

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next, move:

That there be an immediate public convening of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections and that the committee consider but not limit itself to determining the following: the amount of money expended on postage, letterhead, and sundry expenses involving the February 15, '93 letter to New Democrats from the member from Yorkton; immediate restitution of the above expenses from the member personally or the NDP constituency association; and immediate and unequivocal apology from the member to the public of Saskatchewan and the Legislative Assembly.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Assembly, four guests seated in your gallery: Robert Cosman, who is well known to all of us as our Legislative Law Clerk; and his son, Douglas; and Douglas's two grade 4 friends, Caley Woods and Kevin Ulmer.

The first thing I asked those three young men was why they weren't in school, but they assured me that their teachers were having an in-service today, so their presence here was quite legitimate.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them here this morning.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Crofford: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House an old friend of mine who's seated in your gallery. She left Regina in 1991 after winning the president's medal as the top graduate at the University of Regina and she's now continuing her studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

When I asked her for her comments of what's going on in eastern Canada, I couldn't repeat anything she said without implicating either ourselves or the members of the third party. So I'd like to you to join me in congratulating Jill McKeen and welcoming her.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To you and through you to the House, I would like to introduce seated in the east gallery, Mr. Gary Shail of Regina. This is Mr. Shail's first visit to the legislature and I would ask that the members welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly a young fellow sitting up in the Speaker's gallery, my son, Carson McPherson. He's known as "Sniper" around the hockey rink in Shaunavon and please welcome him.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: -- Yes, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Kinistino to introduce to you and through you 28 grade 6 pupils from the Aberdeen School. They are accompanied by their teachers, Kevin Lester and Janise Brace. And if my notes serve me correctly, there are also 11 chaperons in the bunch. So I think most people are away from Kinistino these days viewing what we're doing in the legislature firsthand. I would like to welcome you and I hope you have a pleasant stay.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Energy Policies

Ms. Stanger: -- Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Today I'm happy to tell you about the attitude of oil executives in our province today. According to a recent editorial in *Oilweek* magazine, oil executives are being very complimentary about Saskatchewan's energy policies. I'm glad to say there has been a rapport develop between citizens of the oil patch and our government.

This is good news for the Cut Knife-Lloydminster constituency. This has come about because of two basic reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker: fiscal realism and a willingness to consult before acting. As a result of this communication and cooperation, the net present value of drilling wells in Saskatchewan has not decreased but increased.

The advancement of science and technology plays a critical role in this particular situation. The trick here is to identify emerging technologies and nurture them appropriately, without wasting any money. A recent study by the Canadian Energy Research Institute said that 86 per cent of the province's conventional oil reserves are not recoverable with current production methods. This means that recovery techniques will determine whether Saskatchewan has a viable oil industry well into the next century. With today's prices and technology, established reserves equal merely 10 years production at present rates.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Next statement, please.

Saskatoon City Land Exchange

Mr. Koenker: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to publicly salute and to recognize wonderful cooperation between two levels of government. And I'm talking of the cooperation between the city of Saskatoon and the two successive federal governments, actually, with respect to the land exchange that took place in my constituency of

Sutherland-University.

This is a wonderful thing for the city because it basically involves a two-for-one swap of land that sees the city benefiting by getting proper land for orderly urban development, and sees Agriculture Canada getting land suitable for the continuation of their agricultural research in Saskatoon.

The facilities at Ag Canada in Saskatoon do internationally recognized work in the breeding of oilseeds and forage crops, as well as insect and disease control. And there are some particular experiments, I understand, with respect to non-chemical pest control that are very interesting.

And so I applaud all those who were involved in this settlement. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Whitewood Curling Play-downs

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment today to just recognize an event that's taking place in my constituency through this weekend.

Mr. Speaker, the intermediate ladies' provincial play-downs are taking place in Whitewood, being hosted by the Whitewood curling club. And I'd just like to acknowledge the fact that many rural communities have been excellent hosts over the past number of years, regardless of the event they are hosting. And I want to commend the community of Whitewood and their curling club for their efforts and the hard work in organizing and hosting this event this weekend.

I'd also like you to recognize the fact that one of the ladies' rinks happens to come from the community of Kipling. The rink is skipped by Marlene Geis; the third is Mona Lynn Stender; second, Joan Balogh; and lead is Joanne O'Sullivan. And I just wish them well in their endeavours, and I just want to acknowledge that today. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Lions' Provincial Curling Championships

Mr. Flavel: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Starting tonight in the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood we also have a curling championship going on. The Lions and the Lionesses of Strathburg are hosting the Lions' provincial curling championships -- consists of eight Lions teams and four Lionesses rinks from all over the province that'll be competing for the title. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, they will enjoy each other's company and have a fine banquet on Saturday night and for the visitors they will get to know a little more about the variety the province has to offer. This is a social and a competitive event but we all know the excellent work the Lions clubs of Saskatchewan do for our society. Provincially, of course they are a major contributor to the eye bank, but each local club contributes in its own way to its own community.

The Strathburg Lions, for instance, maintain the ballpark and the recreational facilities, as well as helping with a variety of other community projects. I want to congratulate Ron Miller,

the district leader, and especially the hard-working team of organizers and volunteers led by Darryl Reider and Ray Gritzfeld, and to all the participants I want to say, good curling. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Education Week Activities in Melville

Mr. Carlson: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As my colleague from Saltcoats constituency remarked a couple of days ago, this week has been designated Education Week in Saskatchewan.

Today I would like to inform this Assembly of some of the exciting things that have been going on in the Melville constituency this past week. On Wednesday I had the pleasure of attending an oratory competition at St. Henry's Elementary School in Melville and I think many of us will remember our first address in the Assembly and sort of the trepidation we had over that and I'm sure we'll all sort of note the benefits that can come from such oratory participation of our students.

I would also like to briefly comment on another event this week taking place at the Parkville school in Melville . . . Parkview School, sorry, in Melville. They had displays and presentations, crafts, native ball games. And one class built five life-size tepees. There was a display of famous people in Saskatchewan, one of which I would like to note was of our Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like, through the Assembly, to congratulate the children who participated in various Education Week activities in the province. And I would also ask that in keeping with Education Week of Home and School: Making the Connection, that this Assembly congratulate the parents and educators of those children, for they hold the key to our province's most valuable resource, our children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Retirement of President of Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to today extend my acknowledgement to the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) who's retiring today. And I want to acknowledge the work that Mr. Bernard Kirwan has done. Mr. Bernard Kirwan is a reeve of the RM (rural municipality) of Gull Lake and has resided in my constituency, just within the boundary of my constituency.

He first became involved in municipal councils the same time I did -- in the early '70s. And I worked together with him quite extensively. He became a sub-unit director with the SARM, then moved onto being a director, and then later on president of the association. I believe he has provided the people of Saskatchewan with leadership in the municipal business, and I want to acknowledge him and his work.

Along with him, his wife Zella and their family, I want to say that they need to be commended for the responsible way they handled that association. And I also want to say that just in

case you thought perhaps his politics was leaning to the left, he nominated me in 1986 and I appreciate that as well. And I think that it showed the quality of the kind of personality that he had, that he didn't demonstrate any kind of flexibility but stayed the course as a president of SARM should. He directed SARM in the way that they wanted to go. And I want to acknowledge that and his work to the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Wheat Price Adjustments

Mr. Whitmore: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I, as many other grain producers in the province of Saskatchewan today, would like to commend the Canadian Wheat Board on the price adjustment on the initial payments announced yesterday for many grades of wheat.

Many grades have increased yesterday by 27 cents a bushel; the feed wheat and the soft white wheats have increased by 13 cents a bushel, putting into the province of Saskatchewan approximately 80 to \$100 million. And as producers in this province want to receive their money from the market-place, that it illustrates the Canadian Wheat Board is doing the job that it should and they're receiving their money when they need it, when they deliver it at the elevator. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskPower White City Office

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question today is for the minister of SaskPower. Mr. Minister, on Monday, March 7, on behalf of an individual from Southey, I asked about the lease held by SaskPower for White City district office which is closing. Your response to this question was, and I quote:

... the question is phrased on the premiss that the White City office is going to be closed. The White City office, it's my understanding, is not going to be closed.

Mr. Minister, I have a photocopy of SaskPower's in-house publication entitled, *On-Line*, dated December 24, 1993. The document states: there has been an agreement to close the White City and Punnichy offices.

Mr. Minister, is the White City office to be closed or not? And why have the employees of SaskPower been advised through their newsletter that that is going to be closed?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- I thank the hon. member for his question. And certainly there must need to be some clarification on this. It's still my understanding that the White City office is not closing. And I don't recall from memory what it says in the employee newsletter. I'd be happy to check this out further, but I want to be on the record that it's my understanding that the White City office, it's my understanding, is not closing.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

SaskPower Consultant Hiring

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have another question for the minister on another topic.

Mr. Minister, the other day we heard that the Premier . . . we heard the Premier admit that your government is already light years ahead of the former administration when it comes to making patronage appointments. Today we learn that his lead continues to widen.

Mr. Minister, can you confirm that the former NDP nationalization guru, David Dombowsky, has been given a personal services contract with SaskPower. And can you tell us how much you'll be paying Mr. Dombowsky, including any special benefits, services, and expenses he may be receiving?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- I thank the member for his question. It is true that there is a short-term contract with David Dombowsky to do some work at SaskPower. I'd want to question the member on what he views as patronage and what he views as qualified work. And that was the issue brought up in the House the other day addressed to the Premier, and I think the Premier addressed it very ably.

I would want to point out that Mr. Dombowsky started with the provincial government back during the days of the Ross Thatcher government, actually in the Provincial Treasury department which would be the Department of Finance as we know it now. He served as the deputy minister of Finance. He served as the deputy minister of the Department of Industry and Commerce. He's also been the president of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. And as to whether or not he's a New Democrat, I'd have to assume he is because you guys fired him.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'll ask the question in very simple terms so you can understand it. How much is David Dombowsky being paid by SaskPower? How much, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- The contract is a short-term contract. I believe it's for six months. I don't have the exact dollar amount, but I'd be happy to provide that to the member. I'll take notice to that portion of the question and respond to the House as soon as I have the information.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dombowsky apparently has been hired to open up international markets for SaskPower. That's the same David Dombowsky who almost single-handedly shut down the international potash markets through your government's potash nationalization in the 1970s.

It's also the same David Dombowsky who was the business partner of Jack Messer in a consulting firm in Manitoba and managed to suck \$640,000 out of the Manitoba NDP government during the 1980s.

Mr. Minister, isn't that somewhat of a conflict of interest -- Jack Messer hiring his former business associate and partner? Did you express that concern to Mr. Messer, Mr. Minister, or is this just another of your long lines of battles with Mr. Messer that you've lost?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- Well I actually prefer the sparring with you in the legislature, but I'll try and answer your question.

I did in fact address this very issue that you bring up. I'm convinced of Mr. Dombowsky's credibility in the international potash market. It is Mr. Dombowsky's job, on a short-term basis, to draw together a business plan as to how we would market the expertise that we have at SaskPower.

This doesn't mean he's going to go out and start international travelling. He's going to be in Saskatchewan drawing up a business plan. We need to identify what the technology is that we can market internationally. And we need to know which countries there are around the globe that need our technology.

And while identifying those countries that need the technology, we need to know which countries can also pay for it, because humanitarian causes are very great throughout the world. It's not the mandate of SaskPower to fulfil that role. And if this makes good business sense we're going to do it; if it doesn't make good business sense we're not going to do it. Because this government uses common sense.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to direct my next question to the man who runs the Government of Saskatchewan. But since Jack Messer isn't here I'll direct it to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, this is exactly the same kind of patronage appointment your government promised to eliminate if elected. You restated that commitment just the other day. But your actions simply don't square with your words. You've appointed 37 former NDP candidates and MLAs in the past two years since you took office, and then you appoint the former nationalization tsar and Jack Messer's business partner.

Mr. Premier, I'd like to quote from your party's democratic reform document:

Another disturbing practice which has raised . . . controversy in the past two years has been (your) government hiring with personal services contracts.

The growing number of high-profile patronage and otherwise questionable appointments has increased public cynicism.

Mr. Premier, how does your appointment of David Dombowsky square with that statement, which is the written policy of the New Democratic Party?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- Well I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, why the member from Kindersley would stand and try and destroy the credibility of very well qualified people in this Assembly.

I would tell you that Mr. Dombowsky has served as the deputy minister of Finance in this province. He's served as the deputy minister of Industry and Commerce. He's served as the president of SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation). He served as the president of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. In fact I would say that Mr. Dombowsky has a proven track record in establishing new businesses.

When the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan came into existence, the very first year of the presidency and every year after his presidency, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan was profitable. In fact in its third year of existence the company made a profit of \$167 million.

I'm surprised that the member hasn't asked about Mr. Dombowsky sooner because Mr. Dombowsky has been doing work for the government previous to this coming to your attention. And what he's been working on is some of the deals that the former administration put together and has literally to this time saved us tens of millions of dollars that otherwise those people would have squandered under their previous administration.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Complaints against Saskatchewan Government Insurance Adjusters

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI. Mr. Minister, I've been contacted by an SGI client, Gary Shail of Regina. Mr. Shail has a major complaint about SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) adjusters. The first adjuster assigned to his family's case which deals with a sewage back-up damage, spoke disparagingly of Mrs. Shail. He insulted this woman because she had not cleaned up her own basement quickly enough for the adjuster. Mr. Minister, the Shails complained about this adjuster, and to the credit of SGI, were assigned another adjuster. Mr. Speaker, this adjuster then accused the Shails of fraud.

Mr. Minister, are SGI adjusters allowed to speak to clients in this way? If I forward the adjusters' names over to you today, will you look into this situation?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, I will be looking after this case as soon as the member from across brings it over to me. I'm surprised that he didn't bring it over, you know, prior to question period and that type of thing. But I'll be looking into this case.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Shails have talked to your ... to SGI about this and not received any satisfaction. Mr. Minister, what is your policy on this? You took notice of it but you didn't explain whether you thought it was allowable for SGI adjusters to speak to their clients in this manner.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, these are very specific issues that the member from across raises. And I think that it is highly unfair for him to bring forth these questions unless he gives notice to me. And he's now given notice in this public forum and I'll indeed look into it a little bit very, very, very carefully and deal with it right after.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Obviously the minister doesn't know any of the policies of SGI. Mr. Minister, the second adjuster assigned to the Shail case did far more than accuse them of fraud; he had their insurance policy cancelled. And his reason for this action was, and I quote: because they were tired of unemployed bums. End of quote. They, one can only assume, refers to SGI.

Mr. Minister, this adjuster cancelled the Shails' policy. Will you review this case and have the adjuster disciplined for his comments and the treatment of the Shails?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, the policy of SGI is pretty straightforward -- it's to provide excellent service to the people of the province. And I'll be looking into this case, you know, as the member has described it.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. One final question for you. Mr. Minister, I strongly believe that any public employee represents the government and serves the people. And the specifics of this particular case distress me. There were changes made to the human rights Act in the last session, and this change was the inclusion of the following, and I quote: discrimination against place of origin or receipt of public assistance.

Mr. Minister, will you refer this whole matter to the Human Rights Commission for investigation, based on racial and socio-economic discrimination?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Well the fourth and last time, you know, to the member. I think he hasn't understood yet, you know, that indeed our policy is one of providing fair and good service to the people of the province. And indeed if the facts bear out as you present them, we will correct the situation. And indeed we'll be looking into it right after this case.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Farm Bankruptcies

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, last year 188 farmers went through bankruptcy proceedings. Recently a Court of Appeal challenge, *Mulatz v. the TD (Toronto Dominion) Bank*, had an outcome of very serious concern to farmers.

Can you tell us, Mr. Minister, under the current Saskatchewan Farm Security Act and the corresponding federal bankruptcy legislation, what effect the declaration of bankruptcy might have on a farmer who will try to get back into farming through the leaseback program? In other words, is there any prejudice arising from legislation that would prevent farmers from qualifying for a leaseback arrangement?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We're aware of this decision which was handed down a couple of weeks ago. And we're urgently considering the implications of it and urgently considering what action this legislature might take in response to the decision.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. In spite of commodity prices and grain prices coming back somewhat, the albatross around the necks of the agriculture community really is farm debt. And some

farmers, as you know, will never recover from the economic set-backs of the 1980s.

In your 1991 election platform you promised, and I quote from page 7 of that platform document: the NDP government will:

Work with farmers . . . to design a debt restructuring program to keep (farmers) . . . on the land.

Mr. Minister, what is your government proposing? And can you tell us whether you plan to include amendments to the farm securities Act which will protect farmers who are forced into bankruptcy from being excluded from the leaseback program?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the member opposite, the member I believe is talking about the number of bankruptcies in the province. And I agree with her that 166 bankruptcies in a farming sector is too many. And I want to tell her that it is down from last year 13 per cent, as it is down in Manitoba some 13 per cent, while it's up in Alberta some 10 per cent.

The reason I believe it's down in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because of some things this government has done, like the AG 2000, the ag strategy to protect the farm family; the six-year leaseback program; ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) working with individual farmers on an individual case; \$20 million into a farm equity fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker; developing a new farm support program that's taxpayer friendly; and changes to crop insurance. So yes, 166 bankruptcies are still too many, but we are working with the farm community.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Minister, in fact it is 188, not 166 as in the paper. And that's 48 per cent of the total in all of Canada. And even though you say that they're down in Saskatchewan, we have 13 times as many bankruptcies as the province of Manitoba and twice as many bankruptcies as the province of Alberta.

The results of this particular recent court challenge puts many, many farmers at the mercy of the banks and farm credit agencies. And if a farmer is deemed to have unsupportable farm debt and is forced by ACS or lending institutions into bankruptcy, then it is important that conflicts between provincial and federal legislation don't take away these farmers' options in order to get back into the leaseback program.

Mr. Minister, what is your government prepared to do to ensure that farmers are not denied access to the leaseback program if they're forced into bankruptcy?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member opposite: as I mentioned before, the number of bankruptcies is still too high in the province of Saskatchewan. It is down from 1991 when the previous administration was there. And at that year the bankruptcies were 224; 1990 they were 189; this year, and my figures state, to the member from Greystone, that it is 166.

We will continue to work with the farm community. The

six-year leaseback is a very important program and it's used extensively in my area in the north-east part of the province; the announcement of a \$20 million ag equity fund -- these things are important to the farm community. They diversify. Specialty crops up 17 per cent.

But I want to tell the member opposite, the party that is now the federal government and the Minister of Agriculture for Canada says in November he wants to make cash advances interest free. He pledges to immediately work on farm support programs so they are more generic and less product oriented. And he will raise the concept of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Next question.

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister, I shall pose the question again for people in this province who are farm families who have been forced into positions of bankruptcy, often told that this is the position they should be taking, and then turning around and discovering that they have no option to be involved in the leaseback program. And that has come as a great shock to these people.

Would you please . . . you are responsible for your government and their decisions. What are you prepared to do for these people who have been denied access . . . are being denied access into the leaseback program?

They feel that they've been forced into bankruptcy with no options; they were not told that this was then going to be the result. What steps are you taking specifically in order to assist these individuals so that they can stay in farming?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you to Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Justice says that we are looking into that case and we are. But I want to say, what are you doing, Madam Member from Greystone -- what are you doing in talking to your counterparts in Ottawa who on one hand say an interest-free cash advance, on the other hand cuts Crow by 5 per cent? What are you doing with your federal minister, Madam Member from Greystone?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Rural Emergency Health Care

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, last Friday night during a peewee hockey game in Arborfield, one of the Arborfield players, Marlin Frisky was slammed into the boards. Unfortunately Marlin's head and shoulder suffered most of the impact. Afraid of severe injury

or paralysis, the local emergency number was called.

You know the former hospital at Arborfield is now a wellness clinic, Madam Minister, so when the emergency number was phoned it was picked up at the local care home. The RN (registered nurse) at the home said she'd be over as soon as her shift was over.

Madam Minister, there was one RN and one nursing assistant manning the home and the RN could not leave the home to tend to the hockey player convulsing in the arena.

Madam Minister, is this your idea of emergency medical attention for rural Saskatchewan people, when people have to wait until the next shift begins before they can get medical help?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Mr. Speaker, I will have someone look into the situation that the member opposite has raised, and if indeed there's any foundation to his facts, if corrective action has to be taken it will. But my experience has been on cases of this nature that the member opposite and other members in the legislature have not been correct in their facts.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, the nurse arrived after the boy was carefully moved to the dressing room and did what she could while awaiting an ambulance. The game was delayed. Finally the third period was played. The players cleaned up and had a hamburger after the game.

Madam Minister, after all of this time the opposing team then boarded their bus for home and the Meath Park coach said that they met the ambulance that was supposed to be picking up Marlin Frisky right outside of Nipawin. That was about one and a half hours after Marlin was slammed into the boards -- one and a half hours, Madam Minister.

Do you still believe the people of rural Saskatchewan have adequate emergency medical care? Do you honestly believe that, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the members opposite tend to exaggerate the evidence. They tend to take things out of context. And if the member opposite was truly concerned about what was happening, he would have come to the Department of Health, told us of his concerns so that if they were found legitimate, an immediate action could be taken. But he's not concerned about what is occurring because he chooses to grandstand instead of working cooperatively with the district board to make sure that services are in place.

The member opposite is not interested in the safety of the people at the community level. What he's interested in is trying to score political points as opposed to working out -- if there is a glitch in the system -- working it out with the district board. If he was serious about patient safety, he would have attempted to do that already instead of grandstanding and distorting what actually takes place.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Madam Minister, the only thing you seem to be concerned about is whether or not someone is critical of you and your department, not in the care of the people of rural Saskatchewan, Madam Minister. That's the thing that you're concerned about, is criticism.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- It takes about 40 minutes for the ambulance to reach Arborfield, leaving immediately from the nearest hospital, and another 40 minutes to get a patient back to the hospital. Madam Minister, Arborfield would like to buy their own ambulance and be able to transport emergency patients and avoid an hour and a half wait for emergency care for the people of their town, but they can't.

Why aren't small communities like Arborfield able to do what they feel is best for their own communities? Why isn't Rocanville -- a town that already has an ambulance and EMTs (emergency medical technician) -- able to transport patients in order to save lives, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Well the member opposite knows about the Rocanville situation and the fact that this is not a certified ambulance under regulations. That is an example of how they distort the evidence. They come forward here with untruths in the legislature, Mr. Speaker. It's evidence of the fact. He knows full well that that is not an ambulance under the regulations. That's an example, and I pick up on that one point.

The fact is the member opposite is not concerned about solving these problems. He's only concerned about scoring political points. And he's prepared to involve himself in scare tactics across this province by distorting information and coming forward with half-truths.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, you might like to know, we have spoken to the mayor of Arborfield who is very upset about this incident, to Marlin's coach, to the father of another hockey player, and others attending the game, Madam Minister. And every one of the individuals said they were scared, Madam Minister, scared about the next time that something like this happens, this type of emergency that might result in a death.

That's what they said, Madam Minister, that they were scared that it might result in a death next time. They

are willing to talk to anyone who will listen to their concerns, Madam Minister, anyone at all. And I suggest that you give them a call, Madam Minister. Will you personally meet with the mayor of Arborfield and a group of concerned citizens up there to discuss the situation and come to some kind of remedy to that situation -- that serious situation, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Mr. Speaker, I have said right at the beginning that we would look into this. I've also told the member that if he was genuine with his false concerns, that he would have already met with the chair of the district board to seek a solution because they will be implementing any solutions that may be necessary. If the member opposite was genuine -- if he was genuine -- instead of grandstanding in the legislature, he would start working with the people in the local communities who have the authority . . .

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

SaskTel

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to report to the legislature today with the results of SaskTel's second issue of credit TeleBonds. As the members will know, SaskTel has a long tradition of technological leadership, from being the first telephone company in North America to provide private-line telephone service to all its customers, to its ground-breaking work on the communication system for the Channel Tunnel, the Chunnel.

A story that is perhaps less well known, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the corporation's continuing efforts to cut its operating costs so that it can continue to deliver high-quality service in the competitive telecommunications market-place. The latest issue of credit TeleBonds is an important piece of that strategy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For the past few years SaskTel has been working to reduce its long-term debt. Why SaskTel's debt should concern Saskatchewan people is the same reason the province's accumulated debt should concern all of us. The more debt, the higher the interest payments, and ultimately a higher cost of doing business.

In 1990, SaskTel's debt was 72 per cent of its equity. By 1992 this debt ratio was reduced to 63 per cent and that figure will be even lower for 1993. SaskTel officials report that as a result of debt repayment, the corporation saved more than \$13 million in interest payments in 1993 from the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, this debt repayment is coming at a time when the corporation is aggressively cutting long-distance prices so that Saskatchewan residents can receive the benefits of living and doing business in Saskatchewan. In fact SaskTel customers received about \$13 million in benefits from rate reductions in 1993 and will receive \$19 million of benefits in 1994.

(1045)

And rather than paying down its debt through price increases, SaskTel is paying down its debt through cutting operating costs

and raising funds within the province. Credit TeleBonds help fulfil this latter goal. This unique investment allows Saskatchewan customers to receive a competitive annual rate of interest -- six and a half per cent -- directly credited to their telephone bills.

I'm proud to report to the legislature that SaskTel customers strongly responded to this investment opportunity, purchasing about \$35 million in TeleBonds this year. This is truly a positive initiative for everyone in the province; Saskatchewan people benefiting through lower telephone bills and SaskTel benefiting through raising money within the province of Saskatchewan, paying down its long-term debt and reducing its operating cost.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say on behalf of the government of Saskatchewan and SaskTel that I want to commend Saskatchewan people for their strong support of this credit TeleBond issue and also SaskTel, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We commend the government for carrying on with the program that was initiated by the previous administration, that being the SaskTel credit bonds. This was a worthwhile program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it allows the people of Saskatchewan to directly invest and benefit from the Crown corporations in this province.

When I look over and listen to the minister's address today, I find it quite humorous in spots, where the minister talks about clients of SaskTel receiving a \$13 million benefit from rate reductions. And indeed, the people of the province of Saskatchewan have received a rate reduction on long-distance charges; but the minister goes on further to talk about paying down the debt -- but he's doing it, Mr. Speaker, through price increases in the basic rates for telephones for every person in this province through fee increases on every type of service provided by SaskTel other than long distance.

Your jacks have gone up, Mr. Speaker, in your home -- every item touched by SaskTel is costing you more now under this administration than it was previously. The only one that has come down has been the long-distance and that has happened because of competition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the private industry across this province.

When we're talking about these SaskTel credit bonds, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wouldn't it be nice, though, if this government would allow the same kind of opportunities, say with SaskEnergy. If it's a worthwhile program in SaskTel, why not the other Crown corporations also, Mr. Deputy Speaker? While we commend the government on the carrying

on of this program, we're concerned they are not carrying on in other corporations also. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 32 -- An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Labour Standards Act.

The division bells rang from 10:49 a.m. until 10:57 a.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Romanow	Pringle
Thompson	Calvert
Wiens	Renaud
Simard	Murray
Tchorzewski	Hamilton
Lingenfelter	Trew
Shillington	Whitmore
Anguish	Flavel
Johnson	Scott
Carson	Crofford
Mitchell	Wormsbecker
MacKinnon	Stanger
Penner	Kluz
Hagel	Knezacek
Bradley	Keeping
Koenker	Carlson
Lorje	Langford
Lyons	

-- 35

Nays

Muirhead	Britton
Neudorf	D'Autremont
Martens	Haverstock
Boyd	McPherson
Toth	Bergman

-- 10

The Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 23

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 23 -- An Act to amend The Land Titles Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as my colleague indicated the other day, we don't have any real objections to this Bill. But I would like to make a few comments on the Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. Order.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that the original amendments that were introduced in 1992 would make it easier for mortgages to be registered through the use of standardized forms. However, there were a number of groups that were concerned at that time and felt they hadn't received enough consultation and the amendments were put off.

But the fact that they've had a chance to review the legislation and they've been in contact with us and indicated that the amendments that have been introduced through Bill 23 are certainly amendments that they can live with.

It's worth noting that the government indeed . . . and I commend the minister for having taking a little extra time just to consult to make sure that everyone felt that they had input and certainly had presented their views, and their views were adhered to, at least listened to and observed.

The amendments, I understand, ensure that the use of standardized forms does not interfere with the registration of or action against mortgages in other ways. I understand the amendments also clarify and set in law that people who have registered or caveated interests on a piece of land, such as someone who owns the mineral rights, have the same protection as the person who owns the actual piece of land.

Generally, Mr. Speaker, I understand it improves the protection of rights of property owners, which is certainly nothing we could ever object to. I also understand the Act is retroactive to 1906 in order to provide equitable enforcement to all mortgages held in the province. So that isn't one older form of mortgage existing alongside a new, improved mortgage that has different and substantially improved rates.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we have sought legal opinion. The responses we have received to date indicate that they feel that it is a substantial improvement. And we look forward to ongoing dialogue and debate in Committee of the Whole on this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 24

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 24 -- An Act respecting the Convention on the Law Applicable to Trusts** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, here again we do not have any significant objections to this Bill. We find the wording though may be quite complex because it deals with

international laws and conventions. Its intent, however, is fairly simple and unobjectionable.

The concept of trusts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not recognized by civil law systems such as France, so if a trustee of a Saskatchewan trust were subject to an action in France, the trust would be treated as his personal property. We feel this is obviously unfair but we think it can be corrected by having Saskatchewan join the international trust convention as proposed by the legislation.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that six of the nine common law provinces in Canada have enacted similar legislation, so the Bill brings Saskatchewan law into line with the accepted practices of trust law in Canada.

Since this extends the protection and property rights of actual owners of the trust, we would have no objection to the Bill, and here again, Mr. Speaker, after having sought opinion and received responses, we look forward to dealing with the Bill in committee.

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

Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 25 -- An Act to amend The Trustee Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just a few short comments before I again suggest we move this Bill into committee.

We believe that Bill 25 is definitely an important Bill. This Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, allows for the family of the deceased to pay for whatever funeral expenses may occur, out of trust funds.

I'm not sure if anyone in this Assembly has run into a problem where families are dealing with funeral expenses and may not have had access to the trust funds, and I think I'm getting an indication that some family members have.

So it can be a frustrating experience for families to have to deal with someone who has passed away and the sorrow at that time and the anguish, and then to also find that all proceeds and finances are held in trust and can be tied up in legal battles for a while. So I believe what this Bill is doing is just speeding up the process.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, when we're looking at it we will find that the Bill certainly addresses some of the financial hardships that families have experienced over the years because of the fact that there haven't been specific guidelines.

I understand Bill 25 will eliminate some of this hardship, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I recommend we send it to the Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 26

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 26 -- An Act respecting Frustrated Contracts** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, here again we don't have a lot of comments and we're not going to tie a lot of time up in second reading or adjourned debates on this Bill. However I must admit that as the minister had indicated when he reintroduced the other Bill, the wording in the Bill is certainly something that when you first hear it catches your attention.

It seems to be bit ironic that the minister and his colleagues would be bringing forward a Bill dealing with frustrated contract since I think there are many people across the province of Saskatchewan who are frustrated with this government and some of their actions. It seems to me that it's too bad this Bill wasn't made law before GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts and civil service contracts and other contracts were broken by the province of . . . present government.

But then again, Mr. Speaker, all the members opposite have to do is to continue the ministers' rights above anyone else in the province; to continue to place ministers above reproach and give them sweeping powers.

Mr. Speaker, many of the Bills brought forward by the members opposite, and we've seen over the past time, have ensured that decisions made by the minister responsible may not be challenged by the court of law. And on that aspect we would really challenge the minister to come forward and be a little more open and accountable as the government has indicated.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we feel that some of the real questions and debate we want to enter into will be more appropriate . . . we can get into more of a dialogue with the minister in committee. And I would move that this Bill move through to committee.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 12 -- An Act to amend The Ombudsman Act

The Chair: -- I recognize the Minister of Social Services and ask him to introduce his officials to the committee and make any remarks that he might wish to make.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce associate deputy minister, Neil Yeates; and our senior policy analyst for Social Services, Bonnie Durnford; and Madeline Robertson, Crown solicitor from Justice, and welcome them here.

I can maybe make a few comments, Mr. Chairman, on this Act. Just a few comments said in the context. The government recently announced a series of initiatives under the child action plan for children. These initiatives are the result of much consultation and planning both within and outside government, and underline the importance we place on prevention and support services to children and families.

Establishment of the child advocate as an independent voice for Saskatchewan children and youth is a key component of the action plan. Consultations have made clear that Saskatchewan people want a Children's Advocate who will be a voice for children and youth in crisis, will have a role in community education and prevention, an advocate who is independent of the control or influence of any government department or minister, and is visible and accessible to the community.

As a result, we are proposing implementation of a Children's Advocate to be associated with the Office of the Ombudsman. Many children have natural advocates, Mr. Chairman, responsible adults found within the confines of their immediate and extended family. The Children's Advocate is not intended to replace the role played by these individuals.

(1115)

I want to emphasize as well that the advocate will have no jurisdiction to intervene in family relationships or conflict between parents and children. The purpose of the advocate, Mr. Chairman, will be to protect the interests of children and youth receiving services from the government, including those in foster care, group homes, and young offenders' facilities, and to assure that these services are provided in an adequate way and appropriate.

We strongly believe that the Children's Advocate must be able to function without any political or outside interference. Therefore the Bill provides for the appointment of the advocate for a five-year term by the Lieutenant Governor in Council upon the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. This will ensure that the advocate remains independent of any government department or minister; public accountability will ensure through the provision of annual and other reports to the legislature.

In addition to resolving disputes, conducting investigations, and advocating on behalf of children in receipt of government services, the Children's Advocate may conduct research to improve the programs available, to provide advice to any minister responsible for service to children.

The Bill provides the advocate with the authority and responsibility to become involved in public education programs, to promote the interests and well-being of Saskatchewan children and youth.

The Children's Advocate will play a significant role in ensuring the rights of Saskatchewan children and youth, that they are protected. To recruit the most suitable candidate, we are

committed to holding a public competition, Mr. Chairman. The advocate is expected to work in partnership with families and communities to protect and care for children. By building upon the spirit of community involvement which naturally exists in Saskatchewan and which has been encouraged through initiatives through Saskatchewan's action plan for children, both individuals and the community at large will be natural advocates for Saskatchewan children and youth.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It'll be agreed at a later date, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and welcome to the officials. I look forward to our dialogue this morning and I know some of my colleagues and I believe some of the Liberal MLAs have some questions as well.

In general, Mr. Minister, as you've heard in our second reading speeches, we're not really opposed to the child advocate and the role that you're bringing forward today. Mr. Minister, you indicated that this is a role or person that a number of people have been looking for or suggesting.

And I believe as well that my colleague, the member from Rosthern, when he was in the position of minister of Social Services had certainly looked at this type of a format and a role as well and bringing someone in that children could look to, someone who would be . . . and if I hear you correctly, you're talking of an individual who'd be arm's length from government, who would be legally out there with an ability to understand some of the problems that children face, and accessible as a contact person to discuss some of the problems and issues that come across their way.

I guess, Mr. Minister, I would suggest and I would say that many people probably have the same views as I do and the same feelings, and find it very difficult to understand how any one individual, be they a parent, be they a trustee, be they a person that's given responsibility for a child, would take advantage of a child, be they a very young age of maybe under 1, 2, even 17 or 18, at teenage age already, while they're still in custody or under that roof of those individuals. And to be honest with you, it really boggles my mind that we should really have to look into this and provide such an advocate, a person to be out there.

Mr. Minister, you had indicated that this has been a request that has come to the province, has come from residents, come from, I gather from a large sector of the population. And I'm wondering if you could indicate today the groups that have contacted your office and no doubt it's probably contact that's been there over a period of time; the different groups, the type of people that have contacted your office; and at whose specific request and the reasons for bringing the Bill forward at this time?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, I appreciate the general support of the member on the need to support families. I know that that's been his interest in, and record, since he's been a member of this . . . or since I've joined and been a member of this Assembly. The hon. member has always been very supportive to families and I appreciated your colleague's interest as well, comments he made the other day about when he was minister. I know that was very sincere

and the independence of this position that you highlighted I appreciate as well, which was one of the central points, as you know, of the task force.

Of course you're aware of the background to the task force and leading up to this recommendation in their report and I believe your office does have a copy of that report which lists at the end all the . . . I think over a hundred organizations and individuals that were contacted by the task force, a very extensive across . . . geographically across Saskatchewan from urban and rural settings. And of course, there was a cultural mix to the task force, as you know, and there was considerable, I guess, considerable weight given to sort of cross-cultural consultation as well. But we would be happy to provide you with the list of names of those that were consulted if you like.

Mr. Toth: -- I thank you, Mr. Minister, for indicating that you'd be willing to supply us with that list. I think it would still be appropriate if you wouldn't mind, even though it's in . . . the list is in the report that has been drafted, if you wouldn't mind submitting that list to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Minister.

I appreciate the fact, Mr. Minister, that you've at least taken as well, taken the time to consult with . . . or I'm not exactly sure if you personally have had the opportunity to sit down with every group or individual, but I understand you had a group of people come and certainly departmental people, individuals, have taken the time to consult with groups and organizations.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if there are other provinces that have brought forward the same type or maybe even have the same format, child advocate, already in place. And if you or your department have consulted with groups across Canada, and if our legislation that we're introducing today falls in line with legislation that is either in place or the intent of legislation to be introduced in other jurisdictions.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you. We will table the list of the consultations. I'd be happy to do that, Mr. Chairman. And in terms of whether I've met with the groups myself, I do have a list of groups that I've met with, organizations and individuals, since I've become minister. I'm not sure if I have that here; I've got that in my office. It includes 70 or 80 groups. And I'd be very happy to . . . and the dates we met. I'd be very happy to provide you with that. And I may not be able to do that today, but the next day or so; it's right there.

But these consultations were in large part around the child action plan generally. And this child advocate was certainly, in many ways, front and centre to a lot of other important recommendations in the child action plan as we were developing this package. And I would say that since the announcement of the child advocate, there has been just extremely positive feedback to my office, including a chat that I've had with Mr. Wardell, the chair of the task force, who is happy with this approach we're taking.

With regard to your other question of consultations with other provinces, the task force did most of the consultation, the analysis, and made recommendations based on that study, of particularly Manitoba and Alberta, but other approaches across Canada as well. And therefore stressed certain things like the independence of the child advocate to the legislature as a

whole, rather than the minister, which is the case in Alberta and Manitoba, where the advocate reports directly to the minister.

And I do not favour that approach because I can see a potential conflict there. We want the advocate to be able to evaluate our systems and services and programs, and so we want as much independence as possible. That is one of the key differences is the fact that, as you know, our child advocate will report to you and to this legislature.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, how many provinces in Canada have a specific legislation in place to date, how many are working on legislation, and also, is there legislation similar to what you're introducing in the House at present, the Bill that we presently have before us?

And also another question I would have: have other provinces, in implementing this form of a person, have they done it in a similar fashion where we're bringing basically in a child advocate who's going to work under The Ombudsman Act? Or have some provinces introduced a specific Act to deal with this type of format, like a child's ombudsman instead of a child's advocate under The Ombudsman Act?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your question. As I mentioned, Manitoba and Alberta have an advocate. In B.C. (British Columbia) the deputy ombudsman has responsibilities right in that office for child and youth advocacy. Quebec has a similar approach to the one that we're adopting, and Ontario has a children's guardian.

I think that one thing I would mention though is, in terms of scope we have one of the broader Acts with regard to the scope of the Ombudsman . . . or the child advocate, pardon me.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in your second reading speech in your introduction of the Bill, you had indicated, you said:

The action plan is bringing together individuals, organizations, communities, and government to eliminate some of the barriers which have long stood in the way of coordinating policies, programs, and services for children and families.

It would seem to me what you're saying then is the child advocate is going to kind of basically fill in rather than having so many different areas or agencies that children can approach. With the child advocate we're basically giving one person as that person then becomes the contact of any one of these groups and organizations as we reach out to give children an avenue of contact and the person or persons that they can sit down with so we can coordinate endeavours of basically meeting the needs of children who may be facing abusive situations, or whatever format of problems that children may run into.

(1130)

If I understand you correctly, I would suggest that that's appropriate and I commend you for that, in forming one body. Because I think it's very difficult, whether it's children, whether it's women facing acts of violence, facing violent situations, or even men for that matter, or whoever it is,

whether it's people facing racial discrimination.

I think on many occasions people have had a degree of difficulty in deciding who they should be going to. And it seems that you may go to, say, the local police if they're handy, and all of a sudden you're shoved off onto, say, the public health nurse, or another avenue.

I certainly commend you on the fact that we are bringing forward an agency whereby children can come and have a basic contact regarding their problems.

What I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, is how this program is going to work. How will the child advocate then . . . Who's the contact person at the local level, I guess is what I'm looking for, for the child advocate? Because certainly one person can't be in all parts of the province, and the need is probably stretched throughout the province. So how is this program going to work?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you. In terms of your question, let me just say for a minute that the child advocate is one of a number of provisions in the child action plan. As you know, the child action plan was sort of a philosophical framework that would be supportive to children and communities. We want to try and support families and strengthen communities, so it's mutually reinforcing.

I guess the second thing the action plan does is it identifies a process whereby government and communities can work together. And all of the child action initiatives that were announced recently are really community ideas. In other words, we believe that communities have the . . . They know their issues, their problems, their opportunities; they can prioritize their choices. And it is up to us to play some partnership role which is more evolving to kind of a facilitative role as they take on enhanced rec services, for example, like in West Flats in P.A. (Prince Albert).

There's I suppose two ways to try to answer your question as to how this office is going to work in practice, how will people know who to go to. Certainly there will be a public announcement in terms of who's hired. There will very well likely be a 1-800 number. There will be pamphlets. There will be an educational role that will be required as well by this office.

So that's sort of . . . there are many ways in which I believe we'll be able to make available the ways in which to contact the individual and the duties of that individual with pamphlets and offices throughout the province and so on.

In terms of your other question about how will it work, we are looking I suppose at really two ways. One is where the advocate would be available to individuals to assist them. For example, take a youth in the North Battleford youth centre who felt that he was not being treated appropriately or whatever, would have the ability to write a letter, confidentially, to the child advocate and would be delivered unopened, of course, to the advocate who could then follow up as appropriate. So there will be opportunities for children to contact this office individually.

And secondly, is more of a systemic role in terms of assessing systems and evaluating how things are working, whether it's the foster care system or any aspect of the child care system. And of course we would be very open to recommendations on individual situations or systemic or systems procedures and so forth, or level or quality of service, if the child advocate has any recommendations to make in that area, and would be most welcome to cooperate.

We want to make clear that for the 2,500 children who are in the care of the minister, we want to provide the best level of service possible for those children and their families.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I must apologize; I'm not sure if I caught all of your words, and I was wondering if you really gave me a response as to how the advocate would be accessible at the local level. I must admit that you don't have the same boisterous voice as the member from North Battleford so we've got to pay a little closer attention.

When you're talking at the local level, let's say someone in my area, let's say just for example someone in the community of Moosomin, a child feels that they're being mistreated in some form or other. What is the process that they would follow, as you understand it, and what you're intending to present or bring forward through the Bill in which the child could approach the child advocate and spell out the problems they're facing. And then how would this

person, the child advocate, then respond to the child, and what actions will then follow, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.. At this point what I will do is just table or send across to you a list of the groups I've met with so you have a better idea too. And I'd like to provide that to the member if I could, just to give you a sense of who I've been meeting with on this and similar matters in terms of supporting families and communities.

I think, you know, I take your point; it's a good point. What you're really saying is that we need to make sure that families across Saskatchewan, children are aware of this office and what the role is. And I would say again there, we will make sure there are pamphlets readily available, whether in the police offices, the NGO (non-governmental organizations) offices, municipal offices, certainly all provincial offices.

And again we're looking at . . . the scope here is for children who we likely already know about or there may be an investigation required. And so it may very well come to our attention anyhow or to the attention of the police.

But we appreciate your point that we need to make sure this is a provincial office and that people in all corners of Saskatchewan are aware of the potential service here.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. So basically what you're saying, Mr. Minister, then, as you've indicated in your second reading speech where you talked about, there were four main themes you had outlined, dominated the feedback from the task force. Number one, that this person would be a voice for children and youth in crisis; and number two, would have a role in community education and prevention; and certainly is independent of control or influence of any government department or minister; and is visible and accessible to the community.

I take from that, Mr. Minister, that you are in the process of or will be in the process of -- I trust you're actually in the process of discussing some methods even right now on ways of getting out the information to communities, and certainly through the educational method of informing people of the child advocate, the role and the purpose of the child advocate, and at the same time indicating to children or youth that this contact is available.

Now it's certainly fine to have pamphlets available, and probably one of the locations that they could be readily available is certainly in schools. That's probably an avenue where you would run into a lot of children.

And I think the public health system, the public health nurses that are operating out there right now are also involved a lot in, on almost on a daily basis, or weekly, or monthly basis, in the school system and in many cases involved in some of the educational aspects of, say, specifically family related matters. And they could be an avenue in which we could also get some of this information out.

And I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that if you haven't, these are some avenues that we can certainly look at. And I would also indicate that I think my colleagues, and in fact probably any member of this Legislative Assembly, will do everything

we can as well, once we have specific and total information available to inform people of this office and of ways of contacting the office.

So I just throw those out as suggestions and just ask you where the department is to date in their deliberations and how they are going to get this information out.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, I didn't mean for my examples to be exhaustive. Your suggestion of schools and public health offices and so on, is a good one. And I think there are probably many other partners in the community where it would be appropriate to place the pamphlets. That's just one form of making people aware of the role.

I think the first thing we need to do is to make the selection, which we'll do. And then one of the first tasks we have to do is to sit down with the child advocate to ensure that the advocate have a plan to outline the role, and how to access the services, and so on. So the advocate will develop sort of an education-communication plan from that office and we'll cooperate -- as I know communities will -- in any way possible.

Because as you outlined the four points, one of the key points is education of the community; secondly, visibility in the community. We want a proactive person here. That's the key. And so I believe that that will be one of the first interests and desires of the advocate as well and will be part of the very early planning.

Mr. Toth: -- Mr. Minister, just looking over the second reading notes as well and comment, you talk about:

The principles upon which the action plan is built . . . state that actions to enhance the well-being of children and youth must be preventative, culturally appropriate, supportive, collaborative, holistic, and empowering. And the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration.

When I take a quick glance at that, Mr. Minister, when we talk about the best interest of the child -- and don't take me wrong -- but at the same time, Mr. Minister, I think one of the things we must be very careful of is when we're talking of specific . . . just reaching down to . . . whether it's children, or whether it's women, or whether it's men or specific groups, we must also be careful that we're also . . . that we don't really start overstepping our bounds and responsibilities.

I think with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and what we're seeing taking place with class action

lawsuits that are happening, not only across our land but certainly we see it in the States, I think it's very important that we recognize -- and there are many parents out there who are doing due diligence and trying to really be responsible parents and raising their children responsibly and giving them a loving and caring home.

(1145)

What I'm wondering, and what I'm hoping that is being looked at very carefully, is that when we look at the child advocate, number one, I guess a direct question is, what powers will the child's advocate have?

Secondly, when the child advocate is contacted regarding a specific case, how is that case going to be reviewed, or that instance going to be reviewed so that at the end of the day we're not all of a sudden, because of actions taken immediately without sitting back and assessing the situation, we're not then turning around and maybe having to apologize to individuals, especially family members, over accusations that may be thrown out which may draw the advocate in, accusations that could end up being thrown out in a fit of anger.

And I think one thing the child advocate does not end up in as well is, if you talk to local police forces one of the areas that they really detest getting involved in is domestic violence. They're called into a home and possibly a wife is being severely mistreated by her husband or her common-law partner, or her partner or whatever, and the police are called in. And they step in to try and bring some, I guess, peace back into the home and all of a sudden they find both partners are working against them.

And so I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, have we got some guidelines in place so that we are indeed looking at the whole family, and the well-being of the family, even if it's a foster family. So that at the end of the day we've listened to, and we've understood, the problems the child is facing but we also will take the time to see what is happening in that family situation that may have caused that request to come forward.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: --Thank you very much. I would agree with you that what is in the best interests of children is in the best interests of families and vice versa. Perhaps I'm not making myself clear here, that the scope of the Bill is related to the services provided by government to children. And so basically the scope is limited to case review, to case review of services provided by government, or to review of our programs, services, procedures in our systems.

So I want to emphasize that the advocate will not have jurisdiction to intervene in family disputes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, it will not have that authority -- or in conflict between parents and their children. The advocate will not have jurisdiction in that area. And I might just hit very quickly the sort of four points of jurisdiction here, of powers.

Number one, amendments provide the advocate with the power to receive, review, and investigate any matter that comes to his or her attention from any source. Any source includes a child or could include a matter referred by the advocate or the Ombudsman.

Secondly, the advocate may become involved in any matter where a child or children are receiving services from any department or agency of government. This may involve the individual children or youth, such as a single child in foster care; or may involve groups of children or youth, such as all youth in Saskatchewan who are residing in young offenders' facilities. The North Battleford example I gave.

Thirdly, the advocate will not have jurisdiction to intervene, as I said, in family relationships or conflicts between parents and children. And fourthly, we want to emphasize a problem-solving approach for the advocate. Therefore the advocate will, where appropriate, attempt to resolve matters that come to his or her attention through the use of negotiation, conciliation, and mediation.

So that's the jurisdiction and scope, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I guess that's one thing I was just wondering, as to what real role the advocate would play and who the advocate would call upon after they have basically researched a request that has come before them. So you have indicated that if a request comes before the advocate where a child or whoever raises an issue and the advocate kind of researches it, sits down, and then at the end of the day enters into a sort of a mediation process.

Would there be anyone else involved besides the advocate in this mediation process? And the reason I suggest that is just for the fact that you and I know that you don't really want it to go into say a conflict between two members by yourself, because at the end of the day you may find that what you took to be . . . what you understood of the situation and how that may . . . possibly was resolved, an agreement had been raised, but because you're only one and there's maybe two or three other individuals on the other side, you may be standing out in the cold because they may disagree with your understanding of the mediation process.

And it would seem to me, Mr. Minister, that I think it would be appropriate, even though this person has been given specific authority, I think it doesn't matter who you are, but one just one individual, regardless of the authority you're given, if you ended up in a court of law, could find yourself . . . the things that you understood may not be really adhered to in the court because it's just one voice against maybe two or three others.

So I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that if the department hasn't, they should look at a way in which the child advocate has maybe someone else with them as they're trying to work out agreements, if that's possible. Mediate, whether it's through at the local

level, someone from . . . and I guess it would depend on the type of concern that's been raised. Whether it's been a concern regarding violence or whether it's a concern just regarding verbal abuse that's been raised, and it would depend on the type of individual. But I think it would . . . just for the sake of even the advocate, it might be appropriate to have someone that the advocate could call upon to verify the discussion that has taken place. Is that possible?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, the fourth point I raised with regard to jurisdiction dealt with the mediation-conciliation role. And I suppose, like the current Ombudsman now becomes involved, the process would be somewhat similar.

A decision is made to do an investigation. The advocate will become involved like now at the point where services have been provided, say, on a case-specific basis, and someone is not satisfied with the quality of service or not satisfied that things have been worked out and resolved satisfactorily, or has not been handled correctly in some manner. So the investigation, the coming together, will occur at some point and the service providers will be identified. And I would think anyone who has an interest in that specific case will be part of the solution, potential solution, that would be called upon by the advocate.

I might just mention that, as we do now with the Ombudsman, of course when a decision is made to investigate a case situation or systems or procedures, then we cooperate fully, including interviews with staff, giving access to our files, and so on. So that will be the same with the child advocate.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, who does the child advocate report to?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Formally, the child advocate will report to the legislature in a formal way. I suppose in many ways too the advocate will get back to families, children, to us, in terms of case findings and so on. So if a child or a family initiates a complaint or a concern, I would assume that that office would feel some obligation to be accountable to sort that out. So there'd be, I suppose, some accountability to that individual or family to have handled things properly from the advocate's office.

But there's no doubt about it that the advocate is accountable to, in a formal way, to this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Toth: -- Mr. Minister, what budget is allocated to the office of the child's advocate? Or is that just covered under the Ombudsman's budget, global budget, or do we have a specific budget? And roughly, how many dollars would you anticipate going into the office of the child's advocate, and I'm wondering if the dollar value that you're looking to would be strictly wages added on to say the Ombudsman's budget?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you. For 1994-95, the allocated budget will be \$350,000 -- 250,000 for salaries. There will be five staff with this office, five staff members. And 100,000 of the 350,000 is designated for administrative costs, travel, education and so on -- communication with the public.

So the budget is located in the Ombudsman's overall budget, but it's a separate subvote in that budget. We're trying to

balance the financial economy with sort of a proactive person and preserving the elements that the task force felt were important. So that's what we're trying to accomplish.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you also indicated that the child's advocate is going to be an appointment of the Assembly by the Lieutenant Governor in Council upon recommendation of the Assembly for a five-year term. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what process you intend to follow in the hiring of the individual for this position? Will there be a public competition for the position? Will the Public Service Commission conduct the competition? As well, Mr. Minister, would you look seriously at allowing a committee of this Assembly to be involved in that appointment process?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- The government is committed to enhancing democratic reform. And as you know, there's a competition for the current Ombudsman. The process will be very similar to that; it will be a public competition. It will be publicly advertised. The advocate, as I tried to say I think in my second reading speech, there'll be consultation with all parties of the Assembly and then there will be a decision made in the same fashion that the current Ombudsman is being appointed, same procedure.

(1200)

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to pick up just on a few points that my colleague has been discussing. But at the outset, Mr. Minister, let me just indicate to you that this process that you are embarking upon is overdue. I know that I was filling your shoes a while back and it was always a troubling thought about some of the kinds of conditions that the younger, more vulnerable aspects of our society were being subjected to, and yet essentially did not have a voice as such. And as such there was no ear to hear their plea, as it were, in many instances.

I was glad to hear your reassurance that this office is by no means an attempt as an alternative to many of the good parents that we have out there who are indeed doing excellent advocacy on behalf of their own children. And we will certainly hold you to that, recognizing of course that there are many of the children in our society that do not have that built-in advocacy in terms of parents, or a guardian for that matter. And I speak to a lot of those foster home children and so on, and those that do not have adequate parents to voice their concerns.

And indeed I know that as minister responsible for foster children and so on, you have one of the largest families . . . you have the largest family in Saskatchewan by a great deal, and you would like to

see that reduced, if at all possible.

But I think if I suggested that that was going to happen, I would not be being realistic. I mean it's part of the society and your job is to handle the symptoms and the fallouts or our societal system. And I don't think it behoves you or me or members of this legislature to resolve those kinds of problems. We have to deal with those kinds of symptoms.

So I want to, at the outset, say that in principle we were working on it. I know Minister Schmidt -- as much as he was sometimes suspected of not having his heart in the right place, I would disagree with that -- I think he on numerous occasions expressed a desire to do something; we didn't know what in those days. And I know when Mr. Prebble was standing where I'm standing right now, he chastised me as well on a constant basis about not doing enough on advocacy. And in those days he was still talking in terms of Ombudsman.

And I'm glad to say, Mr. Minister, I'm glad to see that you did not take that route of Ombudsman. I think that would have been totally unrealistic to set up a parallel system to the existing system of Ombudsman; and the child advocacy route quite frankly, in my opinion, was the route to go, which was what I was considering doing as well, when I filled your shoes. But unfortunately the people of the province said no, you're not going to do that; we're going to let somebody else do that. And we see a role reversal here.

So having generally given you my support in terms of the procedure that you're taking, I still think it behoves us an opposition to take a look at the legislation and say, how can we improve it even further. And so with that in mind I'm just going to take this opportunity to ask you a few general questions based on what you and your fellow members have stated in the House during the second readings.

And I'd just like to quote from page 673 of *Hansard* where the speaker says:

Mr. Speaker, amendments to The Ombudsman Act provides the advocate with the power and responsibility to become involved in public education regarding the needs and interests and well-being of the Saskatchewan children and youth. This provides the advocate with the ability to educate the public and to help reduce the number of children requiring services.

Now that's an admirable objective, Mr. Minister, and I have no objection to that; but you were just telling my colleague from Moosomin that you have -- and if I understood correctly -- \$350,000 additional funds for the Ombudsman to enforce the role of the child advocate. And then you said that \$250,000 of that sum is going to be used up for salaries, leaving in my estimation \$100,000.

Now, Mr. Minister, what I can't follow is, if the child advocate has this power to educate the public regarding the needs and interests and well-being of Saskatchewan children and youth, how is he going to do this? How is he going to do this to have some kind of actual impact? It sounds good in words but when I take a look at the funding that's being provided him, it's not there. Or is it not that he will be doing the actual educating but

call upon . . . and will he have the power then to, for example, to have the Department of Health or the Department of Education come forward with programs that are going to in the end, result in what your objective is? Could you describe that for me, with such a limited budget, how these objectives are going to be accomplished?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much. Let me say first of all that I know that you as a former minister were committed to enhancing services for families and to enhancing the accountability of government systems as well.

I do want to stress that, your point that most children have somebody who advocates for them satisfactorily already, and of course as you well know, as you have acknowledged, there are also some 2,500 children who don't, and maybe more. So I know that you had been interested in this position, and appreciate that you agree with the general approach we've taken.

With regard to the education role and the budget, I guess I would say that this is the starting point at this point, as we see it. We're not trying to build a new system where the advocate would do all the work in terms of all the education, all the advocating, and so on, but rather to play a role in trying to bring together more closely those who are involved in providing services, support to children and families already.

The \$4.4 million child action plan was designed to try and do that as well. So I'm sure that the advocate, the child advocate, will have suggestions and recommendations for government departments and specific programs and services whereby there may be better coordination, and we would be open to that kind of analysis and those recommendations.

So it would be a complementary role. The advocate wouldn't be responsible only to provide the educational services that the Bill talks about.

Mr. Neudorf: -- What I gathered from your comment, Mr. Minister, is that the advocate will then rely pretty well solely on the art of gentle persuasion, that he can recommend, and that's the end of it if the Minister of Health or the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Education don't agree or, as I suspect, will simply be saying, well we don't have the funds. It's nice in theory but in practice, logistically we don't have the funds to carry any of those recommendations out.

Mr. Minister, what in this Act, what parts of this legislation will actually guarantee that there will be action and guarantee that the advocate will have an actual impact in society?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- In many ways, Mr. Chairman . . . I guess you say the powers of persuasion. I guess what

I would say is that any minister, any government, wants to do as well as it can. And of course the child advocate will be required to provide a report to the Legislative Assembly every year and will have the freedom and ability to provide special reports at any given time. I think that the child advocate will have the potential and opportunity to have a fairly high public profile in terms of children's issues and family matters in a way that isn't available now.

And the report to the Assembly could very well be on the very issues you raised today -- some very good issues that you raise. And those of course would be looked at very seriously, and you would have the opportunity to take a look at those too.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman. This public profile, Mr. Minister, I want to pursue that just a little bit more. You are suggesting what, by this? That because of the public profile and because of the profile that problems as perceived by this child advocate . . . the public pressure would be such that public pressure would cause various ministers to react and to respond to needs. Is this what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Chairman, right now there is no independent voice -- proactive, highly visible voice -- with the independence for children, to advocate for children. What we're trying to put in place is an office, an individual or a group of people, who will have the ability to do that as per the responsibilities as outlined earlier.

I think any government takes seriously the report from the Ombudsman's office in terms of the quality and level of services that are being provided or aren't being provided. And where gaps are identified, I think that all governments have to have good faith that they will . . . in setting up an independent voice where the accountability is with the legislature as a whole, all members have a responsibility to make sure that those issues raised are taken seriously.

So I believe that the . . . the government believes that the ability of the child advocate to bring to high profile issues of concern is very possible in the current legislation. And the advocate may in fact say that there are some additional things that could enhance his or her powers that would be desirable, and I would certainly be open to discussing those.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Well I agree with certain things that you said there, Mr. Minister, and that is that right now there is essentially nothing, I think is what you were saying, and so that this step that you're taking now is better than before. And I agree with you, it is; it's a step in the right direction.

But what I'm trying to do now is to ascertain precisely what you're prepared to do to make this thing work. And what I think I'm hearing from you is that public pressure will be such that there will be changes. And I guess that's what causes me some concern here, Mr. Minister, because I think you will also recognize that as far as your government's track record is concerned, public pressure does not seem to have any great bearing on any direction that you're taking.

Now I don't want to start giving the litany of the things where your government has not listened to the will of the people and the request of the will of the people and they're saying, do this, do this, do this, and you have chosen not to listen to the people.

So I'm not quite prepared to stand here and say, well right, if the child advocate is going to come up with certain concerns, that will be enough pressure, and public pressure will be great enough to cause your government to steer in a different direction, or make certain changes that they are requesting. I'm sorry but I just can't give you assurance that my comfort level is high enough that this will be adequate.

So I just want to pursue this a little bit further, because on that same page that I quoted from before, there's a paragraph here where your government is stating through its members:

That concerns me, Mr. Speaker, because I believe there is a useful function here in having an advocate report to an all-party committee that represents the Legislative Assembly.

Now I'm sorry I may have missed a discussion that you had with my colleague about an all-party committee that the advocate will be reporting to. That's what it says here -- that represents the Legislative Assembly. I want you to describe that for me, what is meant by that. And then further it says:

I say that because the child advocate may indeed need an advocate when it comes to requesting appropriate funding and resources to carry out the mandate on behalf of children.

So it seems to me, the way I read it is that the Ombudsman or the child advocate will report to an all-party committee and that this committee then will have some type of authority or power to advocate, on behalf of the children, to get appropriate funding and resources to carry out that mandate.

Now I find this paragraph on page 675 somewhat confusing and I was hoping that you would be able to illuminate that for me.

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Chairman, what I would say is that as the Provincial Auditor now, as the current Ombudsman now does report to the legislature . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, it's okay. I was just saying, as you know now -- of course you know very well that the current Provincial Auditor, the current Ombudsman, as a watchdog agency, similar to the child advocate, now will report to the legislature.

Now there is no obligation now, as you know, for the government of the day to accept all the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor or of the current Ombudsman. But I think it behaves any

government to ignore the issues raised by those bodies, so what we're really doing is fitting in the child advocate into the same structure as already exists. We're not making any special provisions, any special powers to the child advocate that the Provincial Auditor or the current Ombudsman have.

So we're treating all of these the same. Were you quoting from me there or from somebody else? I think you were quoting from the third party rep, and it's a nice idea but it doesn't fit with the way in which the current watchdogs report or have reported traditionally, even under your administration, to the legislature.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Yes, I know it doesn't fit, and that's what we're trying to explore here, Mr. Minister, is there some way -- and I asked you this question previously -- is there some way that we can put some teeth into this thing? And are you prepared to, I guess, back up in actions what your words are in terms of funding? And that's the point that we're trying to make from this side.

And again, Mr. Minister, I noticed you say that it behoves any government to listen to people. And that's the point that I'm trying to make here, is that I don't think that your government's track record sustains any kind of level of comfort in the people that you are actually going to listen to the concerns that are there that the people have, or that the advocate might surface. And that's the concern that I'm expressing here.

Mr. Minister, the added cost, the added cost is going to be \$350,000, you're saying. And I'm wondering what caused you to go this route of the child advocate being incorporated with the existing Ombudsman's office, which by the way, and I repeat again, I concur with and I think that's the correct route. Why did you choose to do it that way, than going the route of setting up a child guardian, for example.

These are the three routes, according to a paper that I have, that you could have gone: the children's guardian route through legislation; or the children's Ombudsman as an official appointed by the legislature; or the child's advocate, the way you've chosen.

I'm just wondering if you could elucidate some of the reasoning behind the decision that you made to go this particular route. Because there are pros and cons everywhere and I'm just wondering whether money was the overriding issue here and that you sort of reached a compromise position, as opposed to adopting the Cadillac operation, which would have been the children's Ombudsman itself.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Chairman, I don't mind repeating these explanations, as I did for the previous member; I would be very happy to do that. But I would say that your question as to why we have chosen this route . . . and I remind you that I've talked to the chairman of the task force about the route we've chosen, and he's expressed his satisfaction with this. What we're trying to do . . . And I heard you support the notion that we shouldn't set up another big office. We're trying to say . . . I think I heard you say that; you can clarify it if I didn't.

What we're trying to do is to gain some overhead efficiencies, economies. But we wanted to make sure that it was a proactive

role, so the person would be visible in the community, play an educational role, evaluate systems after the fact -- not just investigations, but to look at the systems as a whole, to try and make recommendations so we can enhance accountability.

I just would remind you that while you may be able to say that we should have gone farther here or there, the fact of the matter is that, unlike Alberta and Manitoba where the child advocate reports to the Minister of Social Services -- which I didn't want and I'm sure you wouldn't want it -- we have made sure we followed the recommendation of the task force to make sure that the child advocate is accountable to the legislature.

Now that's a significant difference than the way our neighbouring provinces are doing it. We think that's a significant improvement, and that enhances the independence of the office, and it puts it on the same footing as the current Ombudsman, the Provincial Auditor, and so on. So we think we're in step with the desire to make sure that that individual can feel free to be critical, as necessary, of government practices and programs.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Mr. Minister, I apologize for having to make you repeat some of the explanations, but I think you know how this system works. Not every member is hanging on your every word as the morning progresses, so that's the reality of it, Mr. Minister.

Explain to me please, precisely what the mechanisms in the legislation are for this reporting process. Does the child's advocate report directly to the Assembly or does he report through the Ombudsman? And if so . . . the annual report, is that in conjunction with the other annual reports? Is there a specific time? I think I caught you saying at one point that he could, from time to time, table special reports. But would you, precisely please, explain the reporting procedure.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Section 15 of the Act ensures that, or allows for, and in fact obligates that the child advocate report to this Legislative Assembly once a year. That's a requirement under section 15 of the Act.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to probably apologize, as my colleague did, as to some of these questions because they're going to be clear-up questions.

I want to draw your attention to . . . under the power. And I'm wondering, do you see the Ombudsman working under the Young Offenders Act. I wonder, how do you see this working in conjunction with the Young Offenders Act because there is pressure, I

believe as you know, for changes in that.

Where would this program come in working in conjunction with that, the pressure that's coming from different people?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Chairman, thank you. The Young Offenders Act as you identified is of course, as you know, federal legislation and we're required to provide the services, programs and services, under the young offenders legislation.

Because we're providing the programs and services, then the child advocate will have the ability and the authority and the jurisdiction to do case reviews. If someone in a young offenders facility wanted to contact through, say, letter, the child advocate directly, that could be done. The letter would have to get to the child advocate immediately and be unopened. So the follow-up casework could be assessed on an individual basis. And also for any young offender programs and services, the child advocate has the ability to assess the quality of service and to make recommendations.

So the authority is the same there because we're responsible provincially for providing those services.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, how do you see the child advocate in the role respecting the new Act, Act 30 I believe, in terms of abuse in the homes? How does this interact with that new program, which gives me a little bit of uneasiness in some of the powers that that Act has. Could you just outline for us how you see the child's advocate working within that Act?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Victims of Domestic Violence Act focuses on the relationship between adults in the situation. To the extent that government provides any services to children in those situations, then there would be a role for the advocate. So there's not a direct relationship in any way except if there are some children's services being provided. So there isn't any other connection, as I see it.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you. I understand you to say then that if there is a problem in a home between the spouses, the child's advocate don't have any role in that at all. But in the Act, Mr. Minister, children are mentioned in that Act. It even suggests that they could be taken away, out of that home.

Now if . . . and please don't get me wrong. I'm certainly not critical of the child's advocate Act as it is. But I was wondering if maybe you should maybe take a look and develop with the child's advocate what their role should be if there is . . . and I'm probably manufacturing a case here. But supposing the two spouses were violently disagreeing. Then the children would, in my view, would be vulnerable at that case. Would you maybe give that a little consideration, sir?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Let me try and respond this way, and if I'm not clear, feel free to come back and I'll try to . . .

The jurisdiction of the child advocate does not extend into conflict between parents or conflict between parents and their children unless there might be child protection concerns or unless government is providing some services on that kind of basis.

So we would only have . . . the office would only have jurisdiction where there are services being provided. And I think your colleague from Moosomin was quite clear that there should not be jurisdiction . . . that this position should not have jurisdiction between normal spousal or parent-child conflict.

(1230)

Mr. Britton: -- Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. I probably missed a little of that because I . . . as a member mentioned, your voice is a bit like mine, it doesn't carry as well as some of the other more robust questioners, shall we say.

I want to get a clarification on one more thing here. The Lieutenant Governor . . . you're saying in that Act that the Lieutenant Governor can come into this, and I'm wondering, does that mean that if you have an unsatisfied client they can go to the Lieutenant Governor for redress in that case? Is that what that is saying here?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Chairman, in terms of the Lieutenant Governor or through Executive Council, there is the appointment of . . . on the recommendation of the legislature. Then there is the . . . of course the Executive Council could request a special report. But in your example, any child could go to the child advocate if there was a complaint about a government service, yes.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to go back to the \$350,000 budget again for clarification. I understood you to say that was a standalone budget and that none of that comes out of the global Social Services budget. Do I understand that right?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- That's correct. This is new money to this position.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, subsection .6 says that the child advocate can provide public education about his or her role. And where would the funds come for this? I read that to say that he or she could advertise, or put out pamphlets, or otherwise educate the public as to their role. Does that money, that fund, come out of the remaining \$100,000 of that budget or where do they get the funds for that extra role?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, you're correct. As I was suggesting earlier, the child advocate would want to develop, I would assume fairly early on, an awareness, public education aspect to that position and that office. And so there would be some funds designated for that. And of course that office can draw on other departments and agencies to help provide the additional information that's required. So it's sort

of a partnership office with others who are interested in the best interests of children and families.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would you care to identify those other agencies that would share their budget with the child advocate or does he or she have to go hat in hand and try to fast talk another minister or another department out of their budget. I'm kind of wondering how it works over there if someone came to you and said to you, I want part of your budget as the Social Services minister. I'd feel a little uneasy if, as the Social Service critic, if you allowed someone else to use your budget. I think I'd like to see that all spent in Social Services. So could you just outline who you think might share their money with the child advocate?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, Mr. Chairman. As you recall, the children's action plan generally . . . and this is a part of the children's action plan, this office. The children's action plan is an initiative of some eight departments of government -- Health, Education, Justice, Social Services and so on. And so all of those departments are involved in communicating and providing some educational supports and trying to provide information that hopefully contribute to the well-being of children and family.

So it's a matter of complementing the educational role that the child advocate is playing between departments, more integration between departments of the message of service and supports to children and families in cooperation with the Children's Advocate role. We will continue, as we look at the next phase of the child action plan, we will continue to be open to suggestions and ideas as to enhancing some of the decisions that we've made this year and, as you know, we've established a children's council made up of individuals across Saskatchewan from various geographic, ethnic backgrounds and so on, who will continue to advise the eight departments who are involved in the children's action plan, with the communities, on how we can further enhance services -- and that includes communication and education. So we'll work I think very closely with the child advocate. And I think . . . I hope that satisfies your question.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Yes, I can feel probably a little easier when I realize that you've thought about this, and the different departments have agreed with you that there could be some.

I've got another couple of questions, Mr. Minister. Section 17, what does this really mean? To me, I read that the child's advocate has the power . . . under the penalties he can say that some person was not forthcoming. And I kind of read it like as if that person must answer his questions, even though it would be detrimental to that person themselves; in other words, it could be incriminating or something like this. Can you explain that just a bit more for me, sir?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, Mr. Chairman, this section is intended to prevent people from obstructing the activities of the office of the child advocate and just as a protection. In other words, this cannot be used in any other judicial areas. I might add that this section has never been used, as of this point, by the Ombudsman in that there has been the cooperation that's been required and we would anticipate that that would be the

case. This is a safeguard.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, then the penalty says it could be \$500 or an imprisonment. Then if it's not being used, I'm wondering why it's in there.

The other question . . . I think it begs the question, who is the judge, who is the person that says that this person -- and I know we're just picking a case out of the air -- is actually guilty? Who is the person that says that person is guilty? And the other question you might answer is: who is the one that assesses the penalty? Who does that?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, Mr. Chairman, the provision is there -- as I meant to say -- as a safeguard only, and if the advocate is not getting the cooperation that he or she desires or needs, then that complaint, concern, could be lodged with the department, with myself, and ultimately through the courts.

Mr. Britton: -- Okay thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. I've taken a little more time than I was going to at this time so I'm going to allow some of my colleagues in and we'll be back together again on another day and I can thank you very much because some of the things that I was concerned about as we went along had been cleared up fairly well. Thank you so much. Thank you, officials.

Mrs. Bergman: -- Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the third party, Mr. Minister, I'd like to welcome your advisers today and reiterate what the member for Rosthern said, that the Children's Advocate is, as I stated in my speech before, a very laudable objective and I would like to determine today in this clause-by-clause debate whether we're going to achieve what the government appears to be setting out to achieve.

Mr. Minister, I want you to explain to me the purpose behind restricting the powers of the child advocate to intervention in situations where the child must be receiving services from the government or an agency of the Crown.

(1245)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you to the member for the question. We appreciate your support for the objective and your questions as to why did we restrict. I might add that whereas in Manitoba and Alberta the scope is much narrower, confined to the child welfare system as a whole, we have expanded the scope to include any government services.

And we believe, in light of the questions that some of the members were asking from the official opposition about just sort of what are the powers? Can they extend into relationships -- into families between

parents and children with regard to normal parent-child conflict -- we believe that it goes farther than Manitoba and Alberta. It's sort of a compromise between them and what you're suggesting, and we want to learn from the experience and provide some balance here, in scope. And we will be very open to any suggestions from that office as to whether or not the scope could be expanded or, in fact, might be too broad.

I'm not sure, personally, why Manitoba and Alberta have restricted theirs, but we want to go a little broader than they are, and I hope you can appreciate that expanding it from their experience is a step at least in the right direction.

Mrs. Bergman: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. In my speech I raised an example of a young person who was subjected to what I consider, and certainly what his parents considered, an unacceptable procedure by the police. In that incident it was not an issue of inter-family conflict. And I can understand your concerns there, and the concerns of the opposition.

I question why you would not think it is important for the advocate to be able to investigate the procedures followed by police in dealing with children, regardless of whether they were receiving services from the Crown. Doesn't it in fact bestow special protection to children who are receiving care from Social Services, and doesn't every child have the same constitutional right to government protection?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Well I would agree with you. I think every child has the right to do that. Your example with regard to the police . . . The Police Act, 1990, provides for a public complaints investigator, who is a civilian, and that is the appropriate mechanism to deal with complaints with regard to the police.

So I think that these Acts have to complement each other and overall we have to make sure that there is the support that's required. This is an expanded scope from Manitoba and Alberta, and we believe that The Police Act provides some opportunity to accomplish what you're . . . the safeguards you're referring to.

Mrs. Bergman: -- Mr. Minister, one further question I'd have on that, in the same avenue, is in terms of services delivered to children outside of government services, whether they be NGOs or other organizations that deliver services to children. Why would they not be covered under the Act?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Well I think there are some cases in which the concern you raised can be addressed. For example, where government is funding a non-government organization to provide services to children, that is through public funds, then the child advocate would have the jurisdiction as per the contract with that agency in terms of the contract between the department and the agency to investigate those services -- as the Ombudsman did, say, with Bosco Homes.

So I hope that would maybe give you a comfort level that it could be beyond just the government services using the public funds, and the contract gives that opportunity to expand it to that wider scope that you're referring to.

Mrs. Bergman: -- So what you're saying, Mr. Minister, is that

this is covered in that clause of the legislation, that NGOs, for instance, with government funding would be covered?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- That's correct. Where we have a specific contract with an NGO using public funds to provide services to children, yes.

Mrs. Bergman: -- Mr. Minister, I think there should be some involvement as well in the removal or suspension provisions by other parties. Is that something you are willing to consider? There is a specific reference in the Bill to the salary of the Children's Advocate being fixed by the government and of course expenses and related items as well. Can you explain why you have chosen not to provide the Assembly with the proposed budget so that we can see how much you are paying, what you are spending, and whether this is up to what is recommended by the task force?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Yes, the salary level has not been firmly established and I would be very happy to consult with you on your views regarding a specific number as a general range, but a specific number. And the expenses would be sort of similar I think to normal office expenses of the other so-called watchdog agencies. And with regard to removal of the person, it would be the same procedure that's in place now for say, the Ombudsman, but would require a resolution of the Assembly here. Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Bergman: -- I think so.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Okay.

Mrs. Bergman: -- Mr. Minister, it's somewhat unrealistic, I think, for you to bring forward a Bill which establishes something as important as the child advocate, but not provide any details of the model; what structure accompanies the whole proposal. Because the task force really did suggest a specific model. And I'm wondering why the legislation does not have a model outlined.

My role as a member elected to the Liberal opposition is to analyse and criticize and not necessarily from a negative viewpoint, because that is what criticism has come to mean in the Assembly, but to provide some critical analysis in the true sense of the term.

Now I wonder just how the government expects opposition to analyse and offer constructive criticism of the child advocate if we don't know what your legislation is going to deliver, what it will do, and all those things left to our imagination.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I would

hope that you would at least acknowledge that it has some elements of a model. I've tried to outline as best I could this morning what elements it does have to a model.

Now I would say that all aspects of the model aren't nailed down; this is evolving. The person in the position will have some ideas about how to approach the position. It's a five-year appointment. It will be somewhat developmental.

But we've given the basics. It'll be independent. The person will be hired by this Assembly through a public competition. We've indicated the budget, the staffing component. I tried to articulate a partnership between the -- as I see it, as we see it -- between the child advocate, government departments, the communities. The child advocate will be housed in the Ombudsman but proactive, highly visible in the community.

I think that, as I said, I'll go back to my comment that in my discussions with the chairman of the task force, he is pleased with what we're doing. So that's a pretty good endorsement, I think, of what we're doing. I just have to, I guess, accept that if he's happy then this is satisfactory at this point.

Mrs. Bergman: -- Well I would say it's a very good start, Mr. Minister. I look at the task force and I see a group that was able to articulate very clearly what it was they recommended, what it would do, and how much it would cost, and I agree for the most part with what they were speaking of. And I look at other provincial models and I compare them to the task force report. And I see that the proposal has a good structure, a good community base, and it was much more detailed in the task force in terms of the involvement of a volunteer aspect of what they called the commission, and a good network of community advocates involved in assisting with the advocate department.

They prepared a budget and they included it in their report, but the legislation as presented . . . your suggested budget is considerably lower, and I understand we're in difficult times. So is part of the reason it has been structured in the way it has because of budget limitations? I'm not exactly sure why it was cut down from the recommendation that the task force recommended.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: -- Well let me say that in terms of the fundamental provisions, the fundamental recommendation of the task force -- and I've discussed these with the chairman of the task force -- we preserved the independent voice which is different than our neighbouring provinces. Now that is very important; that is very important to the task force. I talked to another task force member who is very happy about that. We want the role to be proactive in the community with regard to prevention, and education, and trying to pull together the services where possible.

We want the balance between providing direct services -- which is what a lot of the provisions of the child action plan do -- provide direct services to the families and children, relative to the monitoring supportive role. I mean you can always put more money into direct services, you could always sort of set a greater target on that budget. We're trying to balance in a very tight financial situation. We're trying to preserve the provisions that they asked for and start with a model that we believe is workable and will, as I said . . . we

will be open to the recommendations of that individual on an ongoing basis in terms of whether or not we're hamstringing the operation in any way.

We believe that we've taken the responsible, balanced approach to housing a person with the Ombudsman, to gain some efficiencies there, but to make sure it's an independent role, and a proactive role, and has the same legislative accountability as the Ombudsman.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 1 p.m.