parks and more specifically to the operation of the golf courses within some of our provincial parks. I know that in the past couple of years they have been really struggling with the revenues that they have been able to garner and that they pay a share of their income to the provincial park for the operation and the privilege of operating that provincial golf course in that provincial park.

The one I'm specifically interested in is the golf course at Moose Mountain. They're going through quite a renovation there. They're paying for the cost themselves, even though it's park property and at the end of the day when their lease expires or if their lease isn't renewed, those improvements that they have made in the golf course become the property of the provincial government and Moose Mountain Provincial Park. I know that they were struggling because of the shortfalls in revenues. What has your department done to help them to mitigate those costs and to make their golf course a viable operation for both themselves and for the clients using the provincial park?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I thank you for that question. I appreciate the concern about the parks and specifically Moose Mountain Park. What is actually happening is that a number of the parks within the province have golf courses similar to the golf course at Moose Mountain Park. And people within the provincial parks system have been meeting with a group of the operators of the golf courses to look at their specific concerns as it relates across the province.

But in the parks legacy announcement that we made yesterday, which we released this, ensuring the legacy: provincial parks future directions, one of the aspects of this particular document is that over the next four months we will be going to every specific park to look at issues that relate to that particular park. And we have already identified that the golf course and its long-term viability as a really important asset in that area will be a focus of the discussion.

And I know that we've also received correspondence from a number of the people who are avid users of the golf courses, but I would say that the people involved have been meeting with the provincial parks officials to see what kinds of things we can do that will work.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. This has been an ongoing issue now for a number of years, probably two to three years at the very minimum. The costs of upgrading the golf course at the park, which when it was built was built during the 1930s as a depression-era work project and wasn't really built to any golf course standards . . . It was basically the bush was cleared and you now have a pathway for a golf course. And there was no real work done on the greens and on the fairways to ensure that grass could actually grow there. I know the one fairway on there was, basically all the topsoil was stripped off of it to form the green and there was nothing left to grow grass on you know, and so the people who are leasing the golf course are putting considerable amount of their own money into this. I believe it's in the neighbourhood of \$700,000 or more to upgrade it.

So my concern with your announcement yesterday and the four-month period of consultation is that they're going into the golf period right now. And I'm sure that they would like to have some assurance that some recognition is going to be given to them for the investment that they're making into the golf course that will eventually be property of the provincial government and the parks system. It's not an asset that they are going to own or be able to realize on in the sense of a sale or leasing it out to someone else.

So I think it's important that some consideration be given to mitigating their rents so that they can move ahead on this in a proper manner.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for those comments. And I know, as anybody who has experienced the golf course at Moose Mountain Provincial Park recognizes, that no matter how it was originally built, it's now a very beautiful place and a good place to play golf.

What the department officials in the parks area have been doing is trying to figure out a way whereby some of the capital improvements that are made will be reflected in the commercial rents that are charged. And that's where a solution lies. And I know people are interested in making sure that the continued operation of the golf courses continues in a very positive way.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have one question regarding some written questions that we put in regarding ski hills and the fact that the department saw fit to grant \$20,000 to a ski club that's operating out of the White Track ski hill to get that operating. It was for outstanding bills I guess and to make sure that the club and ski hill was operating this year.

And I certainly . . . They did have another request from Mission Ridge. I had talked to those group of owners. And they were quite concerned because the fact that White Track was operating and, as the only other ski hill in southern Saskatchewan, it impacted their business.

Mission Ridge just put in a huge investment into a chairlift because they were feeling that they were going to be the provider of ski services in southern Saskatchewan. And then to see the department put in \$20,000, grant or give \$20,000 to White Track ski hill and the ski club was a little disconcerting. And I just, you know, if you can have an even playing field on a ski hill basis, they were wondering why they were not able to access \$20,000. Because I can guarantee you, they have some pretty major bills forthcoming after just installing a chairlift. So I'd like to know the department's rationale for why they would grant one area \$20,000 and the other ski hills received nothing.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The White Track ski hill is operated by a non-profit organization on parkland. And Mission Ridge ski hill that you're talking about is a commercial business operating on private land. Also Saskatchewan Environment doesn't provide funding assistance to commercial business operators in provincial parks, and that's not part of its mandate.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials here today. I have a few questions. I want to start with an issue that is regarding your colleague's constituency and that is in the constituency of Meadow Lake.

There's a town in that constituency known as Chitek Lake, and for years and years and years on the west side of Chitek Lake there was a bridge. It was part of the Carlton Trail for many, many years. Travellers used that trail to go up into the bush and here some, I believe it was, three years ago that bridge was removed. Now it was a wood bridge at the time and I do have pictures of it here and I will pass these pictures on to the minister at a later date.

This bridge is part of the economic wealth of the village of Chitek Lake. It's a resort area. That bridge is utilized for quads, for whatever have you. Being that it is a tourism town, there's many people that come to the village of Chitek Lake and utilize those trails for benefit to the town of Chitek Lake.

With the removal of that bridge — and it was a log bridge — some three years ago, that has hurt and damaged the town. And I'm wondering if you're aware of this incident, Mr. Minister, and can you enlighten me on what's happening to date.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. The explanation appears to be this, that around 2001 the bridge was dilapidated and was no longer safe to be used and so it was removed. But at that time there were discussions between the village of Chitek Lake and I think possibly the RM and then the First Nation about others contributing to put a new bridge there.

What happened was, it appears that it was just the First Nation that was interested in a new bridge. So what they did was they took the old bridge that was no longer usable and put in a rock crossing which means that, for most times of the year when the flow is low, you can drive right through on the rocks. But if the water flow is high, obviously in the spring then you can't get across that particular spot.

But there's willingness to work with the local people to see whether there can't be something done to put the bridge back there. There's no problem with that but it just related to the fact that the one that was there was worn out and didn't seem to be common will at that point from all of the different parts to rebuild the bridge. But the people in Saskatchewan Environment are quite willing to work with whomever is willing to proceed with that project.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the answer. I would if I may, Mr. Chair, pass these pictures on so they can be passed on to the minister now, please. The pictures, Mr. Chair, will give a vivid idea to the minister and his colleagues as what was there some time ago — actually for years and years — in regarding the wood bridge and why it needs to be reinstated so that a bridge be there.

I know the ministry of SERM [Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management] has done some work in regarding with a rock reef but with the last few years, with the water levels as

high as it has been, that water in that creek right now is in the neighbourhood of 5 to 6 feet.

So in order to address all the issues that's surrounding this bridge, I really believe that the Environment minister, his colleagues need to consult with the people from Chitek Lake — specifically the town — because this bridge is in the park area of Chitek Lake. And one of the reasons why there has not been a bridge put back in is because of . . . the quads use that trail and they go through the park itself.

[15:45]

Now in talking to the CO [conservation officer] from Chitek Lake, he has quoted that there's roughly about 18 calls on an average a year where there is problems with quads going through the park — whether it's high speed, whether it's reckless driving or whatever it is. But he said there's roughly an average of 18 calls. But it's only on certain periods of the summer months, whether it be the long weekend in May, whether it be the July 1 weekend, whatever. So it's at a very, very small part of the season.

The quads are the biggest problem in regarding that area and that's one of the reasons why the bridge has not been reinstated. I again urge the minister and officials to contact Chitek Lake and work in that regards. The pictures that I have passed on to you were taken by an Albert Sullivan from Chitek Lake, who has been a long-time resident of Chitek Lake and has seen that bridge right from when it started to when it was taken out. And at that time, according to Mr. Sullivan, when the bridge was removed it was supposed to be another one reinstated to bring safety to crossing of that river or that creek.

Also, in contacting the minister and the member from Meadow Lake in regards to this bridge that's not there, he was saying that there was a group looking at what they can do with it. But apparently the group that I understand now was within the environment that's looking at it, it's not a big group where officials plus members from Chitek Lake will also be contacted in advising us what to do with that creek.

So can I get the assurance of the minister and his colleague that they will contact Chitek Lake and work in that regards to come up with a plan to reinstate a bridge of some sort so that it can be utilized to a full benefits for the village of Chitek Lake?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, officials from Saskatchewan Environment will contact people at Chitek Lake and others who are interested in this project as identified by the people up there.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure the people from Chitek Lake look forward to meeting with you and your colleagues in regards to it.

I have some other questions, Mr. Chair, and that is in regard to the meeting that took place in Mayfair here a couple of weeks ago, and your deputy deputy minister was present. And I can honestly say from the people that were there — there was 18 people plus the deputy deputy minister and another guy by the name of Mike Gollop — that it was a very positive meeting. Everybody that I contacted said that it was positive, and we look forward to more results coming from this meeting.

This meeting was in regard to the predator problem in that area, whether it be Spiritwood, Shellbrook, Mayfair, or whatever. I believe it actually goes right across the whole province as far as the forest fringe. At the meeting there was comments made by the deputy deputy minister and also the gentleman from Resources, Mike Gollop. I would just like for the record, Mr. Minister, to find out if the deputy deputy minister has talked to you in regards to this meeting and what went on at that meeting so that you're up to date on what took place at Mayfair.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I can confirm that I've been fully briefed about this meeting, and I was pleased that people were able to get answers to many questions and sort out some of the issues that have arisen over the last number of months. The commitment at that point was to have a letter go back to the people in the community which would set out the procedure for local people as it related to various predator issues, and that letter is just now being drafted. It was promised within two weeks, and I think the two weeks will be up next week. So the plan is that it will go out in the next week.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know the residents of that area are looking forward to that letter. In that letter does it state as to when your officials and possibly yourself might be able to get together with that group or a larger group or whatever you would like regarding some of the resolutions or changes that will be required to make in order to deal with the predator problem in the area?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't think that particular issue will be addressed in this letter because that would be a letter coming from me about when I would be available. But this particular letter will set out the various procedures that are available for local people to deal with predators and what happens if certain things happen. And so they'll have that as a message and clearly the officials who were there are quite willing to come back and discuss that letter to make sure everybody understands it. And if it needs clarification, they would do that. But I still intend to come up and visit the people in that part of Saskatchewan and will hopefully be able to do that once we're out of the House.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I take it from that then, the earliest that something of a meeting that may take place would probably be in later June or July at the earliest then?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's possible that it could happen sooner than that, but sometime over the next few months.

Mr. Allchurch: — I think the urgency, Mr. Minister, regarding this is we need to have something in place before the fall time. In my talks with officials and also with your assistant deputy minister and yourself, that the urgency for this predator problem needs to be addressed with urgency. Like I say, the meeting that we had in Mayfair was very, very good. There was a lot of things that got out on the table, and we would hope that in the near future, long before the fall time, that we can address many if not all of these issues.

The problem with the predator problem — and when I'm dealing with a predator it's not only the coyotes and the bears and the wolves, it's also cougars — and a lot of the damage that

is done to the beef animals, to the farmers and ranchers is in the summertime. And therefore there needs to be some urgency taken now so that in the fall time we can get preparations ready for the farmers and ranchers that they can deal with it in the fall time when the trapping season occurs or when it's the best time to alleviate some of the problems in regards to the wolf and predator problems.

Just to give an example, Mr. Minister. I passed over some petitions in regards to just the town, or just the RM of Spiritwood, and there was a number of people that signed their names to that in regards to the predator problem.

But just to go one step further, and it wasn't mentioned at that meeting in Mayfair, if you take roughly a 15- to 20-mile radius around the town of Spiritwood alone — and I've been in contact with most of the people around there to find out how many wolves were taken by trappers, by people that just shot them off their land, and people that had problems with the wolves dealing with their cattle operations — just in that very, very small area, Mr. Minister, there was almost 30 wolves taken. Now that is an enormous amount of wolves taken in that little area.

Now if you look at the number of wolves that are in a pack, their average numbers are anywhere from seven to nine. So if you take roughly two of those animals out of that pack, how many packs of wolves are in that area? And there again, Mr. Minister, I'm only talking of one area. If we go over to Shellbrook it's just as bad. If we go down to the RM of Meeting Lake it's also another bad area.

This problem has not just risen this last year. This problem has been arising for probably the last three years. That's why there's an urgency, Mr. Speaker, in regarding decisions made by your department and your officials to address the problem now and very soon, so that the people regarding this issue can deal with it after you have made the proper procedures and regulations.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well thank you for those comments. And I think one of the key points in the meeting that was held not that . . . 10 days ago or approximately, was the fact that the local people providing the information exactly as you've described now, will be of great assistance to the Saskatchewan Environment officials as they continue to work.

We know that the deer populations have risen, and that at the same time the wolf populations have risen as well, pushing some of the animals down into agricultural areas where they haven't been in as great a numbers. And so we need to end up working together with the local people. And one of the things that they can do — and I think they understand this — is to keep good records of where they find the predators. And if they end up destroying them, making sure that information gets in to the local conservation officers. Because how the officials work is gathering information from many sources, whether it's sighting by some of the officials or whether it's stories or comments from local people. But also the records of people who live in these areas are crucial.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. One of the resolutions that came out of a meeting in early January in

Shellbrook was the fact that in order to deal with the predator problems, that it was set up through the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board. Now some years ago, whether it's the set-up five years ago, seven years ago or whatever, at that specific time there was problems with coyotes. Well now the problem has gotten a lot bigger, Mr. Speaker. And now we're dealing . . . Or pardon me, Mr. Chair, we're dealing with problems with cougars and wolves, and especially the wolf problem.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can tell me that in your discussions as to making some changes, because we're dealing with cattle and cattle operations, would there be an effective way to dealing with this problem better if the predator problem was not dealt with through the Sheep Development Board and if it was set up through another board to administer funds to dealing with the safeguard of the animals from the predator problems?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate the comments about the methods to deal with predators that relate to the sheep and primarily the problem then was coyotes. And what we've seen is an increase in the number of wolves. And so we need to work at some new rules and some new tools for the local people to deal with the wolves as predators and also some of the cougars.

And so a good part of the meeting that was held up in your area was . . . well it informed everybody about what are some of the things that local people have asked for that would assist them in this particular problem. And that's why we're doing up a letter setting out how some of the things can be done, whether it relates to informing the conservation officers if a animal is taken or if it relates to having possession of . . . or having guns with them when they're out in the fields and things like that.

So I think that those are exactly some of the kinds of things that need to be done, and we will work together with the local people to give them the ability to provide control in their local areas because that is the most effective. And it's something where the conservation officers and the biologists who were sort of reviewing the overall situation from a statistical basis can work together with the local people and hopefully provide solutions that will work for everybody.

[16:00]

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the answer. Mr. Chair, another issue that was raised at both the Shellbrook and the Mayfair meetings was in regard to cougars. Now, Mr. Minister . . . Thank you, Mr. Minister. The problem of cougars five years ago wasn't around. It's only been in the last few years that we've had an enormous amount of pressure put on the stock growers and the cattle ranchers because of the cougars in the area.

Now whether the government wants to take credit or not take credit for cougars coming into the province of Saskatchewan, if they were brought in to look after the deer problem, then take credit for it because it was a great idea to bring them in to look after the deer. The unfortunate thing is right now they're not relying on the deer only. They're relying on the cattle operations.

To my understandings, cougars are protected under the office of the Environment of Saskatchewan. That creates a huge, huge problem. If someone was to trap a cougar or shoot one, then the SERM officials have to be notified and SERM officials will take that animal, because it is a protected animal.

If they were not brought in and they came in on their own and they're under the protection of the government, can Mr. Minister assure that there is some way that the farmers/ranchers in the area can be assured that there will be compensation if it is proven that an animal has been taken by a cougar?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I just want to start right off and say that these rumours about the government bringing in cougars are false. There's no truth to that at all.

And what has happened is that there have been cougars in Saskatchewan probably for 40 years at least, but in very low numbers. And as the population doesn't live on the farms all year round, there's been more room for cougars across the province and so we see and hear about more of them in the province.

But there's absolutely no truth to the rumour that the government had anything to do with bringing cougars into Saskatchewan to . . . such as has been suggested. And I've met this comment a number of places across the province and it's just not true.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. But, Mr. Minister, you failed to address the question I had in regard to a cougar problem in the province of Saskatchewan with the farmers/ranchers. If the animal is protected under the ministry of Environment, then what happens to a farmer/rancher that has cougar kills on their land where animals are taken? There is no compensation for that animal, yet the person that has the animal taken cannot go out and shoot the animal because it is a protected animal through the ministry of Environment.

Can you assure me that there will be changes made in your negotiations in the next months to come regarding predator problems, that cougars will be dealt with in a manner that, if a farmer/rancher has an animal taken that there will be some compensation to the landowner regarding this problem?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think we need to start off with some facts. Cougars are not protected. They're not a protected animal and so . . . It's just there's no hunting season for them because it's not one that is included in the hunting season. But they're not protected. And so if a landowner has a problem with a cougar, they can shoot the cougar.

Now I think one of the reasons that we want information about cougars that are shot is so that we can keep track of where they are in the province. But it's not a protected animal. So if your whole question is based on the premise that they're protected, well then that's . . . I don't have to answer that one. So maybe if you have some other questions about this that relate to cougars, I'm happy to answer them.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If the cougars are not protected then and they can be shot as you just mentioned by the local farmer/rancher, what happens to that animal when

the farmer/rancher shoots it and brings it home? What happens to that animal then?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What has generally happened, because it's not a very common occurrence, is that those animals have been picked up by the conservation officers and taken to the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. And they're used there for experimental or research purposes to learn about the cougars who live in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Well let me relay a story. And your assistant deputy minister heard this story in Mayfair about an incident that just happened some two months ago in Shellbrook where a person raising horses has lost a number of horses — well, five to be exact. The last horse that was taken was worth \$16,000. Now the gentleman that had this kill — and it was definitely a cougar kill — when he talked to the SERM officials, they said that they would come out and look after the problem, and that the only way to track down this cougar was to find some dogs.

Well another resident from Shellbrook found dogs close to hand, and they started tracking this animal on a weekend. But the SERM official stated that there's only three people that can shoot this animal — he is one of them — and that when the animal is shot, they will take that animal. Mr. Minister, if the farmer/ rancher has lost this animal but yet has the power to shoot it, then why is the enforcement officer saying that this animal is under the protection and therefore he is the only one that can take the animal?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's my understanding that this particular issue does relate to the fact that the landowner is able to shoot an animal on their farm, and the SERM officer, obviously. And I assume the third person probably is a police officer, if that's required.

But one of the issues that was discussed at the meeting of all of the people who were there from various RMs was the fact that we need to figure out a way whereby local ranchers can have an ability to hunt a cougar that might go across a whole number of landowners' land. And that's exactly what the officials are working at, to figure out how to do that, which then basically says that for ranchers in a particular area — and it could be, you know, 20 to 30 kilometres wide or bigger — they would have an ability and an agreement amongst themselves that would allow them to hunt for the cougars on each other's land. And that would then be able to comply with some of the rules that we have that protect wildlife in general.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you for the answer. If in fact there was something set up that a farmer in tracking this animal goes how many miles it is to retrieve this animal and shoots it then, when he does shoot the animal, the animal still has to be turned over to the ministry of Environment. Is there some way that the ministry could look at compensation for that farmer/rancher because of the loss of animal? Yes, he is shooting the animal so it doesn't do it again. But is there some way a compensation package can be set up to help with the losses that the farmer/rancher incurs in regards to the animal taking one of his farm animals?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's my understanding this particular issue

was discussed at the meeting, and it's one that officials have taken back to look at and see what some options are.

I think as you know, RMs are able to declare certain animals a nuisance. And you know a recent example was dealing with wild boars. In a few RMs they were able to declare them nuisance animals which then allowed for their destruction by people within that area.

I think this other issue around what you do with a cougar after it's been shot and the issues around compensation, we just need to have more information about how often this happens, what kinds of situations arise there. And I know that's what the officials said they were going to try to look at. And therefore it's very important for people in your area up there to keep good records of what happens and where the animals are and what kinds of problems are arising because that'll give us an ability to maybe create some policies that will solve this.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister, for that. And I look forward, and I know the residents of the area look forward, to the negotiations you and your department officials will have to do in order to come up with a reasonable plan for the farmer/ranchers in that area.

One of the main issues that was raised there, and it wasn't under a resolution, was the fact that — and this came out of Shellbrook — was we need to address and make changes necessary to the above-mentioned issues. SERM officials in the field have to make regional offices in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert aware of these problems so that they can be dealt with more effectively and . . . a more time-consuming manner.

And the reason that was put in, Mr. Minister, is there's a huge problem between the local COs in the area dealing with the issue and then getting to Regina, Saskatoon, or P.A., wherever it may be in order for you to make the changes needed to address the problem.

That has been the problem for some time, and I believe this is why the wolf problem has risen to the state now where it needs some control immediately. When we have officials in the area . . . And I can well speak for some of the COs in the area with their comments regarding the first meeting we had set up in Shellbrook. And one of the COs from the area said we will not attend the meeting. Why would we go just to deal with angry farmers? Another CO said there is no problem with the wolf problem. Yet on many occasions there have been people phoning regarding predator problems, whether it's a wolf, whether it's cougars or whatever.

So the point I'm trying to make, Mr. Minister, is the COs in the area can't take the law into their own hands and deal with it on their local level. They've got to get to and represent the people that live within that area and the concerns and the problems in that area, and have the assistant deputy minister, the minister and so on deal with these issues so that they can come out with changes to make it more affordable and accountable to the people in that area.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I appreciate the member's comments, but I don't think they're that helpful to state them that way. And I think, let's look at how do we move forward to

solve this particular issue.

One of the reasons for setting out in a letter to the local people, which will also go to staff at Prince Albert and Meadow Lake and other places and the local officials, is so that everybody sees what the plan is around dealing with these predators and has a common rule.

I think also it was promised at the meeting that — the two officials who were there — the next time that the meeting was held they would bring the conservation officers along so that any specific questions that local people had could be answered. And that's a much more positive way to move forward than to try to point fingers relating to an issue that is much broader in that it relates to the increased deer population, the increased number of predators, and some of the pressures that happen clearly in the, you know, forest fringe area as agriculture meets up to the northern forest.

And those are all issues that need to be dealt with. But let's look at them in ways that we can actually solve them. And that's what we intend to do.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Well thank you for that answer, Mr. Minister, and I agree with you that there has to be some changes made. But I can honestly say that when we had our first meeting in Shellbrook on January 5, had the COs from Prince Albert been at that meeting where there was only 82 people . . . Now maybe that's a large group of people. But had the COs come to that meeting when they were invited and said they were going to come . . . did not show up at that meeting, then I'm sure we could have had changes made long before the due dates that we had to have.

There again, what I'm trying to stress is somewhere along the line the COs on the local level have to be more accountable to the people with the concerns they have because it's not just a handful of people that have concerns.

[16:15]

That meeting in Shellbrook, there was 82 people there that had concerns regarding this, and that just touched the little bit of the area. Had we had a public meeting, we probably would have had 3, 400 hundred people there. That shows the extent of the problem in the area, Mr. Minister, and that's why the urgency of that meeting between some officials and your officials needed to be addressed. And I'm glad it happened in Mayfair. It was a very, very good meeting and hopefully we can build on that. But again I stress to the minister that somewhere along the line the officials, the COs in those areas at the local level, have to be more accountable to the people where the concerns are.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I also I think would remind the member again that let's move forward. Let's look at the things that we can do together. I think it's also incumbent upon the public to learn as much as possible about the changing nature of the predators in Saskatchewan. And the COs and the department can be very instrumental in providing information as we move forward, but it needs to be done in places where the discussion can be constructive. It appears that we have that process in place now, and I look forward to continuing to have department officials work with people in that area and other areas of the

province as we deal with certain special issues that happen in different parts of the province.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I thank you for that. And I know, like I said before, not only myself but the citizens and the residents of the Shellbrook, Spiritwood, and Mayfair areas look forward to your officials getting together to come up with some resolutions or some answers to the resolutions that were given out at the Mayfair meeting. And hopefully that the citizens of there . . . whenever a meeting is called and whatever size that meeting will be, later on that both sides will be in agreement as what changes need to take an effect. So thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome to the minister and his officials.

Mr. Minister, I had a constituent call me, and this is regarding the Lutheran Bible Camp, the area that surrounds it. It's south of Hitchcock along the Rafferty lake area, and there's been thousands of trees planted in that area. They were planted a few years ago. And this constituent called me very concerned that these trees are now getting to be a nice size, and the cattle are running in that area. And when the trees were planted, no cattle were permitted in that area. And people were either told or assumed that this land would be left in, you know, its natural state except of course for the trees that were planted.

And it has been a haven for hunters, but now with the cattle in there, you know, they're just actually destroying that whole area. And I guess what I would like to know, has the policy changed regarding the function that is under the jurisdiction of the Watershed Authority?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question, and I will try to explain the context here so that viewers who have happened into our conversation will understand what happens.

When the Rafferty dam was built, it created a reservoir which then flooded parts of the valley. And so in mitigation of the flooded bottom of that valley, the Souris River, the land was purchased higher up on the banks and planted with trees. And it became then, and it's becoming each year more trees and grass and effectively a good place for wildlife and birds. And it's an important thing.

This particular area did have an incident in the last while where there was some overgrazing in one of the areas, and it was identified by the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. And one of the officials at the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority has met with them a number of times to try, well, to address this particular issue. I don't have sufficient information to know whether it was just by mistake that they overgrazed a certain part, but it did cause some damage to some of the trees and some of the grass.

Now to counter that, there also is the point though that when you do have grass growing in the trees, it's very important for the health of the grass that it is grazed. And so they do want to have some grazing take place, but clearly they don't want to

have the overgrazing that did take place which then also resulted in some of the damage to the trees. So this is an incident that nobody likes and they're trying to make sure that it doesn't happen again.

Ms. Eagles: — So, Mr. Minister, what you're saying is the policy hasn't changed as far as that area is concerned. It's just kind of a one-time thing and they're presently looking into it so that it doesn't happen again. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that's correct as it relates to the overgrazing. But what we will see is some cattle in there grazing in a reasonable rate because when you have grass like that growing, you need to have some grazing to make sure that the grass stays healthy. But clearly, steps will be taken to prevent another incident like the overgrazing that took place.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there any area around that Lutheran Bible Camp where you are proposing to allow cabins to be built? Is there any area in that immediate area, I guess?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At the present time the only place where there are cottage lots developed is at Dr. Mainprize Regional Park. And there are quite a number of lots that are still available there and so there is no intention to create other cottage areas at this time.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and to your officials also. I appreciate your responses.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, the member from Melville-Saltcoats raised the issue of the Qu'Appelle Valley lakes and particularly Round and Crooked lakes and the water level in that area. And also I asked the question, a written question with regards to Echo and Pasqua lakes and had to do with the interim agreements that have been reached with the First Nations in that area. The answer that was provided . . . And we certainly thank you for the information. This particular answer did provide information; it wasn't a response. I noticed the Government House Leader wasn't listening, but that comment was for his benefit. And there is a difference between answers and responses. And the information was very helpful.

The interim agreement, the second interim agreement is in effect till the end of this year, I understand. I have a number of questions dealing with the four lakes and I'll start with the Echo and Pasqua lakes. Are they part of the same set of negotiations as the Crooked and Round lakes, or are there two separate sets of negotiations taking place at this time?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The negotiations are happening with each of the First Nations. And so Muscowpetung and Pasqua First Nations, the issues relate to those same two lakes, but they are happening at separate tables and obviously they're making sure the information goes back and forth. But the arrangements are being made with each First Nation as is possible.

But clearly all of the issues are tied together in one sense, and I think it's the federal negotiators that are working on this. And I

don't totally understand how they're doing all of these things, but they are keeping track of what happens at each table to make sure there's balance across the board.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, could you comment on the prospects of reaching a final settlement with the Muscowpetung and Pasqua First Nations. It seems those two communities were willing to sign interim agreements, and I don't know if that's an indication that we're getting closer to a final resolution on the issue. Perhaps it is. And I think the residents and the property owners and people who use the Pasqua and Echo Lake may have put that interpretation on it.

And so we would like comments as to, do you feel that we'll see a final resolution with those two First Nations within or before the end of this year and therefore we won't have that uncertainty for next year? What are your comments with regards to the negotiations taking place with those two First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As I mentioned before, this is negotiations between the federal government and the federal negotiators, Mr. Si Halyk from Saskatoon, and then also with the First Nations. But clearly the provincial officials in the Watershed Authority have been part of the discussions because it does relate to the overall watershed in that particular area. And so some of the issues that they're working on . . . And I think people are optimistic. They're hopeful that final resolutions are going to be reached. And a lot of it relates to defining the boundary between the . . . as it relates to the actual water there, you know. And that's something that is taking a lot of time, but I think people are optimistic.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, you said that some of the main stumbling blocks and unresolved issues is the — can I interpret it this way — the amount of First Nations land that has flooded as a result of the installation of the dams and defining that area. Is that one of the main issues that remains to be unresolved?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well thank you very much for that question because it's not often that you get a chance to explain some of the interesting things about water law in Western Canada and western North America.

Not a lot of people realize that the boundary waters agreement with Canada and US was created in the early part of the 19th century to deal with water flowing from southern Alberta into Montana and into the Missouri River system. When that was done, it created an agreement which now has become the rule which is used for the Great Lakes. And it's used for a lot of the lakes and rivers in British Columbia and Washington state, Idaho, Montana.

The reason I mention that is that these negotiations that relate to our beloved lakes that are real close to here — we all know very well — have as one of the key points of negotiation where the boundary is for the First Nation and where the shoreline is. And so there are quite a number of First Nations right across Canada where the boundaries are defined by the shorelines, whether it's on a river or on a lake.

And the federal negotiators are thinking about the whole country. The local people are saying, well we just want to solve this particular problem here. But the federal negotiators have to be very careful that whatever rules that they create in that particular area will also apply as it relates to lakes in British Columbia or Nova Scotia or Northwest Territories or Nunavut or wherever and, you know, wherever there is a similar situation.

And so I think people are optimistic in that they are developing these proposals that will work here but resolve issues right across Saskatchewan and across the Prairies. So it's kind of a long answer to your question, but I think it puts it into a bigger context about why this is seeming to take a long time for something that we all can go out and look at it and say, hey, this shouldn't be too hard to fix.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Minister, for that explanation. It certainly does explain some things as to why it is taking the time it has and, you know, we are dealing with a bigger picture here. And so I guess if we don't see resolution with the Muscowpetung and Pasqua bands by the end of this year, I guess it's my hope and the I think it's the hope of the people in the valley that perhaps another interim agreement could be reached with those two communities. And if in fact that is the case, are you prepared to fund part of that interim agreement as you have in the past two years?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The plan is to have a final agreement. So we haven't necessarily asked that question yet, and we're optimistic that we can get a final agreement. But as I said before, the people that have to agree on what the final agreement is, is the surveyor general for Canada, the controller of surveys for Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. All of them have very important interests in making sure the definition between land and water is right.

But I think there's a fair degree of optimism that that will be resolved which will then allow for a permanent agreement, and then hopefully we can deal with the other issues in the valley shortly thereafter.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Minister. From your comments I would take it that provincial officials are actively involved in this file in providing assistance wherever they can be. And that is certainly good news because it wasn't too long ago when one of your colleagues was the minister responsible and we raised this issue. From his answers it appeared that the stance of your government was at that time that this is a federal issue, and the province really didn't have a role to play. And we felt that, we agreed that it's certainly a federal issue but we felt that your government through your department certainly had a role to play, and it, you know, it seems that that is happening. And we're certainly pleased that, you know, efforts are being made on all . . . you know, by everyone who has an interest in this area to get this issue resolved.

So I understand now the status of where we're at with Echo and Pasqua. From your earlier comments, there are a separate set of negotiations going on with those First Nations communities that are affected by water levels around in Crooked Lake. And I guess a question that I would have is, why have you and the federal government not been able to reach an interim agreement

with those communities. those First Nations communities, to allow lake water levels to, you know, rise to their levels that they were prior to this whole dispute. You were able to reach it with Pasqua and Muscowpetung. What's different in the Round and Crooked Lake area?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'll try to answer this as briefly as possible. But as you know, the original discussions involved a group of all of the First Nations in the Qu'Appelle Valley as together. And at a certain point the federal government . . . You know it was clearly a negotiation between the federal government and the Qu'Appelle Valley organization of First Nations. And eventually the federal government said this isn't going to work, so they stopped the negotiations. And what happened is some of the First Nations came back and started negotiating sooner than others.

I think the positive news is that now today there are some discussions with every one of the First Nations taking place, but they're all happening at different levels because of the fact that some came back to the discussion sooner than others. But even in the last number of weeks there have been some new conversations which are reason that everybody is more optimistic that a resolution will be found.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Minister, for that information. Minister, I wonder if you could tell me what time frame we're looking at as far as lake levels in Round and Crooked Lake. I mean we are in the spring runoff time, and I imagine that the water levels in those two lakes, I'm assuming, is at least somewhat acceptable or reasonably high. How much time have we got before we see lake levels go down to where they were the last couple of summers?

And what I'm looking at is . . . I guess the second part to that question is, do you feel there's any chance at all of reaching an interim agreement by that time where we could, you know, we could still preserve at least reasonable lake levels for this upcoming tourist season?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well thank you for that question. In a normal year the timeline would pretty well be the end of May as far as the effect of an interim agreement making a difference for Round and Crooked Lakes. But in this particular year we have an interesting situation whereby Last Mountain Lake is quite high and so that the flow of water out of Last Mountain Lake into the Qu'Appelle River system will extend that time clearly till, probably until the end of June, maybe a little longer.

And so if agreements can be reached over the next couple of months, it will probably be able to keep the levels of the lake relatively back to where they were before. So everybody I think is working hard to come to some resolution here. And the fact that Last Mountain Lake has some extra water in it this year also gives a bit more space or time for negotiation.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Minister, for reminding me about Last Mountain Lake because I just . . . My constituency assistant actually faxed me some information that we got as a result of a telephone conversation she had with a constituent who was very concerned about the high water level in Last Mountain Lake. So I guess my question is, are you currently releasing water from Last Mountain Lake? And when will the

residents along the Last Mountain Lake see a return to what has been sort of a normal water level?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I appreciate this question. We're slowly moving our way up the province so I don't know if we have enough time to get to all the different places.

But I think not everybody understands that Last Mountain Lake is a very large lake, and it has the flow coming in from Lanigan Creek at the north, and there's been a fairly steady flow from that whole drainage area into Last Mountain Lake. Because everybody understands that the lake is up probably between 6 and 8 inches higher than would be sort of the summer level, they have restricted the flow coming into the Qu'Appelle River valley from the west and so that means that they have controls at Diefenbaker Lake which . . . and so there's less water coming there to allow for some of that volume in Last Mountain Lake to get into the Qu'Appelle River system. And so everybody's watching this very carefully.

And as you know from last summer, some of those big rainstorms in Alberta changed a lot of the plans. And ultimately it's still the weather and the rain and the natural courses that govern much of this, but people are using the information that they have from many, many points to try to make the right decisions. And we're pleased in Saskatchewan to have the Watershed Authority getting more and more coordinated information right across the system. And I think as the years go, we will see that we truly value water — especially in southern Saskatchewan — but that we also become better and better at predicting where some of the troubles are going to be but also then where some of the solutions are going to be.

[16:45]

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you for that, Minister. I will have some information that I can pass along to my constituent, and I guess they can look forward to seeing a return to more normal water levels in the not too distant future. At least I believe I can take it from your comments, I can tell him that the level probably isn't going to get any higher, or if it will, not very because we are discharging at the bottom end into the Qu'Appelle system.

Minister, I'd like to just turn my attention to another issue. I have a number of issues that I'd like to cover although we don't have a lot of time. We probably would cover a number of these smaller issues and then when we, the next time around, we'll get into more policy oriented discussions.

You recently, last month, announced that there'll be a ban on alcohol in all provincial parks in the upcoming May long weekend. We certainly understand why that move was necessary. It seems it's the old proverb where a few bad apples spoil it for the rest of the people. And with some of the destruction and some of the situations that occurred in our provincial parks last year, we could certainly understand why the need was there to move forward on that.

I guess the question I would have is that do you, by moving forward with this ban on alcohol, do you feel or have you done any analysis or have you been in discussion with the regional park folks to . . . Because, you know, what I suspect that is if

those individuals who are looking at a place to have a party and those people who have been causing the trouble that we've seen in the past, they can't go to the provincial parks, they may be going to the regional parks. And it just seems to me that the regional parks, which are community owned and operated, may not have the resources to deal with the issue. And have you been in discussion with the regional park association over this issue? And if so, what's been the outcome of those discussions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm happy to respond to that particular question. The Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association has been part of the discussion as we move forward with this policy, and they have been supportive. We've actually reviewed The Regional Parks Act, and in that Act they do have the power themselves, each individual park, to put in bylaws that control the use of alcohol in their parks. And so what they have said to me — but more importantly to the officials who have been working in this area — is that they will be monitoring this and to see whether it is a problem. And they will create some of the bylaws that they need to enforce that if it's necessary.

We're all interested to see what the effect is across the park system this May long weekend. We have been able, both as regional parks and as provincial parks, to have information from Prince Albert National Park and Waskesiu where they've had some bans on alcohol for a long time. We've also had information from other provinces where they have implemented similar policies, so we're not going into this whole thing without some advice about what the effect is.

I think it sends an important signal that the parks are there for families and for people to gather together in a safe way and that we have no room for the kind of hooliganism that we've seen recently. And so therefore we'll do that for this May long weekend, and we hope we don't have to do that for any other weekends. But if in fact that becomes something that we will need to do, it's something we will look at. And once again, we'll look at it in conjunction with our friends in the regional park system as well.

Mr. Hart: — Good. Thank you for that, Minister. Just staying on the regional parks for a moment, it's my understanding that the regional parks don't receive any assistance, provincial assistance in their operation or any capital dollars for construction of facilities and development of the park. I believe, and I stand to be corrected, that there was some one-time assistance last year under the centennial grant. I wonder if you could clarify that issue for me.

And then also as part of the same question, in meetings with the regional parks association, they've identified the whole issue of capital dollars for park development as one of their priorities. And my question I guess would be, are you looking at providing some assistance? It seems to me that in a period of time where we do have additional dollars, perhaps taking some of those dollars which may be only around for a short period of time and using them for some capital purposes within the regional parks, as you are doing this year in the provincial parks, may be a good use for some of those dollars. So I ask for you comments in that area, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well thank you for your question. The

centennial funds were used over four years. It was \$2 million that was provided for capital for the regional park system, and that was \$500,000 a year over four years. And what was done was the money was given to the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association where a peer group of regional park officials — sort of I think board members — would review the projects that were brought forward, and that's how the dollars were used.

And unfortunately this year we didn't have any more of the centennial money going forward. But we have been in conversation with officials there, and we're looking at what other kinds of things that we can do to work together with them. Some of the regional parks have some fairly large capital requirements as it relates to sewer and water issues because they have a number of residents who live there year-round.

And in 2004 the Act was changed to make sure that borrowing powers were there and available in The Regional Parks Act, which would allow them to do a project and then have it amortized or paid for over longer periods, whether it's 10, 20, 30 years, if that was required. So in many ways we've worked at accommodating them.

Also in our parks legacy document which we released yesterday, it includes also looking at how provincial parks system as itself works together with the regional parks and also with the national park system. And we're going to continue discussion along that route as well. The regional parks have, or most of them have very good support in their local areas, and we want to work with them to deal with problems that they identify, see if we can fix those. And we'll also be examining again the kind of capital funding that we had before because some very positive things happened with the money that they got.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Minister. Thank you for that response. And as I said I would urge you to look at, you know, using some of the one-time dollars that we have available currently for those type of capital projects.

Another issue that I would like to deal with just very briefly — I see the hour is getting late and this probably shouldn't take just too long. I was provided with a copy of a letter from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that April 19 they sent to you, Minister. And the issue that they were dealing with, raised with you, is the rate that vendors of fishing and hunting licence receive as compensation from your department. They feel it's too low. In their letter they say that the rate hasn't been adjusted in the last 13 years. And I wonder if you have responded to the federation and if so what was your response.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well thank you for that question and I'm pleased to be able to provide a nice, clear answer for you. A new fishing licence, hunting licence vendor policy for all public licensing vendors was implemented on June 1, 2000 and at that point the commission rates were reviewed. Although the new policy then didn't increase the vendor commissions, it's been well received by most of the public vendors with only a few of the really low-volume vendors that are requesting that there be a review of the commissions structure.

The Environment officials have made a commitment to review the vendor commission annually among all Canadian

jurisdictions, so that in other words they look across the country and see what kind of commissions are there. The next vendor commission review is scheduled for this fall, the fall of 2006.

At this time the five provinces and territories have a commission structure that's higher than Saskatchewan, and six have a commission structure that's lower. So I think we're right in the middle. And so at this point we won't be changing the commissions but we are looking at that for this fall.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Minister. I guess I would ask then that you make the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] aware of the — or perhaps you've already done that — that you'll be reviewing them and asking for their input so that, you know, they can present their case and be part of the discussions.

Just one other quick question that is somewhat related. At least, it has to do with fishing. I understand that the fisheries management unit was conducting a survey of anglers to gather information as to their experiences, angling experiences, in 2005. A letter that I have indicates that this survey is conducted every five years. And I guess, Minister, you know, I wonder if you could just briefly explain the information that is gathered, what it's used for, and as a result of this survey, will the anglers of the province see any significant changes in the fishing sport and those sorts of things.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This survey that you ask about is a national survey so all of the provinces and territories participate and so we are participating and it's presently in progress. It's done every five years so we would have information from the survey from five years ago but we will be awaiting the information that we'll get this summer and then we'll be using it as we move forward in developing policy.

But it's quite helpful because it provides a comparison as to the value of recreational fishing to the communities and to the provinces and to the country. And it also gives us some sense of concerns that may be there and also some things that people would like to have and that then gives us a chance to adjust the recreational fishing policy that we have now.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I see our allotted time is near expiration so . . . the clock on the wall is ticking and so I would just really like to thank the minister and his officials for the information that they've provided this afternoon.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I would move that the committee report progress on estimates for the Department of Environment and then proceed to the next estimates.

[17:00]

The Deputy Chair: — It has been moved that the committee report progress on the estimates for the Department of the Environment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That's carried. I want to thank the minister and thank his officials. And we will go to the estimates for the Department of Health. And we will recess now, it being 5 o'clock, and gather here again at 7 p.m.

[The committee recessed until 19:00.]

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