

June 6/90

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct pleasure again to invite some students to the legislature here today. I'd like to invite two groups.

First of all, I will begin with a group of 36 students, grade 4s and 5s, seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. They happen to come from a community that I grew up in and attend the school at -- maybe I'm a little prejudiced, but

-- one of the finest in Saskatchewan, the community of Langbank. In fact, one of my colleagues said close to the finest.

One of the staff in the cafeteria commented on the group today and suggested they were probably the best and well-mannered group they've ever had in the cafeteria, so I compliment them for that.

Mr. Speaker, there are 36 students accompanied by their teacher, Valerie McNabb and Erin McKee. And their chaperons, Gordon West, Cliff Worley, Kate Toth, Arnold Varsi, Jim and Ellen Cairns, Lorna Dorrance, and Sharon Balogh. It was my pleasure to meet with the group before question period for questions and answers and to have lunch with them. I would like to welcome them, and I invite all the members to welcome them in the usual manner.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- As well, Mr. Speaker, one other group, if you'll allow me, Mr. Speaker, a group of 41 students that I have the distinct pleasure of introducing from Grenfell, Grenfell Elementary School, grade 4 students. They are seated as well in the west gallery, and they're accompanied by teachers Gordon Warman, Tim Taylor, and Carol Piller, and chaperons Cindy Lowenberg, Martha Lichacz -- I trust I pronounced that right -- Lynne Warwick, Sandy Chicoine, Blair and Marg Thompson. I look forward to meeting with this group later after question period for pictures and drinks. And I as well would welcome them and ask the members to join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege, again, today on behalf of the Public Service Commission to introduce to you and to other members of the House and all assembled here today, members of the professional staff of the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, the award winning civil service people who recently were recognized by the national organization.

Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned in the past, these members of our professional staff of the civil service have come into the legislature to see what is going on in this building. Some of them, perhaps, don't have an opportunity to be here as often as they would like, and so this is an opportunity for them to come here and see how this business goes.

Today we have members from the Department of Education, Department of Economic Diversification and Trade, Department of Urban Affairs, Public Service Commission, Department of Social Services, and, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health. I want all members to help me welcome our professional staff here today, Mr. Speaker

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 52 grade 5 students from Greystone Heights Elementary School in my constituency who are seated in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are accompanied by two of their teachers; Jackie Semchuk and Susan Voitka, and they are also accompanied by four chaperons; Mrs. Shephard, Mrs. Grismer, Mrs. Riehl and Mrs. Heese-Fiddler.

Mr. Speaker, students from Greystone Heights Elementary School and their teachers and chaperons make a special point of visiting on an annual basis in the Assembly, and it's a great pleasure to have them here again this year. And I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming these students and their teachers and chaperons, and wishing them an enjoyable stay and a safe trip home.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I have the . . . well just one of the greatest pleasures of having to do in this Assembly is . . . as people well know, I don't get this opportunity very often to introduce guests from my part of the world, and I tell you, one of the greatest parts of the north-west.

I'd like to though introduce to you, and through you, and to all members of the Assembly, 20 . . . there's a little confliction here as well. The first letter I got was 27 students, and I hope they didn't lose two because now I understand there's 25 students from the community of Cut Knife, along and accompanied by the teachers, Len Dupuis and Connie Lane; and also chaperon, Lyle Atton.

And it's a beautiful community of Cut Knife and these students . . . and Len brings the students down here annually. It wasn't too many times where I was able to meet with them. So I would today like to express the fact that it's my pleasure to be able to say today that I'm able to meet with his class and answer any questions.

And I'd ask all members of this Assembly to please welcome them in the usual manner.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Expansion of SGI

Mr. Koenker: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, you contend that SGI cannot expand outside of Saskatchewan unless it ceased to be a Crown corporation.

Following that logic, are you telling us that SaskTel International is established but doesn't do anything because other governments and private industry refuse to deal with a Crown corporation? What about Secore Computers, a wholly owned subsidiary of SaskCOMP operating across Canada; or Pacific Western Airlines, wholly owned by the Government of Alberta and expanded to become a major regional and national carrier?

Mr. Minister, if these publicly owned companies can operate across provincial boundaries, why do you have to privatize SGI to do the same?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, I do not contend that . . . We're talking here about the insurance business, not the airline business, not the telecommunications business. The telecommunications business is regulated by the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission). The airline business is regulated by the . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the insurance business is regulated in each province by the registrar of insurance. The Superintendent of Insurance in Saskatchewan may be the registrar or the Superintendent of Insurance in other provinces. And you cannot be an insurance company operating in another province without being registered provincially in that province under their regulations. And all of the information we've received to date is that if a Crown corporation were to apply to sell insurance in other western provinces, that it would not be accepted.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: -- New question, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, to the same member. Mr. Minister, you say that other governments won't license or register SGI to operate out of province as a Crown corporation. But you produce absolutely no evidence to substantiate that -- not a shred.

Aren't you just using this as an argument to cover up what you really wanted to do all along, namely to privatize to SGI?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, it's all we want to do is expand this company so it can, like other insurance companies, have a bigger business base and a bigger head office in Regina, with more employees. That's all we want to do. We will do it . . . we would like to do it in whatever way is possible, but we can only do what's possible. We cannot make the laws in other provinces. We have to comply with the laws of other provinces.

There is another complication here, and that is that the general insurance company of SGI, the general insurance company, is not sufficiently capitalized to be licensed in other provinces in its current state. Therefore we would have to put more taxpayers' money into the company to do business in other provinces, even if they would license us, license this company, which there is no indication that they would.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: -- New question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. You . . . (inaudible) . . . want to talk about capitalization, Mr. Minister. You can take your loan guarantees for Cargill and put them to better use for SGI.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: -- Mr. Minister, there's absolutely nothing that would stop SGI, as a company owned by the people of Saskatchewan, from expanding outside the boundaries of Saskatchewan. The truth of the matter is that you don't want it to remain a Crown corporation, and so you advance bogus arguments.

In 1983 Paul Rousseau, the then minister of SGI, stated in a radio interview that SGI had too much of the market share and had to be brought down. And for seven years now, you've been doing just that. You've been whittling away on the market share of SGI so you can justify privatization. Why can't you be honest and admit that this has nothing to do with economics and it has everything to do with your own blind faith in the privatization ideology of this government?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the way I understand the opposition's line of questioning is that they are not opposed to this company expanding across Canada. They are not opposed to that. We are now into the mechanics of how it's to be done. And I'm saying that if they would want us, if the opposition would agree that we should apply in other provinces and risk being rejected, I would consider that. I would certainly consider that.

But when we do it, we don't want to do it as a little company that looks like it doesn't know what it's doing. We want to do it according to the rules and regulations of the other provinces. We have no problem expanding into other provinces under the current structure if we meet the capital requirements and the regulatory requirements of the other provinces.

We are advised by the best legal advice we can obtain now that we do not meet those requirements at present and we have to have a company that is Canada class, not Saskatchewan class. And that's what we have to do. Now the opposition agrees that we should expand. I'm prepared to explore further every possible way of expanding.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: -- New question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. Let's move closer to home, Mr. Minister. In 1989, last year, you started charging Saskatchewan people higher premiums for lower coverage. Last year SGI instituted a new policy in home insurance that would no longer give guaranteed full replacement cost coverage to homes built prior to 1950. And with this change you also introduced an 8 per cent increase in premiums for those owning older homes. So it's not surprising, in other words, that many of these people are switching coverage away from SGI.

And your 1989 annual report showed that this move resulted in a decline in market share and revenue but an increase in profits, Mr. Minister. Why don't you admit that you didn't do this to improve insurance service and coverage for Saskatchewan people, but you were trying to set the company up for privatization?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, SGI competes in a general insurance business in Saskatchewan with world-wide companies, with Canada-wide companies, and we meet the competition in the market-place. And we cannot sell policies that are distinctively different from the competitors or, yes, people will change companies.

But we have to be competitive; we cannot operate as a government charity. We operate as a competitive insurance company and people have an alternative. This is not a monopoly within Saskatchewan. We are talking here about a general insurance company. Has nothing to do with Saskatchewan Government Insurance, our licence plate insurance company.

But what you're doing here is, the opposition is advocating that we take virtually all the risk in Saskatchewan, which is contrary to insurance principles. One storm, like the storm that hit Edmonton, Alberta, would wipe out SGI if you had all of the insurance.

So if the members opposite don't understand business, they don't understand insurance, they don't understand legalities of what has to be done in other provinces, really they should tell us what they do understand. Maybe ideology, that's all they understand, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: -- Final question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your argument that SGI has to be privatized is nothing but a red herring. And it's also obvious that SGI has to recapture its . . . all it

has to do to recapture its market share in this province is to change its policy direction from government.

This whole business has been cooked up by you and your colleagues solely as an attempt to justify your privatization plans. And if you're so zealous on privatization, why don't you just bring in a Bill to privatize SGI and see how Saskatchewan people react to that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the opposition wants confrontation; we want a bigger business. We want expansion, we want to do positive things, we have no desire to enter into a negative debate about ideology. I do not want to privatize SGI and I want to make it clear that SGI will not be privatized, that SGI -- the government insurance company of Saskatchewan -- will always be there.

Now we are talking about the expansion of a general insurance company which is a branch of SGI. We are talking about expansion; we are talking about positive building of new jobs in this province. We are not talking about ideology. We will do what is necessary to build more jobs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Lay-offs at PCS

Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the minister who will be answering for the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and I suspect that's the minister that was just on his feet for the last few questions.

The PCS has issued notices to more than 500 workers, laying them off work for an additional four weeks this summer after their regular summer holidays, not the first lay-off for the corporation this year. In January you laid off some 600 workers for various periods during the month, and you had further lay-offs at Rocanville and Lanigan this spring.

Now, Minister, what's going on? Is this a result of the superior management that you're paying Chuck Childers more than \$700,000 a year on a five-year no-cut contract to deliver? What's happening at the potash corporation?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, potash is, or is an ingredient in agricultural fertilizer, point number one. Point number two, Mr. Speaker, when those countries' farmers who do not buy potash fertilizer to the same degree that they might have in the past, do not buy the fertilizer, then one is faced either with piling up inventory at a tremendous cost, Mr. Speaker, that ultimately can bankrupt the company, or you make proper adjustments to your inventory.

In this case one of the major buyers, China -- I think the circumstances in China over the last year and more are well-known to us all -- has not been

in the market to the degree that they might normally have been or have been in the past for Saskatchewan potash. Sales there are particularly down.

And the company has had to respond, Mr. Speaker. They have responded in what I think is a reasonable fashion. They have used holiday time plus maintenance time plus additional time, if you like, as down time to adjust those inventories in a way that is trying to be as humane as possible to the employees. I think that is reasonable management, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously none of us would like to see anybody employed over and above or beyond their holiday time, if you like, but certainly they're doing it in what I would view as a very reasonable . . . taking a very reasonable approach there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mitchell: -- A new question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, there is obviously something very wrong with the operations at PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.) and it must be gross mismanagement, because it's interesting to note that PCS's biggest competitor, IMC, (International Minerals and Chemical Corporation (Canada) Ltd.) has announced only one lay-off in all of 1990 and that was a for a period of one week at the end of this month. And it would appear from reports that Manitoba has enough faith in the industry to be going ahead with its new mine at Binscarth.

Now by these lay-offs that I have referred to, you're forcing the 500 laid-off workers to bear the financial burden of the mismanagement of the potash corporation. I want to ask you what share of that burden will be faced by our high paid executives? How much of that burden is going to be shouldered by Chuck Childers? And how much by Mr. Doyle with his \$1.5 million five-year no-cut contract? Or My. Gugulyn with his \$1 million five-year contract? How much of a burden are these guys going to share? Or is it the fact that the workers alone have to bear the burden of this gross mismanagement?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, relative to the management at the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan which Crown investments holds on behalf of the public of Saskatchewan about a 30, 31 per cent interest in, of that private company, the observations I would make about the management of that company over this last 3 and 4 and 5 years, Mr. Speaker, is that they have done an excellent job of increasing productivity, of positioning that company, Mr. Speaker.

I think the results speak for themselves in terms of the confidence that the Saskatchewan people hold in that company when we went with the offering to the market-place and 73,000 people wanted to buy those potash ownership bonds, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me, although the NDP may not have much confidence in that privatized company, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan certainly have confidence in that company, Mr. Speaker.

Quite frankly I'm disappointed the hon. member would raise the question that he has in the context he's raised. I think he's merely trying to score points, relative to salaries, as opposed to looking at the real issues, the real economic issues that are behind that slow-down, Mr.

Speaker, at those mines. None of us want that. We'd all like to see Chinese farmers using more and more Canadian potash which they really like, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to this kind of cheap politics, Mr. Speaker, and that's all that it is.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, a new question to the same minister. The issue here, Minister, is the gross mismanagement of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. There is no other issue here.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- And isn't it a fact that the main reason for this lay-off is to maximize the earnings of this recently privatized potash corporation and therefore the return, the dividends to investors. Isn't that really what privatization is all about, Mr. Minister? The main issue is the return to the investor, and the workers who work there are the ones to suffer. And isn't that what your sell-off of the potash corporation has brought to the people who work in the potash mines in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I think any time that management has to contemplate a move like this based on the market realities, it's always difficult. It seems to me, doing this kind of initiatives, surrounding it around a vacation period and maintenance periods for the employees, is a very reasonable approach. I don't think any person looking at it in a reasoned kind of way would argue any differently.

Why are they having to deal with that, Mr. Speaker? Because world potash demand, particularly in China, is down. The management of the company, Mr. Speaker, has consistently shown great gains, better net income returns for the shareholders, Mr. Speaker, bigger tonnes production per person employed. All the historical measurements that one might apply to that company -- and I don't have them in my head -- certainly have been very, very positive, Mr. Speaker. The reality is potash demand is down, sales are lacking, and they had to respond, Mr. Speaker, and they have, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Suspension of Globe Theatre School Tour

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Recreation and Culture. Minister, over the weekend members on this side of the House, and I expect members on your side of the House, would have received a letter from Globe Theatre stating that because of financial constraints that renowned theatre group will be suspending its school tour next year unless alternate sources of funding are found.

Now, Madam Minister, the Globe Theatre has an established reputation

province-wide. It's brought classic theatre to the children of Saskatchewan for 24 years. It's been appreciated by parents, teachers, and children throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

My question is, Madam Minister, what is your government prepared to do to ensure that we do not lose this creative and expert educational and cultural means for the children of Saskatchewan to learn, or are you going to abandon it like you abandoned the summer school of the arts for Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: -- Mr. Speaker, yes I did receive the same letter that the hon. member is referring to and I'm sure many of my colleagues on this side of the House also received one. There is no doubt that Globe Theatre has brought much to this province in the past and today, and will continue to bring much in the future. The people that have been involved with Globe Theatre over the past and today, indeed are creative, are innovative, and do much to enhance the quality of life and enhance culture, not only within the arts community but for those people like me who do not actively participate but do like to be in the audience.

The Globe Theatre funding is based, as the hon. member from Prince Albert knows, through the Arts Board. He also knows that that board has received exactly the same amount of funding through their base grant this year as they did last year. The decisions as to the funding to Globe Theatre are made through the Arts Board. It would be my preference that the decisions at the Arts Board remain very long arm's length from government. And, Mr. Speaker, they have decisions to make. They made those decisions.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Madam Minister, your government is not excused . . . New question, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, your government is not excused in this situation because you do fund the Arts Board and you appoint the board members. Ultimately in the end, if the funding is not sufficient for Globe, it's you that has to bear the responsibility.

Madam Minister, in its letter the Globe Theatre refers to a precarious state of funding for the arts and the lack of one-time funding through the lotteries. Now it was your government that initiated the disastrous lottery tax that caused this precarious state of funding. You caused the problem, yet you're unwilling to accept the responsibility to assure that this widely acclaimed presentation of Globe is not continued, and is sustained.

At the same time, Madam Minister, as an example, you are willing to continue to provide funding for a bloated office at SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) costing \$700,000 for executives. I ask you, Madam Minister, in view of those two examples: where are your priorities? Tell us about that.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: -- Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that the member listened, and if he did, did not understand, and I will repeat for his benefit. The funding to the Arts Board on the A base, the base budget, is exactly the same as it was last year. Now the Arts Board makes some decisions as to who receives funding, the various community groups, theatre groups, that type of thing, Mr. Speaker.

It is not my intention at this time to interfere with the decisions that have been made by the Arts Board. I am concerned, as the member is concerned, in terms of the Globe Theatre and perhaps what position they have been put into. But it is not my preference at this time, Mr. Speaker, to interfere with the Arts Board decision as to where the funding goes.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Reduced Funding for Saskatchewan Council of International Co-operation

Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Agriculture or the Deputy Premier. Mr. Minister, your government is cutting funding to the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation. Now by cutting that group's funding in half, you are sending out a message that Saskatchewan is no longer interested in helping developing nations. Now that 425,000 to help developing nations is only 60 per cent of Chuck Childers's salary, and it's a minuscule portion of what your government is supplying to Cargill, and it pales in comparison to what you gave millionaire from Alberta, Peter Pocklington.

Now in Saskatchewan under your government, the rich get incredibly richer and the poor get poorer. Now my question is: Mr. Minister, how in the world do you explain those kinds of priorities when the issue of poverty, both home and abroad, has to be addressed urgently?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, in the course of putting this year's budget together, many difficult decisions had to be made. Cut-backs were made in many areas, Mr. Speaker, that will result ultimately in about \$300 million of savings for taxpayers in Saskatchewan over the next two years.

None of these were particularly easy decisions, including the one to the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation. And I might add that Saskatchewan today is still one of the few provinces across Canada that have that kind of program in place, Mr. Speaker, albeit at a reduced rate.

But we made the conscious decision, Mr. Speaker, to cut back expenditures, put in place some savings for the taxpayers, not raise taxes, and use those savings, Mr. Speaker, to fund education and to fund health care and to fund agriculture. And we stand behind that budget thrust, Mr. Speaker, 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 36 -- An Act respecting a Report on the State of the Environment

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move first reading of a Bill respecting a Report on the State of the Environment.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 37 -- An Act to amend The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act

Hon. Mr. Klein: -- Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 38 -- An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Superannuation Act

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Municipal Employees' Superannuation Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 31 -- An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984

Hon. Mrs. Smith: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to be able to move second reading on Bill 31, The Urban Municipality Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is designed to provide municipalities with additional tools to deal with municipal by-law votes that result from conflicting petitions. The issue has come to a head, more particularly in the city of Regina where the electorate will be going to the polls this fall to vote on not two, but three proposed by-laws all of which, when combined together, are based on contradictory petitions.

Mr. Speaker, in meeting with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and the city of Regina, they both have expressed concern regarding the legislation that is in place and the situation placed before the Regina council and the potential for further councils in the province. It was asked that I review the legislation, that I look at the possibility of an amendment and legislation that would indeed allow municipalities to manage better this situation than the present situation that Regina city council finds itself in.

It has been pointed out that Regina alone will spend about \$200,000 approximately to hold the vote required by the petitions. Public funds spent to hold the vote could very well be wasted, as it has been said, unless the legislation is amended to provide the opportunity for a very direct, clear outcome.

I want to assure members of this Assembly today that this is not just a problem for the city of Regina. A good many municipalities in Saskatchewan hold plebiscites during and between regular local elections on a variety of subjects. The voters faced two contradictory by-law votes in an earlier store hour vote in Regina in 1988, and the city council in Prince Albert has recently received two petitions on the same subject that indeed may prove to be contradictory.

The point, Mr. Speaker, is that contradictory by-law votes resulting from conflicting petitions could crop up in any urban centre in Saskatchewan, large or small. So it has become an issue with some potential province-wide impact. We want to offer municipalities the flexibility to clarify the choices in the voting procedures before it results in a waste of local public revenue, not to mention the resulting frustration for not only urban councils but urban voters.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is to amend The Urban Municipality Act and it will allow municipal councils to determine whether two or more petitions are conflicting. If the council decides that the petitions do in fact come into conflict, it will have the option of setting them out as alternatives on a single ballot. Voters will be asked if they favour any of the alternatives on the ballot. If a majority of votes are no, then none of the petitions has received the support of the electorate. If, however, the majority votes yes to the first question, then the petition receiving the greatest number of votes is the winner, and council is bound to pass it and put it into effect.

I would like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill sets out these new procedures as optional. In other words, councils have a choice. And I believe that's important for local government. Urban councils are given that choice. They can choose to apply the new procedures where they feel circumstances warrant it or they can use the existing provisions in the Act dealing with petitions and voting procedures.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that local government, local councils are in the best position indeed to make that judgement and accordingly, the Bill offers added decision-making flexibility to local government.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a companion Bill before members of the House making one procedural amendment to The Local Government Election Act and it too will permit a change to be made in the form of the ballot. But I will not deal with that Bill at this time. This Bill to amend the urban Act that is before us now, Mr. Speaker, is designed to make sure local democracy continues to work well in Saskatchewan cities and towns. These changes were requested by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, representing some 500 urban municipalities in our province as well as the city of Regina, the council most immediately involved.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to support this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make it clear at the outset that this side of the House will support the Bill. The Bill addresses a situation in the city of Regina and, as the minister pointed out, has application for all municipalities in Saskatchewan, although it's not anticipated that many will be running into this kind of dilemma.

The situation in Regina, I think, has been adequately explained by the minister. Where conflicting petitions for by-laws be put to the electors were received by city council, the net result of the votes that would have been held might well have been conflicting advice or conflicting by-laws being implemented by city council. There was no mechanism to deal with this and the Bill's attempt to deal with this matter of conflict.

And we, as the city of Regina, support this and I would believe that all municipalities support this.

There has been much debate, Mr. Speaker, about the solution to the dilemma that the city of Regina found itself in with respect to these Bills, and one of the solutions that was being advocated by many, including some editorial writers, was the solution that the percentage of electors required to submit a by-law to the electors, the percentage of electors needed to petition a council to put a by-law before the electors should be increased from its 5 per cent to 10 or 15 per cent and therefore make it more difficult for citizens to exercise direct democracy in Saskatchewan.

I'm pleased to see that the minister has not taken that approach and has resisted the efforts and the suggestions by some in our community that we should move in that direction.

I think that it's very tempting from time to time that when you have transitory problems such as store hours and you have conflicts arising such as this one to look to extreme solutions such as to make it more difficult for citizens to exercise their right of petition, and to see that as the solution to the problem.

(1445)

We must remember that this exercise in direct democracy exists within law because it protects individuals from uncaring and out-of-touch local governments. Some have made the suggestion over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, that we should have such a provision provincially and that people on a provincial basis have the option of putting questions directly to the public and certainly have a recall provision for governments. We don't have that, but certainly in the local scene we have supported over the years the right of citizens to petition their local governments for by-laws and to petition them on other matters. So I'm pleased to see that the minister has not taken that approach.

Mr. Speaker, we may have some questions in committee about the details of the Bill. Also, alternatives that might have been explored, in my opinion, and we'll want to hear the minister's answers as to why this particular approach was taken.

We also have some concerns about what took the minister and the government so long to recognize that this matter was first raised with the government towards the end of November last year, more than seven months ago . . . or more than six months ago. The government was apprised of the situation in Regina, and they're only now, at the last minute, putting legislation forward.

I understand the legislation is based on legislation in Ontario. It need not have taken the government so long to respond to the situation in Regina. The situation in Regina, Mr. Speaker, which led to this Bill has caused city council there to go through protracted debate about the best way to proceed in the absence of any help from the government.

A lot of confusion might have been avoided. A lot of extensive debate might have been avoided if the province had moved with greater speed, greater determination in this matter and advised the government there, the local government, the city council, that in fact it had a solution to the problem, and I'd ask the city to recognize that in its discussions. But none was forthcoming until about a week ago.

But, Mr. Speaker, the main comments I want to make in this Bill is to the necessity for the Bill in the first place. And I think it has to be recognized that if it weren't for the government's abrogating its responsibility in the whole area of store hours, it is unlikely that any such Bill would now be before us. And we have to recognize that these amendments, or these Bills, are very much the result of a provincial government abrogating responsibility in the area of store hours.

To no one's surprise, Mr. Speaker, and certainly as predicted at the time, some two years ago when the government moved to change store hours, the store hours situation in Regina, the store hours situation in Saskatchewan is one of two things: it's either wide open or it's characterized by a great deal of confusion, as is the case in Regina and which is leading to the Bill before us.

To no one's absolute surprise, Mr. Speaker, we see one of two things. And I want to refer in this matter, that we either have wide open or confusion, to the minister's own briefing notes which were provided to her in September of last year. And the minister's own briefing notes from her department states in part that the current store hours regulations in each of the cities are summarized below.

Saskatoon. It points out that Saskatoon passed a new store hours by-law in '88, that Saskatoon had at that time been generally been successful in enforcing its by-law, although not completely. But again we know now that the Saskatoon by-laws are again being challenged. Saskatoon only requires large stores to close on Sundays. There is wide-open shopping all other days of the week. But it again is being challenged on the Sunday shopping.

Regina. I don't think I need to go into the details. The minister has gone into the details and it's well-known that the shopping hours situation in Regina is confused, confused because of by-laws by the council, challenges in the courts, petitions by citizens, all of which are valid exercises. But again a great deal of confusion.

In Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, there is no confusion . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. It seems that the member is raising issues which only vaguely pertain to the Bill, and he's trying to tie it to the Bill but with not much success. And I ask him to stick to the Bill itself.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Speaker, I would point out that this Bill at this time has no . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I'd ask the hon. member not to point anything out. I've made a ruling; I'd like him to abide by it.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well I'll certainly abide by your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I would point out to the people of Saskatchewan that this Bill before us, this Bill which attempts to clarify the confusing situation in terms of shopping hours certainly wouldn't extend to the city of Moose Jaw because the city of Moose Jaw has no restrictions on store hours. It's wide open, something that the government wanted all along.

But this situation may well have application to the city of Prince Albert because the store hours situation in the city of Prince Albert is very confusing. And the city of Prince Albert notes that it has had a number of petitions from citizens, Mr. Speaker, which this Bill talks about.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I'm going to once more ask the hon. member to stick to the Bill under discussion.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert has a by-law in place. Will you concede, Mr. Speaker, that this matter deals with by-laws? This by-law was challenged to allow grocery stores to remain open on Sundays. A petition was received in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, a petition was received asking for Sunday grocery shopping. A second petition against Sunday opening is about to be presented.

Now this Bill before us may have application for the city of Prince Albert, where the store hours situation is a confused mess. And this Bill may help the city of Prince Albert. And Yorkton, of course, we also have a great deal of confusion and this Bill may have application for the city of Yorkton.

It won't have much application at this point for the cities of Melville, Estevan, or Lloydminster because these cities permit wide-open shopping, Mr. Speaker, wide-open shopping . . .

An Hon. Member: -- It has nothing to do with shopping.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- This Bill has everything to do with store hours. This Bill has everything to do with shopping in the province of Saskatchewan. This Bill has everything to do with your chicken attitude towards shopping in the province of Saskatchewan, where you refuse to take any position. You've turned it over to the municipalities.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- You refuse to take a position. Or maybe you have taken a position like your Premier did where he went to Prince Albert and noted how pleased he was that the store hour situation had been turned wide open, turned wide open. That's what you Tories want. That's what you wanted all along.

No, the Tories in this province are chicken. They won't listen to municipalities, they won't listen to municipalities, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities have made it clear that they didn't want the government to take this kind of action, but no, the government has taken this kind of action. No, this situation in Saskatchewan, this confused situation which this by-law in part will help to clear up, is exactly what the province wants, is exactly what everyone predicted would happen, that it would be . . . unless it was wide open, you're going to have a great deal of confusion.

You were warned, but you wanted this. The Premier himself, I believe in 1989, in March '89 in his remarks to the Prince Albert chamber of commerce, and I quote from the article:

In his opening remarks the Premier praised city council for opening up store hours and commended the business community for supporting council.

And there we have it. That's what the Premier wanted. That's what the government wanted. That's why they changed the municipal Act to allow for wide-open store hours in Saskatchewan. And if we don't have wide-open store hours, we have a great deal of confusion which this Bill is attempting to clear up, Mr. Speaker.

That's what the government wanted. There's just no doubt that they got what they wanted and this Bill is one of the results of what they did in the past, Mr. Speaker.

And it appears that in those provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan where the provincial governments have shifted the responsibility in setting store hours to the municipal level, any attempt to regulate store hours is challenged. Very quickly the end result is wide-open shopping in all areas of the province, unless of course you've got a great deal of confusion which the government needs to clarify through Bills such as this.

In those provinces where the provincial government has maintained the responsibility for setting store hours, such as in Manitoba, no such wide-open shopping results and the laws are enforced and upheld, unlike Saskatchewan where either we have wide-open shopping or we have a great deal of confusion which needs to be clarified through Bills such as this.

The members say that this Bill has nothing to do with shopping. The minister in her own remarks, Mr. Speaker, made it very clear that the reason that this Bill is before us is because of the conflicting by-laws in the city of Regina, all of which have to do with store hours -- all of which have to do with store hours.

This Bill and the other Bill that we're discussing today have everything to do with store hours, Mr. Speaker, everything to do with store hours. And I think that it's a legitimate exercise for the members of this side of the House to examine that issue in some detail, to explain to the people of Saskatchewan why it is that we need a Bill before us, why it is that we need a Bill which attempts to give municipalities powers so that they can resolve the store hours mess that they find themselves in. It's because of the government and their stand on the store hours.

DThis Bill has everything to do with store hours, Mr. Speaker. They may not want to hear that and they may interject and shout at you that this has got nothing to do with store hours, but it certainly doesn't gibe with the minister in her opening remarks.

Mr. Speaker, there are valid reasons, valid reasons why a provincial government should restrict store hours, as the province used to do up until a couple of years ago. And one might say that you can avoid a lot of confusion as the government is now trying to clear up with the Bill before us. But there are other valid, good reasons why the government should not proceed in the way that it's doing in this Bill but look for other amendments to The Urban Municipality Act so as to reimplement the provisions for store hours because of the effect on neighbouring communities that it has, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we received a couple of years ago at the height of the store hours debate, a letter from the village of Edam, or the Premier received a letter from the village of Edam. And I want to just quote in part where it says:

Smaller urban centres are already struggling to compete with the larger centres in their varied services. If your legislation is passed, these larger centres will undoubtedly be allowed to open for Sunday shopping, which in turn will literally force many smaller communities to allow Sunday shopping or risk the further loss of revenues to these larger centres. As you are well aware, many small-town businesses are family owned and operated. To allow Sunday shopping would in essence be taking away the one day of the week that the family can be together.

And that's the essence, the reasons that we've always had provincial government in terms of shopping hours. That's why the provincial governments had set rules on shopping hours. Because this is not just simply a matter for individual municipalities; this is a matter that it can affect many municipalities. And as Regina goes, other municipalities around Regina go. And it may well be that Regina by its by-laws is doing what the people of Regina want it to do. But that may conflict with the people around Regina, but they have no further say in the situation. They

must respond to what Regina is doing or lose all hope of being able to keep . . . they lose the chance of losing many of their small-town businesses.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has everything to do with shopping hours. Again, there are valid reasons why a provincial government should not be putting the amendments before us that it has, but moving other amendments. And again, they have everything to do with recognizing that store hours have a ripple effect, that it's not just a matter of a municipality being an island unto itself. And I just want to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to an article in the paper last year, March of last year, and the headline is: "P.A. store hours policy creates concern in Melfort" -- exactly what I've been talking about.

(1500)

And there they say that the store hours issue is, for now, peaceful in Melfort but that could change if Prince Albert, less than an hour's drive away, goes ahead and passes a by-law allowing stores to open any time during the week. The mayor of Melfort says that's causing us some concern. Everything is peaceful now as far as our merchants are concerned, but we may be getting dragged into the debate if Prince Albert goes along. A domino effect, the article refers to it as.

It also refers to Moose Jaw. Moose Jaw city council is also in a wait and see mode, the mayor said. He goes on, he says that Montgomery knows all about the domino effect. Not only does this council have to wait and see what happens in Regina before passing their own store hours regulations, but he has watched while more and more local stores are opened Sundays in order to compete among themselves.

Weyburn is also waiting to see what Regina's going to do, Mayor Ron Barber said. Yorkton, which is fighting for its own store hours by-law in court, is in the fortunate position of being far enough from the competing market. But while Yorkton watches Prince Albert, Melville is watching Yorkton. And until we see what Regina and Yorkton do, we aren't taking a stand on store hours. And that's the way it is all around Saskatchewan.

And although this Bill may well help the city of Regina and may well help individual communities deal with a very limited aspect of the controversy of store hours, it really doesn't deal with the major question, and that is the domino effect of opening up store hours, as the government is now permitting through its legislation, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill simply does not deal with that. It doesn't provide the kinds of tools that municipalities have been asking for.

Mr. Speaker, the other day I pointed out that this government has a propensity -- propensity for getting involved in issues that it should stay out of, but also of running away and hiding and not displaying the leadership that it should be on other issues.

This is one such issue. The issue of store hours is an issue where the government should be providing leadership, and that's recognized by many

communities across Saskatchewan. They have refused to do that; they run and hide. They run and hide, and they're doing that because of their own philosophical agenda. It's got nothing to do with being in touch with the people of Saskatchewan, because the people of Saskatchewan didn't support them on that.

You know, when members -- like the member from Rosthern is an example -- can explain to his constituents why it's good to have Sunday shopping all over Saskatchewan, you know, and how his government through Bills such as this is attempting to clarify the situation, but the matter stands. He and other members of the government side changed the situation such that we now have Sunday shopping in Saskatchewan -- something against the dictates and consciences of many people in our communities. They didn't want to see that. They wanted a common day of rest. But the member for Rosthern and other members . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I think I've given the hon. member considerable opportunity, and he's straying from the topic. I'm sure he's aware of that. He's spending much too much time on a peripheral issue, and I would ask him to remain on the topic.

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear as the day outside that this Bill has everything to do with shopping hours. The minister in her remarks when she stood up said that this Bill comes to us because of conflicting by-laws in the city of Regina. Those by-laws all have to do with Sunday shopping or shopping hours.

Now I don't know who in Saskatchewan would say that this Bill really doesn't have very much to do with shopping hours, except the government members opposite who keep yelling from their seats that oh, it doesn't have anything to do with shopping hours; shut them up; we don't want to hear this.

This has everything to do with shopping hours and that government's sloppy, uncaring attitude when it comes to shopping hours, the needs of workers, the cares of small business -- that's what this Bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will support the Bill but we will not long forget why this Bill is before us, nor will the people of Saskatchewan forget in the next election why we have such confusion in Saskatchewan when it comes to shopping hours, or we have no law at all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 32 -- An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act

Hon. Mrs. Smith: -- Mr. Speaker, I move second reading on Bill No. 32, The Local Government Election Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is the companion Bill to the amendment of The Urban Municipality Act that we have just finished talking about. This Bill, Mr.

Speaker, deals with the ballot itself and will provide the authority for a municipality to place more than one by-law vote on a single ballot leading to a single outcome. This is purely a procedural change required by the composite ballot that is authorized by the companion Bill amending The Urban Municipality Act.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize once again that this Bill amending election procedures sets out this new mechanism as optional. And by that, that councils would use the ballot setting out conflicting proposed by-laws as options, only if they choose to place the conflicting by-laws before the electorates as options. Unless councils choose to use the new mechanism under the urban Act amendments then the existing provisions in The Local Government Election Act respecting the ballot for by-law votes can still be used.

Mr. Speaker, while this amendment to local election legislation is purely administrative in nature, it is an important change designed to resolve the issue of conflicting by-law votes. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to support this companion Bill.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 34 -- An Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm please to rise today to move second reading of The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1990. One of the provisions of The Child and Family Services Act, which will be proclaimed later this year, permits the parent of a child to voluntarily commit the child to the Minister of Social Services. In general, the purpose of this committal is to enable the child to be placed for adoption. The proposed amendment is intended to ensure the validity of a voluntary committal made by a parent who is less than 18 years of age. This amendment will give the needed security to the adoption placement for the adolescent birth parent as well as the adoptive parent.

The Adoption Act contains a similar provision. Without this provision, a court, Mr. Speaker, could set aside a committal made by a parent. And therefore I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Prebble: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to say clearly that we are opposed to this piece of legislation. I am surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Social Services would bring forward such an inadequate amendment to The Child and Family Services Act.

As the minister has said, this Bill deals with voluntary committal, a provision under which a parent who does not feel able to care for his or her child can arrange for his or her child to become a ward of the Minister of Social Services. And the amendment specifically permits a parent who's under the age of 18 to voluntary commit his or her child to the Minister of

Social Services and such committal is as valid and effectual under the Bill as if the parent were 18 years of age.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's certainly a need for a provision for voluntary committal for parents who are under the age of 18. There are obviously regular circumstances that arise under which a parent who is less than 18 years of age and has had a child, will want to commit that child to be a ward of the Minister of Social Services and, as the minister has indicated, that situation usually leads to the process of adoption being initiated, Mr. Speaker, although in some cases the child will be placed in a foster home.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is unacceptable about this amendment, the Bill that the minister has introduced this afternoon is that there is no provision in this legislation for a parent who is less than 18 years of age to be guaranteed the right to independent legal advice and to independent counselling under this Bill. Mr. Speaker, these provisions are not in The Child and Family Services Act that the former minister of Social Services took through the Assembly last year, and they're not in this amendment. And we find that, Mr. Speaker, to be unacceptable.

Surely the minister must acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, surely the government must acknowledge that someone who is 15 or 16 or 17 years of age and is usually under a great deal of pressure with respect to the decision about whether or not to give up a child that they've just had, deserves to have access, Mr. Speaker, to independent legal advice about the implications of the decision that they're making and deserves to have access, Mr. Speaker, to independent counselling. And, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Social Services should pay the cost of both to a parent who is under the age of 18.

This is a major decision that the parent is making, Mr. Speaker, yet the government today has introduced legislation into the Assembly that allows a young person under the age of 18, who becomes a parent, to make a voluntary committal to in effect turn their child over to be a ward of the Minister of Social Services without any guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that there will be independent legal advice or independent counselling offered. And that, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable. That is simply unacceptable.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is another inadequacy in this piece of legislation, and that is that the legislation also does not adequately recognize the role that grandparents may play at a time like this, Mr. Speaker. In many circumstances, grandparents are anxious and willing to take responsibility for the care of a child when a child is born to a parent who is less than 18 years of age, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, in many cases grandparents are anxious to do this but don't have the financial resources to do so, Mr. Speaker. And we say, Mr. Speaker, that under those kind of circumstances, the government instead of encouraging voluntary committal whereby the child becomes a ward of the Minister of Social Services, should instead be providing financial resources to the grandparents to care for that child, Mr. Speaker.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that in the Indian and Metis community, where many Indian and Metis families lack the adequate financial resources to be able to take responsibility for a child -- the grandparents often don't have the financial resources to be able to do that, but they certainly have all the other abilities and desires to do so, Mr. Speaker -- that this is something the government needs to address.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am urging the Minister of Social Services to look at reconsideration of this Bill in such a way that, first of all, independent legal advice and independent counselling is given to parents under the age of 18 before they make a decision about voluntary committal of their child. And secondly, that the government look at the question of the role that grandparents may play, Mr. Speaker, so that instead of a child becoming a ward of the Minister of Social Services, they can instead be cared for by their grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, for those reasons we will not be supporting this Bill on second reading.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Motion agreed to on division, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

(1515)

Bill No. 4 -- An Act respecting the Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of the Child and Family Services Act

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to move second reading of The Child and Family Services Consequential Amendment Act, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, the government remains committed to strengthening and supporting families in Saskatchewan. Recent examples of this support are the opening of the Family Support Centre in Saskatoon; funding recently announced for additional child counsellors in three transition houses, and parenting support services in four elementary schools in Regina and in Saskatoon.

As part of our commitment to the families of Saskatchewan, we passed in 1989 The Child and Family Services Act, The Adoption Act, and The Child Care Act. In addition, during this session we have introduced The Young Offenders' Services Act. This legislation when proclaimed will replace The Family Services Act, a 17-year-old Act which no longer reflects the changing needs of Saskatchewan families.

The purpose of the Bill before you is to provide for repeal of The Family Services Act and to amend other legislation to be consistent with the new package of family legislation such as removing references to The Family Services Act in The Vital Statistics Act and substituting The Child and Family Services Act.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to move second reading of an Act respecting the Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Prebble: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief with respect to this Bill. As the minister's indicated, this legislation is largely consequential from The Child and Family Services Act that was passed by the Assembly last year.

But I want to just make one point here, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the comments of the minister. And I want to go back to The Child and Family Services Act and the debate of last year and remind the Minister of Social Services that one of the major considerations last year was the need for a children's Ombudsman, in effect an Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker, to ensure and protect the interests of children who are wards of the Minister of Social Services. On a regular basis there are some 2,200 children who are wards of the minister, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of Social Services has special responsibility to ensure that the interests of those children are protected.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that in the legislation that is being introduced now as part of The Child and Family Services Act package if you like, we would see this year provisions for a children's Ombudsman in the province of Saskatchewan, an Ombudsman who would protect the interest of children who are wards of the Minister of Social Services.

And last year the minister of Social Services, the former minister, the member for Melville, promised a consideration for such a children's Ombudsman position would be given. And, Mr. Speaker, it's clear this year that the government has no intentions of introducing such a provision. And we say shame on the government for that because we've now had two ombudsmen that have recommended the need for a child ombudsman for children who are in the care of the Minister of Social Services. We've had the Bosco Homes scandal of last year, Mr. Minister, that clearly provided evidence of the need for a children's ombudsman for children who are in your care. And once again, Mr. Minister, you have failed to bring forward such provisions, despite the fact now that at least three other provinces in Canada have these provisions.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say, therefore, that we are very disappointed in the Minister of Social Services for failing to act on that issue. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 33 -- An Act respecting the Administration of Young Offenders' Services

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise once more to move second reading of The Young Offenders' Services Act, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, my government is committed to helping young people, who have been charged or convicted with offences, to better themselves and to help them reach their full potential. We also want to take preventative measures aimed at those young people who may be at high risk of becoming young offenders in the future. Mr. Speaker, this Bill establishes the legal authority for the delivery of provincial programs and services to these young people.

Let me give you a little background, Mr. Speaker, about this Bill. The federal Act, entitled the Young Offenders Act, Canada, came into force in 1984. It replaces the juvenile delinquents Act which had been the law governing criminal behaviour by children since the early part of this century. The new federal Act defined young persons as children or youths who are charged or convicted of a criminal offence when they are over the age of 12 years, yet under 18 years of age.

The federal Act says the young people who commit criminal offences should be held accountable and responsible for their actions. But it also recognizes that these young persons have certain rights such as the right to receive legal counsel. The federal Act also says that we must strike a balance between the rights of the offender and protection of the public.

My department, Mr. Speaker, is committed to that goal, to achieving that balance. Until now, however, we have never had clear authority to operate our young offenders' programs. Rather they have simply been operated under more general authority of The Family Services Act which is slated to be repealed later this year.

The youth model, as we call it, is our model for the young offender program. The youth model is one which recognizes youth as unique. Their needs are different from those of children and yet also different from the needs of adults. Therefore, our programs are geared toward meeting these special needs. We also believe in the importance of involving the family in the program whenever possible. This helps them to better cope with the needs of the youth when they are eventually released from custody.

Mr. Speaker, we also believe in involving the community in programs for our troubled youth. We want to make maximum use of community-based resources and service delivery. This is particularly important in programming for native youth. And I'm pleased to say that my department has recruited a total of 17 native-operated community homes out of a total of 34. This recognizes the need for native involvement in service delivery to native youth and provides positive role models for the youths as well. We will be continuing and expanding on these efforts.

We also want to take steps to prevent young people from being drawn into the criminal justice system. That is why we develop programs like alternative measures and early intervention services in partnership with the police. These programs are helping to keep our youth out of the courts and out of the jails by turning them around before they become serious offenders. Partnerships with the local police, the community, and non-government agencies are critical to the success of these programs.

If I may summarize, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this legislation is to establish clear and separate authority for the programs and services Saskatchewan operates for young persons, as I've just described, and to fill the gap when The Family Services Act is repealed later this year.

The new Act will specify the groups of young persons served -- yes, like young peoples defined in the federal Act -- 12- to 15-year-old juvenile offenders and 16- and 17-year-olds defined by the provincial law. This new Act will complement the federal Act. It will clarify the duties and powers of the provincial director. It will authorize the operation of and payment for young offenders' services and programs. It will allow development of educational and prevention services. It will enable development of innovative programs and services. It will permit regulations to be made for young offenders' programs and services and support services to increase the potential of the young persons of this province and to strengthen community involvement.

And so with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of An Act respecting the Administration of Young Offenders' Services.

Mr. Prebble: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a good deal of merit to many of the provisions in this Bill. Before we take a final position on the Bill, I would like to have the opportunity to consult with many of the organizations in Saskatchewan who are working with young offenders, providing support services to young people who will be affected by this Act. And until I have a chance to undertake those consultations, Mr. Speaker, I would like to beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 14 -- An Act respecting Certain Payments to the Meewasin Valley Authority, the Wakamow Valley Authority and the Wascana Centre Authority

Mr. Chairman: -- Would the minister introduce his officials?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sitting beside me is Mr. Doug Cressman, the deputy minister. Directly behind Mr. Cressman is Steven Schiefner and behind me is Don MacAuley.

Clause 1

Mr. Hagel: -- Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I will be asking a number of questions here this afternoon. My questions will be focused on the funding for the Wakamow Valley Authority in Moose Jaw. My colleagues, the members for Regina North East and Saskatoon Westmount, will want to address some concerns and questions to you regarding the authorities in the cities that they represent.

Mr. Minister, I recognize that what this Bill is all about, entirely about, is funding. That's obviously the question that is before us. And it is on that subject, obviously, that I will be addressing my questions. But first of all, I would like to simply ask for your opinion as to the ministerial responsibility for the authorities.

I commented when we were reviewing the funding for Wakamow authority last year in a separate Bill that I was very pleased to see that the ministerial responsibility for the Wakamow authority had been transferred from the Minister of Urban Affairs to the minister responsible for Parks. And I believe that that made sense, that that was transferring the responsibility to the minister who, by very nature of responsibilities and the department, would have a greater concern for the authorities to function as Parks, albeit in an urban setting.

(1530)

I was pleased to see that, and I know as well that the minister responsible for Parks last year was also pleased to see that. However, Mr. Minister, we now have really -- by coincidence I think more than anything else -- yourself seeing this Bill through the Assembly with the ministerial responsibility for the Wakamow Valley Authority being assigned to the minister responsible for Energy and Mines, which although there is geographical reasoning that could be used, certainly the Minister of Energy and Mines by his ministerial responsibilities has very, very little to do with parks. And obviously it is not a high priority for him.

Mr. Minister, I would appreciate knowing your perspective as minister responsible for Parks, your view as to whether it is most appropriate that the ministerial responsibility should be portioned out to other ministers, or whether it would be more appropriate, as was done last year, for the urban authorities, the urban parks, to have this ministerial responsibility assigned to yourself as minister for Parks.

I've made my position very clear. I think it should be in your hands. And I would ask, Mr. Minister, whether you would share my view and also to comment, Mr. Minister, whether there is any possibility that ministerial responsibility may be transferred back to yourself, sir, as minister responsible for Parks, and indeed I would urge that the government consider taking that action.

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- First of all, Mr. Chairman, to maybe address the last question first if I may. Of course, I don't make those decisions about what minister is responsible for what within government responsibilities. Not that I want to suggest that I wouldn't accept any responsibility that is given to me, but it's so hard to comment on something like that when you don't feel that it is your decision to make. So to say yes or no is really quite hypothetical, I feel.

I feel there are some good reasons why the particular ministers were put in charge of the individual parks, and I think you've sort of alluded to most of what I would, I guess, confirm in that . . . Well, first of all, I want to assure you that there still is a very close working relationship between

me and the other ministers who are in charge of each of the parks. But I guess the reason, like I suggested earlier and you sort of touched on it, is that these ministers are closer to those communities, they are more in touch and probably offer, if I may use the word, a better service to the parks involved and give it truly a local perspective and a local flavour to that responsibility.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, I'm not being overtly critical of the Minister of Energy and Mines, but I think in assessing the priority for the urban parks, one cannot ignore the results. And the results of the review that I want to make reference to in just a moment have not been good news for the urban parks, and I'm speaking specifically of Wakamow Valley Authority.

I do recognize, Mr. Minister, that it's not your decision to make. That ultimately lies with the Premier. I would simply . . . and I know that you can't . . . it's in a sense a bit of a sensitive question to ask, and I know that you're not in a position to say that you will be lobbying to assume ministerial responsibility for the parks. But I would simply want you to know, Mr. Minister, that within your own cabinet discussions, that I would urge you to lobby to assume ministerial responsibility for the urban parks. I

I think in the broader scheme of things of government administration that simply makes more sense; and I know that the parks to you, as minister responsible for parks, are a higher priority than they naturally would be in the course of daily events of the administrative responsibilities of the Minister for Energy and Mines.

Well, Mr. Minister, in reflecting then on Wakamow Valley Authority, it is in a sense unique among the four that are before us in this Bill. And just to review for a moment the history of the funding for Wakamow Valley Authority, you will be aware that it was established in 1981, and at that time there was a government commitment of funding of equivalent to two mills, two Moose Jaw city mills, of funding from the province.

At that time as well it was made clear to everyone who was involved with the Wakamow Authority in Moose Jaw that that was considered to be a starting point, and that obviously the operating costs of Wakamow Valley Authority would increase with time as the park was established and as it was developed. And largely it has been. They've done a superb job, due to the efforts of their staff, quite frankly as well due to the charitable efforts of contributions within the city, both private, personal as well as corporate, and the many volunteers, and the many volunteers who have contributed their efforts -- service clubs and otherwise.

As a result of that, what's happened is very predictable. The park has grown in its beauty and in its use, but the problem being that as the park is developed, the cost of maintaining the facilities, of maintaining the grounds throughout the park obviously, consequently increases.

And it was the intention when Wakamow Valley Authority was first established that there be 2 mills of funding, and that over a period of time that would increase up to the equivalent of I believe 5 mills of funding, putting it on par with Saskatoon and Regina.

You'll be aware as well then, that consequent to the change in government, that the formula has been put on hold and has never increased from the original 2 mills. In fact, in 1986 -- no, excuse me, in 1983 I believe, that it was reduced from 2 mills to 1.6 mills, and has stayed at that point. This would be the seventh year now that funding has been held to that point; and that in the Bill before us, essentially all it's doing is holding the funding equivalent to the level of 1986.

Now, Mr. Minister, credibility I think is important. We all understand this is not a major expenditure on the part of the Government of Saskatchewan, but it is an item of significant concern to many Moose Jaw people, not just those directly involved with the Wakamow Valley Authority. And as Moose Jaw looks into the future, through the '90s and to the turn of the century, it seems to me that key to the development of our city is the maintenance of an image and the services related to that of a city that's a good place to raise a family and a good place to retire. And obviously the presence of parks within the community are a key ingredient in quality of life, not only for those of us who live there, but for people to come to our city for any of a number of reasons. And for that reason, I consider, I've always considered Wakamow Valley Authority to be a significant priority for Moose Jaw through the eyes of the provincial government's relationships to our city. And so I was encouraged somewhat last year when we had the review of funding to hear the minister of Parks at that time say, and again I quote from Hansard of July 6, the minister of Parks who said:

. . . it is the intention of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture to carry out a comprehensive review of the funding formulas for all of the urban parks. This will be done over the next several months, and it will be done in consultation with the parks' authorities to ensure that their view will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Minister, at that time, I recognized that, and I applauded the minister for that statement.

In consideration of the same Bill when we were in committee then on August 18 -- and I quote from Hansard -- I directed a question to the minister at that time consistent with this reasoning. And again, I remind the minister of the question that I directed and the response of the minister of the day. The question I asked, and I quote:

Would you be of the view, Mr. Minister, that in light of, as well, of the fact that both again Wascana and Meewasin have third-party funding from the universities, and that Wakamow in Moose Jaw does not, in light of that fact as well as the lower level of mill rate funding from the province and the lower proportion of provincial funding, 40-60 versus 50-50, I simply ask if you would be of the opinion that the Wakamow Valley Authority is not being funded by the province in an equivalent manner to the other three development authorities in the province?

To which the minister stood in his place and said in response, and I quote:

What I have said to the officials is when we get down to negotiations and into discussion we should take that into consideration.

And again, Mr. Minister, I recognized and applauded the minister in this Assembly on the record for giving that consideration to the funding for Wakamow.

We wrapped those estimates on August 18, and I'll remind the minister again of a comment I made and the response from the minister of the day at that time when I said and I quote:

Well just finally, Mr. Minister, let me make it clear that I'm not asking for preferential treatment . . . but simply that Wakamow receive funding to a level that is equitable with the other authorities.

To which the minister responded in August 18 by saying and I quote:

Mr. Chairman, we'll do our level best subsequent to negotiations.

So having reviewed that, Mr. Minister, not only the history of funding for Wakamow, but the exchange. And I think it was a non-partisan high level exchange of opinions in this Assembly, where I presented my concerns in a non-partisan fashion, and I believe the Minister of Parks responded in a non-partisan fashion that reflected his bonafide concerns about funding for Wakamow. Then, since that time, the review took place and now we come before this Assembly with a Bill to provide exactly the same level of funding as last year.

Now I don't know if that's a reflection of the fact that the Minister of Energy and Mines is now the minister responsible and it's not a high priority, or if there was a bonafide review of funding and for some reason it was concluded that having done the review and taken into consideration the things that we talked about in this Assembly, it was concluded that everything was just as it should be which I find hard to believe in light of the minister's comments and in light of the history.

If I would ask, Mr. Minister, if you could outline to me just how did that review of funding take place and on what basis did you conclude or did the Minister of Energy and Mines conclude that the same level of funding for Wakamow Valley Authority this year as last year is the appropriate response from the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- First of all, I just want to make some general comments regarding a statement that the hon. member made, Mr. Chairman, and that's regarding the good work done by the Wakamow Valley people. And I certainly want it to go on record as well, as suggesting that I, too, recognize the great strides that they have made in that park area with the help of just everyone, and that includes volunteers and city and government as well as corporate sponsors. And I think, if anything, they should be commended for just the great improvements that they've made to developing their capital infrastructure in that river valley. We feel that Wakamow is probably years ahead of its planned development and doing really quite well in achieving just one . . . what we call an excellent infrastructure which

will be completed, we're sure, in the near future.

To address your more specific question regarding the funding review, and I think possibly I could answer part of the question quite quickly by telling you that, first of all, that the funding . . . the review of the formula is part of the bigger picture of reviewing funding for all three parks. And we can't just talk Wakamow here of course; we had consultations with all three of them.

And then to answer the other more direct question about, well, did it work, is it finished, is it not finished. I would like to give you a status on that because I believe you deserve it being an MLA from that area.

(1545)

I would confirm for you that a funding review by the former minister was set up as was committed to you during the estimates of last year. That funding review did get under way really quite quickly. And I have some figures here that I will just give you as details.

The review was established in September, 1989 and what they did was they got together with the urban park authorities, and first of all, established a terms of reference for this review. This review was initiated in October of 1989 and they went through all the necessary background research which included consulting with Urban Affairs, the urban park authorities, who of course are a very important part of it. And that was sort of the first formal step in that review process.

The review team then met with the urban park executives, separately, from the end of October to the middle of November of 1989. And at this time of course, the authorities, the park authorities, were given the opportunity to table any issues and concerns, recommendations that they had for this review process. And as well, the committee toured each park while they visited with these people.

As a result of this, a review paper was prepared in mid-December for discussion purposes. And the options ranged and you can . . . and I'm putting thoughts in their minds, but I think it would be safe to assume that they discussed all the different options that were available, from, as you suggest, to leave things as they were, to major revisions in the formulas and various equity considerations -- which would address your direct question -- were also considered.

As well about this time, I, as the minister who is sponsoring this Bill, at the same time of course, raised the issue for funding for urban parks during budget negotiations, and of course because of certain fiscal responsibility was not able without any resolution to achieve much success.

The options identified for discussion during those November meetings were presented to a meeting of the urban park executive directors in January -- January 23, 1990 to be specific. And as well, an executive summary of the review paper as well as the feedback of the urban park executive directors was presented to a meeting of the three relevant ministers who look after

the specific authorities. And we work quite closely within that framework, or within that information, and were not able of course to complete the review at this time, in time at least for the submission of any sort of a change in time for budget.

We are still in a process of reviewing those options with the individual ministers. There's still not a definite resolution as to how it will be resolved, but to assure the member that it is still very much a part of my concern and that we are working towards a resolution of this review progress with the hopes of completing it just as soon as we possibly can.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, listening to your response then, am I understanding it correctly by summarizing it this way: that you conducted your review and at the end of the day in making your case to the Minister of Finance ultimately for budget considerations, that the Minister of Finance in consultation with the Premier decided to hold the total level of funding to urban parks at exactly the same level as the previous year. And then consequently it was decided that because the funding level was being held the same as the previous year, that all authorities would be funded on exactly the same basis as the previous year. That's the conclusion I draw from what you say. Am I understanding that correctly, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- To a point. There are a couple of things I'd like to clarify. The study -- I wanted to emphasize the study is still not complete. We still have not resolved the details at all of this review process.

The only other comment I would like to make would be that I don't think it would be fair to suggest that primarily the Minister of Finance or the Premier or both of them are mainly responsible for this. Cabinet decides as a group, and it was a policy decision of cabinet, rather than blaming the Minister of Finance for something of this sort.

Mr. Hagel: -- So then, Mr. Minister, you're saying that it's everybody's fault over there. The minister nods yes.

Mr. Minister, then you say the review is still under way and that you anticipate it being done as soon as possible. Mr. Minister, can you give me indication as to when as soon as possible means. Are we talking July or August of this summer? Are we talking October of this fall? At what time do you anticipate that review being completed so that you're in a position to take action within cabinet to alter the funding formula for the urban parks?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I would just like to, Mr. Chairman, I would like to suggest to the hon. member that I predicted I . . . but of course you'd asked this question, and from my experience in life, and it's not just in politics -- I certainly don't want to suggest that it's all based on my short political life -- but earlier on in life I learned that it's very bad judgement to put a deadline on things when you're not sure of yourself. And if I could assure the member that we have a target date in mind and it's this fall, if that would suffice, I would certainly like it to because when you deal with so many different interest groups, it's so hard to

predict just how things are going to work out in your negotiations.

I would also while I'm standing like to pass some other information on to the hon. member which may be of interest to him as he works with his . . . and I'm sure he does have communications with the Wakamow Valley people. I would like to pass on some other financial information on to you in that through the work -- and I'd like to give the credit to the Minister of Energy and Mines, the member for Thunder Creek, who is the minister in charge of this authority -- that besides the statutory amount that is given to the park that in 1990-91 the Environmental Youth Corps will have a budget of \$14,000 and New Careers Corporation will also be spending \$195,000 in that park, for a total of \$209,000 which is additional funding that will be provided to that park area. And I just wanted the hon. member to be aware of that.

And as well, the employment development program through Social Services will also be providing in this current year \$22,223 as future assistance to sort of get them through this year as we work towards our conclusion to the negotiations.

Mr. Hagel: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. I do recognize and am aware of that and do appreciate that for this year. However that doesn't negate the concern for statutory funding which is reliable on an ongoing basis as opposed to year-by-year grant, which is the circumstance this year.

The Wakamow Valley Authority, and certainly the citizens of Moose Jaw, would prefer to see the funding on a statutory basis so that it can be planned for and anticipated and that the administration of the authority could be conducted in a . . . using good management practices by being able to reliably plan for the development of the park and the maintenance of the park on a reliable basis.

Mr. Minister, I recognize that sometimes it's a little difficult to set an exact deadline, and I'm satisfied with your target of this fall. I recognize that what we're doing here is exchanging concerns and that you're not going to, as a result of our debate this afternoon, change the formula and up the funding for Wakamow Authority. I'm not anticipating that, although if you do have that urge this afternoon, Mr. Minister, let me urge you to go with the flow.

But having said that, Mr. Minister, I think the key thing is that your target is sufficiently in advance of budgetary considerations for the next fiscal year, and so that the consideration of changing the funding formula will be completed and in place to allow you to make a change in the 1991-92 budget year.

Mr. Minister, would it be unreasonable, or can I ask at the very least, that serious consideration for funding for 1991-92 be at the very least at the formula level that your government inherited in 1982, and that being the equivalent of 2 mills. I know that that doesn't put the Wakamow Valley Authority . . . even that doesn't put Wakamow Valley Authority at par with Chinook in Swift Current or Meewasin in Saskatoon or Wascana in Regina. But at the very least, Mr. Minister, as we attempt to make these changes to

get equitable funding for Wakamow Authority, it would be meaningful to the Wakamow people to know that serious, serious consideration is being given to at least renew the funding to 2 mills.

Perhaps also in the context of the fact that next year Wakamow celebrates its 10th anniversary, it would be appropriate in that year, Mr. Minister, to renew the funding to the 2 mill level.

Mr. Minister, would you consider that to be a reasonable expectation in a review of funding formula for Wakamow for 1991-92?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Mr. Chairman, as the hon. member is aware, we have a committee that is in the process of coming to some decision on their negotiations. And I want to assure him that I will bring these concerns to their attention.

I think to recommend that figure would sort of prejudice their negotiations. And as an example I could suggest to you that what they may come at may be lower, but on the other hand it could be higher. And I don't think I want to prejudice their negotiations, but I think that it is my duty to bring these concerns of yours to their attention, certainly.

Mr. Hagel: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I would urge you to do that. I would also remind you that the decision in the end is a political decision. It's made by the government, and it's a political decision in the best sense of that word. And direction from the minister obviously is significant.

I have no trouble going on record as urging that 2 mills for 1991-92 be an appropriate level of funding on the 10th anniversary of Wakamow, as well as amending the formula over a period of time. Perhaps it can't all be accomplished in one year, but past 1991-92, increasing the level of funding from the province in support of Wakamow so as to try to arrive at a position of equity with the other urban authorities.

It's significant, I believe, that I have never stood in this Assembly and asked to have preferential treatment. All I have ever asked is to be treated in the manner equivalent to the other urban parks. And I recognize that Wakamow from day one has not had equivalent funding.

(1600)

And again, I remind you of the history. It was established . . . 2 mills was established as a start-up point, recognizing at that time that its development was done, that the cost for maintenance would increase and that it would be necessary as a provincial commitment to the urban park to increase the funding formula over a period of time.

So I have no difficulty whatsoever, Mr. Minister, going on record as being fully in support of funding for 2 mills, 1991-92, and then increasing the funding level after that point with an objective of arriving in the equity position for funding from the province of Saskatchewan, putting Wakamow in an equity position with Meewasin, Chinook, and Wascana, taking into consideration that some of those have other funding inputs from other

sources as well.

Mr. Minister, can I ask then whether that approach to funding is something that you would find objectionable or that you would see as being worthy of your support, and I guess through you, to the Minister of Energy and Mines. Although I do hope, as I said before, that the authority will come back to you. Do you see that as being worthy of support as a long-term plan for the funding for Wakamow Valley Authority?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I think I understand what the member is saying, and equitable treating of the parks is something, I think, that we both can agree on. I think that's only fair, if I can use that word once more. And certainly I intend to take the member's comments under advice.

Mr. Hagel: -- Mr. Minister, as we were talking, the member from Swift Current accuses me of wanting to steal money from Chinook for Wakamow.

Mr. Minister, number one, if the member from Swift Current would like to volunteer that in the interest of equity, I would applaud her as well. But as a matter of fact, I've never even asked for that. Just as funding does increase, and surely it must at some point, that the special inequity for Wakamow be given special consideration.

I believe I just have one question before . . . one final question, Mr. Minister, before turning the floor over to my colleagues from Regina North East and Saskatoon Westmount.

Mr. Minister, the funding from the city of Moose Jaw budgeted this year is \$188,419. In addition to the 2 mills funding from the city of Moose Jaw, there is a commitment to match private contributions up to a maximum of an additional \$25,000. Just in conclusion, Mr. Minister, what is the dollar commitment for funding for Wakamow in this fiscal year, as contained within this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Mr. Chairman, the statutory allotment for Wakamow Valley for 1990-91 is \$98,301. And as I had mentioned to you earlier, in conjunction with that the Environmental Youth Corps in 1990-91 is spending \$14,000, and New Careers Corporation is spending \$195,000, and the employment development program will put in an additional \$22,223 into the funding of Wakamow.

Mr. Hagel: -- Well, thank you, Mr. Minister, for that information. I simply want to conclude then by encouraging you within your ministerial authority to do everything that you can to correct the inequity in funding for Wakamow Valley Authority and within your own cabinet deliberations. I am confident that you will do that and I wish you every success at achieving that objective.

And, Mr. Chairman, having said that, I'm happy to turn the floor over to the member from Regina North East.

Mr. Chairman: -- Why is the member from Redberry on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Gerich: -- Can I have leave to introduce some guests, Mr. Speaker?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Gerich: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This afternoon I'd like to introduce 21 students from the Vawn Elementary School -- it's in the north, extreme north-west corner of my Redberry riding -- grades 5 and 6. They're with their teacher, Louise Baillargeon; chaperons, Shirley Godbout and Marilyn Russett and Dennis Baillargeon.

I'd like to thank them for coming to the Assembly today. It's not very often we get visitors from Vawn down to Regina to partake in democracy in action. I hope that you find this afternoon's travel down to the legislature educational, and I hope that you have a safe trip home. I will be meeting with you at 4:15 for pictures and then drinks later on and any questions.

And I ask the members of the legislature to please make my guests welcome.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 14 (continued)

Clause 1 (continued)

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Chairman, I have some questions I want to ask the minister -- not many. But as a member who represents a constituency in Regina and has a great appreciation for the Wascana (Centre) Authority's work and the park that has a reputation across all of Canada, and indeed North America, a park that was man-made on a prairie, I am growing in my concern about the continuing deterioration that has become so evident on this man-made park which continues to have this reputation.

This concern, Mr. Chairman, has been raised before, and it has always been my hope and the hope of my colleagues that something would be done to address the problems which are causing this to happen. And the problems, Mr. Chairman, basically are underfunding which is resulting in understaffing, and therefore all the work that needs to be done is not being done.

I have not always lived in the city of Regina. I came here in 1972. And I can remember, Mr. Chairman, that at that time and for many years afterwards the Wascana authority area was almost perfect in the way that it was looked after. I can't say that any more. And as in so many things it's the result of the neglect by this government because its priorities have been somewhere else. Not saying that many of those priorities aren't important either, but on this one I think it is time, and I hope the new minister will take the time to address what's happening and maybe use some influence on the rest of his cabinet colleagues to begin to bring about some changes.

I am told, Mr. Minister, that one of the things that's been happening, instead of looking at what do we do to make sure that the standard of this park is as high as it has been known to be, is as is in the style of your government, there is a continuing look at how we can cut costs.

Is it true, Mr. Minister, that there has been a gentleman by the name of Wolfgang that has been hired or at some time had been hired to find out where you could cut even more of the costs? Who is this individual? Has this individual been hired? And is he still doing the work that he's been employed to do?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Mr. Chairman, I wanted to first of all suggest to the hon. member that I share his concerns for the Wascana Park area. Just as a matter of interest, and this has nothing to do with the Committee of the Whole, this appointment was lined up approximately a month ago at another function.

But I spent an hour this morning with Mr. Lorne Scott and we toured the whole Wascana area. Certainly in an hour, you don't cover that whole beautiful area, but we certainly . . . he was very hospitable and showed me basically the whole park area. And I want to assure the hon. member that things are still looking pretty good there and I think that's a real tribute to the staff there. Everything is beautiful. It's green, it's groomed, where tilled it's necessary. To put in a nutshell, I was extremely impressed and I agree with the hon. member. We should all be very, very proud of Wascana -- the park where man planted every tree.

I have a great deal of admiration for the staff there, and I think that they're still doing an excellent job under their present budget amounts.

In answer to your specific question, I do not have . . . That is under the jurisdiction of the Wascana Park authority. The member who would be able to answer those questions, and I would suggest that maybe you could possibly, in writing, address questions to the hon. minister of families who is the minister in charge of the Wascana Park authority and who sits on the authority and would have the information regarding that gentleman. I just don't have that information.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- We're beginning to understand what the problem is. Well, Mr. Minister, that minister is here. He just finished sitting beside you and giving you some advice. Will you call him over and have him advise you.

You're here responding for this Bill. You're piloting this Bill through the House. You're responsible for this Bill. This Bill is the Bill that determines the funding that is going to be provided to the Wascana authority and the other authorities.

Don't give me this malarkey that somehow you can't answer this question, because if you don't want to answer this question, Mr. Minister, there is something that you're hiding. And the member from Wascana is hiding something as well, because there is a reason why this gentleman has been

hired and I'm asking you: tell us what the reason is. Otherwise you shouldn't be piloting this Bill through here. That's why you're the minister, and that's why you're here today. Now will you stand up in your place, do the responsible thing, and tell us what the function and the responsibility of this individual is?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I would like to inform the hon. member that the gentleman that he inquired about does not work for the government, has nothing to do with the government, and it's as simple as that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Well, Mr. Minister, the government has representation on the Wascana authority. The Wascana authority has hired this individual, whether it's on contract or what not. So, Mr. Minister, you are the minister in charge of this legislation. This legislation determines whether the Wascana authority is able to function because it determines the funding. I ask you again, Mr. Minister, what is the function of this Mr. Wolfgang, if that is his last name? What is his role? What is he doing?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I'd like to inform the hon. member that our responsibility is to provide funding to Wascana park authority that is made up of members of

Dgovernment -- of provincial government, members of the city of Regina, and the University of Regina. Now if he wishes, I will take notice of that question and go to the authority and get that information for him.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Minister, can you explain to me, since you're the minister who's responsible for this Bill -- and I assume a responsible minister, although I'm beginning to have some doubts -- why you would not have been prepared to answer those questions today? Can you explain that, Mr. Minister? Why have you not briefed yourself adequately so that you could answer the questions today when they're asked?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I'll inform the member once more that I'd be extremely happy to go to the Wascana authority and get that information for him.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Well I guess we're going to have to accept that, Mr. Minister, although I think it's really a sad reflection on yourself as a minister, and I really regret to say that, because that's not the opinion I've had of you, sir, as a minister of the Crown.

But I think in this particular situation, Mr. Minister, you're covering up for the minister, the member from Wascana, and that's why your government has arranged to have you pilot this Bill through the House instead of the minister responsible, in this particular case. I won't pursue it any further because it doesn't matter what we do here, obviously you're not going to answer the question.

But I will take you up on the offer, and I will write you a letter. In fact I shouldn't have to because it's on the record here today. I will formally now make a request, Mr. Minister, for the record, that you will provide me

a letter which outlines what this person is doing, what kind of retainer he's on, what kind of costs, who he represents, and what his function is. I will also ask you, Mr. Minister, whether that report which he is to be preparing has been completed and if you will provide it for me if it is completed.

Now I have one more question, Mr. Minister. I hope you can answer this one. That's what you've got officials here for who know all this. It's not their fault. They know the answers, it's just that you don't want to provide them.

My question is: what is the state of the Wascana conservatory or the Wascana greenhouses? Is it the intention of the Wascana authority or you as a government to do away with those greenhouses, or can you make a commitment to this House today that they will continue to operate and be in place?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I think for the same reasons that I gave you earlier, I will certainly take notice of that question and once again commit myself to getting you that information.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- Mr. Chairman, I've long been a supporter of Wascana Centre Authority and obviously Meewasin Valley Authority, and by implication, the Wakamow Valley Authority.

However, I have a disappointment in the ministers that have assumed the responsibility for these authorities over the last few years. I believe the problem began in earnest back in 1983 -- May 1983 -- Bill No. 32, assented to on May 20, 1983, the essence of which was to strike out 5 mills of statutory support for the authorities and substitute therefor 4 mills.

The minister in charge, Mr. Paul Schoenhals, the minister of Urban Affairs, in a news release at that time said, Saskatoon city council passed this week a resolution seeking reinstatement of the previous funding formula for MVA (Meewasin Valley Authority), which was reduced in this year's budget. Schoenhals said, "It's too late to change that now even if he wanted to, but it could be a budgetary consideration next year." Next year being 1984-85 budget year, Mr. Minister.

Now, Mr. Minister, I'm disappointed by the kind of support we've got from ministers like Mr. Schoenhals and the member for Mayfair who's had some responsibility in this area and the member for Melfort who has also had some responsibility in this area. And I don't want to be disappointed in you, Mr. Minister.

I see that the previous minister, according to your comments today, has established the committee that's looking into the review of funding for the authorities.

During your comments, Mr. Minister, you mentioned that there was an executive summary on funding which was subsequently referred to the three authorities. I wonder, Mr. Minister, could you make that executive summary available to me.

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I've been informed by my officials that at this time that's an internal working document. It has to be discussed and eventually the . . . I guess once the considerations are summarized into some sort of a policy, we will be circulating that information to the authorities once a more formal . . . well once a decision is made on this.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, could you identify more clearly for me the nature of this executive summary. Was it an executive summary of the study made by the group on funding and was subsequently submitted to the authorities or what was the flow, the direction of flow on this executive summary you referred to earlier?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- My officials inform me that what the summary was . . . or the executive summary that you refer to was, was a list of the options that were available to address the funding problem, the different options that . . . options, directions, whatever word you wish to use, that could be taken in arriving at a conclusion.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- And could you specify, Mr. Minister, the direction of flow of this executive summary? Who prepared it, and where was it submitted to?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- To address your question regarding the flow, parks branch prepared the options. It was discussed with the executive directors and their input was received and that's where it stands at this time.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- So the executive summary is being considered by the Parks department?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Yes, it's back in our hands now to digest all the input that we received from those executive directors.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- And I take it then, Mr. Minister, this is the report that you have specified to the member from Regina North East that you would have available by this fall some time. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- The analysis . . . and I think you're referring to the member from Moose Jaw North. Correct? Yes. We will analyse those results, and we want to go back one more time to the executive directors before they will become more of what we call public knowledge.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- And I take it, it follows -- does it, Mr. Minister? -- that the executive directors will discuss this with their boards and the separate authorities?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I of course can't speak for the policy of the authorities, but I would assume that would be correct.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- I believe I have a final question, Mr. Minister, and it has to do with the implications of this Bill as it relates to funding and Meewasin Valley Authority -- to those two things, funding of Meewasin Valley Authority. If this Bill was not passed, what would be the

implication of that?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- If the Bill does not pass, it would mean an increase of \$104,243 for the 1990-91 year.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- So in conclusion, Mr. Minister, then the funding for Meewasin Valley Authority would go back to the original statutory funding of 5 mills. Is that a correct interpretation of what you said?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Our interpretation is that it's frozen at 4 mills. I think you suggested 5. To the best of our research here, it would be 4 mills.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- Well perhaps another supplementary question, Mr. Minister. If it is in fact frozen at 4 mills, why is this Bill necessary? Or does this Bill not deal with the funding?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- What this Bill does is it removes the automatic escalation in the Act and freezes the funding at the '86-87 level.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- Final question, Mr. Minister. Can you explain the automatic escalation? Could you outline what it is and tell me what it means in dollars and cents if it were allowed to kick in, if I may say that?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- The Bill has an automatic 3 per cent escalation clause in it. That would be the escalation. The Act has a 3 per cent automatic escalation.

Mr. Brockelbank: -- Mr. Minister, that's a 3 per cent annual escalation?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- That is correct.

Mr. Prebble: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, as you will know, a significant portion of the Meewasin Valley Authority is in my constituency. And I want to tell you, sir, that many of my constituents are getting frustrated with what has now been a five-year freeze in funding by your government to the Meewasin Valley Authority, Mr. Minister.

And I want to remind you that back in 1984 your government was providing \$810,690 to the MVA. By 1986 you had increased that to 830,650. And, Mr. Minister, it hasn't changed since that time. And inflation during that time, as you well know, has been in the range of 30 per cent. So in effect, Mr. Minister, you have implemented a very significant cut to the budget of the Meewasin Valley Authority, and the result this year, sir, is that the authority is having to delay a number of projects that it had planned to undertake, several of which were in my constituency.

One example, for instance, is that Cosmopolitan Park in my constituency was to be made wheelchair accessible this year and that's not going to be possible as a result of your budget cuts. The Cranberry Flats area just

outside of Saskatoon in the Meewasin Valley Authority was to be restored this year. Those plans have had to be cancelled as a result of your budget freeze.

Now, Mr. Minister, you're in effect . . . your five-year freeze is, in effect, eroding the ability of the Meewasin Valley Authority to undertake its mandate, and my question to you is: how do you, in light of the very high use that the Meewasin Valley Authority gets -- for instance, 400,000 people a year use the trail system alone -- how do you justify, at a time when inflation since 1984 has been in the range of 25 to 30 per cent, that you have only increased the budget of the Meewasin Valley Authority by two and a half per cent? Can you explain that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to make the member aware that the fairness exists; we feel the relative fairness exists between Wascana and Meewasin.

An Hon. Member: -- That's not the question I asked you.

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- I know, and I'm going to continue my answer. I think also as well, I think that if you go through the park area, granted no one is a greater supporter of the parks of all Saskatchewan than I am, and I have been through the Meewasin Valley park area, and I still think that, as I suggested earlier to the member from Regina North East, things are I think in excellent shape there. It's a tribute to the people who work there. They're putting out; I think they've got their heart into the job, if I may use that expression.

And the funding I think is fair when you consider the fiscal responsibility that has to take place in this province. You have to make priorities. We all can't have what we'd like. And at a time when money is a bit on the scarce side and if we choose to maybe spend a dash more on agriculture or on health or on education, that is the choice we made. And we asked for the co-operation of these people in bearing with us as we work through these hard times. And I want to assure the hon. member that I do get letters suggesting support with that type of a philosophy.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 14 -- An Act respecting Certain Payments to the Meewasin Valley Authority, the Wakamow Valley Authority and the Wascana Centre Authority

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Family Foundation
Ordinary Expenditure -- Vote 31

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I will be brief. I've just a few brief comments, and then I have about three or four questions that I'm sure that you'll have no difficulty with.

I would like to thank your officials for coming back again. And last day we did talk about the importance of healthy families and some of the challenges facing families, the state of the Saskatchewan economy and the impact of that, the poor performance of the economy on Saskatchewan families and communities. And I'm not going to go into any detail on that, but I think we both agreed, Mr. Minister, that issues of unemployment and poverty and hunger and out-migration and bankruptcies for small-business people, family businesses and so on is very, very . . . these are very important issues.

And I guess one of my observations from your responses the other night was that while you acknowledge that these are important issues, I got a little bit nervous that in one of the areas of your mandate that I consider to be the most important, particularly at this point in time with the . . . what I would consider to be hardships on Saskatchewan families in all of the areas in which I outlined, I felt a little nervous that you're not prioritizing as much as I would hope in a critically, analytical way the impact of government policies on families in Saskatchewan.

And that while you're working with families at the community level -- and you've been visible at the community level and that's very, very important -- that macro-policies of this government, economic policies, financial policies, taxation, etc., that those policies impact on thousands of Saskatchewan families, and that it's very important that you be satisfied that those policies are in the best interests of Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan communities.

Now I happen to believe that many of the policies of this government, such as privatization, have in fact put more stress on families by creating unemployment and so on. And so I know that we will agree to disagree on that. But I felt a little nervous that while on the one hand you acknowledge the stresses on families, you're not prioritizing very highly the impact of your government's policies on families that create incredible stress not only on families but on communities.

And so I would urge you to give . . . not be a cheer-leader for government programs that aren't working, but that you seriously give consideration to honestly analysing those policies. And I think you have a good mandate. I said that the other night. I commend you on the mandate that has been developed in your Bill. And I would say that if you have a will to seriously look at the policies and their impact on families, then you will

make a difference as the Family minister. And in that regard, I wish you luck.

And I know that you're aware that there is a relationship between unemployment and poverty and hunger and lack of social and recreational opportunities and erosions of supports to families that we've seen through some of the cuts to family support agencies, for example, turning away over 700 women from transition houses in 1989. That there's a relationship between those dynamics and family and community and social problems, as there's direct relationship between those two. That there is a relationship between 300 street children in Saskatoon or in Prince Albert, which we saw in The Provincial last night. There's a relationship between street youth there and street youth and gangs in North Battleford -- 200 street youngsters in Saskatoon and some 1,500 here. There's a relationship between that and unemployment and poverty and hunger.

And I know that you know about that relationship and that you will address not only the problems at the local level which is also important, because you've got to respond to the immediate need and in that regard I commend you on the Outreach workers and your support of the Outreach workers in North Battleford. But I also plead with you to . . . in many ways, healthier and better policies at the macro-level in terms of government social policy will correct a lot of the problems that you're trying to correct at the local level.

And so I would suggest that . . . you've got a very good staff and that they will give you good advice in seeing a relationship between policies that aren't working -- economic, financial, and social problems and you'll be able to address those with your colleagues.

(1645)

Now you know, as well as I do, that Saskatchewan families are worried, they're worried about the security, they're worried about opportunities, they're feeling vulnerable. We're not going to get into numbers about how many are unemployed, but you know you're not satisfied with the unemployment rate in the province and you're not satisfied with the level of poverty.

But Saskatchewan families are looking for hope, and I think they are looking to you more than anything else. I think right now, as the Red Cross study indicated, Saskatchewan families are looking for hope, hope that real problems will be dealt with. And the major hope they have with your government now is that you in your capacity as Minister of the Family will be able to provide some hope for them, which to me means a shift in direction in a number of the policies of the government, but they're giving you the benefit of the doubt and putting some hope in you.

It's been my observation -- and I'm just about finished, then I've got some questions for this -- it's been my observation in terms of some of your public responses, as I've kind of observed you talk about solutions, and I've gone over some Hansard copies and some of the paper articles, and you talk about solutions, you talk about going for a walk with your children.

You talk about talking to your kids, the importance of talking to your children. You talk about the importance of nutrition and budget counselling. Mr. Minister, I agree with that. I agree that those are very important things to do.

You say, for example, too that . . . you're quoted as saying, at least, that basically all family problems can be resolved over the back fence. Now I'm not sure what you mean by that, but in the same way that, yes, you need to talk to your neighbours and you need to . . . you know you can exchange what works in terms of parenting children and you can talk about your anxiety and stress, and good neighbours are an important support. But those aren't the only solutions to improving the life for Saskatchewan families. Those don't take the place of having a meaningful job with an adequate level of income to support your family.

Going for a walk with your hungry kids really doesn't solve anything. And I'm not suggesting that you're simplifying the problems here, but I've gotten some feedback that some people feel that your messages are a bit too simplistic.

Now the other one that disturbed me a little bit is that you indicated, again you're quoted as saying that communities should help feed the hungry so that they understand the problem. Now on one level I wouldn't disagree with that, but I think that Saskatchewan communities, particularly the 12 communities that have food banks, clearly understand family hunger and family poverty and children going without enough food, and in fact have tried to respond to meet the needs of their community.

So I think communities are showing that they understand the hunger problem and that they're trying to be good community citizens. And I think that . . . I hope that what you're not doing there is kind of shifting your responsibility. I hope that's not the message. I don't think that's the message that you would be trying to convey. And so I assume that your comment was taken a little bit out of context there, and I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt on that.

But basic needs, fundamental basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter for families -- I know you know that's important. I know that you know that jobs for families are important. I know that you want to keep young people here. You know that security is important, you know that employment is important, and you know that it's very important for families to have a sense of dignity, for parents to have a sense of dignity if they're going to feel good about themselves and have the confidence and the security to parent and cope with the things that families have to today.

So you know those things are important, and I think that what we need is a bit more sensitivity by some of your front-benchers to some of those real problems facing real families. And I'm putting my faith in you that you will be able to talk to the Minister of Health, because last night I think he made it clear that he's not that sensitive to the hunger problem as it relates to the well-being and health of Saskatchewan people. So you do have the opportunity to make a difference, Mr. Minister, and I know that you want to, and I think that you will.

Now, Mr. Minister, in terms of questions, I've got a couple of categories, and if this is in order. And first of all, the first category I would like you to send me over the next week or so, if it's convenient, this information. Because your department is small -- I obviously wouldn't ask you for job descriptions of all the employees in the Public Service Commission, for example, which you're also the minister to -- but I would be interested in having a list of the responsibilities of particularly your field staff, just so I can get a better sense of what . . . and the qualifications as to who you have working for you, what their qualifications are, and what the nature of their work is if that would be in order.

I would also like to know, based on the amount that was budgeted last year for the Family Foundation, how much of that you spent. Again you could send that to me if you wouldn't mind. And I would like that broken down, if I could, as best as you could do that. I would like to know, based on the current budget request, 1990-91, a bit of a breakdown of other expenses as to just what that means. And the fourth thing I would like, based on last year's expenses, is a list of your travel -- where you went and a cost breakdown of those trips if possible.

If those are in order, I can move on to . . . I only have three or four specific questions. If those are in order . . . I'll give you a chance to respond to that. If those are in order, then I'll move onto my other questions.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Yes, I'll be happy to provide you with that information.

Just a couple of responses. I certainly agree that it's important that this department work across government, and we've tried very hard to do that and will continue to pursue that. And I must say that I have had good co-operation from all the ministers.

The deputy steering committee on family policy, which was supported by a working committee, has been established and has done a lot of work up to now. That includes the Family Foundation who chair it, Social Services, Education, Health, Justice, Women's Secretariat, SADAC (Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission), Executive Council, Culture, Multiculturalism and Recreation, Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat, Consumer and Commercial Affairs.

And they work on six policy areas: working and family life, education and schools, family life, family living skills, family violence, community recreation, culture agencies, and municipal government, and of course hunger.

As to that comment that you quoted me as saying in the newspaper, having been in the business of reporting for some years, I know sometimes how reporters only take one phrase out of a two-hour session and use that as their key phrase. I won't try to justify that statement because I made it, but in a much larger context, and I think you understand that.

As to the communities involving hunger, I feel that it is important that communities know what's going on in their community, that people in the community understand what's going on, which is why I've tried very hard to build a partnership with the communities and with the cities and with the provincial government in terms of answering and responding to some of these questions. And I think the partnership is really the key word there.

But I will give you the answers to those first questions.

Mr. Pringle: -- Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the I guess concerns that all of us have, and certainly I know that you will, is the situation in the North regarding the unemployment and poverty and alcoholism and substance abuse. We know from the Murray commission report that the North is basically a third-world status regarding some of the diseases and certainly regarding the level of unemployment -- some 90 per cent for young people, for example, under the age of 25.

I guess one of the concerns that I really do have, and I know that my northern colleagues do as well and I think all Saskatchewan people will, is the fact that in the North your government -- and this occurred before you were the Minister of the Family -- but your government removed the subsidy, the transportation subsidy on food. But your government left the transportation subsidy on alcohol in the North, which is a major problem in the North. The North does not need easier access to cheaper booze, they need cheaper access to food.

So, Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you if you would make a commitment to lobby whoever you have to lobby to reverse that, remove the subsidy on alcohol to the North, and put that subsidy onto food subsidies for northern residents. Would you -- because I assume you're concerned about that contradiction there -- would you make a commitment to lobby the Minister of Northern Affairs or Finance or whoever is responsible to make that change?

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Yes indeed I will. I don't disagree with you on that issue and it's one that I would like to pursue.

Let me point out that in 1986 social assistance food allowance rates were increased by \$25 per person per month in the communities of Black Lake, Stony Rapids, Uranium City, Wollaston Lake, Kinoosao, Camsell Portage, and Fond-du-Lac to help cover higher food costs in communities not accessible by road.

But my answer is, yes I will.

Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Minister, could I just ask you, have you raised that question in cabinet and are you in a position to give us -- particularly to assure the northern residents today -- that we will see a change in government policy very quickly on that matter?

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Well I'm not in a position to make that commitment today. You have my assurance, however, that I will consult with my cabinet

colleagues on that issue.

Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Minister, I will take your word at face value for now and raise that . . . if I don't hear anything within the next couple of weeks from your government before this session ends, I will raise that again because that has got to be dealt with. That's a very serious matter; that is a very significant concern. And we cannot leave this session without that issue addressed, Mr. Minister.

Now, Mr. Minister, the Saskatoon Youth Centre, as you know, is attempting to deal with the issue of street children, street kids, so-called, some 2,000 based on the most recent study. That centre is progressing very nicely. I know that that project has submitted a proposal to your government and that they feel that you have been supportive to that proposal, and they appreciate that. And I want to acknowledge that.

I would like to ask you on their behalf today in terms of the Saskatoon youth project, first of all if the money, the 200,000 that they're requesting from the government, will in fact be forthcoming. And as I said, they're optimistic that it will. And I hope that you can answer that today.

And secondly, would you anticipate that that will be a yearly guarantee rather than sort of 200,000 this year and it's up for grabs next year? Because the stability of that program, the board sees as very important. So is the money forthcoming this year? And secondly, do you anticipate there will be an ongoing commitment for that money?

And you don't have to advise me of your government's role, that is Social Services or Education or Health as it relates to that project, because I'm very aware of that. And I'm really concerned about . . . or my interest really is whether or not the money will be forthcoming or not.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- I agree with you on the validity of the project. I think it's a good model for youth in crisis and I assure you that it is under serious consideration at this time.

(1700)

Mr. Pringle: -- It's under serious consideration. Do you know when you would anticipate a decision being made? Because as I understand it, the commitments from other levels of government have now been made . . . and the big commitment that needs to be made by the provincial government, and very clearly the provincial government has got to be part of the solution. And when would you anticipate that this decision will be made? Say, before the end of the month?

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Well it's really difficult to put a time commitment on it. I do understand the need for it and I understand the urgency the people of Saskatoon feel about it. Really all I can tell you is that it is under serious consideration. We even discussed it today.

And by the way, talking about northern Saskatchewan, I'll be in La Ronge on

Monday morning to meet with a variety of people about some of the things you've talked about for one of our family consultations.

As to Saskatoon, its under serious consideration. That's all I can tell you at this time. And I don't want to put a time commitment on it because I know you'll hold it to me. But I assure you we want to get it done if possible, just as soon as possible.

Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Minister, I want make clear I'm not interested in pinning you to a commitment of a week or two weeks or something like that, because the main thing is that the money be forthcoming and the project feels that you have been supportive to it.

Could I ask you if you're optimistic as the Minister of the Family that the 200,000 to the youth centre will be forthcoming?

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- I met with a group of people involved with the Saskatoon downtown youth centre just the other day and they understand my position and I agree with you. I'd like to get her done. It's an important issue.

Mr. Pringle: -- Okay. The deputy minister, I appreciate her commitment and I thank her for that. Deputy Premier, sorry. Sorry to downgrade you there.

Mr. Minister, two more questions. The \$740,000 that we've talked about many times in the House . . . and I'll preface my comment or my question by saying that I clearly feel that that is such a pittance. And I'm really concerned that with all the starving children and hungry kids in Saskatchewan, that 740,000 that we're not sure is cost-shared or not -- some of it might be, some of it might not be -- is really pitiful. And I know that you must be concerned about that small amount.

The status of that 740, I found got more confusing the other night. And I would like to say I've heard you say that . . . well the throne speech said that the government planned to eliminate hunger. The week after or a few days after, you said, no we only mean reduce hunger. The member from Wilkie says that we can't afford to eliminate hunger in Saskatchewan which baffles me in the food basket of the world. But that's what he said.

You have indicated that in the past here, because I've gone over the Hansard copies, that that money will not be directed specifically to feed hungry children -- in other words, put food in their tummies. Then you've said that some of the money will go towards feeding hungry children. Some of it will go towards street gang support workers and other needs as communities define them.

You've said that it won't be cost-shared in this House and then you've said that, well parts of it might be cost-shared. So the status of that is confusing. What I would like you to send to me, Mr. Minister, if you could send to me -- I'd let this go for now -- but if you could send to me a listing of the commitments to date, projects, and amounts of any moneys that have been approved from that 740. And I'd like to know when you send

those to me, whether or not there's cost sharing by a project-by-project basis.

I would like to know secondly, the criteria for making the decisions to spend that money, a listing of the criteria. I would like to know if you have any specific plans right now to direct some of that money, or whether the communities are going to define how the requests are going to come in to you and if that's going to be the basis. But if that's . . . and I see you shaking your head. So I'd like to know then the first two questions, and you can send those to me and I would appreciate that.

The only other point I would like to make, Mr. Minister, is that . . . because we talked about this the other night, we talked about cuts to youth where you have over a 70 per cent unemployment rate in Saskatchewan and I know that you're not happy about that. Since 1986-87 we have cut \$7.5 million to the Opportunities summer employment program. Now in this budget . . .

An Hon. Member: -- It's not true.

Mr. Pringle: -- No, that is true. In this budget you have cut a half million dollars from that program. You have also cut a half million dollars from the public service program which you're the minister of -- so a million all together. And I'll admit that you've put back another half a million in the environment, and I'll give you credit for that, but the net result, the net result is that you've cut 500,000 in two places, and you put back 500,000 in the environment at a time . . . so for a net reduction to student employment of some half million dollars.

Now you're saying that isn't true. I would like you to tell me why that isn't the case because, as near as I can figure out, that's been the net. The net reduction to youth employment programming has been one half of a million dollars at a time when our youth are unemployed in high numbers and having to leave the province.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Yes, I'll give you that. I'll give you . . . you want that information, I'll give it to you. You want the information regarding the cost-sharing potential for the \$750,000, \$740,000, and also having to do with youth employment for the summer. I'll give you all those answers.

Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much.

One last question. As you will know, that we've got in Saskatchewan today 54,000 child care spaces -- 5,400 child care spaces, 5,400. Well I want you to know this though because you're the Minister of the Family and this very much impacts on the inability of working women particularly, single parents, to access good quality child care.

You also will be aware because you have to lobby this, Minister, in child care, if you're really serious about supporting families -- 5,400 spaces, the second lowest in Canada of any province in child-care spaces. This government has frozen the child-care subsidy for eight years in a row. Now that's on public record -- that's public information. And you know the

importance of child care to the ability of working women, because 70 per cent of women who are working full time live in poverty. Eight years of child-care subsidy freezes.

I would like to know if you have lobbied or intend to lobby the Minister of Social Services to make sure that first of all, child-care spaces are increased. I'm not talking about private child care and profit-making child care as per your last year's Bill; and secondly, whether you will lobby him to increase the child-care subsidies that have been frozen for eight years.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Well those are the types of issues that I discuss with the Minister of Social Services quite often. And we have of course increased spending in child-care spaces, you know, substantially since 1982. But I will . . . 28 per cent increase . . . 48 per cent, the Minister of Social Services tell me, in child-care spending. But I will continue to consult with the Minister of Social Services on these issues.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2 agreed to.

Vote 31 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1990
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Family Foundation
Ordinary Expenditure -- Vote 31

Items 1 and 2 agreed to.

Vote 31 agreed to.

Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to thank the minister and his officials for the co-operation and having to come back three times because we had bits and pieces on these estimates. And I appreciate that very much and I wish the minister in his foundation success in trying to deal with the major problems facing Saskatchewan families -- and the officials. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- I also want to thank the hon. member, and I appreciate his support. I also want to thank . . . And the good questions. I also want to thank my officials, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:13 p.m.