



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 19 – April 28, 2009



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-sixth Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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Mr. Jeremy Harrison
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Mr. Warren Michelson
Moose Jaw North

Ms. Laura Ross
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Ms. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 15:00.]

**General Revenue Fund
Agriculture
Vote 1**

Subvote (AG01)

The Chair: — Good afternoon, committee, and welcome, Minister of Agriculture and officials. We will be continuing with the consideration of estimates for Agriculture. And at this time I would ask the minister to introduce his officials, and if there is any additional remarks he would like to make, may do so at this time. If not, we'll go right to questions.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Good. Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left is Alanna Koch, deputy minister. To my right is Laurier Donais, executive director, corporate services branch; Rick Burton, on the far side here, assistant deputy minister. Cam Swan, next to Rick, is general manager of Crop Insurance. Al Syhlonyk right behind me is executive director of policy branch. Tom Schwartz, I think most of you know, is director of financial programs branch. Maury Harvey, at the back here behind Tom, is manager of policy branch. And of course you know Tim Highmoor is my chief of staff.

Just before we start, Mr. Chair, I thought I would answer some questions that the member had asked that we didn't have answers to. And I'll just go through them right now if you would let me.

How many appraisers are on your credit appraisal list, I believe the member had asked us last time, and that number is 18.

Of the 18,962 acres sold at April 20, 2009, how many acres were appraised by the ministry and how many acres by the accredited appraisers? The answer to that is that we don't actually keep track of who, how many acres each one appraises by the sales that we have.

What has been the average value per acre of land sold so far? And the answer: the average price is \$299.70.

A breakdown of the Crown agriculture land by category was asked for, and the answer to that is in total there's 7,161,574 Crown land acres under the Ministry of Agriculture. I think we've had that number before. But the breakdown goes like this: agriculture leases, there's 5,785,835 acres; and cultivation, there's 557,450 acres; grazing, 4,865,529 acres. Hay land under agriculture leases is 242,132 acres, and wasteland is 120,724 acres.

Non-agriculture leases, 32,673 acres; oil and gas, 24,195 acres; sand and gravel, 3,881 acres. Public acres, there's 2,672. Commercial is 1,925 acres, and land under agreement for sale right now is 28,278 acres. Land used by the PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] is 440,123 acres. Provincial pastures amounts to 824,767 acres, and vacant right now is 49,898 acres.

Another question that was asked that we didn't have access to the answer the other day is how many leases by category,

example pasture, cultivated, and etc. And we don't have that exact breakdown, our lease by type other than agriculture and non-agriculture, so I would pass that on before.

Under one agriculture lease there could be multiple categories. On one specific lease there could pasture, cultivated, waste, whatever it is, so it's really hard to know. Each quarter isn't defined just strictly as cultivated or pasture, whatever it is. They could be a combination of two or three different things, so that's really why it's hard for us to give that breakdown. So that's really the answers to the questions that the member had asked the other day and they are the answers.

The Chair: — Ms. Atkinson.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I know that I asked you for the average value per acre of land that's been sold, and I appreciate the answer. I'm wondering, given that you have a metric of 350 on average for cultivated acres and \$140 for pasture or grazing acres, do you have a breakdown of that? I know you've got the average of 299.70, but I just wondered if you broke it down by pasture or grazing land and cultivated land.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — We can try and get that answer for you and give you a breakdown of that, yes. I'll follow up.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, thank you. And I really appreciate the fact that you provided the answers to the questions during the committee.

Mr. Minister, I now want to talk about the pork industry. I've had an opportunity to review what appears to be happening in the pork industry and I think it's fair to say that things are becoming grimmer. Does your policy and planning branch, do you have any idea how much the pork industry lost collectively in the province last year?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Are you talking numbers or dollars or . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Dollars.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Dollars. It would be another one that we would have to try and find for you. That's a really tough one to track because each, as you know, each individual operation probably would have a different number per hog that they lost. The larger ones would be . . . I imagine every individual operation would probably be different, but we'd almost have to poll each operation to get those exact numbers.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Like I tried to follow it in terms of the number of hogs going to slaughter each month in the province just for 2008. It looks as though we had a total of 913,000 hogs. The average price was \$126 and it varied from a low of \$91 in January to it looks like a high of about \$143. So I did some rough estimates myself but I wanted to see if you could confirm that we're looking at very significant industry losses.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — This might help a little bit and some of the material that we have here but then this is an estimated number of course. But on average we believe that hog

producers have lost about \$39 per market hog in 2008 and \$21 per market hog in 2007 and of course realizing that that's an average for the full year, so as you said, you know, the prices have gone up and down.

There has been a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel where the futures were higher but it seems every time we think hog prices are going to start to head that direction — and they have a wee bit but not to the point that we'd certainly like to see and I know the producers certainly would like to see — but the futures were to the point of I think \$166 which would be much more in line with what producers need to break even or may even make a dollar or two.

Ms. Atkinson: — So when I look at sort of the reaction of the province since late 2007, we had the advance payment program for hog producers, we've got AgriInvest, I guess, we've got AgriStability, we had the federal cull breeding swine program, we've got the short-term hog loan program, and then of course Saskatchewan cattle and hog support program. So I guess, Minister, the intent of my questions here is to try and get a picture of what I consider to be a pretty distressed industry, and it appears as though there would be very few operations in the province that are making any profit.

And so I guess I'm trying to understand the various components that would interact with Saskatchewan hog producers to see how they might be faring. And I recognize this is rather complicated because some people produce their own grain, other people don't — they have to buy it — and so forth.

But one of the main things I think to understand in the province is that about 40 per cent of the industry is in the hands of two very large producers. And I guess that would be Stomp and . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Big Sky.

Ms. Atkinson: — Big Sky. Right. So, you know, if you look at the pork industry in 2008, it looks as though Saskatchewan produced about 9 per cent of Canadian pork on about 300 farms. And that's down from about 1,000 a decade ago. And I have to tell you that if you're a small farm and you're wanting to get a couple of weanlings, it's impossible to do at the moment. If you want to just have a couple of pigs for your own consumption, it's difficult to get access to them.

But I guess I'm curious to know that if Stomp and Big Sky represent, you know, a significant part of the production and we know that there are only about 300 farms at present — and I include Hutterite colonies in that — do you know the exact number of operators in the hog industry at present in the province?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I think 300 is high, but I'll check.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. That's what I'm curious to know.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. The Saskatchewan hog industry right now has about 226 producers of which 70 producers market about 93 per cent of the hogs. So the balance of that would be fairly small producers and then of course there's almost no middle ground there and then the larger producers and then the two that are of course, as you know,

Stomp and Big Sky that are very large.

Ms. Atkinson: — What is the size of an average farm?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I don't know any more if there is such a thing as an average farm.

Ms. Atkinson: — In terms of a sow operation, what would the size be? Would it be 600 sows, do you know?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — No, I don't know that because the two large ones would throw that average out quite a bit and it varies all over the place. You know, I guess we could try and find you an average number, but off the top of my head I certainly can't give you an average. I know the Hutterites have, you know, large operations out there and then you throw Stomp and Big Sky in and that would throw the average way out.

But the number of smaller ones we know — I think we would both agree — that there's not that many of them left out there. Where probably at one point, two out of every three farms would have hogs on, and right now it's probably hard to buy a pair of weanlings anywhere in the province because you have no access to them.

Ms. Atkinson: — So of the total industry support that came from the province, how much of that went to the two largest firms in the province?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Are you talking now the 71 million or . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Well it won't be 71 million, but the portion that went — in terms of short-term hog loan program — the amount of money that came out of the 71 million, the advanced payments. Can you give us . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well on the loan part, I believe it was 60 million to the cattle industry and 30 million to the hog industry. The uptake wasn't that high, I believe.

What would the number have been on the hog side, Tom, do you remember?

Fifteen and a half, I believe, on the hog side. And that was the loan program. So we knew some producers would take advantage of it. And some, you know, I think you've heard them say that really wasn't a loan that they were looking for.

Ms. Atkinson: — So of the fifteen and a half, do you know how much would have gone to the two large producers in the province?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Both would have got the max that was capped out at \$5 million.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. And do you know anything about the cull breeding, the swine program that the federal government had?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Federal government come out . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — That was 200 and . . . We had worked with the food bank to make that food accessible for the food banks. That was a federal program.

Being that it was a federal program, we don't have access to the numbers. The only part that we would have played in that cull program was the 400,000 that we put in for the processing of the hogs for the food banks.

Ms. Atkinson: — I think the plan was to try and reduce the swine breeding herd by the middle of 2008, and they wanted a 10 per cent decrease. Do we know what happened here in the province?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I apologize. I missed part of the question.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. The federal program's goal was to decrease the Canadian swine breeding herd by the middle of 2008 by 10 per cent. And producers had an opportunity to depopulate one breeding barn over a three-year period. So I guess what I'm trying to understand, Minister, is in 2008 what happened in Saskatchewan in terms of our swine breeding herd?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — In numbers?

Ms. Atkinson: — In numbers.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — The Saskatchewan Pork Development Board indicates that under the federal cull breeding swine program, there was a 14 per cent reduction in breeding stock in Saskatchewan. So I guess, to a degree, that's, you know, giving you the percentage of what the drop actually was with the cull program.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now I know that you get information from the federal government in terms of AgriStability. And one of the criticisms of the program has been that basically if you have a number of years of negative margins, it really doesn't apply to you.

And so I'm wondering can you advise us, in terms of AgriStability because there have been negative margins in the hog industry, what kind of payouts has there been to the hog industry in the province of Saskatchewan? What's the global amount? And then could you advise us what the payout would be to the two large producers?

[15:15]

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I guess a number of things are involved in this answer. Number one being that we have to be a little careful here if you give that breakdown, that there's no trade implications come back, of course you know from where. The other thing is too, we aren't allowed to give out information on such things as Stomp and Big Sky individually . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Fair enough.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — For reasons, you know, of privacy.

Ms. Atkinson: — Fair enough. So can you give me the global

payout to the hog industry in Saskatchewan under AgriStability, I think it was, or was it CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — It was CAIS, I think, when it started but then . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. It was CAIS in 2008.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes, but it changed in the . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — I thought it changed in 2008.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — In the mix because it was a year, one year with actually out a signing on the program and then . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Right, right.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — The problem we're having is that the number we get out of AgriStability is the whole farm program. It's not broken down. We don't get numbers that are broken down by different sectors out there right now.

And then of course, as you know, part of the problem with the programming, and it's been my complaint and I think many of the producers out there, is that if you're a mixed farmer right now and grain prices went up — and of course our livestock's down whether it's cattle, hogs, whatever it is — you're almost in a position where one is defeating the purpose of the other one. And you know, I think we could agree on this, that that's part of, one of the reasons that that program isn't reflective of what's going on out there right now. We'll certainly be working with that.

But this is a hard number to get. And then remembering that in 2006, I believe right now there's about 80, 70 to 80 applications that aren't processed yet. So that final number wouldn't be in, but it would be close. But then for 2007, we know there's a lot more that aren't processed. In 2008, I mean they're all in the works right now, you know, some of those applications are just coming in now. 2007, there's still 1,100 applications that haven't been processed. So it's one of those things; it's really tough to give you an exact dollar figure.

I think one of the things, by bringing AgriStability back to the province, we're certainly going to have a better access to these numbers because they're going to be right here. And I think it'll give us a better chance to see day by day, or at least month by month, what's actually happening out there and what our record is going to be in processing. And I'm hoping it's going to be far superior to where we are today, which of course will be good news for the producers in the province.

But on top of that, we'll have a better handle on what the numbers actually are, just like you're asking. Because putting money into these programs, I think if they work properly, we should know that number very easily and we don't have access to that as easily as I would like.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, so we know we've got 70 producers that have 93 per cent of the hogs. We know that there have been negative margins for some time, and we know that no doubt they've been accessing, whether it was CAIS or AgriStability.

And we know that the province put up some money under the cattle and hog support program — what, \$20 a weanling or . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Twenty dollars for a market hog.

Ms. Atkinson: — Or market hogs.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Ten dollars for . . . [inaudible] . . . weanlings, yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — Ten dollars. Okay.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Forty dollars per cow and bred heifer.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So we know that, but we don't know how much . . . I guess I'm interested in trying to figure out what's the accessibility of the program and how much have they accessed in terms of money. And it seems to me you should be able to find out what's happening with the 70 producers at least that have 93 per cent of the hogs, how much money they accessed because we know they've had negative margins. And I think in 2007 they certainly would have had access to the program because we had problems in 2007 I think, or partway through the year we had a problem. So I'm just . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — What may reflect the answer, the closest that we have is the TAP program or the targeted advance payment. You talked about that. If we can get that number, that'll give us some indication of maybe where the final numbers would be.

Ms. Atkinson: — Perfect. I was going to get there. Sure.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes. That might be the closest indication.

Ms. Atkinson: — The advance payment program you have . . . Okay.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes. And that might give us some hint of where we would be at when the final payment comes out.

Okay. On the TAP program I can give you the numbers that, you know, they're the same numbers that we would have access to that I'm giving you here. They had a number . . . 100 letters went out to let producers know they would be eligible for the TAP, targeted advance payment. Of those mailed-out letters, 58 responded. The gross amount that would have been accessible through that program, that advance, was \$10.575 million.

Of the payments that went out to the 58 that actually applied then for the program, \$8,241,332 went out through that advance program. So that gives us somewhat of an indication of, you know, if you take a . . . What is TAP, the percentage of the total payout?

A Member: — 60 per cent.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Sixty per cent. So you know, if you add another 40, that would be a rough indication although not exact. The average payment that went out was \$142,000, just over \$142,000.

Ms. Atkinson: — And, Minister, that's for which year?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — 2008.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So that is for 2008.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes. That's the most up-to-date one. Of course that's the last year we would have numbers for, yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — Right. Okay, now under the Canadian swine breeding cull or the cull breeding program, I recall you said that we saw a reduction of about 14 per cent.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — What does that represent in terms of numbers of hogs or sows? So I'm interested in knowing how many sows came out of production in 2008?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I'm just remembering that it was a federal program, and we don't have access to their numbers. I guess if we could find the actual numbers, if we know them for last year, what the breeding herd size is and of course take 14 per cent of that, we would know because that was in Saskatchewan.

The best answer I can give you right now from the information that we have is the Saskatchewan Pork Development Board has estimated that since the beginning of 2007, almost 28,000 sows from 86 production units and 224,000 finisher spaces from 49 production units will exit the industry by the end of 2008. I can repeat that if you want because that was a lot of numbers.

From the beginning of 2007, almost 28,000 sows from 86 production units and 224,000 finishers spaces from 49 production units will exit the industry. So that was the projection that we had at that point.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. I know Stats Canada has information in terms of where we were at in 2007 in terms of the size in the province. And I'm interested in knowing where we were at in 2007 and then what happened in 2008.

I guess my thesis, Minister, I'm trying to prove this, is that we have seen a significant drop in the number of hogs that are produced in this province. And I think my thesis also is that it's much more significant than either Alberta or Ontario or Manitoba in particular. And I'm just wondering if you can confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I would think, off the top of my head, that you're right. I think the numbers probably have dropped far more in Saskatchewan than they have anywhere else. We'll just check. I'm going to try and find you actually better numbers than I'm giving you today, because I think whether we check with Sask Pork, they may have a really up-to-date where they feel the herd has gone. They would probably have far more accurate numbers than we do today, but we'll look that up.

I think the feeling is though that Manitoba would be somewhat similar to Saskatchewan in the number of hogs that have dropped. I know they have large hog operations there too. We do know that COOL [country of origin labelling] affected every

province in the country, not just Saskatchewan of course; so that would affect the numbers out there right now. We know in Ontario that slaughter capacity has gone down too, as it has here.

So we have a number of similarities. I guess it depends on how high a concentration of hogs you have in your province to what the degree of decline would be, of course. Knowing that the prices in, you know, were below break-even at most points last year, and of course we're hoping to, now they improve enough to where we at least get to break even or even, let's be optimistic and hopefully they go above that.

Ms. Atkinson: — All right. Well I haven't gotten to COOL yet, but I was just curious because it appears from the Saskatchewan Development Board, or Saskatchewan Pork Development Board in a statement that they made at the end of February of this year. They said that we've seen our breeding herd and overall production has been reduced by 25 per cent. So I was just curious to know where were we at, at the end of 2007? Where are we at now? And is it really a true snapshot of the picture in the province?

So I guess I'll just move on here. We've loaned with the short-term hog loan program, money has been loaned to producers and I believe that \$30 million has been loaned to the pork industry.

[15:30]

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — In the loan program I believe the uptake was 15.5 million — right around there.

Ms. Atkinson: — That's everything all in? Because there have been other loan programs before you came to office so in terms of the totality . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — The numbers I'm giving you is just under . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. So I think from the public's point of view . . . I'm interested in knowing how much has been loaned in terms of all of the programs, because there were programs in place before you came to office. And how much is still owed in the program at present? How many producers have paid back their loans? How much is outstanding? Because there are producers that have exited the industry and I don't see any provisions for writeoffs in your budget, I don't think.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — In the loan program we had a provision in there — I can't remember the amount of dollars percentagewise — but there is provision within the loan program. The same in the cattle side, just for the 2008-09 part of the program.

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, well I'm interested in what happened before as well, so I'm wondering if you can give me any data on that.

Okay I'll try it again. I'm interested in knowing . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — In 1998, 2002, and then of course now the 2008-09.

Ms. Atkinson: — So how much has been loaned to the industry in total?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes we'll get those numbers for you.

Ms. Atkinson: — I recognize that there's a new program, that there's been an extension given until producers can get to a certain price. But I'm interested in, of the previous loans, how many producers have paid back those loans? How much is still outstanding? Not in terms of your program but in terms of previous programs. And what are you projecting for a loan loss provision in this fiscal year?

If I could just make a point, Mr. Chair, while we're waiting. I'd really appreciate a briefing at some stage because these are the kinds of questions I could be asking in a departmental briefing.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well we could certainly get you the information that you're asking for. In fact we're keeping track of the questions you asked that we haven't answered today on numbers and things like that. We'll certainly find those numbers for you.

One of the things with the loan programs — and I'm not sure, Laurier, if it worked the same in '98 and 2002, but in the program that we came out with in 2008-09 that if you were . . . You had to be in good standing to get the full amount that you were eligible for, or that portion thereof that you were not in good standing would be deducted. Or if for some reason that amount was over the amount, you couldn't get anything out of the program. So maybe that was addressing to a degree the loss that we, you know, would have accumulated at this point.

I can't speak though for '98 or 2002 yet until we find out exactly how that part of the program worked.

I'm going to get the officials to answer this because they know exactly the numbers here and how the program worked.

Mr. Schwartz: — The original short-term hog loan program was granted in 1998 and there was 11.795 million in total. There was 241 loans, and the writeoff on that was \$9,000 on that program to date. Then there was the 2002 short-term hog loan, which we lent out \$14.617 million, and that was in 126 loans. And the writeoff to date on that is \$2.682 million.

Ms. Atkinson: — Two point six . . .

Mr. Schwartz: — \$2.682 million. And then the 2008 short-term hog loan program there was 15.8 lent out, and there was 36 loans.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I'm just going to get Laurier to touch on what we budgeted, the provisions for budgeting for losses. Maybe you could just touch on that.

Ms. Atkinson: — Just so I'm clear, Minister, the provision for budgeting for losses is based on the program in '07-08.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — The last program, yes . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — The last program.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — In '07-08. Yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So it's not based upon . . . I mean, the other programs have been basically sunsetted. There's no one attempting to still pay off these loans from 2002, the 2.68 million.

Mr. Schwartz: — If you had arrears outstanding from 2002, those had to be repaid before you could borrow the 2008, or at least brought them up to date.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So everybody is up to date.

Mr. Schwartz: — If they didn't take out a 2008 loan and had arrears, those wouldn't be up to date yet.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay.

Mr. Schwartz: — So there is still a few loans outstanding from 2002.

Ms. Atkinson: — Does the ministry expect to recover any of that?

Mr. Schwartz: — We haven't written them off yet, but the chances of recovery are not great.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So we've got a bit of a record, I guess, from 1998 — eleven point eight million nine thousand. That was a pretty good recovery. And then 2002, we seem to have a bit of a problem there, but we had many more loans. So we've got 36 loans at 15.8 million. What are we expecting this year?

Mr. Donais: — Yes. Laurier Donais, director, corporate services. For the 2008 short-term hog loan program we actually set up an estimate for an allowance of just over 7.5 million, so I think that's probably around 45 per cent of the loans that were actually advanced.

Ms. Atkinson: — So we expect to lose about half, not recover half of the loans that were advanced? Do I understand that correctly?

Mr. Donais: — Well that's what we estimated as an allowance, based on I guess the current conditions and what we knew, sort of, what was in the industry, happening in the industry.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. This is just for hogs?

Mr. Donais: — Yes. Yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Can you tell us what happens in the cattle industry?

Mr. Donais: — For the short-term cattle loan program?

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Mr. Donais: — That actually is recorded under Agricultural Credit Corporation. And there would be a similar allowance done under . . .

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — It's different on that.

Mr. Donais: — Right. Right. But there would be similar process in terms of an allowance being booked for estimated uncollectible loans into the future. And that one would have been about 15 per cent.

Ms. Atkinson: — And when this short-term hog loan program and the cattle program were both announced, did we anticipate that, you know, close to half or 45 per cent of those loans wouldn't be repaid? Did that figure into our analysis?

Mr. Donais: — A bit of a tough question to answer. I know, I mean this is basically . . . What we did for accounting rolls at the end of the fiscal year is we took how much it had been advanced, looked at some of the larger loans and, sort of, what kind of repayment ability there was on those, and then took a general allowance on the remainder. And that's really how we came up with the \$7.5 million figure.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So producers in both the cattle industry and the hog industry have until September 2010 to repay this? Do I understand that correctly?

Mr. Schwartz: — It was a three-year repayment term on those loans. And then last fall the first principle payment was extended. So it's actually four years. So it'll be 2011 now. All they had to pay . . . They had the option of making an interest payment this year and extending the payment.

Ms. Atkinson: — Did any make an interest payment?

Mr. Schwartz: — Yes, on the cattle side.

Ms. Atkinson: — All on the cattle side.

Mr. Schwartz: — Almost all. Well the hog ones, the payments don't come due until May 1.

Ms. Atkinson: — Of this year.

Mr. Schwartz: — Of this year. So they're just in the process of exercising that option of postponing their payments.

Ms. Atkinson: — Do you get a sense what's going to happen?

Mr. Schwartz: — I sense that they'll pay the interest. The interest is set at the cost of borrowing, at the government's cost of borrowing, so it's not excessive.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So given that . . . And did I hear you correctly that we anticipate that there'll be a 45 per cent loss on the cattle side as well? I didn't hear you correctly.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — No, that was 15 per cent.

Ms. Atkinson: — 15 per cent.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — . . . is what we allowed for on the cattle side.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So do we anticipate there might be other loan programs to the hog industry?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Coming in the near future, you're saying?

Ms. Atkinson: — Maybe the near future or next year, I mean, given what we're witnessing at the moment.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I'd have to say right now, not. There's certainly nothing in the works right now. And we've just done the support program in the hog industry, and prices have, you know, improved somewhat. So I'd like to be optimistic and think the market will actually supply the income needed to break even or better and, you know, who knows where we're going down the road? So numbers are down. That is one thing in the favour of prices for sure, not just in Saskatchewan but right across the country and probably North America for that matter.

Ms. Atkinson: — But we have COOL.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — We have COOL, that's right.

Ms. Atkinson: — And so have we done any estimations on what impact we will see on the feeder pig, weanling export of our feeders and weanlings to the United States because of COOL? Do we have any sense? Because we know exports have been growing in the province up until 2007. And I'm wondering, what are we projecting?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I don't think we have any way of knowing at this point, you know, what effect it's actually had. Because to be honest, we don't really know where the rules are going. I think with the new administration down there, there was some optimism that they were going to relax the rules to a degree and shorten the categories up for where they started off with the four different categories and putting them down to three, and then of course the new administration came in and put everything on hold. Right at the end of the Bush administration it looked a bit positive. I think we could've possibly lived with and, you know, and adapted to the new rules if we had to. And I guess we would've had to.

But now of course, for six months Mr. Vilsack, the Ag secretary down there, has put a freeze on everything. So we're not sure where they're going to go — the cattle industry, the hog industry — nobody knows just where we're going to go with this. And I don't think . . . I've heard Brad Wildeman in fact just the other day on the radio saying, it's hard to put your finger on just what effect this is going to have. You get some of the industry saying it hasn't had that much effect on us yet, others saying it has had quite of an effect on us. So I'm not sure anybody really knows at this point how much it's already hurt us, but I think the more worrisome part is where it's going to go down the road and how it's going to affect our prices. It's the last thing we need right now.

And I guess the other thing I would say is in my belief that it has nothing to do with food safety. Our hogs and cattle are as safe as any in the world right now, probably the best in the world, but it's protectionism and I mean that's too bad because that's a false sense to the public out there that using the screen that this is all to do with public safety, when I believe personally that it has absolutely nothing to do with public safety. It's R-CALF [Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund]

in the US [United States] and other groups that are being protectionist.

[15:45]

Ms. Atkinson: — But we know from data that has been collected by the Manitoba government in their Agriculture department that they'll see a reduced weanling exports of over 50 per cent, and that's significant in Manitoba. And I know that we have just hired a group in Washington to support the province in terms of its export markets.

And I'm just wondering, have we done any analysis at all within your ministry, Minister, where we're looking at what kind of impact COOL is going to have? Not in the livestock; I understand there's been work being done on the livestock industry. You've got a whole crew of people that are working on that. But I'm wondering has there been anything done in the hog industry in terms of the impact on our province because I think it's fair to say that a number of people worked very, very hard to increase our exports in the province, to grow the hog industry in the province, and we saw a dramatic increase, really, in the numbers of weanlings that were being sold to the United States in this province.

And I'm just wondering what your analysis is, and do you have people in your ministry working on this? Are they talking to the people that you've hired in Washington? I guess I'm putting in a pitch for the hog industry. We've got lots of people in the cattle industry and you're very familiar with that. I'm just wondering where we're at in terms of hogs and the support for the industry in your ministry.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well I think I'm going to come from a little bit different angle on this one. I think there's a number of things we've done in the agriculture industry and not just specifically for hogs or cattle, but on the grain side. I would remind the member on the education tax side — which is in direct cost every year to every producer out there whether you're hogs or whoever you are — education tax has been a real burden for them and we've actually come to the table and brought the mill rate, set the mill rate and brought it down to just 7.8 mills for this year and down to I believe it's 3.9 next year. So I think there's quite a savings there for producers of all kinds out there.

We talked about the loan program that we came out with very shortly after we formed government. Shortly after that, we worked with the federal government, pushed the federal government to speed up the TAP, the targeted advance program. And I know that was something that Neil Ketilson and the hog industry had certainly been asking for. And we worked with them, and the federal government come through on that.

Of course as you know, we did the support program, right now of \$40 per head for cows and bred heifers and \$20 for market hogs and \$10 for isoweaners and weanlings. So that part of the support program, I think, helped the industry out there.

I might even add — it might be a bit of a stretch — but revenue sharing from municipalities, I think, has saved the agriculture industry money and will down the road out there. As you know, we did the per capita, one hundred and I believe it was eight

dollars per capita right across the board to help keep the economy going but to also help municipalities out there. But in turn, this helps municipalities keep their mill rate either stable or from raising them and, I think, helps the ag industry out there.

AgriStability in this last budget . . . And as you know, the ag budget this year is higher than it's ever been on budget day. And don't get me wrong, that I'm saying that's the highest budget ever; that's not right. But on budget day, a budget day announcement, it was the highest budget ever in the province of Saskatchewan for agriculture at \$483 million. I think that was saw very positively by the industry, no matter whether you were in hogs or cattle or grain or whatever it was.

AgriStability, our costs have gone up dramatically — we've had this discussion before — where they're really, it's projections from the federal government. So we have to honour whatever they put on the table. But it was a commitment we made that we would fully fund the programming. And I think that's important.

Crop insurance of course is on the grain side where it affects people more. But a lot of the hog producers in the province — some I should say, some of the hog producers — are mixed farmers so the improvements to crop insurance would have certainly helped the livestock industry.

So you know, I think we've done a number of things. Not one thing out there is going to save any farmer out there. But I think when you put them all together, the bottom line at the end of the year is going to be better than it would have been if we had done none of these.

Ms. Atkinson: — When you were speaking, Minister, you reminded me of a question that I could have asked in Education, but I'll ask you. In terms of the reduction of education tax on property, what does it mean to the agriculture industry? How much will their education taxes be reduced in total?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I believe this year it's \$35 million would be the savings over where the rebates was last year. And of . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — So an additional 35 million.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes. And the next year of course the mill rate will be set not quite half of what it is this year. It's 3.8 mills, something like that, 3.7 mills for next year. So it will be about half of where it is this year. So I think that'll be an improvement to the ag industry out there too.

Ms. Atkinson: — So, Minister, I didn't mean to in any way, shape, or form to suggest that you've been sitting doing nothing. That wasn't my intent. But you know, we have an industry here, the hog industry that is in pretty rough shape.

And the last time we spoke, I think it was one of your officials has been working very, very . . . I think it was the second last time we spoke. One of your officials — Mr. Govindasamy, I think his name is — has been working very hard with the livestock industry. And you have put funds into a significant study to deal with markets and that sort of thing. Fair enough.

But we know that there is going to be, if COOL should prevail, there's going to be very significant impact on the hog industry in this province. And if you look at the numbers, there already has been — without COOL and without swine flu and so on and so forth.

So I guess what I'm trying to get at, Minister, is you have a ministry. It's dedicated itself . . . You know, you've restructured yourself. You've got people involved in the livestock industry that are out and about now. I guess I'm interested in knowing what kind of support can we expect from your government for the hog industry. Because I know you've just hired this group of lobbyists, I guess, in Ottawa and you were collecting data for the cattle industry. What can we expect for the hog industry?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well one of the things, as you know, the Premier was in the US here not long ago and actually had the good fortune to be able to meet with Tom Vilsack in the US, the Secretary of Agriculture down there. And one of the issues that he talked to Mr. Vilsack about was specifically about COOL and what the impacts were on our country — but especially specifically on the Saskatchewan industry here, whether it's cattle or whether it's in the hog industry.

So I think we have been doing something on that front. We've certainly been passing on our concerns to them.

We're also working on the WTO [World Trade Organization] agreement. We were at Geneva, as you know, a year ago and would have been far happier if an agreement had have been reached at that point. We've met on a number of occasions with diplomats from different countries, like India and China and places like that, how important that a WTO agreement would be to us here in Saskatchewan.

And I think that would really help right across the spectrum of agriculture, especially trade when we have such a high reliance on trade in this province. We very efficiently produce a lot of commodities in this province. But having said that, we rely very heavily on the world trade agreement that we haven't got at this point and certainly wish we could get one.

Ms. Atkinson: — Minister, I understand that we're going to be adjourning these at 4 o'clock, so I just want to get a detail of the \$22 million that's going to be spent to move AgriStability to Melville. Can you break that down, please?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Sure. I'm going to get Cam Swan to give you the answers to this because Cam directly, as the general manager of Crop Insurance, has been working on this problem.

Mr. Swan: — Okay. Of the \$22 million for the '09-10 budget for transitioning AgriStability to the province or to Crop Insurance, just a little over \$7 million is for IT [information technology], computer system development.

Ms. Atkinson: — Pardon me?

Mr. Swan: — Just over \$7 million for IT system development, 7.16 million. About 4.3 million — 4.33 — for human resources, career advertising, relocation, those types of things. Salaries and benefits is about 6.4 million. Tenant improvements or

renovations to the building is about, just under 2 million — 1.95. Office furniture and equipment, 1.65. Program advertising, a million and a half. Some temporary space lease we'd be looking at is about 160, 200,000, in there; and about 2.6 million contingency for allowance on our estimates here. And we've got some from '08-09 that are underexpenditures that we are carrying forward.

Ms. Atkinson: — And were they carried over?

Mr. Swan: — Yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Can you give me some detail on what you intend to do with the office space? Is this a new building? Is it renovations to an existing building? We're talking about moving 140 people into this space. Can you give us some sense? Is it a new building? An existing building? Crop Insurance building?

Mr. Swan: — We won't be able to fit into our existing building. The existing building we are in was originally designed for, I believe, 85 people. We actually peaked at about 135 at one point. We are sitting just over 100 right now, so we are going to need additional space for 110 positions in Melville for AgriStability.

Ms. Atkinson: — And do you expect that this is going to be brand new space or leased space?

Mr. Swan: — It's likely going to have to be brand new space because I don't believe there is enough available space in Melville right now to house that size of a workforce.

Ms. Atkinson: — So is crop insurance going to be tendering this construction for this new facility?

Mr. Swan: — We've been working with Government Services on the process here and I guess the way I would describe it is we're right still in discussions around all of that. So I can't really give the final answer on exactly what's going to happen there.

Ms. Atkinson: — Does Crop Insurance presently own the building that it's in?

Mr. Swan: — No, we lease it.

Ms. Atkinson: — You lease it. And is there anything else that you can tell me about the state of negotiations with the federal government in terms of AgriStability and the move to Saskatchewan in terms of existing people who work in the federal government having opportunities to work for the province of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Swan: — No, I think the last time we were here, Nithi indicated that the federal employee side is an integral part of our negotiations, and that is still true. We've still been discussing and negotiating back and forth. All I would say is, we're still on track for delivery of the 2009 program here. So discussions and negotiations continue, but I believe we're still on track.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. And, Mr. Chair, sorry, I had a

miscommunication. I thought I had another five hours of questions. So I have five hours of questions to ask the ministry.

And I know that in the past there have been opportunities for critics to get briefings from government ministries. And I know I certainly afforded that to my critic when I was a minister, and you can consult with some of these critics that are now cabinet ministers. And I would really appreciate the opportunity to — I've got a book here — of just having briefings on various portions because I think it could make estimates next year go a lot smoother. So I don't know how you feel about that, but I just think in terms of transparency, it might be something you might want to consider.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well I will. But I was . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — You will but you won't.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Exactly. I think you hit the nail on the head. I was opposition critic for probably 10 out of 12 years, and I didn't get one briefing from when your government was in power.

Ms. Atkinson: — Did you ask for it?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — I asked for a lot of information I didn't get. I also used to be able to phone Crop Insurance and get information. And then the last number of years, I was told Crop Insurance could not give me, I couldn't phone the general manager of Crop Insurance and get information. It had to come through the minister's office. And that's the way we're going to work, exactly how it worked when I was critic.

So you're asking for a briefing, and I didn't have that made accessible to me. So I apologize, but it won't be happening now. They're busy briefing me. They have to keep me up to speed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank my officials today and thank the members of the committee and thank the member for her questions.

Ms. Atkinson: — I also want to thank the minister for the questions, and I would urge him to, you know, in the name of collegiality to reconsider his hard-nosed position.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — You know how easygoing I am.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Seeing no more questions, we will vote. Vote 1, Agriculture, central management and services, subvote (AG01) in the amount of 7,433,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Policy and planning, subvote (AG05) in the amount of 9,650,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Research and technology, subvote (AG06) in the amount of 15,148,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[16:00]

The Chair: — Carried. Regional services, subvote (AG07) in the amount of 19,561,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Land management, subvote (AG04) in the amount of 24,071,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Industry assistance, subvote (AG03) in the amount of 10,386,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Irrigation and water infrastructure, subvote (AG11) in the amount of 11,632,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Financial programs, subvote (AG09) in the amount of 5,963,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Business risk management, subvote (AG10) in the amount of 376,650,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Amortization of capital assets in the amount of 2,391,000, this is for information purposes only. There's no amount to be voted. Agriculture, vote 1, \$480,494,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2010, the following sums for Agriculture in the amount of 480,494,000.

Ms. Wilson: — I so move.

The Chair: — Ms. Wilson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 1 agreed to.]

The Chair: — I'd like to thank the minister and officials for being in front of the committee and answering questions.

And for the committee, I would ask that we just take an in-place recess of about five minutes for the next officials to come in and get established.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund
Energy and Resources
Vote 23**

Subvote (ER01)

The Chair: — I'd like to call the committee to order please. We are here for the continuation of the consideration for estimates on vote 23, Energy and Resources. And I would invite the minister to introduce his officials, and if he has any additional remarks he would like to put forward to committee at this time, he could do it after the introductions.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to be here this afternoon and present to you. On my left is Kent Campbell, the deputy minister. On my right is Hal Sanders. Over my left-hand side here is George — they switched — Ed Dancsok. And on my right is George Patterson. We are pleased here to present the estimates for the Department of Energy and Resources.

Mr. Chair, if you might permit, I would just want to follow up on some of the questions from last time we met with committee members, in particular to Mr. Taylor's comments or questions surrounding the surface rights groups down in the southeast part of the province and the southwest part of the province.

Since that time, we've had occasion, myself along with department officials, to travel to a meeting in Estevan and to a meeting in Maple Creek last week. And they were, I think I would describe them as very productive meetings. We talked about the letter that they have presented and the brief that they had at that point. There were a number of people in attendance, probably I would estimate about 12, somewhere in that neighbourhood, at the meeting at Estevan; and probably 15, 18 — something like that — people at the meeting in Maple Creek last Friday that we had those meetings.

We have undertaken to provide information to them with respect to the questions that they had. Most of the things were process related, I would call them — sufficient notice being given for the right of entry, some of those types of questions. It's my understanding that the surface rights Act has not been opened up since 1968, and so it's probably high time that we took a look at some of those things in the Act surrounding that. So we've undertaken to do that and provide information back to them.

With respect to your questions about whether or not we have been uncooperative in terms of meeting with them, that simply isn't the case, Mr. Chair. The very first occasion that we received an invitation from both of those groups, we accepted it and went down and spoke to them about the concerns that they had. Where the perhaps confusion is, is yes, they have not had occasion to meet with the minister before, but it was not a minister of our government. It was a minister of yours.

It was on numerous occasions they told me that — the Chair of the meeting in Maple Creek made this point to me, Gordon Ford — that on numerous occasions they contacted the former Justice minister Frank Quennell's office here at the legislature and were put off on many occasions about any particular meeting that they were asking for. On numerous occasions, he

said.

And finally after some degree of frustration, they called and spoke to the chief of staff for Mr. Quennell and was informed . . . And essentially what they said to the chief of staff was, are we or are we not going to get a meeting with the Justice minister, which housed the Surface Rights Arbitration Board at that particular time. And they were told this: that you probably, you folks down in the Southwest probably aren't going to vote for us anyway, so no, you aren't going to get a meeting. That's what they were told. So I would say pretty much in sharp contrast, Mr. Chair, as to how this was presented at the last occasion that we met here as committee members.

So the very first occasion that we were asked to go, we went. We took into consideration their comments. We had, I think I would suggest to committee members, very excellent meetings with them. We will endeavour to get back to them with respect to their concerns.

We are considering some potential changes to the Act to update it. Obviously since 1968 there's probably a lot of things that have changed with respect to surface rights issues out there, and we will endeavour to get back to them as soon as possible with respect to the answers on that.

So just to set the record straight, Mr. Chair, not us, previous administration difficulties with getting to meet with the minister; and in fact told you're not voting for us anyway, so you're not getting a meeting. I don't think that that was a very co-operative way of dealing with or positive way of dealing with the good folks in the southwest or the southeast part of our province. So just to set the record straight, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Happy to entertain questions.

The Chair: — Questions? Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the minister and his officials today.

I know that the minister is aware that the former minister of Justice, Mr. Quennell, who he alludes to quote, is not present tonight. There's no opportunity to debate what he said, she said, what the minister said. The minister, I do not believe, can speak and quote individuals who he may speak to in a social context in this Chamber without having something more of substance to back that up.

I think if my colleague, Mr. Quennell, were here, he would probably argue strenuously that the words that the minister uses to describe his or his chief of staff's comments would not be correct. However we can't debate that here, for simple reasons is there is no evidence to support either the minister's contention or mine that the minister would not speak in that way to constituents.

New Democrats did represent that constituency a number of times over the years, and one day New Democrats will again represent that constituency. So it just doesn't make any sense for somebody to say that we're not doing this for you because

you don't vote for us. In fact there are people up in my neck of the woods in the rural areas that would say they've been told that by members of your government today. So we will cross those bridges as we come to it.

I'm more interested actually in the Department of Energy and Resources and the reason we're here today, which is to discuss matters relating to the budget, the estimates, and the operations of the department.

And I'm very happy that the minister did meet with representatives of the surface rights groups. I was asking questions about the east side of the province. No one from the west side had actually contacted me, and the references that I was making were simply to ensure that the questions that were being asked on the east side of the province had an opportunity to be answered. And I'm pleased that the minister was able to meet with those individuals and help to answer some of their questions. And I'm pleased that the minister saw fit to report that back to the committee, and I thank him for that effort.

My questions today relate to a number of areas, the first of which actually goes into questions the minister answered earlier today, both in the Legislative Assembly and in the lobby of the Assembly, in response to some questions from the media. It has to do with the Iogen project — originally looking at the Birch Hills area for the development, has some significant federal funding attached to the plans of Iogen, and now being considered in the Prince Albert area around the now-closed pulp mill.

Can the minister take a moment and simply elaborate on what he can, what he knows about the proposal, the potential proposal from Iogen to seek relocation from their original proposal around the Birch Hills area to the Prince Albert mill site?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the earlier discussion, I will undertake to get a letter from Mr. Gordon Ford with respect to provide evidence of the comments that he made at the meeting — in a public forum, but in the meeting that he made. If you want evidence, we'll undertake to get the evidence for you with respect to the comments that he made.

And I'll be happy to, if Mr. Quennell would like to come in and chit in at the meeting at some point in the future, we'll be happy to debate him with respect to that and what comments or the difficulties over the time period they had of getting a meeting with him and his officials. We'll do that as quickly as possible. I'm pretty certain that my folks are monitoring the meeting here today in my office, and I suspect they're already on the phone getting answers from him, and hopefully we'll have a good and thorough debate about this.

[16:15]

With respect to Iogen, I think there are some comments that have been made by Iogen officials on the record — public record that is — and by the Premier with respect to that. A lot of the information at this point in time is of a confidential nature. These types of negotiations, you would know that that would be the case. There has been no announcements with

respect to this by the government or by Iogen. They are looking at various venues.

As a government, we are trying to accommodate them as much as we possibly can, just as we would accommodate any other company that might be interested in relocating to the province of Saskatchewan or locating to the province of Saskatchewan. This, I think, is a venture that has some potential — significant potential — for our province. We're quite excited about it as a new venture coming to Saskatchewan, and I think we are as a government encouraged when we see companies wanting to locate in our province.

And I think that's based on a number of things. Clearly they feel that there is an administration that is business-friendly. Clearly they feel that there is a good workforce in Saskatchewan, and they think that there is a good potential for a development here in the province.

Further to that, it's difficult as you would know, I think, to comment much beyond that until the information has gone both before cabinet. And at that point in time, company officials I suspect will be ready and willing to make announcements, public announcements, with respect to this. They are looking at Saskatchewan; I think they are looking at it in a very favourable way. We're encouraged by that. And when there are appropriate announcements to be made, they will be made.

Mr. Taylor: — I think the minister would acknowledge, I'd like him to acknowledge that the Iogen plan in discussion currently for Prince Albert is a plan that has been in discussion for some time with the community of Birch Hills, and that in fact the business-friendly environment began prior to November 2007 that Iogen had been seeking, had been expressing interest in the Birch Hills and the province of Saskatchewan prior to November 2007. Will the minister acknowledge that?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — I think they've been in discussion for some period of time. Of course there was no announcement of any project coming to Saskatchewan. There was an announcement that they were looking at the Birch Hills area. There was no announcement. I expect we will see something to that effect at some point in time. I'm hopeful of it at the very least.

Iogen is an innovative company that is looking at the province, and I think the company officials would tell you that their interest has been piqued since November 7, 2007.

Mr. Taylor: — The minister would also know that the announcement of significant . . . well the actual announcement came on the heels of federal funding. Back about a year and a half ago, the federal government announced a \$500 million cellulose ethanol program — \$500 million, of which about 180 would end up with Iogen. With these discussions that are going on currently, is the minister aware if there's been any change in plans from the federal side of this equation for Iogen to receive up to \$180 million of federal funding?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — None that I'm aware of, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Taylor: — Okay, so there hasn't been any change in that regard.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Taylor: — Knowing that, that the significance of this project produced an announcement with \$180 million, up to \$180 million of federal funding in the discussions with Iogen — we do not have to discuss any amounts or breach any confidentiality — has Iogen suggested that a contribution from the provincial government to support either an innovative agenda, an infrastructure agenda, or capital support? Any suggestion that they would request similar funding from the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — The federal government is working through the SDTC [Sustainable Development Technology Canada], sustainable development and technology corporation, I think — something along that line; we'll get you the exact name of the organization. It's an arm's-length organization of the federal government that looks at new developments — technology and that type of thing — throughout Canada. They made announcements in a number of locations with respect to this. They are looking at that.

We understand that Iogen has made application for this and has been successful in this. I think that that's certainly positive for the people of Saskatchewan, the province. We are looking at, we have said to them, just as I said in the House this afternoon, we are prepared to look at cogen opportunities as a part of their facility. There may be some opportunity for that. We are prepared to look at infrastructure needs should they have those; that's a part of this discussion. I think that's always been what we have said right from the outset with respect to Domtar or anyone else that wants to look at redevelopment of that particular site.

There's nothing further that I would say is on the table. There may be a need to look at other infrastructure types of things, or perhaps new growth tax incentives of some sort, given the innovative nature of this project. But I can tell you that they will nowhere even come close to the type of \$100 million that was on the table from the previous administration in the dying days of their government just prior to an election. There will be nothing even remotely close to that on the table.

Mr. Taylor: — So the minister seems to indicate that a fair bit of thought has gone into this potential proposal of moving a project slated for the nearby Birch Hills area to the Prince Albert mill area. That having been said, I'm assuming that Domtar or Weyerhaeuser — whoever the mill's name is in — would also be talking to Iogen. Iogen wouldn't be interested in doing this if they didn't have a willing partner for the sale of the property.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Well I think you would want to ask Domtar that question. I'm not privy to any kind of discussion that they have between the two of them. The fact that they may be discussing things, as I said, I'm not privy to any of those discussions.

I think I would say, with respect to a potential change in location from Birch Hills to the Prince Albert area, I would say I noticed in recent press information, media information, that the people at Birch Hills were indicating that they still saw this as a very positive thing. They indicate that Birch Hills is

essentially a bedroom community of Prince Albert. They still viewed it as a positive development.

I think it speaks to the type of people, the proponents in the Birch Hills area for this project. They still view this as very, very positive. Obviously I think there's some disappointment that their area, immediate area, may not see the construction of a facility should there become one. However it seems to me that they have been pretty, oh I don't know, pretty gracious in this process in indicating that they still think it's good that the province of Saskatchewan is in the running and there is a potential development that could unfold here. So I think that there's still lots of good news about that. So I'm encouraged by what we're hearing and as I've indicated that, Mr. Chair, there will be appropriate announcements should the decision be made by Iogen and others to proceed.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Minister. I have no desire to cause the people of Birch Hills any stress over my line of questioning. I haven't quite got through the full set of questions on this that I wanted to yet. I think the Birch Hills people did an awful lot of very good work there and they have a right to expect some sort of return for that, and if they accept Prince Albert as sort of a regional base for this, I'm obviously very supportive of that as well.

Iogen had chose the area because of the access to cellulose feedstock. It's a very good area for a plant of that nature to be located. And it is a regional matter.

The fact of the matter is Birch Hills was being considered for a new construction actually at a time when the mill was open and producing, and the mill itself wasn't available for consideration. It would appear now that Iogen and Domtar may be talking, and as a result of that, I am under the impression then that Domtar must have abandoned its desire to move forward with anything to do with the forestry — pulp mill or otherwise.

Therefore my question to you, Mr. Minister, is since you seem to know that the department is going along the line of what would be available if Iogen were to approach the province for support, you must be aware then of discussions with Domtar. Does this mean that indeed your discussions with Domtar to reopen the mill have been abandoned?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — It certainly does not mean that at all. I think that's a great deal of speculation of what ifs and what might happen and all of those kinds of things. We have to deal, Mr. Chair, in the real world here, not in speculative gossip or hearsay. I think that there are still ongoing discussions with Domtar. I think company officials in recent media reports have indicated just that, that they are still talking with the government about the potential for development there. Or there may be other options that they might consider. That is not something that we can control or that we can direct as a government.

We encourage them to develop the facility or redevelop the facility, reopen it or what other options that are there. And I think that that's the responsible position of a government — not to write cheques to just try and attract business to the province of Saskatchewan but to use the tools that are available to us in terms of persuading them, to providing a good business

atmosphere for companies, a hospitable atmosphere for companies to locate here in Saskatchewan. That's exactly what we are doing and I think that's why we are proceeding in a positive fashion here.

With respect to the forestry sector, it's an extremely challenged sector. I don't think anybody would deny that. If memory serves it's something like 207 of these mills throughout North America — might even be just Canada; I'll check that — but have closed in the last number of months and years. This is not something that's unique to Saskatchewan. I think, again if memory serves, the majority of these facilities in Saskatchewan closed under the previous administration and not under this administration.

We're working to see what we can do as a province without writing cheques. You know, I think I remember some of the editorials surrounding this type of venture in the past. I think the former premier was referred to as chequebook Lorne by one of the columnists with respect to these types of things. I don't think that that serves the interests of the province of Saskatchewan very well to run around prior to an election and writing cheques to almost whomever arrives at the doorstep looking for something to re-locate to Saskatchewan or whatever else they are interested in.

I think the people of Saskatchewan want a government that looks at these in a businesslike fashion, looks at them and says, is this in the best interests of the province of Saskatchewan and the taxpayers? After all, I think when people pay their taxes they aren't really interested in being part of a venture capital fund, which is essentially what the previous administration engaged in. I suspect they look at it and say to themselves, I'm interested in health care; I'm interested in education, highways, all of those kinds of things.

And what qualifies the government to make those decisions about engaging into essentially venture capital types of ventures? And frankly the track record for all governments of the past has not been very good with respect to this, Mr. Chair.

[16:30]

So there are discussions ongoing with Domtar. I speak with Mr. Patrick Loulou on a fairly regularly basis. I wouldn't say it's, you know . . . I'll call it an occasional basis, as the need arises. He has certainly all of my contact information, both in the office here and my personal cellphone and at home, everything. We've talked on many, many, many occasions about what is possible here. I have all of his contact information. We've spoke while he was even on holidays on a couple of occasions, to see what could be put together here.

But this is, as I said, a very, very challenged industry. We are leaving essentially no rock unturned in terms of trying to figure out what we can do without just signing off on a cheque. And I think that the people of Saskatchewan are supportive of that. I think the people in the P.A. [Prince Albert] region understand that, and I expect we will continue to have negotiations and ongoing discussions until the appropriate time that the companies decide whether it's go or no go. And at that point, if we're asked to participate in any kind of announcements, we'll be happy to do so.

Mr. Taylor: — I think the minister would acknowledge that Domtar is a business. I think the minister would acknowledge that Domtar is a pretty darn good business. They've got a track record. I think the minister would acknowledge that Domtar was a signator on an agreement between the provincial government and the industry with regards to the previous agreement that the minister seems to continue to portray as something that's not businesslike. The minister cannot criticize one party to an agreement and not the other.

So I think the minister will acknowledge that there was a business agreement in place that, after the election, the minister walked away from. And he's acknowledged it several times, we would not do this. I'm not questioning that. The minister has a right to do that. But when he talks about campaigning, the minister's also aware that this is not a he said, she said situation. One of the members from Prince Albert actually campaigned on the platform of the mill reopening.

So my question to the minister quite frankly is, does the minister believe that if Domtar leaves Prince Albert and Iogen comes in, that a refurbished plant dealing with cellulose ethanol production, would that be viewed as the mill reopening, or how would the minister categorize this promise of his member in the Prince Albert area?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Well indeed, Domtar is a business. There's no question about it. And I think there was 100 million reasons why they decided to accept your offer. Why wouldn't they? As a business, I think any time somebody is standing there saying to them, we'll give you \$100 million, I think it would be probably pretty foolish for them to say . . . And I suspect their shareholders and their board of directors would say to company officials, when someone's standing there with a \$100 million cheque just prior to an election campaign and ready, willing and well, I guess, able — should they be re-elected — to hand that cheque over, it's not a big surprise to me that they would want to accept it.

I don't imagine that it would be a big surprise to anyone that if a government is prepared to put those kind of dollars on the table, that the person on the other side of the table might want to snatch it up. I don't think that should be a big surprise. As a business, certainly they're going to do that. I think they negotiated hard, and I think that they kind of won. I think that they were able to convince a government that was on the verge, on the eve of an election, knowing full well that they were very, very vulnerable in that election, that they would want to try almost anything to try and get themselves out of the political jackpot that they saw themselves in at that particular moment.

So am I surprised? Not in the least that they would want to pick up the \$100 million cheque that you had laying for them on the table.

So with respect to the mill reopening, I think in election campaigns, I don't think it's inappropriate at all for people to be optimistic, for people to be encouraging, for people to say that I will work as hard as I can as a member of the legislature, should I be elected, to try and help with respect to the reopening or redevelopment or anything else in terms of job creation or the attraction of business to their area. I don't think that that should be a big surprise.

I mean, I think that all of us, probably on various occasions, have said during election campaigns or leading up to election campaigns that I will do everything I can to help the community or help the constituency that I'm running to be elected in. I don't think that that should be a big surprise either.

Are you always able to accomplish the things that you would hope to do in those kinds of things? Maybe; maybe not. I don't think it's inappropriate that the member would want to try and do the best he can for the good people of Prince Albert and the people in the immediate area. I don't see anything wrong with that whatsoever. Was he doing something inappropriate? I don't think so. I think he was just simply saying, I'm going to work as hard as I can as a member.

I have probably had as many discussions with that member about Prince Albert as I have about with Domtar — him offering encouragement, offering advice, offering suggestions as to what might be possible, what might not be possible, those kinds of things — of course knowing the parameters that the government has set forward, that he agrees with, that we won't put a cheque on the table like the previous administration did.

So I think that the mill reopening in some fashion is possible, whether it's in terms of a forestry venture, whether it's in terms of something else, might be possible. I think we should all be very encouraged by that, that everybody — it looks like to me — Domtar, possibly Iogen, and the government are interested in doing whatever we can to facilitate job growth and potential business growth here in the province. I don't think that there's anything wrong with that, Mr. Chair. I think we should be doing that.

I think where the people of Saskatchewan depart company though with the former administration is the way that there was some of these things were conducted. On the eve of an election . . . We've seen it actually right during elections. And I can think of examples in the Weyburn by-elections as a good example of that — right during an election, throwing money on the table hoping it might improve the fortunes of the candidate down there.

I don't think that people of Saskatchewan agree with that approach. I don't think they agree with the approach of putting money on the table and not expecting that someone on the other side of the table might be willing to pick it up. I think people of Saskatchewan are pretty astute when it comes to business and recognize that this was not in the best interests of the taxpayer. It was something that was debated at length during the election campaign and I think the verdict was pretty clear.

Mr. Taylor: — The minister can't change what the member from P.A. Carlton actually said. He can try to change or interpret what Darryl Hickie said, but the message was very clear. And the people of Prince Albert know, a vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill being opened. He didn't say, I'm trying . . .

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Okay. Do we want to get into a semantics discussion about in what form?

Mr. Taylor: — What I'm saying to the minister quite clearly is that this is not a question of he said, she said. The minister can interpret what the member said. I'm not going to question that

the minister can do that interpretation. But the public will also interpret what the member said. And my interpretation . . . I'm trying to get a clear understanding of how the minister interprets that. But what I'm more interested in is what the minister is saying to Domtar and what Domtar is saying to the minister. I want to get this clear today because there is the talk about Iogen. There is concern that that means that the discussions with Domtar are done.

Can the minister assure me and others that his last conversation with Domtar indicates that a deal with Domtar is still under discussion?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chair, I don't know whether I could be any more clear than I was, but I'll try. We have continued to have discussions with Domtar ever since we called them and told them that we were withdrawing support for the MOU [memorandum of understanding]. We indicated during the election campaign, prior to the election campaign, and immediately after cabinet was sworn in, I think it was maybe the next day that I was sworn in as Minister of Energy and Resources — I'm pretty certain and I'll check that for sure — but it was if not the next day within a couple of days, called Domtar officials and indicated that we were withdrawing support for the \$100 million in the MOU.

At that same time, we indicated to them that we were interested in discussions about what we could do as a government to help facilitate the reopening of the facility, what we could do in terms of redevelopment. All of those kinds of things were on the table. I indicated to the media at that time that we were interested in the potential of cogen, that we were interested in perhaps any needs that there may be to help with respect to the reopening of a facility; that infrastructure needs, we would be willing to discuss those kinds of things.

Those discussions took place over a long period of time. This is a difficult file, as I have indicated. We have continued to have discussions with Domtar about this. Clearly they are not going to make a move unless they think it's in their best interest, and that should not surprise anyone, I don't think.

Since that time we've seen essentially a global meltdown in prices for almost everything, I guess I would say. Capital markets are extremely difficult. I think Domtar's share price, if you look, has probably, oh if they're more than one-third of what they were prior to November of last year, I'd be surprised. Today I think they're way less than that. They're not any different than any other company out there right now. I think there's a difficulty in terms of raising capital potentially for anybody out there.

So they are the same as we are, and they have made public statements to that effect, that they are looking at development, redevelopment, other options. All things are on the table with respect to this facility.

And, you know, honestly I'm not sure. I think the people of P.A. understand that. I think they look at, you know, they look at the news. They read what they're seeing. They watch the television news, listen to the radio, and they're, I think, perfectly aware of what they're seeing in terms of a global meltdown in, you know, the economies of a lot of companies

and of states for that matter, of sovereign states.

So I think that they understand that. They've seen, you know, massive foreclosures in the housing market in the United States. That is of no surprise, I guess. So I think they're looking at it and saying, it would be great to have a development. I think the mayor of P.A. has said that on a number of occasions, that it would be great to have a development. I think the people of Birch Hills have said that they are very supportive of any type of development that there might be. It appears to me that this is all good. But the conditions have to be such that there will be a potential for companies to make some revenue before they're willing to, you know, venture into these types of things.

I think the important thing here is that they fully understand that the government is not willing to put money on the table. And of course then that makes it a little bit more challenging for them because they don't have taxpayer money to support the venture. It has to be on the economics of the facility, not on the potential that they may have \$100 million in front of them, or perhaps even more.

If we want to get into a lot of speculation here, I guess I would ask the question: given a different result in the election campaign, where do you think that 100 million would be now? And do you think that there would be a very strong possibility that they'd be back for more, given the marketplace that there is out there? Given the fact that we see housing starts in the US less than a third of what they normally are, probably a fifth of what they normally are. What other things would the previous administration be willing to put on the table to maintain that facility given the economics that we see today?

Well I don't think there's many people that believe that this mill still wouldn't be challenged with the \$100 million of taxpayers' money on the table, given what we see in the housing market in the US which is primarily where all the lumber goes to from these facilities.

[16:45]

So I think we have been pretty clear with the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Prince Albert. And we've said all along we're not going to enter into this unless it's right for the people of Saskatchewan, the taxpayers of this province, and we're not going to do this just to try and help in terms of any kind of election fortunes going forward.

Mr. Taylor: — I appreciate the answer from the minister. I realize our time is winding down. I have one other question, and I assure the Chair that the matter to follow, *The Pipelines Amendment Act*, I have very few questions. We'll be done very quickly once we leave the estimates here.

I was provided with a transcript of an interview that you did, Minister, by a member of the media. The member of the media has asked if I would place a question to you. The transcript of that interview was done on March 17, and I quote from the transcript:

Reporter: I was just wondering about the Delbert Kirsch report. Did he do it? Did you get it?

Mr. Boyd answers, yes, yes, yes.

Reporter: Can we see it?

Mr. Boyd: Can you see it? Well I don't see any reason why not.

That was on March 17. You've subsequently said that that was an internal Sask Party report and therefore there is no reason to disclose it. On March 17 you said there was no reason why you couldn't show it to the members of the media. What happened to make you change your mind?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Well I think it became apparent to me afterwards that this was an internal caucus working document that would form the basis for some of the work that we would be putting forward in the election campaign. I don't think that there are many, probably very few occasions when governments release internal caucus documents with respect to this. I think the full body of the information was a part of the election campaign, a very public document clearly, the election platform of the Saskatchewan Party. I think that that is more than sufficient. I think the people of Saskatchewan judged that report through the lens of an election campaign and I think that they were positive with respect to that.

Would we release all internal caucus working documents? I suspect that we don't. Your government hasn't in the past. I can think of examples like the settlement agreement with the former caucus employee, Jim Fodey, was never released to the people of Saskatchewan, you know, even though it was asked for on many, many occasions.

There's nothing nefarious in this report that anybody should be alarmed about. It was suggestions about what might be helpful to the forestry sector. It was incorporated into the election campaign. And I think it is appropriate that the discussion is such that deals with it in that fashion.

Mr. Taylor: — All right. Thank you to the minister. I think he's indicated that he actually didn't know it was a caucus document prior to March 17, and I appreciate those comments.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — I think you're actually accurate with respect to that. I wasn't a member of caucus at that particular time, you might recall. I was back at home working on my farm. Afterwards I was supplied with the information that this was not a government document; this was an internal caucus document. So the decision was made at that point in time that the appropriate venue for release of that was through the election process and election campaign, and that's how it was done.

Mr. Taylor: — I thank the minister and his officials for their time here today.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chair, thank you for the questions, to the member. And we appreciate the support of the ministry officials with respect to this and look forward to further discussions about Energy and Resources in the future.

The Chair: — Okay. Seeing no more questions, vote 23, Energy and Resources, central management and services,

subvote (ER01) in the amount of 21,449,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Forestry development, subvote (ER18) in the amount of 4,150,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Revenue and program services, subvote (ER04) in the amount of 3,725,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Petroleum and natural gas, subvote (ER05) in the amount of 7,618,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Exploration and geological services, subvote (ER16) in the amount of \$6,398,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Resource and energy policy, subvote (ER06) in the amount of 6,903,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Amortization of capital assets in the amount of 4,201,000, this is for information purposes only. There is not amount to be voted.

Energy and Resources, vote 23, \$50,243,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2010, the following sums for Energy and Resources in the amount of 50,243,000.

Mr. Harrison: — So moved.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 23 agreed to.]

Bill No. 47 — *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008*

Clause 1

The Chair: — The next order of business is consideration of Bill 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act* and . . .

Ms. Wilson: — 47.

The Chair: — Bill No. 47? What did I say?

Ms. Wilson: — 43.

The Chair: — Oh, 47. Sorry. Consideration of Bill No. 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act*. And, Mr. Minister, do you have any different officials?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — No, we do not.

The Chair: — If you could just identify the two officials that will be with you then, and then we'll open for questions.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Yes, okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Remaining with me is Kent Campbell and also Ed Dancsok.

The Chair: — Thank you. Questions? Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much. I have had the opportunity to review Bill 47, consult with stakeholders and others, and I do find that what the minister said in his second reading speech to explain the purpose of the Bill is not only acceptable and accurate but reasonable to the stakeholders that I have consulted with. The minister indicated that this was largely a housekeeping Bill, and that there had been consultations prior with major companies and associations that make up the oil and gas industry, and that those consultations indicated that the stakeholders were largely supportive of the Bill.

A very simple question — actually I have two questions — but a very simple question to the minister: has anything happened since the Bill was introduced to require anything further to be done in this regard? Has anything occurred that the minister might like to note before we conclude discussion on the Bill?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Member, not really, I don't think. We continue to be encouraged by what we are seeing with respect to carbon capture and sequestration. There seems to be a huge amount of interest in this in a global way. Saskatchewan is clearly leading the charge with respect to this. We know that there continues to be large numbers of delegations coming through that want to look at the project.

In some respects it could be housekeeping, but it's also quite important when you think about the potential for further carbon capture and sequestration projects. Companies indicate to us that they are extremely interested in this approach. They're finding that, just like the companies are involved so far, that there is lots of application for this. And that's why they're quite supportive of this change to allow for the transportation of carbon dioxide in pipelines so, you know, to transport to the location where they may be interested in enhanced oil recovery program.

So while it's housekeeping, it's also I think an important step forward to allow for further projects of this type to go forward. There is going to be the capture of carbon in potentially in some of the coal-fired generation facilities that Saskatchewan has, and this type of change will help facilitate the transportation of the CO₂ to further enhanced oil recovery projects, perhaps even in the United States.

So I think this is quite important. I think it is something that's supported very much by the industry, and we are encouraged by the further information that we are getting from the companies about potential, new enhanced oil recovery projects that they're

interested in. So this will help facilitate that and we're encouraged by that.

You know, these enhanced oil recovery projects are very, very important. The economics of them are tremendous for not only the companies, but for the province of Saskatchewan. There isn't much need for further infrastructure; the infrastructure is already in place in a lot of these areas. They're injecting CO₂ into, you know, deeply into the ground, and they're getting huge benefits from that. So any time we can increase the oil recovery rates in Saskatchewan, we should all be very supportive and encouraged by that. This helps facilitate that.

Mr. Taylor: — And my last question, prefaced with this comment: there are already pipelines handling CO₂ in the province. I'm assuming that the gasification plant in Beulah, North Dakota is getting its CO₂ to Weyburn through pipeline, so I expect that this is already in place. What this legislation would do would be to ensure that that is covered under regulations for environment and safety and other things. But the minister talks about wanting to be able to facilitate new CO₂ storage projects. Aside from the Weyburn area and the, sort of, the tie to Beulah, North Dakota, what other CO₂ storage projects might he be alluding to?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Well there's certainly potential in terms of the clean coal projects. Again I think the member would know that some of those discussions are sort of confidential at this point. We're aware of, I perhaps should've said, we're aware of companies that are very interested in this. They'll certainly make their own announcements with respect to any projects.

But I think it's safe to say that there are a number of companies that are very, very encouraged in this technology and are looking at projects. I think in the Midale area, there's some being considered there. I know that up in the Lloydminster area, there's some potential there that is being looked at, and I think even in the Shaunavon area as well.

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks. We're prepared to send this forward at this time.

The Chair: — Well thank you. Seeing no more questions, clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008* without amendment.

Ms. Ross: — I so move.

The Chair: — Ms. Ross. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would like to thank the minister and officials for being here. I didn't get to thank the other ones before they left, but you may pass that on from the committee, that we appreciate the time and the responses that were provided. And I'd also like to thank the committee for their indulgence here this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chair, thank you as well. Thank you to the officials for their ongoing work on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan and the taxpayers of our great province. And thank you to committee members for their questions, and we look forward to further deliberations in the future.

The Chair: — I would now entertain a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Michelson: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Michelson. This committee is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 17:00.]