

**Public Hearing: Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation**

**The Chair:** — I think we have the total number of members that are joining us today. I would like to welcome you again, and ask the Provincial Auditor to introduce some new people.

**Mr. Strelieff:** — Thank you, Chair, members. Good morning. With me today are: Phil Creaser — Phil's been doing our work related to SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation); Bashar Ahmad is here for the Saskatchewan Indian college agenda item; Sheri Lucas is a student in our office articling for her CA (chartered accountant) and is here to observe how the committee functions, and of course this is her first time in the committee room; as well as Bob Black, who is coordinating our efforts here at the Public Accounts Committee. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — The first item on our agenda is SOCO, and it's in our agenda item under Q, section Q. There is one recommendation and I don't know if . . . I think you had spoke to it, but certainly if you'd like to make brief comment, Mr. Strelieff.

**Mr. Strelieff:** — Okay, Chair, members. Phil Creaser, would you like to just go over the issue in paragraphs .05 to .08?

**Mr. Creaser:** — Okay. The matter that we reported dealt with . . . The board of SOCO was established in October of 1994 but the operations of the corporation started in August of '94. So it ran for almost two months without an appointed board, in accordance with the operating Act of SOCO. It's supposed to have directors to manage its affairs so we wanted to point that out to the committee and to the legislature.

**Mr. Strelieff:** — Thank you very much, Phil.

**The Chair:** — Any questions?

**Mr. Sonntag:** — Yes. I just wanted to know if this is likely to happen again, or unlikely to happen again be better put?

**Mr. Strelieff:** — Chair, members, for SOCO — SOCO now is established; it has a board. One of the reasons we're bringing this to your attention is that the government establishes corporations on an ongoing basis, and it's important to make sure that boards are in place when those corporations are formed.

So we assume that it wouldn't apply to SOCO, but we just want to make sure that the government is reminded in the future, when corporations are created, that they remember they have to get a board of directors in place. So it's a future kind of oriented recommendation.

**Mr. Sonntag:** — Okay. Certainly then I don't know how we can disagree with the recommendation. I would note the committee concurs with the recommendation and it had been complied with.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Are you in agreement? Agreed. Anything else related to SOCO?

**Public Hearing: Department of Education,  
Training and Employment**

**The Chair:** — If not, we will move to section M, the Department of Education, Training and Employment. We have two recommendations there that the auditor raised in our briefings on Monday. Would you like to touch on them briefly again to acquaint us with it?

**Mr. Strelieff:** — Thank you, Chair, members. I'd like to advise you that the recommendation related to the Prairie West Regional College is really no longer relevant as it relates to a set of financial statements that are a couple of years old, and the new financial statements for the year ended '95 and '96 have already been published and are okay financial statements.

So I recommend for M.1 that you really don't have to address it. We should have advised you of that earlier on in the week, but . . .

**The Chair:** — Well we can concur and note compliance.

**Ms. Stanger:** — Well thank you very much to the auditor, and I'll just make my statement since I was of the assumption we were going to deal with this . . .

**Mr. Strelieff:** — Well we still can.

**Ms. Stanger:** — Yes. I want to thank the auditor for pointing out the error which was made in the Prairie West Regional financial statement. And what transpired was, when the staff were entering information and preparing the financial statement, they forgot to delete the note. And the note had appeared on the previous year's statement where it belonged. Although the note appeared again, the note being there does not call into question the financial accuracy of the statement.

So thanks to the auditor for his diligence. We acknowledge an error was made. And I am assured that all the appropriate people are aware of it.

The reason we weren't going to go with tabling in the legislature is the cost of re-tabling the financial statement is extensive, as the correction would have had to be printed, attached to financial statements, and mailed to the original mailing list.

So we thank the auditor for due diligence; acknowledge the error. We are confident that all parties are aware of the error, and we're assured that every effort will be made to ensure such errors do not occur in the future.

I think, Mr. Chair, Mr. Auditor, that the committee feels that we can leave it at that.

**The Chair:** — Is that agreed? Clarification is sufficient? Thank you.

Item M.2. Mr. Strelieff, any comment?

**Mr. Strelloff:** — Mr. Chair, members, on Monday we did briefly talk about the recommendations related to the Saskatchewan Indian Regional College. And I think members wanted to know the status of the committee that the deputy minister of Education was referring to in trying to work with the college to examine if the legislative status of the Indian college needs changing. And I understand that the comptroller's office have information related to that committee. Is that . . .

**Mr. Paton:** — No, no.

**Mr. Strelloff:** — Okay. Bashar, do you have information related to that committee?

**Mr. Ahmad:** — Mr. Chair, members, I've spoken to the officials of the department and they inform me that a committee was struck comprising members of the department's officials and a member of the Indian community.

And the committee came to a conclusion that a separate Act may be needed for the Indian college and their proposal was sent to the Indian nation officials and nothing has happened so far. They want some kind of overall package deemed by their jurisdiction and what have you, and there is no movement on that yet.

**Ms. Stanger:** — I can shed some light on that. It's a private members' Bill that would be required, and when that is the case it would have to be the college to initiate that. But I did the same thing as you did. I met with some officials, and I just may as well do my thing here and read it into the record.

It is important to note that the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies receives no provincial grant funding. Their revenues are provided by the federal government or from tuition fees. SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies) is not in compliance with some requirements of The Regional Colleges Act. That is correct, because they do not consider themselves bound by the Act.

Actually, just to put a bit of historical perspective on it, they were established in 1976 by an order in council, and when the new Regional Colleges Act was passed the college was grandfathered under the legislation.

But on a broader basis, the matter is being dealt with in the context of relationships between the government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians on a whole scope of educational issues. And this is one of the things that's happening.

I think I would recommend that the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training should continue to work with the college, continue to respect aboriginal self-government and political court issues, to remove SIIT from the legal requirements of The Regional Colleges Act. And an alternative, we think, could be a private members' Bill in the legislature which would have to be initiated by the college.

Now the department tells me that they are continuing to meet. They are hopeful this is going to happen because the college

just cannot be . . . it has to be under some legal status. It just can't be floating around out there.

So now it's under The Regional Colleges Act. It's not satisfied. The auditor points out they're not complying, so hopefully with negotiations with the department we can get them under the private members' Bill and there'll be something that they then will comply to.

I have this recommendation written out, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** — Did you read it just out now into the record?

**Ms. Stanger:** — Yes.

**The Chair:** — I guess what I'll do is read it into the record.

The committee recommends that the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training should continue to work with the college, continue to respect aboriginal self-government and political court issues, and to remove SIIT from the legal requirements of The Regional Colleges Act.

An alternative could be a private members' Bill in the legislature which would have to be initiated by the college.

Are we in agreement with that recommendation? Agreed. That's a recommendation . . . no, it's a motion.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that completes the agenda that we have before us this week. I would like to note that since the committee was formed last March, we looked forward to a very daunting task of getting our agenda current. And I have to commend each and every committee member for their participation and their efforts in moving our agenda to a current basis.

We will reconvene in December, dealing with the spring 1996 report, and as you are aware, there are some chapters already that have been completed in that report. So I have to express my gratitude to each of you, particularly to Mr. Sonntag as Vice-Chair, for assisting in moving this agenda forward; to the Provincial Auditor and the Provincial Comptroller for having people at our disposal to see to it that we move to a current and timely basis, and conclude by thanking you very much.

**Mr. Sonntag:** — Yes. May I say just a few words as well. I would like to thank everyone this week, all of the committee members, government and opposition, and certainly the auditor and his officials and the other officials that did appear before us this week.

And I as well, I know, Rod, you and I talked privately, but I would like to have it in the record as well, I certainly want to compliment you as Chair. I think you've done an exceptionally good job, especially in light of the fact that as a fairly newly elected member would not . . . not necessarily knowing how committees work. And I just think you've done a great job in moving the agenda along.

And certainly, I've been reminded here, when we begin to thank people, I've forgotten to thank the comptroller's office as well. You've done a fine job in assisting us also.

So with that, thanks again to everyone who helped out this week, and the Clerk's office too.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Have a very good Thanksgiving.

The committee adjourned at 9:45 a.m.