

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the cost involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offering alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have been proven to be leaking, cost sharing or another alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

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

And these are from the Saltcoats, Bredenbury areas of the province; looks like the east side of the province. We have even one from Edmonton, I noticed on here, which is significant to know that people from outside the province are also concerned. We've got Yorkton and quite a few other areas just along the east side of the border.

And I'm happy to present these today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present today dealing with the underground storage tanks. These petitions come from the Manor, Alida, Carlyle, the very south-east corner of the province, Mr. Speaker, Redvers, Beaubier; also a number from the MacNutt, Calder, Wroxton area, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present today.

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have several pages dealing with the same subject. And as the prayer has been read, I won't do that.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions come across the province right from Luseland, Major, over to Saltcoats, Saskatoon, Esterhazy, Regina, Stockholm -- I don't know if that could even be Sweden, Mr. Speaker. So as my colleague said, there's a lot in interest in this -- Riverhurst, Yorkton, Esterhazy, I think that . . . Churchbridge, Langenburg. It's with some degree of pleasure I lay this on the Table, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have petitions with regard to the underground storage issue, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners come from Canora, Buchanan, Kamsack, Weyburn areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, as well as some from Regina city, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased to present them today on their behalf.

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions today. These are petitions, Mr. Speaker, dealing with the question of underground storage tanks and are people who agree with the thousands that have already presented petitions in front of this Legislative Assembly.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I have individuals from the city of Regina; communities such as Frontier, Saskatchewan; Weyburn, Annaheim, Saltcoats, Saskatoon, Nipawin, Springside, Whitewood, Turtle Lake, Yorkton, Lanigan; community of Moosomin, Mr. Speaker; Saltcoats, Churchbridge -- petitioners from all over the province, Mr. Speaker, that I do present today.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleagues in presenting petitions on behalf of those people who are concerned about the costs of replacing the underground storage tanks. And my petitions come from a variety of areas, mostly from Waldheim -- pages from Waldheim, Mr. Speaker; also from . . . a couple of pages from Saltcoats, Bredenbury, Saskatoon, and Lloydminster; and I want to put these on the Table at this time, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: -- According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of Saskatchewan praying that the Assembly urge the government to change the regulations requiring the replacement of underground storage tanks.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege and pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, a group of 23 grade 12 students from Martin Collegiate. They're seated up here in the Speaker's gallery. I want to welcome them here today to observe question period and look forward to meeting with them after question period.

Along with them is their teacher, Doug Bolander, as well as a couple of chaperons, Darlene Kreklewich and Moses Lukwago. And I want to welcome them as well because I know this is part of the teaching experience and look forward, as I mentioned, to meeting you after question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Rolfes: -- I too would like to introduce some guests today. It's not very often that the Speaker has guests in from his constituency, but I'm very proud today to be able to introduce Sam and Gertie Gross and their son, Murray, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. I ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly and give them a good hand of applause.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Curling Champions

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's true that we throw many rocks in this House, but I rise today to recognize individuals who do a much better job than we do.

Curling has a long history in Saskatchewan. Following suit of the European and Scottish rural workers who began curling with drystone rocks and frozen loch or moors, Saskatchewan people have grown to develop their own curling tradition, and those traditions have continued on for generations. Keen competition, spirited audience participation, and strong, friendly heritage are key ingredients to the success of this sport. Such is the case in Saskatchewan.

It isn't every day that athletes from a province receive worldwide recognition, but this weekend is an exception. Callie Curling Club's Sandra Peterson and her curling team captured the attention of Saskatchewan people and the world last year by winning the women's curling championship.

Mr. Speaker, they did it again in Oberstdorf, Germany, yesterday. Sandra, Jan, Joan, and Marcia made history by beating Scotland 5-3 in the final and becoming the first Canadian women's team to win two world titles.

As well, Mr. Speaker, our former colleague, Rick Folk, captured the men's world curling title this weekend. And Rick has been well known in Saskatchewan for years since he captured his first men's world title in 1980.

Coupled with the recent victories of the Saskatchewan junior teams at the junior world championship, these achievements prove that while Scotland may have invented curling, Saskatchewan owns the sport.

We are all very proud of them, Mr. Speaker, and look forward to congratulating them all in person. May I request that all members of this Assembly join me in recognizing these great Saskatchewan athletes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to Canada's Women's, Men's and Junior World Curling Champions

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. Today we can all be proud and delighted with the news that Canada's women's and men's curling teams have joined the junior curling teams as world champions. All teams played valiantly in dramatic games against worthy opponents. I am sure that everyone in our province is proud of the accomplishment of our women's team. Sandra Peterson, Jan Betker, Joan McCusker, Marcia Gudereit, along with fifth Anita Ford, made history by becoming the first Canadian women's team to win

back-to-back world titles when they beat Scotland's Christine Cannon 5-3 in the women's final.

Meanwhile, Kelowna's Rick Folk, who played out of Saskatoon in 1980 and was a member of this Assembly in the early '80s, won the men's title in dramatic fashion by beating Sweden 3-2.

Also let us not forget the fine victories of our junior teams. With these four championship teams, it was truly a sweep for Canada this year, and we can say the best curlers come from Canada and many from the province of Saskatchewan.

I would like the Assembly to join with me in congratulating the Canadian women's, men's, and junior world champion curling teams. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to the Canadian Women's World Curling Champions

Mrs. Bergman: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Regina's own Sandra Peterson for winning the second world curling title in two years. Her rink of Jan, Joan, Marcia and Anita are the first Canadian team to win two consecutive world titles, and they accomplished this feat by beating Scotland yesterday.

I am sure all members of the Assembly will join me in applauding these athletes, and agree that the Peterson rink represents the best of Saskatchewan's winning spirit. They really raised our spirits as we had the honour of watching them.

To win two world championships in a row, and to be part of the Canadian sweep of the world championships, is a tremendous boost to the morale of our province. This kind of teamwork is an inspiration to all of us to work as a team to accomplish great things at home and around the world.

To Sandra, Jan, Joan, Marcia, and Anita, and to their families, I want to express our heartfelt thanks and congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Last Mountain District Music Festival

Mr. Flavel: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to inform the Assembly about a very exciting and a very special event in Last Mountain-Touchwood -- the Last Mountain District Music Festival.

The festival, which started on April 11 and is going to April 22, is taking place in the town of Southey again this year. The event, organized by the Saskatchewan Music Festival, travels throughout various districts biyearly. The Last Mountain District Music Festival of 1994 marks the 31st anniversary of the district music festivals throughout Saskatchewan.

This year's music festival attracted over 430 participants, all with various musical interests. It was very important for the community to pull together, which it has done, in order to make the event run smoothly. Organizers and volunteers alike should be congratulated for a job well done.

The Last Mountain District Music Festival is an optimum opportunity for the youth of our province to show their abilities in music. It also provides a chance for many children who would normally, for various reasons, not be able to compete in such a big festival. The winners of the district festival go on to the provincial level, and then those winners go to the national level.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again inform this Assembly of the ongoing Last Mountain District Music festival in Southey and to encourage all those interested to visit. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Women's World Hockey Championship

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Canada's success on the ice yesterday was not only limited to curling. Canada also won its third consecutive title yesterday at the women's world hockey championship at Lake Placid, New York. I would like to congratulate all members of the team, but in particular 15-year-old Haley Wickenheiser who played most of her hockey career in Shaunavon.

Haley is the youngest member of Canada's national team and a good example for all young people in rural Saskatchewan. Before moving to Calgary, Haley was our babysitter and is a big reason why my two boys are so involved in hockey as they are.

Her parents, Tom and Marilyn, are very good friends and I'm sure, very proud parents today. I would like to have all members of the Assembly join me in congratulating Haley and the other women on Canada's national hockey team.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Head Heroine

Mr. Scott: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to tell the Assembly about a young hero from Indian Head. Charity Kopp, 12 years old, is credited for saving the life of 20-month-old Brandon Racette. The incident happened on Saturday, April 9, when Brandon wandered into a nearby creek.

Charity discovered the boy's body floating face down in the water much later. It is still unknown how long the toddler had been submerged in the icy water. She quickly jumped into the water herself and pulled the lifeless boy out. She then performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the young boy, which she had learned from swimming lessons.

Brandon still was not breathing, nor did he have any sign of a pulse 30 minutes after he was pulled from the water. Others, including some volunteer fire-fighters, a medical technician, and Brandon's grandfather all came to help Charity resuscitate the child. The child was finally rushed to the hospital where he miraculously survived. Brandon is presently doing fine and is expected to recover fully. If it had not been for the fast thinking and brave action of Charity Kopp this story surely would have ended in tragedy.

This is the type of spirit and character which defines the people of Saskatchewan, and it is through people like Charity Kopp in which it shines through. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Volunteer Week

Mr. Johnson: -- A few years ago a prominent Regina lawyer said, and I quote, that the spirit of volunteerism in Saskatchewan is dead. And he went on to give a line that we have all heard before, that as the government tries to do everything for everybody, there will no longer be any room for volunteers. He was wrong then and he is still wrong today, as the previous member indicated today in the House.

In recognition of volunteers' contribution to the Saskatchewan life in so many ways, the week of April 17 to 23 has been declared National Volunteer Week in Saskatchewan. We urge those to take this official week and recognize the work of volunteers.

In the past few weeks, Mr. Speaker, all of us have been contacted in one way or another by volunteers -- the Kidney Foundation, the fire-fighters association, or volunteer amateur sports associations. We are familiar with the work done by those in Meals on Wheels or exhibition societies. We are familiar as well for the hundreds of community fairs and sports days that are put on by volunteers.

It would take a week to list the activities of the volunteers in the province of Saskatchewan. And rather than dying, Mr. Speaker, I believe the spirit of volunteerism is alive and prospering in the province today. And on behalf of all of us here, I would like to thank them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Expansion of Gaming

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon we want to begin by having a series of direct viewer mail questions asked by the citizens of this province to the Premier.

I have a question here from Jerry Thomas from Mervin. And he says: Mr. Premier, I heard a report on CNN (Cable News Network) that U.S. (United States) casinos are losing money. Oversupply of casinos is

depriving all of enough money to operate. Has the government considered this in deciding to open still more casinos?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Yes, I want to say to the question that was raised, Mr. Speaker, that we quite clearly have looked at the market conditions throughout North America and throughout Saskatchewan's jurisdiction, and when we were putting together the analysis of the markets in Saskatchewan, we took all of those figures into account.

The person who asked the question is quite right in that casinos are expanding all over North America; there appears to be a consumer demand. We will ensure, in Saskatchewan, that we don't overbuild. We don't want to oversaturate the Saskatchewan market and we'll clearly make sure that we don't do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Vehicle Inspection Program

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier comes from Gordon Gherasium of Regina: I want to know why the government, through SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), decided that they should inspect all vehicles coming in from out of province to make sure that they haven't been totalled off or anything else, and yet they allow all kinds of junk to be licensed in this province and go out on the road. Every time I've had an accident in the city of Regina, I've been hit by a \$50 piece of junk.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- First of all, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the research done on automobile insurance, approximately 1 per cent are from faulty vehicles. But, Mr. Speaker, we still take this into serious consideration and that is the reason why we added the inspection program, you know, for vehicles coming in from other provinces.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower President

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question as well is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, I want to know what the Premier himself plans to do about the issues surrounding Jack Messer. It's an issue that really concerns me as I sit home and watch the news. I'm really concerned about what he's been allowed to get away with over the past couple of years.

I'd like to see the Premier take a stand and actually do something for a change about issues that he himself has talked about in the past as being immoral. I had hoped to see that he could stand up and make some decisions about this.

And this question, Mr. Speaker, comes from Darcy Paul of Regina.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- I'd like to thank the hon. member for his question, and the member who wrote it in. I think that as much as anything, the questions that have been asked in the Legislative Assembly concerning Jack Messer have been more of innuendo than anything to do with fact.

And I'd like the person who sent in that particular question to keep this in mind. SaskPower is an important Crown corporation. They provided good service to the people of Saskatchewan by any stretch or any standard compared to other utilities. SaskPower is a very good utility, providing reliable and cost-effective service.

If you look at the rates at SaskPower for example, putting them together with the SGI package, with the gas utility and the telephone rates, combine those four together, we likely have the cheapest and most efficient package of utilities anywhere in western Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Labour Standards Act

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question comes from Gail Tiefenbach from Regina.

I quote: I would like to ask a question about The Labour Standards Act. I am a group-home worker and I'm working about 75 hours a week with no overtime. And I would like to know why group-home workers are such a class of workers that they don't belong in The Labour Standards Act like the rest of the workers.

We are exempt from the hours of work provisions of the Act and I want to know what makes us different, other than the fact maybe that group homes are funded by the provincial government. So the provincial government makes rules that all other businesses and people have to abide by as far as labour goes. But they can't make special rules for themselves. I don't think that's quite right. Mr. Minister, what do you think?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- This is indeed a great day. What I think I heard the member from Maple Creek saying was that greater protection is needed through labour standards; I think that's what I heard him say.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that from the very beginning of this debate I've defended the member from Maple Creek, and I've said he's a fair-minded man -- he's open to an argument. I'm glad to see you're proving me right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Re-assignment of Co-op Employees

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today comes from Mr. Elmer Laird of Davidson, Saskatchewan. And his question is: Mr. Premier, I want to know why Mr. Lingenfelter has

discharged the senior adviser and five regionals coordinators, all of them, of the co-operatives branch?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I would tell Mr. Laird, who many of us know, that in fact these people are now working in the area of the regional economic development authorities, and as most of the co-operative organizations in rural Saskatchewan know, this is an integration of business co-operatives in order to keep their communities working.

My friend and colleague, the member from Maple Creek, we were in Gull Lake the other night at an opening of the regional economic development authority in the south-west part of the province. There were a number of co-op people there, and he will know that the people doing that work are from the co-ops' area and doing an excellent job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Standards Amendments

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that the official opposition hoisted the provincial government's proposed changes to The Labour Standards Act was to allow the business and employers' community an opportunity to review the House amendments.

Mr. Speaker, after only a few days the results are in and they are unanimous. The House amendments brought in by the Minister of Labour can best be described as a betrayal. As usual, Mr. Minister, you told them one thing and then you delivered another. In fact many of your changes make matters worse for business and job creation.

Mr. Minister, why does the proposed list of House amendments which you described to the business community, differ so widely from the final House amendments? Who or what got to you that you . . . after you had committed to improving the situation? What happened, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I'm a little disappointed, Mr. Speaker. Having gained an ally in the member from Maple Creek, it appears in the space of a few seconds I've lost him again. I've seen some backsliding but not quite that rapidly, Mr. Speaker.

Nevertheless, I think the series of questions from the member from Maple Creek points out the complexity of this whole issue actually, to be fair to the member, who I think has been fair to the issue today. I think this simply points out the complexity of the issue.

There are people such as the group-home workers who genuinely need protection, and this Act will extend that to them. There are also concerns in the business community and we think we can meet those concerns as well. So I guess I'll have to ponder for some time the exact position that the member from Maple Creek's taking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the business community is using the term double-dealing quite often in reference to you and your government. I guess that should come as no surprise. The word is out that you can't be trusted.

Mr. Minister, with your tongue firmly planted in your cheek you said last week that the majority of businesses and employers agreed with your legislation. Well on Saturday, dozens of concerned businesses and organizations placed a full-page ad telling you how they really feel. They paid for that -- I didn't.

Now among other things, the ad said, quote:

New labour laws are about to be passed . . . that will scare off investment and result in fewer jobs.

Mr. Minister, let me ask you the question which the business associations ask in the ad:

Is this any way to establish a positive climate for economic renewal???

Is this any way to encourage new business investment or create new jobs???

Is this any way to build a partnership???

What do you think, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I want to make it very clear, first of all, what the process here is. This legislation is not the preserve of business, it is not the preserve of labour -- it is the preserve of the public. And the end beneficiary of this legislation is not either one of the those groups, but the public themselves. And at the end of the day, they're the only people whom we really . . . that's the only group whom we really ask for approval.

Having said that, I want to point out to the minister what I think the questions he has asked today points out, and that is there are concerns by labour, there are concerns by business. We have tried to strike a reasonable balance in meeting those and perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the member is asking questions from both sides, indicating concern from both sides, perhaps that indicates that we have struck a balance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Minister, perhaps it indicates that your balance is somehow out of balance.

Mr. Minister, it is not just organizations of business, the umbrella groups and the employers who are against your plan. Hundreds of individual businesses are also speaking out. Let me give you a small example of this. If this Bill is passed as proposed, it will mean the death of many Saskatchewan jobs and many Saskatchewan businesses, says one businessman from Kindersley. Many part-time workers will likely end up

not having a job at all, writes the reeve from Corman Park. This Bill will restrict any type of expansion and growth by small companies in Saskatchewan, says an oilfield businessman from the Kindersley area.

Mr. Minister, you say you know more about their business than they do. Very simply, can you tell them what part of your Bill will create new investment and what part will create employment? Can you point these out, Mr. Minister, for the people of Saskatchewan who are really concerned?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- While creating new investment is not the primary function of this Bill, nevertheless we think it does . . . nevertheless we think it will contribute to that in an indirect way.

It is our belief, Mr. Speaker, that the future belongs to those companies which can restructure, which can adapt to new technology, and which can, in doing so, gain the cooperation of their employees. They're more likely to do that if their employees have some minimal protection.

On that basis, we think, Mr. Speaker, that progressive labour legislation is an essential part of economic restructuring, although as I say, attracting investment is not the primary function of this legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has finally been able to get serious this morning about this very serious problem.

Mr. Minister, even part-time workers are telling you that they are concerned. Your office has received a letter from a part-time worker in a fast food chain in Regina. She said, and I quote:

I, and I am sure many others, would prefer a job without benefits as opposed to no job at all. Please, for the sake of the part-time workers in this province, do not allow this legislation to pass.

This is from a young, part-time worker, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, it's time you recognized that you botched this process from the very start. In the name of jobs and business investment, will you commit to scrapping The Labour Standards and The Trade Union Acts and start all over again, this time with real and meaningful consultation and with a view to creating a positive job creation and investment climate in the province?

Will you do that, Mr. Minister, for the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- The answer, Mr. Speaker, is

no, we will not withdraw it. We do not think that would contribute to a better climate, as you put it.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that we have attempted a financial restructuring of this province and we have a balanced budget plan which is coming into place which will accomplish that.

We have attempted to do that in other areas, and we are attempting to do it in the area of the economy. Unlike members opposite who squandered enormous sums of money with one hare-brained project after another -- and I will not, Mr. Speaker, take time to name those hare-brained projects; if I were to name them by name I would go over the limit in time -- unlike members opposite, we have sought to work with the Saskatchewan economy to restructure it and to provide a basis upon which Saskatchewan will not just survive in the '90s but will thrive in the '90s. We think that's in place.

But I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, we will look elsewhere than members opposite for advice on how to manage the economy. Your record speaks for itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Underground Storage Tanks

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Environment minister. I've been receiving several phone calls in my office about the requirement to dig up underground fuel storage tanks. A constant complaint is the apparent randomness of testing sites in requiring tanks and soil to be dug up.

Mr. Minister, is there a plan for how your department is identifying potential sites, and will you table that plan today?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: -- Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. I want to thank the member opposite for the question. The issue of underground storage tanks is less one of identifying which sites are responsible. Every business person in Saskatchewan that owns a service station knows that the risk one needs to avoid is the risk of an underground storage tank leaking and causing further contamination.

So the objective of the regulations that are in place are to help businesses with guidelines that allow . . . that identify ways of protecting those tanks if they're relatively new tanks; or providing guidelines for when they should be replaced, should they be of an older age and at risk of leaking, to avoid further contamination and public risk. The department has guidelines with which it works for helping to identify those.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We raised questions in March of this year on behalf of the independent service station owners who face enormous financial costs of digging up tanks and

replacing them. There appears to be a total disregard of the cost and impact on the people involved. In at least one case I know of personally, because of the random choice of your department, a family's life savings have been wiped out to dig up a tank.

Mr. Minister, will the government consider giving Saskatchewan businesses some form of financial assistance to help defray the cost of digging up and replacing these tanks?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: -- Mr. Speaker, I know that for businesses who have decided that they should upgrade their facilities there is a cost involved, as there is a cost involved with operating any facility. But I want the member opposite to know that when we looked at this issue shortly after we took office, we examined the issue of the upgrader requirements and decided that it was first important to offer an extension of deadlines to allow more time for planning and to review the issues that are of concern to people.

The deadline has been extended to April 1, 1995 for all service station owners except for those who are of class A sites. And I want to say that I want to express appreciation publicly to the class A site owners; 95 per cent of them have now complied with the need to upgrade by April 1 of this year. And they deserve credit for the decision they've made.

And what we are going to be doing is continuing to consult. The member opposite may not be aware that we've set up an advisory committee about a year ago to advise on the details of the upgrading, the details of the soil contamination standards. And we are listening to the industry and the concerned owners to make those regulations sensitive to their own business needs and to the public safety of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, my question was not regarding the advice you give to people or some of the sites that you say have been dealt with. My question had to do with the enormous costs that these people are finding.

Mr. Minister, I have a copy of a bill from the Yorkton School Division. It will cost a total of \$150,000 to exhume one tank which is buried beside a school building. To the Regina Public School Board the cost will be in excess of 200,000. In Melville the cost is at least 20,000.

Mr. Minister, in every case the cost for this will come out of the budget for education. Mr. Minister, what is your priority -- education or digging up underground tanks that we can't afford?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: -- Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is a bit of an amusing study. He fully supported the revision of the standards about which he now asks questions, only a year ago.

The fact is that it doesn't cost \$100,000 to dig up any

tank simply for removing the tank. The costs begin to mount when there's contamination resulting from leakage. And the only reason there's costs attached to cleaning up contamination is because, if there's gasoline or other substances that are components of gasoline in the soil that are either cancer risks or fire hazards or at risk of contaminating and putting the public at risk or environmental considerations at risk; water supply and municipal infrastructure; water lines; telephone lines; that it is important that you not make the situation worse by allowing the contamination to put the public at risk and put the facilities at risk.

So the question is a, very simply, financial balance between getting the job done at minimal cost without adding further risk to that variety of elements in society that are at risk if there's contamination in the soil.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, my question is, why wouldn't the cost come out of your budget, and why does it have to come at the expense of the educational budget?

We spoke with the staff at the Yorkton School Division offices and they tell me that the \$150,000 cost will be reduced by 40 per cent, thanks to a grant to the school division from the Department of Education. That's a grant of \$60,000.

Mr. Minister, are there going to be grants to all the school divisions across the province, as well as the universities, regional colleges, hospitals, and other public institutions?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: -- Mr. Speaker, the funding of costs within any sector I will leave up to the departments concerned. The reality is that owners of equipment that is wearing out are responsible for the replacement of that equipment. It is our goal to work with owners.

And it's my understanding from my discussions with them that they generally would agree that we ought not to leave tanks in the ground until they leak. That means that when they approach the risk of leaking, then one needs to either protect them from further corrosion -- which is the idea of the action plan to put in cathodic protection and to put in collection trays for collecting leaks to avoid further contamination -- to either do that upgrading or to replace the tanks and when the new tanks are put in place to have a high standard of protection of those new tanks, which then can go for a long time. If you can achieve that level of protection then the public is not at risk.

Now does the member argue, does the member argue that we ought not to upgrade tanks to protect them or we ought not to remove them when they leak? I don't understand the point of the member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Appointment of Lieutenant Governor

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, on Friday, Liberal fund-raiser and strategist Jack Wiebe was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan by the Prime Minister. This appointment was made by the Prime Minister, as I understand the process, in consultation with the Premier.

Mr. Premier, why did you agree to this obvious patronage appointment, the exact kind of appointment that Mr. Chrétien and the Leader of the Third Party have spoken against in the past? Why did you agree to that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer, on behalf of the Premier, the member's question. Let me, first of all, make it very clear that in this appointment there was no consultation by the Prime Minister or by the federal government.

But I think that this appointment -- and I look forward to working with the new Lieutenant Governor, who I am sure will dispose of his responsibilities in the same way as the former Lieutenant Governor did; and I want to commend her for the tremendous service that she provided to Saskatchewan -- but I think that this appointment nevertheless is a revealing commentary, Mr. Speaker, on the so-called new politics of the member for Greystone, who I know, in the process . . . because it is the process has been always carried out, where the Leader of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan was no doubt consulted and had some input and advice on the appointment of the new Lieutenant Governor. And I think that the member from Greystone and the Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party has an awful lot to explain in this particular circumstance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier, then. Mr. Deputy Premier, are you telling me that the Leader of the Third Party okayed this appointment, even though we see obvious criticism from her in the weekend newspapers, and the Prime Minister consulted with the Leader of the Third Party, but not with the Premier in making this appointment? I think, isn't the process supposed to go the other way around, Mr. Deputy Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Speaker, I think the comments from the member from Thunder Creek are comments worth noting, in that indeed is the process. But as far as I know, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan was not consulted for recommended names on who should be appointed, or whether the present Lieutenant Governor should be the choice of the Prime Minister.

I'm sure though, because the member, the Leader of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, has so often said

how she is in almost daily contact with the office of the Prime Minister and the federal members, that she was consulted. And I really think, Mr. Speaker, that this is an interesting revelation as to what we really mean, or what we really should understand about what the new Liberal politics in Saskatchewan is really all about. And it's about patronage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Premier and the government, I rise to pay tribute to the Most Reverend Charles Halpin, Roman Catholic bishop of Regina, who died on April 16.

And I know that all members of the legislature will join with me in my comments and in the tribute paid to someone who we knew and who made such a tremendous contribution to this province and to the people of the church which he led.

Born in Manitoba, Charles Halpin was fifth bishop of Regina and metropolitan of Saskatchewan for over 20 years until his untimely death at the age of 63. His vocation to the priesthood came at an early age, and he served his church faithfully and with distinction in many senior positions in Winnipeg before his move to Saskatchewan.

Archbishop Halpin was a beloved and popular leader for Roman Catholics in the archdiocese of Regina and the province of Saskatchewan. He was respected and admired by people of other churches and faiths for his genuine friendship and openness to dialogue.

At the time of his death he was the senior religious leader in our province. Mr. Speaker, Charles Halpin led his people through challenging times. Following Vatican II, the Roman Catholic church faced major changes in its worship, its structure, and its ministry. Archbishop Halpin rose to those challenges with his customary vigour and good humour. He thoroughly involved lay people, clergy, and religious in the activities of the church. He established the first lay ministry program in western Canada, as well as an adult education centre. He spoke out for social justice. He firmly supported the farmers of our province during the agricultural crisis of our time.

Mr. Speaker, Charles Halpin earned the affection and the respect not only of his own church members, but of people of many faiths and different walks of life across the province. He will be sorely missed by us all.

On behalf of the government -- and I'm sure I can say on behalf of all of us -- I extend sincere condolences to his mother, his sisters, and his brothers, and I convey to the clergy and the people of the archdiocese of Regina, our deep sorrow at the loss of their archbishop.

Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the Deputy Premier to say a few words about the late

Charles Halpin, the archbishop of Regina diocese. Our daughter, Camille, is about to take Communion for the first time this month, Mr. Speaker. And we were all looking forward to the opportunity to enjoy that celebration with the archbishop.

As the Deputy Premier has pointed out, Archbishop Halpin was respected, he was admired. I particularly enjoyed his good sense of humour. He was very much interested in policy and politics and family and in rural life, urban life, enjoyed exchanging stories. He was a man who was very, very compassionate.

He was instrumental in the involvement of changing policy in the church. And again, as the Deputy Premier pointed out, it was a time when the church had been changing, and he was instrumental in allowing his good advice and the support of the church to be involved in those changes.

The respect of the community, Mr. Speaker, will undoubtedly be reflected in the respect that will be shown on Wednesday at his funeral. And he will be missed. And from this side of the legislature, let me sincerely provide our condolences to his family, his mother and brothers and sisters, and say, Mr. Speaker, that we will miss a very powerful and a very compassionate and a very religious individual.

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, we would simply like to add our words of condolence to all of the friends and the family of the archbishop of the diocese of Regina. I did not have the privilege of meeting him, but did have an opportunity to read about his accomplishments in the paper just this past weekend. So we do wish to pay honour to an individual who has added so much to the life of Saskatchewan society. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 57 -- An Act to amend The Government Organization Act (Executive Council Reduction)

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Government Organization Act (Executive Council Reduction).

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

Bill No. 58 -- An Act respecting Representation in the Legislative Assembly

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Representation in the Legislative Assembly be now introduced and read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 56 -- An Act to amend The Automobile Accident Insurance Act

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise in the House today to move second reading to The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation exemplifies how careful study and consultation work together to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people. This Bill addresses major concerns, not only for SGI and its ability to operate a sound fiscal insurance program. More importantly, it gives all victims assurance that they will be properly cared for when injured in an auto accident.

Mr. Speaker, we found through a comprehensive study that a good number of accident victims are receiving inadequate rehabilitation and other benefits. As well, the priority in which they are receiving those benefits is backwards. This means that many victims with similar injuries can receive quite different compensation depending on who is responsible for the accident. Under this proposed Bill, those problems and concerns are addressed. Instead of going through a lengthy, complicated legal process to assess benefits, victims are automatically compensated.

The priority in which they receive those benefits also changes. In the future, accident victims will receive immediate benefits with medical rehabilitation being the top priority, followed by loss of income, and still provide recognition for pain and suffering. This ensures that a victim's health is restored quickly so he or she may return to work and resume normal life after suffering injuries in an auto accident.

Mr. Speaker, we believe auto accidents are just that -- accidents. The people of Saskatchewan should be compensated properly regardless of fault. This legislation accomplishes those goals. So not only have we improved benefits but we have ensured that the fairness of how those benefits are delivered meets the needs of all injury victims.

As well, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a reflection of this government's commitment to fiscal integrity. While we believe that accident victims deserve immediate and improved benefits, we also believe that the people of Saskatchewan shouldn't have to pay more for those improvements in auto insurance. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, ensures that benefits are delivered with compassion and fairness while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, what was once a subjective system of compensating auto accident victims will now be turned into one that is more objective in nature. However, Mr. Speaker, if a victim disagrees with the compensation being offered, they have the ability to appeal through the Court of Queen's Bench.

We do not propose this without careful consideration

and planning. The due diligence applied to this legislation was exhaustive. Two years of careful research and study has gone into the drafting of this Bill. Equally as important, Mr. Speaker, input from those who hold an interest in this program was included. Consultation with affected interest groups is a key ingredient in this proposed legislation. We explained the problems; we offered the possible solutions. In other words, we consulted, listened, and now we have acted.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we believe this legislation will solve concerns with respect to the level of benefits offered to auto accident victims, the fairness of how they are delivered, and the cost of providing those basic benefits. Those three foundations are the basis for the proposed legislation before the House. It will ensure in the future that all accident victims receive immediate and improved compensation for their injuries without having to bear increased costs.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Automobile Accident Insurance Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no it wouldn't be wise for us to allow for a question on this Bill at this time; it's just too early to allow a Bill to proceed into committee without at least raising some concerns -- although after listening to the Premier the other day, maybe a person should sit down because you might be perceived as standing up here supporting all the lawyers in this province. But I think, Mr. Speaker, we want to support the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan and there are a number of concerns with regards to the no-fault insurance that it would seem to me that we must raise, that go far beyond just the legal community versus the average consumer across the province of Saskatchewan.

One would wonder why the government would be coming with no-fault insurance at this time. The minister has indicated that there has been an extensive two or three years of consultation regarding the no-fault insurance and regarding the proposals that have been brought forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I was viewing the minister's statement, or the press release that came out last week, one would wonder where the government is really going to save money.

And the reason I raise that question is because in one place it talks about the fact that loss of income benefits will rise from a maximum \$200 per week to a maximum \$550 per week -- that's a \$350 increase. Now I think to the general consumer out there, they would say, well it's about time we're going to get some compensation -- at least some would be perceived as fair compensation -- right up front; we don't even have to go and fight for it; it's automatically given to us.

And another point that was raised was rehabilitation benefits will increase from a maximum \$10,000 to a

maximum \$500,000. Now if that's an automatic and if people can expect to receive that, I don't perceive that as being a saving to the general insurance side or the auto insurance side, as the minister has been talking about.

And I guess the greatest concern I have here as well, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that victims who suffer severe, permanent injuries will qualify for a maximum payment of \$125,000 for pain and suffering but smaller payments for less severe injuries. That is a cut-back of 125,000 from 225,000.

There's also another area that caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, and I was reading about it, the fact that people who are quadriplegics who would be left with just that 125,000. When you think of the fact that a quadriplegic doesn't have the ability to use their arms and legs any more, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that \$125,000 is a paltry sum when a person may, even as we've seen, just in the last little while, a couple of hockey players who have had severe neck injuries and have become quadriplegics. In fact I believe both of the individuals were under 20 years of age, their whole lifetime ahead of them. And they're just supposed to accept, or anyone in that situation, expect \$125,000 would maintain them for the rest of their life? And I think those are some questions that we're going to have to raise.

(1430)

I think, Mr. Speaker, there's no question that we have to look at ways in which we can make the auto fund more accountable, and ways in which we can protect the consumer out there who is looking at buying insurance that is economical that will meet their needs.

And it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that maybe we need to look at expanding the mediation process that the Minister of Justice is talking about bringing forward in one of his Bills.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to court challenges, there's no doubt that courts have awarded suits or lawsuits or compensation to individuals which I think most people in general would argue that are very large, and probably are much larger than necessary.

At the same time, when you look at going through the courts, Mr. Speaker, you find that the cost of going to court is very expensive as well. And so therefore it's imperative that people receive a fairly substantial sum so that they can pay for the legal bills that have built up while they've gone through the extensive process of going through court.

And so I would think, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at no-fault insurance and the SGI auto fund, maybe the government should have looked at a process of mediation that would have allowed for individuals to sit down and come to a consensus as to what would be fair compensation rather than going through the courts and rather than facing the challenge of possibly

a high settlement at the end of the day, which may or may not meet the needs of the individuals involved.

The other thing, the big reason, the government gives for changing the auto fund is the fact that they had a \$18.8 million loss in 1993, mainly due to the increased cost of injury claims. Now I'm sure each and every MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in this Assembly has had people call them because they have had a difficult time dealing with Workers' Compensation, especially when it comes to head and neck and back injuries.

And there's no doubt that it's very difficult at times trying to determine whether or not an injury sustained today can relate back to a possible injury that was 10 or 15 years old, regarding maybe relating to an accident that person was involved in or whatever the circumstances. And that has become a major concern. It's a very difficult one to determine whether or not back injuries are persistent. And every time a person may run into a back problem, does that relate back to an injury that was sustained let's say in an auto vehicle accident or on the job a number of years previous.

I'm not exactly sure that the Bill before us is going to address that concern. What it's going to do is limit the ability of that individual to get proper compensation for the loss of ability to provide for themselves because of their health problems.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that SGI CANADA, the competitive general insurance side of SGI, realized a profit of \$2.4 million in 1993. And I find that very encouraging. I think it shows that the argument that took place in this House, the debate that took place five years ago, was indeed the correct argument. The government of the day was right in saying that it's time we expanded and allowed SGI a larger role. And by allowing SGI CANADA into the competitive general insurance market, it has given them that ability to realize some profit rather than just staying within a local market that they monopolize.

And I think maybe that's part of the problems with our auto fund. It's a monopoly. There really aren't a lot of other alternatives. And as a result, the auto fund is facing some problems.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly a lot of other things that I could raise and I will raise the next time I have a chance to speak before this Assembly -- a number of concerns my colleagues and I want to raise. But at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 54

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Shillington that **Bill**

No. 54 -- An Act to amend The Trade Union Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again I enter debate on this particular Bill with a great deal of concern. Because as I started to point out on Friday last, Mr. Speaker, it seems that this piece of legislation, in tandem with the changes to The Labour Standards Act, have gone forward in this province without the proper kind of consultation and due diligence that one would think necessary in a province that currently has some really big problems in front of it.

And I refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that has been pointed out in this House many times, that there are now over 81,000 of our citizens on welfare; there has been a net job loss of over 12,000 since 1991. And the simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, that people in this province are increasingly having difficulty finding a job.

Mr. Speaker, as we talk today, there are Saskatchewan citizens looking outside of this province to seek employment.

It's been pointed out in this House that university students, in a short two weeks, will be hitting the job market. Tens of thousands of young people, Mr. Speaker, are going to be out seeking employment so that they can continue on and further their education. The prospects, Mr. Speaker, are incredibly dismal in the spring of 1994 for very many of them achieving that objective.

That objective, Mr. Speaker, is a very laudable one. All of us that have had the opportunity to go past our post-secondary education into other institutions of higher learning know that there is a significant cost attached to that. If I hadn't had the ability, Mr. Speaker, as a student to find employment in things like the housing industry, certainly in agriculture, often just working week by week, the opportunity and at that time an economic downturn, the early 1970s, would have meant that university simply would have been out of the question.

In the face of this, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we do have over 81,000 of our citizens -- that's getting awful close to an uncomfortable 10 per cent of the population -- the fact that we have a net deficit on the job side, along with our students coming into the workforce, means that bringing in two pieces of legislation which time after time have been challenged by people both inside of this legislature and out to point out where there will be one new job created, we have had a deafening silence from the members of the government.

The government continues, Mr. Speaker, to stand in their place and say oh, we've done such a wonderful job of understanding all of the ramifications that go along with these two pieces of legislation and particularly the one that we're dealing with here today, the changes to The Trade Union Act. The minister stands in his place and he says that I have

consulted broadly with people; that I have not just talked to business and I have not just talked to labour; that I have talked to the people of the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province increasingly are sending a message back to this minister and this government and they're saying no, you have not talked to me, you have not listened, you simply do not understand the economics of 1994 in Saskatchewan.

And I refer you, Mr. Speaker, and all Saskatchewan people today to the ad taken out in most of the major newspapers in the province on Saturday, an ad that was sponsored by a number of organizations, Mr. Speaker. And I would just once more read them into the record because I think it's important that the Minister of Labour understand who in this province is complaining about the job that he's doing.

This ad, Mr. Speaker, was sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Restaurant & Food Services Association, the North Saskatoon Business Association, the Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Saskatchewan Construction Association, Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, Saskatchewan Restaurant & Food Services Association, Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, and other Saskatchewan businesses and organizations.

The only ones that aren't included in here, Mr. Speaker, at present -- and I say at present -- are the public sector employers. And as we all know, Mr. Speaker, on the changes to the labour standards, those public sector employers were also very vocal, very vociferous in their opposition to what is being proposed in this House because they also cover another 50,000 employees. The SUMAs (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), the SARMs (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), the SAHOs (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), the organizations, Mr. Speaker, that you and I depend on and our families depend on so much for the delivery of service in this province.

All of these groups have said to the Minister of Labour who claims to have talked to them in the last 16 months, you are wrong. At the end of the day you are absolutely wrong. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not going to take one or two changes to change the minds of all of these people.

I have here a list, Mr. Speaker, that goes through segments of this particular piece of legislation, and I won't get into that because that is better left to the clause by clause study of the Bill. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there is substantial opposition to the entirety of the legislation. It isn't just one point or two.

I think some of the government members like to think that if for instance we deal with the issue that surrounds the benefits going to people on strike, that the company has to keep on paying the benefits if this

is going to solve the problem. Well I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it is much deeper than that. It is much deeper than the minister simply tinkering with the legislation.

There is a fundamental flaw at work here, Mr. Speaker. And the flaw is, I think, that the minister travelled around this province for 16 months on his own agenda rather than the agenda of the people that he is charged with serving. Because if in that 16-month period he did not detect the degree of opposition that we see here in this province today, then he only had one thing in mind, and that was some type of political agenda, Mr. Speaker, that meant that the session of 1994 had to be the one that made the changes; not because those changes were going to, one, create any more employment in the province. I think that's pretty well conclusive. We've pointed out that there isn't an opportunity here for one new job both in 1994, '95 and '96 . . . as far down the road as you want to go. So we can almost dispense with that not being on the agenda.

Two, the minister says that there are certain segments in our society that have a prime need to have their issues addressed, particularly part-time workers, people that the economy of the 1990s and beyond are putting in a state of flux. Well as I said the other day, Mr. Speaker, if we were simply dealing with the ability of having bereavement leave because one of your grandparents has passed away, I think there is no one in our society that isn't prepared to deal with that, no one at all.

The question of asking people to double-shift, the questions surrounding those in our society who by necessity can only achieve part-time employment because of family considerations and things surrounding the family circle -- I'm sure that we could come to some kind of agreement on them, Mr. Speaker.

But the simple fact is, what the government has done here . . . and I believe there is that third agenda, Mr. Speaker, and that is to satisfy the wishes and the wants of some of the labour leaders in this province who also happen to be big-time supporters of the NDP (New Democratic Party) Party, big-time contributors to the NDP Party, big-time sources of labour at election time for the NDP Party.

And the minister has done nothing to disprove that, Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing at all in the remarks that have been made in this House so far, that would allay that suspicion one iota from someone in the public.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if that is the primary consideration, if that is, and the government is afraid to bring in honest to goodness change in 1995 or 1996 because that may interfere with some election forecast, then we're doing this for all of the wrong reasons, Mr. Speaker, absolutely all of the wrong reasons.

Changes to labour legislation in this province in 1994 or 1995 or 1996 should be targeted. It should fit in,

Mr. Speaker, with what the government has already proposed. You know, they bring forward these high sounding proposals -- the *Partnership for Renewal*, Ag 2000, and others -- and they say that this is how we are going to achieve through cooperation and renewal a new spirit in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I say to the government, then why are you not applying your own legislation to the standards that you've already set?

(1445)

I mean the Minister of Health has launched us off on a health care reform package in this province, Mr. Speaker -- very ambitious program, deeply flawed, has been obvious already to those of us in the province; we have got hospital closures all over the place. But in regards to the workforce, Mr. Speaker, it is very evident that there has not been the proper kind of forethought here.

We have the situation where we have dozens of hospitals in this province having role changes occur. Those role changes, Mr. Speaker, affect the employees, the very employees who the Minister of Labour, in these changes, says are going to be better off. The simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, that they aren't going to have a job, period; that we've got a net loss of jobs being projected in the health care sector. A lot of those people, Mr. Speaker, because of the areas in which they live, don't have the opportunity to travel to other areas of the province to work. In effect, a net loss.

On top of that, the Minister of Health has said that one of the reasons we're doing health care reform is that we centralize, we consolidate, and we put power in the hands of locally, we hope, elected boards, Mr. Speaker -- we hope elected boards -- the ability to cost save at the local level because they are far better at it than the provincial bureaucracy. That essentially is what the minister gets at.

And yet we look at the legislation, the proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to see those very people -- health care boards, hospital boards, school boards -- now prohibited from doing just that. No more contracting out, Mr. Speaker. In other words, if they already have a unionized workplace, the agreements are signed, these people will have to go to the Labour Relations Board in order to propose a different system of delivering service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've had example after example brought to this House by my colleague from Kindersley, where in one particular community you will have a hospital and a nursing home, you may have other facilities surrounding the delivery of home care, all being coalesced, for instance, into one particular facility. You have a number of boards being amalgamated and you have a number of bargaining units, Mr. Speaker, also being amalgamated into. And that has necessitated things like bumping privileges; it has meant that there has been changes in shifting for the employees affected.

At the end of the day, this is all being done, Mr. Speaker, in the words of the minister, to give us a health care system that will go into the next century, that we're going to save medicare. But the bottom line is we're going to save dollars -- that the health budget has to be pared back for the government to meet its balanced budget target. We're going to save dollars. At the end of the day, when push comes to shove, Mr. Speaker, it is to save money.

So here we have a set of criteria that have been laid out over the past year in this province, Mr. Speaker, to save money. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, we pointed out circumstance after circumstance in this Legislative Assembly where that saving of dollars in effect creates a two-class system of health care in this province and indeed has put some people at risk as far as their medical care.

But we are forging ahead, Mr. Speaker. We're even forging ahead so far as we'll go out and get the former chairman of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and pay him 500 bucks a day to run around the province and tell us why we shouldn't democratically elect these people. And that extra \$200,000 is justifiable because that is a worthwhile cause, Mr. Speaker.

But at the end of the day the Minister of Labour, after 16 months in consultation, comes back and says, I am proposing that none of these newly created regimes in health care are going to have the ability to truly save money; they can't go and contract out because they find that that is a better delivery of service.

No, they will have to go through the bureaucratically and politically appointed board set up by the Minister of Labour. And as I pointed out on Friday, Mr. Speaker, the minister, the Premier, the cabinet, by order in council, can appoint an individual shortly before the end of their term which the succeeding administration would be forced to live with for the entirety of their term -- for the entirety of their term, Mr. Speaker -- unless that administration was prepared to bring in legislation which declared all of this null and void.

Now I tell you, and I ask you, does that seem logical? Is that a logical progression for a government that says that they are cooperating, that they are working with the various parties in this province to deliver a cheaper system of government? I don't think so. I don't think that makes any sense, Mr. Speaker. The left hand doesn't know what the right is doing.

I wonder some days, Mr. Speaker, if the head knows what either hand is doing, because that's what it appears. That's why you get people all over this province spending very large amounts of money, Mr. Speaker, to point out to Saskatchewan citizens in this ad on Saturday that there is folly at work here. There is absolute folly at work.

I hope the minister, the next time he has the opportunity, can show us for instance in the health care sector, where there will be one new job because of this legislation -- one new job. I don't think he can

do it, Mr. Speaker. I honestly don't believe he can do it.

I would ask the Minister of Labour, show us where the current jobs in health care will be preserved because of this legislation. I don't think he can do that either, Mr. Speaker. I honestly don't. So far there's been no indication at all from that minister that that is a fact.

The same goes, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture brings into this House a proposal called Ag 2000. And I know, Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of jokes around the province about whether that is an agricultural plan or if that's the number of farmers that'll be left in this province in the year 2000. Given the way that these people operate and after their promises to the agriculture community, I suspect it's the latter rather than the former.

But the simple fact is that I've taken the opportunity to read Ag 2000. And what it emphasizes, Mr. Speaker, to you and me and everyone else in this province, particularly those of us in agriculture, is that we must diversify; that we must key on those areas that will garner Saskatchewan producers bigger shares of export markets; that will garner for Saskatchewan producers higher dollar volumes because we are now adding value to various projects and products.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's nobody that disagrees with that -- nobody disagrees with that at all. But the simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, as I go through this legislation I try to look at the red meat industry which has been one of some stability in this province in the last few years. I look at both the cattle and the hog sector. And I believe that hogs, for instance, is the number two export in dollar volume right behind grain in this province, as far as agricultural products go.

I look at the hog sector and I look at everything that surrounds the raising of pork, both for domestic and export uses, Mr. Speaker, and I look at this legislation and I say to myself, is there anything here that will ensure that there are more jobs going to occur in that industry? Are there any more jobs? Mr. Speaker, I can't find a single new job in the hog sector because of this legislation. In fact what I see happening, Mr. Speaker, what I see happening are Saskatchewan packing plants being put at a disadvantage to other packing plants, particularly in western Canada and the United States, because of this legislation.

In other words, if you're one of the several hundred hog producers in this province that have gone out and expended very large sums of money in order to build new, modern facilities, take their sow herds up from small levels to medium or very large levels; and I say, what are the prospects surrounding that industry in the future, given what might happen with this labour legislation? And, Mr. Speaker, I would not believe a single word in Ag 2000 when I make that comparison.

I raise the issue surrounding the meat packing plant in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. That packing plant has been

shut down by strike action for over a year and a half. There's five and a half million dollars of taxpayers' money potentially tied up in this facility. We used to have the only boxed beef operation in the province, Mr. Speaker, the very thing that the Minister of Agriculture talked about in Ag 2000 -- adding value.

Today, culled cows in this province, Mr. Speaker, are shipped to killing plants in western Alberta. In other words, they're put on a semi-trailer truck and then trucked 450 miles before they reach their destination. The economics of doing that, Mr. Speaker, are nearly negligible. So all the producers in this province that have a culled cow that has to go to market are facing a very serious problem. It used to be that they went to the facility in Moose Jaw; that cow was killed and went through the boxed beef operation and back into the restaurant trade. That's where she went to, Mr. Speaker.

I look at this labour legislation and I say, is this labour legislation going to put that packing plant back to work? Is that packing plant going to be competitive with the ones in Alberta, with the ones in North Dakota, South Dakota, and further south because of this labour legislation, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what the answer is? No.

If anything that packing plant will almost assuredly be shut down for ever, Mr. Speaker, because of the proposed changes of the minister. That 170 jobs in my community -- and if there were another shift added, 220 jobs -- will assuredly not happen. That plant will stay closed, Mr. Speaker, because the economics of running that operation when you tack on the added costs of this labour legislation, mean that that plant is uncompetitive in the western Canadian context.

Mr. Speaker, the day that it went on strike, it had the highest wages of any packing plant in western Canada in the beef side -- the highest wages on the beef side of any plant in western Canada.

Now I read the words, Mr. Speaker, I read the words in Ag 2000, but when I read the words and I stack them up against what else this government is doing, that's all they are, is simply words. There's no meaning there, Mr. Speaker. There is no intention, there is no intention to follow through on Ag 2000 and implement this legislation at the same time. It simply doesn't work, Mr. Speaker. It simply doesn't work.

Mr. Speaker, the largest grain company in the province of Saskatchewan today is Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and their employees are now on a collision course. The Grain Services Union in this province is prepared to go on strike for the first time in 50 years.

Sask Wheat Pool's construction division, Mr. Speaker, is being wound down, and it's being wound down for a very good reason, because the farmers that that construction section is charged with servicing can no longer afford the costs of building the new-style elevators in competition with other companies who build theirs by contracting out. Mr. Speaker, there, I

am told, is a full 20 per cent difference in what Sask Pool is paying today and what their competitors are paying.

An Hon. Member: -- 350,000 on an average elevator.

Mr. Swenson: -- My colleague says to me that's \$350,000 on the average elevator.

Mr. Speaker, the ramifications of that strike and the prevention of change in Sask Wheat Pool hold tremendous ramifications for every agricultural producer in this province, particularly those that patronize Sask Wheat Pool elevators, livestock yards, farm service centres, and others.

I look, Mr. Speaker, I look back at this legislation and I say to myself, given that grain in Saskatchewan is primarily exported -- in fact about 80 per cent outside of the country and most of the rest into our own domestic market -- the fact that those prices have not dramatically changed over a fair period of time, why would the Government of Saskatchewan, the largest grain producing province in Canada, bring in labour legislation that would raise the cost of production for each and every producer in this province.

Because in effect, Mr. Speaker, that's what will happen. That's the only thing that can happen if this legislation in its current form is applied against the current labour dispute at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Because it will prohibit, Mr. Speaker, the very contracting out which the Pool is talking about. It will mean that the certification process, Mr. Speaker, will have to stay in place rather than be abrogated.

(1500)

Now, Mr. Speaker, does that fit with Ag 2000? Does that mean that a pasta plant will ever be built in this province? I say to you, no, because it makes this province uncompetitive against all other jurisdictions in western Canada and those close to us, the United States.

Western Canadian farmers, in particular Saskatchewan farmers, have dreamt about the ability of having a pasta plant in this province for decades. Every major farm organization has supported it. Well I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it'll be a frosty Friday, I think, before any company, in the face of what the Minister of Labour is proposing here, will choose our province as the jurisdiction to build that.

Why would you do that when you inherently add on costs, Mr. Speaker, which in the pasta business they tell me amount to a few cents a box, a few cents a box? And the minister has the gall -- the Minister of Agriculture -- to stand up and say that here is the window of opportunity for agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan when his own colleague, the Minister of Labour over here, is busy pulling the plug. Pulling the plug, that the document that was paid for with thousands and tens of thousands of dollars of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money and held up to Saskatchewan producers as the NDP way, is being

backsidied by the Minister of Labour.

It doesn't make a lot of sense, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't make a lot of sense. I don't think there's an agricultural producer in the province of Saskatchewan, if he were shown everything that was in the changes to The Trade Union Act and Labour Standards, would go along with it.

I haven't had the Minister of Labour say one thing in this House about agricultural groups and their support for his proposed changes. I see lots of NDP back-benchers around this place, Mr. Speaker, that come from rural ridings and I've heard absolutely nothing from them.

Have they been out talking to their hog producers and their beef producers and their grain producers and their canola producers? Have they done that? And those people support the changes that are going to add cost to each and every one of those products? Maybe, Mr. Speaker, that's why we hear so much silence from them. This big, huge majority NDP government that is full of rural back-benchers all sitting on their hands in dead silence.

It will be interesting, Mr. Speaker, to see the member from Biggar rise to his feet and defend this legislation as it applies to Ag 2000. I'd love to hear it. I would like to hear the minister, the former minister from Rosetown, stand and tell me how this legislation makes Ag 2000 a better Bill. I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I don't think they've got the courage. I don't think they've got the courage.

I really wonder why we hear such a deafening silence. All we've heard so far, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this minister here went around the province for 16 months and he attended breakfast and lunch and dinner. And we know that he lectured the folks about British labour law in the 1830s and American labour law in the 1930s. We know that for sure, Mr. Speaker.

But we don't know much else, because every group that he claims to have consulted with have said no, he didn't consult. He came in and he told us some things, and at the end of the day he brings forward two Bills that have no relationship at all to the economy in which we live. That's all we've heard, Mr. Speaker.

And now those people are having to take out full-page ads in the newspaper -- full-page ads in the newspaper to try and bring this government to its senses. That is what we know, Mr. Speaker. That is what we know.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Labour could have come in here with even one of the groups attached to this ad, saying the high praise of the minister and the job he's done, I think somebody would have given pause. But so far all we've had is the minister stand up in here and introduce his friends in the gallery one day, and we know who his friends were, Mr. Speaker. As one of the columnists said in a recent editorial, at least he didn't say brothers and sisters. They would give the Minister of Labour that, that at least he didn't

about his brothers and sisters; they were just his friends.

And it was quite obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Labour was here to please his friends. Well as I said earlier on, Mr. Speaker, the pleasing of your friends is something that these people are very good at. I mean we've had the spectacle in this House, Mr. Speaker, this session, of the big friend from over at SaskPower being pleased on a very regular basis, pleased on a regular basis.

And we've had the other big friend who used to be the president of Sask Wheat Pool being pleased on a very regular basis. I mean 500 bucks a day is a great way to please, Mr. Speaker. And I can go on and on and on about former NDP candidates and past MLAs and those kind of people that are pleased in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, on an almost weekly basis.

But the simple fact is, that isn't what we should be all about here, Mr. Speaker. What we should be all about here is designing labour legislation that is good, that keeps Saskatchewan in the forefront of what's going on in the changing world we live in, makes us competitive, and allows Saskatchewan people to obtain a far higher degree of employment than what we see here today.

I mean it is an absolute disgrace, Mr. Speaker, that over 81,000 of our citizens are on welfare -- an absolute disgrace. This from a government that two and a half years ago promised the end of poverty, the end of food banks, that they were going to put in place regimes that would eliminate all of that, Mr. Speaker. They were going to do it just by being a New Democrat. Poof, it was gone; gone from the face of existence in this province. And the simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, that it continues to grow and is fostered by these people. And then, Mr. Speaker, and then they bring in two pieces of labour legislation that almost guarantees that all 81,000 will stay right where they are.

Mr. Speaker, a short, four years ago there were eight people in this province working for every person on social assistance. Today the number is five people working for every person on social assistance. That's a real big change, Mr. Speaker. That's a real big change. Every taxpayer in this province bears that proportionate change of burden. And you know, Mr. Speaker, none of us mind bearing that burden because we all know somebody in our life that has misfortune, that has to have the ability to get back on their feet.

But I ask you, Mr. Speaker, why would any government, faced with those kinds of statistics, any amount of that human tragedy, then decide it was the appropriate time to bring in legislation that would keep them there. Why would they do that, Mr. Speaker? Why would a government that was pledged to removing poverty in the province of Saskatchewan, the removal of food banks, bring in legislation that almost guaranteed those functions would continue to exist for years and years and years to come. That doesn't make any sense.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, if they had tipped entirely the other way and got 20 or 30,000 people off of those welfare rolls, off UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission), jobs back in the province of Saskatchewan, I'm sure there would be some criticism; but by and large, I think most people would say, we agree with what you're doing. Even though you are taking perhaps some chances, we'd agree with that.

But what we have here simply is the satisfaction of friends, Mr. Speaker, at the expense of all else -- at the expense of all else. I mean, Mr. Speaker, you know what one of the outcomes of this debate has been. We get a full-sized headline here in the paper: Union fines will now be debts. Union fines will now be debts. That's a real big issue, Mr. Speaker, to the folks on welfare, to the folks on UIC, to the folks that have to flee to another province -- union fines will now be debts. That's a big issue with those folks, isn't it?

Is there anybody over on the other side of the place, the guys who are supposed to be in charge of this government, Mr. Speaker, that can tell me of someone out there today that is really concerned about union fines in 1994, other than a couple of dozen union leaders, and what ramification that has on the Saskatchewan economy? I don't think so.

I don't think that's a real high priority, at least in the constituency of Thunder Creek. I bet I could drive for about two days around this province, Mr. Speaker, and I could look in every restaurant and hotel, every small-business corner, and I wouldn't find anybody that thought that was a big issue. But in the new legislation proposed by the minister, it's a big issue.

The minister needs to put more hands in the power of his friends, so that they can fine people who disagree with them. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have the spectre in my community of a Woolco store being closed because the people that worked there couldn't decertify the union. And they're out on the street, because that store most definitely is going to close, Mr. Speaker. So another 100-and-some jobs in the community of Moose Jaw are gone -- gone. I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that most of what I see in this Act will give any of those individuals any comfort at all. Because you know what? The mortgage is still going to have to be paid and the kids are going to have to be educated and three squares a day put on the table. There is nothing in there, Mr. Speaker, that is going to help those people keep that job.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, you've got the entire retail trade sector of the province of Saskatchewan taking out paid advertising saying to you people over there, wake up, look what you're doing to the province of Saskatchewan in relationship to everywhere else that we do business. Everywhere else.

Look at what you're doing to the Labour Relations Board and the power that you're giving it. Not power that this Legislative Assembly can temper in any way.

Not power that the members who are duly elected to represent everyone in the province of Saskatchewan, regardless of their political stripe, can in any way adjudicate that process. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this board will have more power than it has ever held in the province's history. And I am told from those that understand the process that this board will have more power than any other board in the country of Canada.

Is there any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that those that will have to deal with the board in the future are fearful? Is there any wonder that those that will have to deal with the board in the future say, my costs of business are going to go up? And at the end of the day, at the end of the day, have we achieved a more democratic society because of it? No.

As I said on Friday, Mr. Speaker, where in this legislation does it talk about the fact that 50 per cent plus one in a democratically elected legislature or workplace is there? Whatever happened to the idea, Mr. Speaker, of secret ballots administered in neutral places by people with no vested interest? Where did that go to? Where did that concept go to?

Why, Mr. Speaker, is the workplace any different than any other part of our society? I mean we go to the polls and we elect our school boards and we elect our city councils and our RM (rural municipality) councils. We're going to elect our health boards some day, Mr. Speaker, mark my words. And 50 per cent plus one is going to be the rule.

Mr. Speaker, even this NDP government, when they changed the boundaries of the province of Saskatchewan, didn't mess around with the concept at the end of the day that you still got elected by 50 per cent plus one vote. They might have liked to have touched that, Mr. Speaker, but even they didn't have the courage to fool around with the democratic process when it came to electing this Legislative Assembly. So tell me what is different about the workplace. Tell me what is different about the workplace, Mr. Speaker.

(1515)

And now we will put in the hands of this Labour Relations Board, people appointed by that government for five- and three-year terms, the power to certify, decertify, impose a first contract -- power that this Assembly has never even vested into itself, Mr. Speaker, power that this Assembly has never even vested into itself. Because in the case of labour stoppages that has come before this House, almost always there is a mediation process put in place that listens to both sides, that puts it in the hands of a neutral party.

Now the minister says, well I've got mediation in my Bill. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? This Labour Relations Board proposed by the government doesn't have to pay any attention to that. They don't have to pay any attention at all.

And the minister says, well just wait, just wait. We'll

get the legislation through and then we'll bring in the regulations. That's what he said with labour standards, Mr. Speaker. Just wait; trust us; we'll bring in the regulations later. Well nobody bought into that, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely nobody bought into that. They don't trust this minister and they don't trust this government. Because those regulations can be changed by order in council. Mr. Speaker, they never have to see this Legislative Assembly. There's nothing there that you and I, as legislators, will deal with.

Now I know, Mr. Speaker, there is very little of The Trade Union Act handled by regulation -- very little handled by regulation. But the fact it is, Mr. Speaker, when you put The Trade Union Act in tandem with labour standards, which is controlled by regulation, then, Mr. Speaker, you have the ability to influence the process far beyond what the minister is prepared to tell this Assembly.

That is dangerous, Mr. Speaker. It is even more dangerous today than it would have been 10 years ago or 20 years ago when this province, Mr. Speaker, was far more insular in its outlook. Today you have no choice but to compete, and you have to have a global outlook. Even this bunch over here that were against free trade in 1988 and 1992 have come to realize that trade will mean the survival of this province.

And I always watch with some interest, Mr. Speaker, when the current issue involving durum wheat and American subsidies and how our products are shipped in the United States becomes a topic in here, because the bunch that couldn't trade are now the bunch that want to protect free trade.

Remember that, the bunch that didn't want to trade are now protecting free trade. And you know why, Mr. Speaker? Reality has come home and has hit them square between the eyes. That if this province doesn't trade, if the durum wheat doesn't go south of the 49th, then Saskatchewan farmers are going to hurt. And if the hogs don't go and the beef don't go and the canola oil and the crush doesn't go, farmers in this province are going to suffer. They know that, Mr. Speaker, as sure as I'm standing here. And that's why today they defend it.

But the simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, that what they propose here today with The Trade Union Act, in some ways can be every bit as prohibitive, Mr. Speaker, every bit as prohibitive as our American friends down there putting duty on our durum wheat.

Because, Mr. Speaker, if they stifle investment, if they stifle the ability of Saskatchewan men and women to create new undertakings here and new jobs and use the expertise that we have in this province to put those things in place, if that capital isn't available, if those jobs flee to other jurisdictions because we have priced ourselves out of the market-place, then it will never happen, Mr. Speaker.

So there's a number of ministers over there that need to stand in this House and give an accounting. The Economic Development minister here, the guy that

brought the plan forward -- you know, the *Partnership for Renewal* -- needs to stand in this House and tell us how the *Partnership for Renewal* squares with the labour legislation of the member from Churchill Downs. He needs to tell us how the tourism industry in this province, Mr. Speaker, is going to cope with the proposed changes and how many jobs are going to be added or how many jobs are going to be lost. He's got that challenge in front of him, Mr. Speaker, and he had best do it while this legislation is being debated here.

The Minister of Health, as I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, has the exact same obligation to stand in this House and point out to the health boards around this province how this proposed labour legislation is going to affect the people that are already faced with more change than they can cope with.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture minister has the obligation and the duty to stand in this House and explain how this labour legislation is going to affect each and every agricultural producer in the province of Saskatchewan and how this labour legislation is going to make that farmer and his family's life easier and how he is going to fulfil his mandate as Minister of Agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan as regards this particular piece of legislation.

Now that might be a pretty tall order, Mr. Speaker, for some of these people, but I think it is their obligation as ministers of the Crown and as people who are charged with guiding very large segments of our population over the next two years or two and a half years, that that obligation is real, Mr. Speaker, and it is one that they should not shirk lightly. They should not shirk that responsibility to stand in this House and tell us how those segments of our society are going to be affected by the changes proposed by the member from Churchill Downs.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon the Finance minister of this province -- the minister charged with continuing on our debt reduction plan, the minister who has made projections in her budget about employment levels three years in a row now -- it is incumbent upon that Finance minister to stand in this House and tell us how this proposed labour legislation is going to affect the bottom line of the province of Saskatchewan and the jobs that she has forecast, the income tax which she says will be paid, and how it affects Saskatchewan in the Canadian context.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think those are unreasonable goals for a government to undertake. Is there anything that I have outlined here today, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly that those members find onerous? Is it beyond the capability of the minister from Saskatoon to do that? Is it beyond the capability of the Ag minister from Canora to do that? Is it beyond the capability of the minister from Elphinstone/golf course to do that? Is it beyond the capability, Mr. Speaker, of the Minister of Health, the former member from Regina, to do that?

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it is. I don't think that that is

something that any citizen or taxpayer in the province of Saskatchewan would find onerous. I don't think the people that elected these people in those constituencies would find that onerous. In fact I think they would expect it.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I think the people that elected this very large, massive NDP majority in the fall of 1991, would expect all of these NDP back-benchers that inhabit this House, Mr. Speaker, to be prepared to stand on their feet and tell us on behalf of the constituencies that they represent, that people agree with the changes being proposed to labour legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

I would find that very interesting, Mr. Speaker, very, very interesting, to watch most of them get on their feet and talk about the communities in their ridings and the people that work there and how this legislation is going to make them better. That would be a very interesting exercise, Mr. Speaker, very interesting indeed.

The one minister in this whole place, Mr. Speaker, that might be able to pull it off is the minister of gambling. The minister responsible for booze and gambling in this province, Mr. Speaker, can probably tell us about a net job increase. Now I'm not sure that all the people that are going to be building these proposed casinos have had a look at this labour legislation yet, Mr. Speaker, with all their part-time workers. But I would guess right now, Mr. Speaker, that the only minister that can claim that there's going to be a net job increase in this province is the minister involved with gambling.

And at the end of the day, even that sector, Mr. Speaker, is going to have something to say about what the minister from Regina here is proposing. Because as I understand the gaming industry across North America, Mr. Speaker, it isn't exactly the most heavily unionized sector that I've come across. In fact, if anything, it is probably the opposite.

So, Mr. Speaker, there you go; there's the challenge. There's the challenge. The challenge is for all of those ministers to disprove all of the people that take out the paid advertising, to stand on their feet and say that we have consulted and this is how it's going to work, and support the minister from Regina, the Minister of Labour, support him in what he says to this Assembly.

And maybe if all of those ministers have that courage, Mr. Speaker, and they identify with their portfolios and they tell us how it's going to come down, then maybe there will be some confidence in this government. But I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, there is no confidence. There is no confidence that these people can deliver anything other than helping out their friends, other than helping out their friends, Mr. Speaker. We know they're good at that. They do it on a weekly basis.

The challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to help out the average taxpayer in this province. The challenge is to help the over 81,000 on welfare. The challenge, Mr. Speaker,

is to get back some of those 12,000 lost jobs. The challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to convince young people to stay in this province and work and build, not be driven out. That's the challenge, Mr. Speaker. Let's see if they've got the courage to pick it up.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to enter the debate this afternoon with respect to this important piece of legislation, Bill No. 54.

It seems that the NDP government is worried that their support is slipping, Mr. Speaker, amongst unions. And so as a result of that, it's payback time and pay for the favours through increased powers to the unions. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're seeing with respect to this piece of legislation.

If that isn't the case, why was it necessary for the government to bring forward amendments that represent an unwarranted intrusion by government into the collective bargaining process, Mr. Speaker? I think that the business community is telling us -- and I'm sure they're making representations to the government with respect to that, Mr. Speaker -- and saying that this Act simply isn't necessary.

These amendments will significantly enhance the ability of unions to organize workers, obtain and expand certification orders and bargaining rights, and secure first collective agreements, Mr. Speaker. So much for the consensus approach which this government promised through the Priel and Ish committees, Mr. Speaker.

If the government isn't paying back union favours, why did the Department of Labour propose additional amendments in all of the areas where the Priel committee could not reach agreement, Mr. Speaker, with the sole exception of replacement worker legislation?

The government says this Bill is the result of consultation between government, business, and labour -- NDP-style, I guess that means, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because business says that this Bill No. 54 is a failure, an absolute failure, of the consensus-building process, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Trade Union Act gives sweeping powers to a politically appointed board, the Labour Relations Board. The board will now be able to grant automatic union certification or to stop decertifications regardless of the number of union cards signed, and notwithstanding any vote of the majority of workers which results in rejection of union proposals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure Moose Jaw Woolco employees who worked hard . . . pardon me, who worked towards a decertification for a year and a half, find it hard to imagine that the NDP government is making decertification even more difficult.

But The Trade Union Act doesn't even stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The appointed board will decide whether a union contract remains in effect when a

company is sold, creates spin-off companies, or re-tenders a service contract held by a union shop. They will determine whether contracting out from any unionized employer to other non-unionized employers shall be prevented.

(1530)

They'll also be able to unilaterally impose a first union contract upon a newly certified employer and determine successorship obligations to continue the unionized status and contracts to the business -- after sale, spin-off, or transfer, Mr. Speaker. Other sweeping powers given to this board include the right to make interim or rectification orders or order of fiscal compensation, amend court orders and more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are very, very important considerations that have to be looked at. These are the kinds of things that make a difference to employers, whether or not they're going to expand their business or whether they're indeed going to continue with their business. We've heard from a number of businesses around Saskatchewan, employers -- and employees within those business, Mr. Deputy Speaker -- that don't believe that these kinds of things are necessary in a free and democratic society.

There's immense powers will be vested in full-time political appointments that will be locked in with absolute immunity and job protection for up to five years. The Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker, will have tremendous power in those regards, and they'll all be political appointees -- no question about it, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of that, I think there's great deal of concern in the business community about the kinds of rulings we're likely to see as a result of that.

While increasing the power of political appointed bureaucrats, the new Act does not given individual workers the fundamental democratic right to mandatory secret ballot votes, or the basic rights of full informational disclosure about the costs and implications of union fees and other operations.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of the fundamental things with respect to a democratic free society, is a ballot that gives people opportunity to vote in secret, Mr. Speaker. It's an important consideration. We all know what happens from time to time in circumstances where it's just a show of hands, Mr. Speaker, where people use it against you if you voted against the majority of people. And people are intimidated by that type of process. And that's why, in a free and democratic society, we don't have that type of thing where just a show of hands is good enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it's important to recognize that principle, where everyone doesn't have to be concerned about the fear of reprisal. They have the opportunity to vote behind a . . . in a secret fashion, and no one knows how they voted, rather than the strong-arm tactics that we often see from strong unions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I think that that is a principle that unions, they would do well to follow, Mr. Speaker, and they would

do well to recognize how closely held and closely respected that type of secret ballot is, Mr. Speaker. Where is the fairness in that? Where is the balance?

In addition, huge fines and penalties can now be imposed by unions on individuals, which add to the big union intimidation. It seems incredible to me that any government would want to allow a union to be able to discipline its members with fines, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You can only envision the kinds of things that may result out of that kind of thing, where the union leadership has in their control then a very tremendous lever on the union membership that they represent.

Who needs replacement worker legislation when a union can impose massive fines on workers who feel they have to cross a picket line, and then enforce them through the courts?

So you would have examples, I would foresee, Mr. Speaker, where a person decides not to report to a picket line or decides to cross a picket line, and then the union leadership is able to impose fines on them, upheld by a court. And so it's a tremendous tool that would be used against the union membership by the union leadership. And often I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see those kinds of things where the union bosses are wanting more and more increased powers so that they have more and more control over the membership that they represent.

And unfortunately, without secret ballot type of voting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it becomes increasingly difficult to remove the leadership within a union -- almost impossible, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

People cross picket lines for many reasons. Some are single mothers and believe that feeding their children is more important than walking a picket line. The same is true for many fathers with families at home who cannot afford to lose any income. Or how about nurses or other professionals that cross lines to ensure the safety of others?

There are people who don't believe in strikes, Mr. Speaker. There are many, many reasons why people cross picket lines, and now they cannot stand up for what they believe because the NDP government has taken that right away from them.

I was reading about a circumstance, Mr. Speaker, out in Alberta over the weekend about a gentleman who held strong views with respect to abortion, very strong views with respect to abortion, and he belonged to a union, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And he found that part of his union dues were being used to support abortion rights type of movements, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and he was opposed to that. And he spoke out about that. And the union . . . there was a great deal of union reprisal against him as a result of that.

Essentially it comes down to a question I guess of conscience. Should the union leadership be able to do things that are against the good conscience of people within those unions? And he believes that when you're looking at those types of issues, that they

shouldn't be able to do those kinds of things. And I believe he's . . . I support him in that view, Mr. Speaker.

I support that view that the union leadership is not always right. But now we will find circumstances as a result of this legislation where the union would be able to impose a fine on someone such as that gentleman if they spoke out against the union leadership. So you see all kinds of circumstances that could present themselves as a result of the union leaders getting increasing power at their disposal.

In the bereavement leave section of The Trade Union Act, provides a new definition of spouse. We have received legal opinion that this definition would clarify the same-sex partners have the right to bereavement leave benefits even when the minister promised otherwise. And we see the spectacle of one minister suggesting that that isn't the case and the other one saying he doesn't know whether it is or not the case. And your government seems to be all over the map on this question. And I think it's important, I think it's important that that type of thing be cleared up before you go any further with this type of legislation.

What about the costs to businesses for this section alone? Add to that over \$14 million tacked onto businesses by The Labour Standards Act and the additional cost to The Workers' Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety Acts. Continually increasing the costs to business, Mr. Speaker, will not result in business investment in this province. It won't result in jobs; it results in exactly the opposite -- loss of business investment, loss of jobs.

And we've seen examples of that where people have written to us. I can think of one letter that came to me from a constituent of mine that was planning on hiring some people for employment this summer. And he said, as a result of the changes in The Labour Standards Act and in this Trade Union Act, he no longer sees that as a viable alternative for him to hire additional staff. And he's a small-business man; I mean he's only got half a dozen employees, something like that, in the town of Kindersley.

But nevertheless, he provides a good service, and he provides employment for those six families and provides a good standard of living for those people. And I think the people within his employ feel he's a good employer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I don't think that they believe he would do anything that would harm their interests.

But nevertheless, he isn't going to expand his operations because of these types of legislation. And he says that in his letter. And the letter is very explicit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It makes it very plain for anyone to understand that that is exactly the way he views these pieces of legislation.

The NDP government has created an unstable labour climate that will further weaken investor confidence in our province and cost our province jobs.

Considering the fact that there are already 12,000 fewer jobs in Saskatchewan since the Romanow . . . since the NDP government took power, they should be looking at creating jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and a positive business atmosphere, rather than eliminating both of those.

And that's what the fear is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we're beginning to see that kind of thing happening where people are, employers are, writing to us. And we're seeing full-page ads being taken out by business groups saying that that is exactly the case.

And why would they do that if that isn't going to be the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's my belief that they're doing it because that's exactly what they fear is going to happen and they know is going to happen because they've been talking to the people that they represent.

There are tremendous number of concerns with this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And in order for us to have opportunity to hear from as many people with respect to this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, many letters are coming in, phone calls, and I can only expect more after seeing over the weekend's events of full-page ads being taken out; where business groups and business leaders and people who own and operate operations, as well as the people employed in them, Mr. Speaker, have to have an opportunity to have a say in this type of legislation.

In order to get as much input as possible, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that we now adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 33

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that Bill No. 33 -- An Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, and I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. Following the comments made by my colleague, the member from Moosomin -- there we go, from Moosomin, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker -- and following also the comments made by the minister responsible for the Gaming and Liquor Commission, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, what we're doing here is dealing with Bill No. 33, An Act to Amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act.

Now I hope that at the conclusion of my remarks that the minister will indeed be able to take some consideration back into cabinet as to the direction in which his government is going. Unfortunately, I believe that the horse has got the bit in his mouth on this particular Act and it's going to be rather difficult not only to rein him in completely, but even to deflect some of their intentions.

Now my understanding of this Act is simply that there is going to be a major shift or change in who

administers the horse-racing in this province. Now I know also that during our administration we chose to have the Horse Racing Commission involved in the Department of Agriculture. And what this Act proposes to do, among other things obviously, is to revert and put that aspect of gambling into the same sin bin as all the other kinds of things that this minister is responsible for, namely the Liquor Commission, the Gaming Commission, and now the Horse Racing Commission is going to be thrown into that same bin.

And I don't know, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, if that is particularly a great concern of mine because there are some specific advantages in doing that. And I know that we as a government always wrestled with the idea, where is the best place to have the Horse Racing Commission. And I guess what this does it epitomizes the difference in the philosophy of our side as opposed to their side, and that is that we looked at the horse-racing as an agricultural component being the predominant factor; whereas this government is looking at it more from the gaming perspective, that it is gambling more so than the agricultural component of it. Now there's one thing to be said of the gaming minister and his colleagues in cabinet, and that is, at least they are being consistent. The emphasis is totally on the gambling dollar, with this government.

And I guess if I have a concern about this Act and the intention of it, is not so much that it proposes to help the Horse Racing Commission and all those thousands of people that are involved in horse-racing, particularly from the agricultural side of it -- and I think that is a commendable step -- but I draw the line when I take a look at the larger perspective and the total picture of the direction in which this government is going. And even from here I can almost see those dollar signs flashing in the eyes of the minister, because that is the underlying, overbearing motivation that those folks have in introducing this Act.

(1545)

Now there may be some advantages to the horse-racing industry, to the tourism industry. I don't dispute that. I have his second reading speech, the minister's second reading speech. And I noticed as I went through it that there is an attempt to justify this particular step. And that attempt is to, by tracing the history of gaming and alcohol in this province, starting during the 30s . . . or was it maybe the 20s, pardon me, probably, where we had prohibition.

And the reason that he's giving, well listen folks, we in Saskatchewan among other places, try to stem the consumption of alcohol by putting in and making it illegal through the prohibition era. And that didn't work. Then of course, notice is also made of the fact that in 1969 the prohibition that existed on gaming was lifted, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, by the, at that time, federal Liberal government. And then for the first time we find that year-round racetrack betting was legalized.

But, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, if we could take a

look at what he's trying to do and make it as a rational move on their part, a progressive move I guess, where in a series of steps we have come a long way from the 1920s, where it seems to me that the message from this government now is that it's the in thing. We have progressed so far. And I guess in the demoralization of our society, that at one time while legal . . . betting was illegal and drinking was illegal, we are to a point now where it's hunky-dory; in fact it's the in thing to do.

Now if that's what the people want, then of course I am in no position to stand here and argue, because I suppose our democratic society is based on the premiss that the people are right, and what they want, as a majority, is what they get. But I don't like the motivation behind this because it rings through very, very clearly that the real motivation is to fight the deficit, to fight the next election, to fight the next election on the spoils, as it were, the loot, the booty of the gaming industry amongst the Crowns. And we could get off and branch off on some of these other issues where this government is trying to put the best face possible on the deficit situation and ultimately the debt situation.

So, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, I find it almost abhorrent to have to stand here and debate a Bill where a government is putting its best foot forward. And I'll just quote you another part from his speech, where he says, ". . . this Bill is the next step . . ." Notice the progression once more. I guess he could have said, this is the ultimate step. No, but maybe he couldn't say that this was the ultimate step because we don't know for sure what they have in store for us in addition to how far we are.

But none the less, Mr. Speaker . . . and welcome back to the Chair. It saves me a tongue-twister here. So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, the minister says:

. . . is the next step in this government's plan to build on our economic strengths as a province . . ."

Well now, Mr. Minister, you are going to build on the economic strengths of this province by doing what? By emphasizing gaming, by building on the gambling of this province.

Now that is why I am taking a few extra moments in this adjourned debates debate on this particular Bill 33, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because for a government to build on the strengths of gambling indicates to me that they are on perilous, shaky ground, particularly when that same minister gets up and on the day where he announces this particular step, he says that, and I quote again from the Leader-Star Services from March 16, 1994, where the minister says:

The bottom line is we've got to get people out to the track to wager on the horses because that's where the dollars are.

I guess I could rest my case right there, Mr. Speaker. They're going to start advertising and promoting gaming. And they're doing it, what is more

disconcerting yet, in such haphazard fashion, where day after day when we get up and we ask, well where are your studies? How do you know how much you're going to make? How do you know what the concomitant downsides are? How is this going to affect the social life in Saskatchewan when you start to promote this kind of gaming. What are the impacts? Are you really going to make money?

And I ask the minister this question: is the horse-racing history a year from now or two years from now going to be any better off by making this move than they are now, recognizing that it is a struggling industry? And I'm not picking on the industry.

But simultaneously, while you're doing that, what is happening in some of the other areas of gaming in this province? You are promoting casinos. We're going to have full-fledged, Las Vegas-style casinos in Saskatchewan. And you're banking on the fact that there's an unlimited gaming dollar out there -- an unlimited gaming dollar.

And I submit to you, Mr. Minister, that that is not the case. I'll agree with you there's going to be more money spent on gaming, because I'm a firm believer in the concept that supply creates demand -- supply creates demand, the converse of the normal way of putting it. If you put one of these gambling shops on every street corner, of course there's going to be more gambling, of course there's going to be more bread money and milk money spent on the gambling dollar.

But ultimately, I ask you this question: with this proliferation of gambling opportunities in the province, does this mean that ultimately the Horse Racing Commission is going to wind up as the beneficiary? I don't think so. I don't think that it necessarily will. Are the charities, are the local charities going to be the beneficiaries of this ultimately? And I don't think so either.

And I think that if you were going to be totally honest with us, you would get up and say, we are on probably shaky grounds; we're not quite sure what we're doing because we have not fully assessed the impacts of a government sponsored . . . no, not only a government sponsored, Mr. Speaker, but a government advocated gaming system where you are going to go and advertise and ask people to come and spend their gaming dollar. Because in the end, it's going to make the Consolidated Fund and your fund in this government that much richer at the expense of the poorer people. And I don't think you've thought your policy out fully.

In fact I don't think I very often quote from these connoisseurs of politics, what we call the . . . Well we call them by different names, but here is a column and we call him a columnist -- we'll call him a nice name -- and he states this, and this is the headline: The government gambling policy flying seat of pants . . . by the seat of pants.

And that's our concern here, Mr. Minister, is that you are thinking this policy up as you go along. You're

flying by the seat of the pants, and the only people I know of that were good at flying by the seats of the pants are the renowned northern flyers and the bush pilots of this province. I don't think that you're as good at it. And I don't think that you, as a government that is relying on the almighty gambling dollar, have the right to put at risk and at peril this province of Saskatchewan in crashing in your plan.

So, Mr. Minister, I have quite a few specific questions I want to ask you on this particular Bill as we get into the Committee of the Whole, and as far as I'm concerned then, Mr. Speaker, we are going to let this Bill go to committee.

I know that the minister has a burr under his saddle somewhere and when I read this other March 16 headline it says that "Lautermilch spurs on horse race betting". Spurs on horse race betting. Well what we're going to attempt to do is to dull those spurs a little bit, Mr. Minister, and if possible take that burr out from under your saddle. We'll do that in the Committee of the Whole, 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. 49

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that Bill No. 49 -- An Act to amend The Traffic Safety Court of Saskatchewan Act, 1988/Une Loi modifiant la Loi de 1988 sur le Tribunal de la sécurité routière de la Saskatchewan be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister stated in his second reading speech that this amendment will repeal the appeal provision in The Traffic Safety Court of Saskatchewan Act, 1988, so that the general appeal procedures for provincial offences will apply to traffic offences heard in the traffic safety courts.

And after listening to the minister, it would seem to me that there really isn't a major change, this isn't a major change, more of a housekeeping role. And as an opposition, we certainly are more than prepared to move this into committee.

I think a couple of things I might add though is the minister has also made it clear that the current appeal process is confusing. And there's no doubt about it, I think our discussions in estimates the other night kind of inferred that, and I would tend to concur with him.

I understand that this amendment is being brought forward at the request of lawyers and judges throughout the province. And on that basis I wonder if we should be taking a second look at this or we'd better be just a little careful as to how we review this legislation.

As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, there certainly doesn't appear to be a significant amount to do with

the Bill that we need hold it up any longer, and therefore I would allow the Bill to go to committee.

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

Bill No. 50

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that Bill No. 50 -- An Act to amend The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990 be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As with the former Bill, Bill No. 49,

An Act to amend The Traffic Safety Court, this Act as well doesn't have a lot of significant changes to it that would require that we take a lot of time just sitting in the House and debating the issues, but there are a couple of things I'd like to bring forward to the committee.

This Bill includes a number of amendments to The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990. And I understand it will give police officers the authority to authorize the interim release of a person who has been arrested on a warrant to appear in court. And I believe following our discussion that we had with the Minister of Justice the other day on a concern that had been raised through me and that I brought to the attention of the minister, where an individual had been picked up and had been arrested after he had given out his licence and was arrested for something he didn't even have any knowledge of, and then the process and the rigmarole that had to be followed where the individual was taken at 2 o'clock in the morning to the police station -- happened to be a farmer looking after cattle -- and was told he'd have to be arraigned until morning until they could contact the justice of the peace. And he said, well it just wasn't possible, somebody would have to go and look after his livestock. And so they did get a justice of the peace up in the middle of the night and he came over and gave the release. And at the end of the day they found that certainly there was no reason for that warrant to have still been in effect.

However it was there and I think, as I understand this Bill, Mr. Speaker, it'll address some of those concerns in that very issue. I think what this Bill does, the change will simplify the procedure. Previous to this amendment, a justice of the peace would have to be called in to authorize the release of the person arrested.

(1600)

And I would think that in the case scenario that was raised the other day in Justice estimates, if the police could have had the opportunity of using their discretion -- they were dealing with a local person who was of good repute and was well-known in the community -- they could have just allowed the person to go home, double-checked everything in the morning, and found that at the end of the day certainly

it wasn't a big matter and there was a problem with the courts and with the justice system in not striking this warrant off the record.

If the justice of the peace . . . we find as in this case that the justice of the peace was not available, the person would have to spend the night in jail and, as I indicated, that individual in the Montmartre area just about found that's what he was doing.

This Bill will repeal the municipal by-law appeal procedure. I think there may be some inequity in the system as it currently stands. Depending on where you live, your appeal process differs. This amendment will allow for the same appeal procedures to be applicable in all parts of the province. And the minister also mentioned that there are some housekeeping amendments as well.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that we can get further clarification by allowing this Bill to proceed to Committee of the Whole so that we can get on with some specific questions rather than just tying up the debate in adjourned debates at this time. So therefore I'll allow the Bill to move into committee.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

The Chair: -- I will ask the minister to reintroduce the officials to the members of the committee as the last consideration of this department was before the committee on April 6. So if the minister would reintroduce her officials, and then if she has anything she would like to add.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce -- starting on my left, immediate left -- Mr. Duane Adams, the deputy minister; Ms. Kathy Langlois, the acting executive director, management support services; Mr. Rick Kilarski, the acting executive director of finance and administration; Mr. Dan Perrins, associate deputy minister; Ms. Glenda Yeates, associate deputy minister. Thank you.

Item 1

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, welcome to your officials this afternoon. I wanted to just start off with dealing with the concern about the questions, the global-type questions that we provided your department with. I wonder if you'd provide us with the answers to those global questions at this time.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- It's my understanding that the written answers to those questions have not yet been completed, but they should be very soon.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, it's my understanding that those questions have been provided to you some time ago, and I'm disappointed to hear that you haven't got them. But we'll patiently wait for them. And I'm sure Health estimates will be around for some time yet, so we'll have lots of opportunity to deal with them as we get to them.

I wanted to discuss . . . we discussed at some length the other day, the problem that we see and that a lot of organizations across the province see with the lack of direction with respect to the health board elections that had been called for, Madam Minister. And at that time, the last opportunity we an opportunity to discuss this, you provided a couple of editorials from around the province that backed up your case, I guess, of not holding them for a while.

Well, Madam Minister, it appears to me that there's beginning to be overwhelming evidence that that's the minority view. I have a number of them here, editorials from around the province from both large and small newspapers, Madam Minister, that suggest that the health board elections should be dealt with as soon as possible.

And I wonder if you would care to comment on that again for us this afternoon.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Well first of all, Mr. Chair, as I have pointed out in the past, this issue is under review by an independent individual, and the whole issue of health board elections will be decided, as to when it is going to occur, very soon we hope.

As I pointed out to the member opposite, it isn't simply a question of looking at editorials, it's a question of consulting broadly with the Saskatchewan public, and as well with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, its membership consisting of numerous boards and associations throughout the province, who have advised us that they feel it would be premature to proceed to elections at this point in time. And all of this input and advice has to be considered and we've asked for broad consultations on the issue.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. Well it was you that said to the people of Saskatchewan that there was people around the province backing your claim up not to hold the elections. It wasn't me who provided that little piece of information to the public of Saskatchewan. It was you who used the argument that you have a couple of editorials from around the province to support your contention; as well as the only other one that I can find, and you used as an example again here this afternoon, SAHO. And I can hardly . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, I think that most people would look at it and say their opinion is a little bit checkered and a little bit biased when it comes to looking at this kind of thing, Madam Minister.

And as well I want to make the point this afternoon that this independent individual, as you call him, for those people that are watching this afternoon and

paying any attention to the proceedings this afternoon, that's code for NDP partisan Garf Stevenson, is what that is code for, Madam Minister.

I wonder if you can confirm for us this afternoon what the cost on a per-day basis is for Mr. Stevenson, both in terms of his salary or his remuneration, whatever it's going to be, as well as cost of travel, staffing, all of that kind of thing. Surely your department, prior to putting this road show together, has come up with some costing for the whole thing. And we would be interested, and I'm sure the people and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan would be interested, in knowing what it's going to cost for all of that operations, both in terms of Mr. Stevenson's salary and everything else involved.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- First of all, I can't let your comments go, your slanderous comments with respect to Mr. Stevenson, that somehow he's a partial person and not impartial. I can't let that go by. I think it's wrong that you would make derogatory comments of that nature of an individual, in this Legislative Assembly. I think it's wrong.

I think that Mr. Stevenson will conduct himself in a very impartial manner, and he will come forward with recommendations that he believes are correct. I think it's highly inappropriate that you would use your immunity as a member of the legislature to slander an individual while you're within the four walls of this building. I think that's inappropriate.

Now with respect to Mr. Stevenson's remuneration, the details with respect to travel and expense are still being worked out. The total that we expect to pay in terms of remuneration for Mr. Stevenson would be in the range of approximately \$50,000.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. Well, well, well, we touched a little chord with you, it seems. When you call into question one of your NDP financial contributors, you all of a sudden seem to have a problem with that. When we call into question someone who puts up NDP lawn signs, a well-known NDP supporter, all of a sudden, somehow or another, we're slandering that individual.

You people didn't seem to have any difficulty this afternoon talking about Jack Wiebe and his appointment, Madam Minister -- no problem whatsoever -- or past governments' appointments. No problems whatsoever about discussing those kinds of things, Madam Minister. But you sure have a lot of problem when we talk about someone that you appoint to a commission.

Madam Minister, the last time we had opportunity to discuss this question of health board elections, you sat there, or you stood in your place and told the people of Saskatchewan that your department, your department was working on it, and that you would be coming up with some kind of recommendations and that you'd be dealing with it shortly.

And after taking a raking over the coals that day, the

very next day, the very next day you come in with this commission -- I believe it was the very next day -- and set it up, probably a hastily arranged phone call with Mr. Stevenson that evening is my guess, and said to him, do you think 500 bucks a day will be enough to satisfy you, Mr. Stevenson? Is that the way it was arranged, Madam Minister? Is that the way it was arranged?

What other jobs does he also have that the taxpayer of Saskatchewan is paying for? Apparently he's on the SaskTel board of directors, is that not correct? He's also on another commission with respect to health care. Is he receiving a salary for that as well?

And on top of that, Madam Minister, I'd also like to know what the total cost of his road show is going to cost. Not just what he is going to get, the \$50,000 you talked about, but what will be his expenses on top of that, anticipated expenses on top of that? What will be his staffing requirements? What will be the cost of his report? All of those kinds of things, Madam Minister, if you please.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Well the member opposite has a show of his own here in the legislature. I just want to tell the member opposite that with respect to the appointment of Mr. Stevenson, he had agreed to this appointment some time before you ever raised the question in the legislature. We were unable to announce his appointment until later on because there were a number of things the department wanted to get into place before we proceeded with the announcement . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, that's true.

The member opposite is suggesting we're not telling the truth. It's the absolute truth. Mr. Stevenson had been consulting with the department on this and had agreed to take on the responsibility some weeks before you raised it in the legislature. So prove it, prove it. Don't be so petty. Let's get down into some serious questioning here about health care estimates.

Now I'm not going to belabour this point, except to simply say that the Department of Health has been working on this issue and has been talking to Mr. Stevenson for some time before his appointment was announced.

Now with respect to the total costs that are going to be . . . the department estimates that there will be, in addition to his personal remuneration, an additional 50,000 in terms of rental of space and travel costs and so on. We will also be using departmental staff to do as much work as we possibly can to support Mr. Stevenson. So there will be no additional cost from the use of departmental staff.

(1615)

Mr. Boyd: -- Madam Minister, you suggested earlier on that the cost of this would be in the neighbourhood of \$200,000. Now you're saying it's not going to cost that much; it's going to cost \$100,000. And you're also suggesting to us that that's, to use your words, a

petty amount of money. I would suggest to you, Madam Minister, that the people of Saskatchewan would think that that's a substantial amount of money to do something that's not necessary, that could have been done a long time ago by your department.

Madam Minister, \$200,000 for that, a couple hundred thousand dollars for other delays, \$500,000 for the cost of holding the elections outside of the municipal process -- \$900,000 is what I come up with in terms of the delays. I wonder if you could confirm that this afternoon, that it's going to cost in that neighbourhood if the elections are held outside the municipal process.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- The additional estimate of \$200,000 took into consideration staff that Mr. Stevenson may want. We are, however, using departmental staff and so it will not be -- the extra 70 or 100,000 that we were talking about will not be an additional cost to the government or the Department of Health because what is happening is we're using departmental staff.

Mr. Boyd: -- So what you're saying to the people of Saskatchewan is, is that you've got too much staff; they've got time on their hands that they can deal with these kinds of thing. Or what are you saying?

There always is a cost, Madam Minister, whether the people . . . if they're not doing the appointed work that they normally would be doing and are seconded and put into this process, there's a cost to that, because someone has to back-fill for them. How do you get around that, Madam Minister? How do you deal with that problem, that these people are going to be doing work that they normally wouldn't be doing. There must be a cost to it. I'd like to know the answer to that.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- In any business or in any government you make priorities in terms of what work is going to be done by employees, and you prioritize. And today this may be your priority and something else may come along and that happens to be the priority. It's not a question of having staff sitting around doing nothing; it's a question of the choices you make as to what the priorities are.

An Hon. Member: -- Well what's not getting done?

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. I think my colleague makes a good point. So what priorities has this process overtaken? What things are being set on the back burner that you aren't dealing with as a result of these staff people having to do other, what you consider priority items?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- The staff person that has been assigned to this is someone who was working on health reform in the policy analyst branch and . . . or she is a policy analyst. She will be doing this aspect of health reform as a priority over the next few months.

Mr. Boyd: -- And how much money will that cost, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Well it'll cost the salary that we

ordinarily pay, which I think is about 40,000 in this particular case, and that's annualized.

Mr. Boyd: -- So you've come up with what you would consider a reasonable figure of \$50,000 for Mr. Stevenson's salary and benefits and all of that sort of stuff, and then another \$50,000. That would be all encompassing; we can take that to the people of Saskatchewan. A hundred thousand bucks is going to be the total cost of this whole exercise. And have you set a budget for them, Madam Minister? Is that, you know, the type of thing that you've done, that they are told that here's the amount of money that's available, and we'd appreciate it, Mr. Stevenson, if you don't go any higher than that? Or how have you dealt with that?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- I'm informed that a target budget has been set for them and that the department will have to absorb all these costs.

Mr. Boyd: -- Do you not feel, Madam Minister, that this is such an important consideration, such an important thing, that the money would be better spent in the delivery of health care services compared to these types of things? And I'd like you to comment on that for us, Madam Minister, this afternoon.

Because that's an important thing, I think, that the people of Saskatchewan must recognize -- that are interested. Talking with people around the constituency that I represent and the letters and stuff that we've been receiving from municipal councils and town councils and all of those kinds of things, Madam Minister, they feel that the money would be better spent on the delivery of health care services. And I wonder if you'd care to comment on that.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- I think the member opposite has never completely understood what has to be done before we move to elections in health districts. First of all we have to define the boundaries. We have to determine what sort of formula we make with respect to population and geography. That has to be determined. Then the specific boundaries have to be determined. We also have to determine whether we build in any sort of formula for minority groups and to achieve gender balance on the boards. So there are a number of different questions that have to be dealt with, as opposed to simply drawing boundaries.

Now the member opposite will know that when the provincial Constituency Boundaries Commission met, there were how many -- three people on that? And it took them a year to draw those boundaries. And the Department of Health is asking one individual to deal with that entire question.

In order to achieve the proper boundaries within districts and the proper mix of urban and rural representation on the boards, we're looking at something like \$3,500 per district in terms of the actual costs laid out, plus the departmental staff. So I do not think that it's unreasonable to take the time and spend that amount of money per district in order to come up with the right formula.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I think all of that . . . and you know very well that all of that was possible and could have been in place a long time ago. And I'd like to read to you this afternoon an editorial from the *Star-Phoenix* in Saskatoon of April 13. And they believe that that's the case as well, Madam Minister, and I think people all over Saskatchewan believe that's the case.

The headline is "Why the stalling?" And I'll read it into the record this afternoon because I think it emphasizes the points that we've been trying to make with you, Madam Minister, and emphasizes the lack of understanding that you seem to have, or lack of. You don't seem to care about this, simply don't seem to care about it. "Why the stalling?"

It would be interesting to know why the government of Saskatchewan is going to such pains to stall on the election of members of district health boards.

Both the rural and urban municipal associations want the elections held this fall. That is a logical and common-sense position for the obvious reason that this is a municipal election year. Doing anything other than holding health board and municipal council elections at (this) . . . time would complicate things needlessly and waste a lot of money.

Health Minister Louise Simard, however, seems determined to make this process into something terribly complicated. She claims the subject of health board elections is complex, (and) with a lot of details to be worked out. Those "complications" include borders for wards and deciding who can run for (the) positions on health boards.

To suggest these are great mysteries is nonsense. Where wards exist, use the same borders that have been drawn for elections of councillors. As for determining who can run, use the qualifications already laid down for candidates for councils. There might be some small room for debate about whether a person can run for both. All the government has to do is take a deep breath and make a simple decision.

According to Simard, her department is consulting widely on how to implement the electing of health board members. What for? All it has to do is tell us when the elections are and when (the) nominations close. It is also looking at the best way to run the elections. (Again) What for? You hand out ballots, let people mark them and the job is done.

"Consulting widely" and looking at "the best way to run the elections" sound like excuses for foot-dragging. The minister should stop dithering and get on with the business of keeping a government promise to hold the health board elections this fall.

Madam Minister, I think that sums it up very, very well. I think that the person who wrote this editorial has dealt with the subject extremely well, Madam Minister. The common sense position is for elections held this fall. The minister suggests that complications -- these are not great mysteries, Madam Minister, as the people here suggest. These things could have been put in place. You could have dealt with this problem had you wanted to and had your department wanted to, Madam Minister.

What is the real reasons behind your not wanting to hold these elections this fall? What is the real reasons for coming up with a commission staffed by a NDP partisan, Mr. Garf Stevenson, at \$500 a day? What is the real reasons behind it, Madam Minister?

As this editorial suggests, stop your foot-dragging and dithering and get on with the business of keeping a government promise.

Madam Minister, it was you and you alone who made those promises and commitments to the people of Saskatchewan. It was you who said health board elections would be held as soon as possible. It was you, Madam Minister, who now feel that isn't necessary.

Madam Minister, why don't you do the right and honourable thing and get on with the process, as the people of Saskatchewan and editorials all over this province are suggesting?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- I had told the member last time he was in estimates that we did not promise that there would be elections in October 1994. I did say at that time that I didn't expect him to acknowledge that because the accuracy is not . . . accuracy is not his forte.

So I'll say it again for the record: there was not a promise to hold elections in October 1994. What there was, was speculation on that being the first possible opportunity and a possibility that we could move to elections on that date. Yes, we did talk about October '94 being a potential election date. There was not a commitment to have them under any circumstances. What the commitment was was to have board elections. And that commitment's written into legislation.

The issue then becomes not simply a question of drafting boundaries, as I mentioned to the member opposite on numerous occasions in this legislature. It also becomes an issue as to whether the structural changes that are required by health reform are adequately in place to enable us to move to elections. It is not a good idea to have elections for the sake of elections if the health reform structures have not been adequately put in place.

I have pointed out, and I will again to the member opposite, that some of these boards were not up and running until late 1993 because they did not . . . we didn't even know what the boundaries were till the end of August 1993, and then there was the 120-day

amalgamation clause before the boards triggered in and took over. And that took us into late 1993 before many of these boards were even up and running. Okay?

So for the member opposite to say that we've known for a long time what these districts are and what sort of boundaries we could have, is again an inaccurate statement. We haven't known for a long time. We allowed community groups to come together and define their own boundaries, unlike what happened in Alberta where the Alberta government moved in and has put forward a map of what the boundaries will be. This in face of extensive consultation people around Alberta have had, thinking they would have input, and in the final analysis were dictated their boundaries.

(1630)

That wasn't the process in Saskatchewan. The process of dictation took place in Tory Alberta. We did not know what the boundaries were or what the board's complexion was going to be until August of 1993.

So I'd want to put those points on record. It's a question of looking at the districts, defining the boundaries, but it's also a question of the readiness of the boards to hand over the reins to another group of people and have elections in the province. It's a question of readiness and that's important, unless your desire is to try and undermine health reform, which I believe it is, because quoted in **Hansard**, I believe, you have simply said that your intent is to use the elections in a political fashion and to cause mayhem throughout the province. I think that's implied in the comments you made in **Hansard**. That's your intent; it's not to improve the health care system for future generations.

And so I think the member opposite, if he's genuinely concerned about the improvement of the health care system, he will be working with his board to get them into a state of readiness where they can move to elections. As opposed to simply grandstanding and haranguing for elections, he should be working constructively with the people in his district to move to elections.

I want to point out as well to the member opposite that the Tory government in 1988 to '89, I think it was, paid some \$1.8 million, not a hundred thousand or a hundred and seventy thousand, if you take staff and other things into consideration, to look at how we're going to design the districts. They paid \$1.8 million for that. And what did they do with that report that designed districts in the province? They shelved it and did nothing with it. \$1.8 million -- I tell you that's a long cry from 100,000 plus staff and office staff expenses.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you've gone through all of this kind of health care reform up to this point, and you've closed hospitals around Saskatchewan -- that didn't seem to be a problem. You've done a whole bunch of things

with health care reform and the people of Saskatchewan asked for time in a lot of cases in those circumstances and you just kept on pushing ahead.

The train left the station, the Premier kept on saying to the people of Saskatchewan, and it wasn't prepared to back up. No way, we're not going to back up. We're on the road to health care reform and that's the way it's going to be, was the way it was interpreted.

And she accuses the opposition of causing mayhem when it comes to health board elections. Well, Madam Minister, it isn't me that's delaying the elections. It isn't me that is asking now that they be delayed. It isn't me that's causing the frustration out there in the people of Saskatchewan when it comes to these types of things. It is you and your department that is causing these delays, Madam Minister.

Here's another editorial that I'd like to read to you this afternoon, and this one comes from **The Eston Press**. You'll be familiar with Eston, Madam Minister; you spent an evening out there in Eston where there was 15 or 1,600 people there that were concerned about the health care reform to begin with. And the editorial reads: Health board elections should be held:

Most people in the province want elected district health boards. The exception, it appears, is the members of the district health boards, their excuse being that they're not ready. Granted, the boards have not been operating for that long and that the members have had a lot of administrative details to attend to and a lot of learning to do.

However, had experienced people been appointed in the first place, the task would have been easier. This is no reflection on the people appointed. We have no doubt that they are taking their task seriously and doing the best job possible under the circumstances. However, while the argument that they bring no past baggage to their task may have some merit, experience also has merit.

The main reason for wanting elected health boards is not to do away with the current appointees but rather to make them accountable to the people who are paying for the health boards, the taxpayers of this province.

At the moment the boards are in no way accountable to the taxpayers. Their meetings, unlike the meetings of elected bodies such as town and rural municipal councils and school boards, are not open to the public. There is not even a responsibility, as there is with other bodies mentioned, to give details of salaries paid to top officials or the amount of money paid to board members for expenses in attending meetings.

In fact when the editor of this newspaper asked one health board for that information, she was told it was a

rude question despite the fact that part of her salary as well as the salaries of her readers goes to make up the very expenses she was asking about.

District health boards are obligated to hold two open meetings per year. Both the Midwest Health District and the Prairie West Health District have announced dates and places for the holding of those meetings. It should be noted that neither is opening one of those regular meetings to the public. Rather, special public information meetings are being held.

It is hoped that the people in these areas affected will attend those public information meetings and they will ask the questions that are needed to be asked -- elected or not -- these health boards and the health care systems which are being dealt with.

Madam Minister, and I again point to that type of editorial where the people in Saskatchewan, all around Saskatchewan . . . The first one was from the *Star-Phoenix*, an urban newspaper; the second one was from a rural newspaper in Saskatchewan, Madam Minister, and they believe that these type of problems that you've identified can be overcome.

And SUMA and SARM agree that those kinds of problems can be overcome, Madam Minister. Let them lend their expertise to the process. They have . . . SUMA and SARM have both, I understand, agreed to lend their expertise to the process of setting up wards, and they have a wealth of experience when it comes to dealing with these kinds of concerns, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, we brought in a piece of legislation that would help you with that as well. We brought in a piece of legislation that asks that those elections be dealt with as soon as possible, this fall. And we've also, within that legislation, believe that all members of the board should be elected.

And we wonder, Madam Minister, if you could give us some kind of rationale this afternoon as to why you would oppose the legislation that we've brought forward -- private members' Bill -- as to why that these elections can't be held as soon as possible, as well as having all members of the board elected, and then the chairperson elected from that body of elected people. Why can't they deal with it that way, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- First of all, with respect to your allegations that the district boards aren't accountable to the public, once again your statements are totally inaccurate. The district boards are completely accountable to the public. They have dual accountability -- accountability to their residents and accountability to the Government of Saskatchewan.

They're accountable to their residents through The Health Districts Act which requires them to have two public meetings a year. And at these meetings they must present to the residents of their district an

operation and expenditure plan for the next fiscal year, and a report on the health of the population of the district, and the effectiveness of their boards' programs.

Now this is unique. It's a first in the history of this country, that boards have to go to the public and table not only their budget, but also a report on the health status and the effectiveness of their programs, on the health status of the citizens in the district.

This never happened before. Your government had 10 years to make hospital board meetings open to the public and you chose not to -- 10 years to do that. This government has moved to appoint district boards that requires them to have two public meetings a year. They are also accountable -- and eventually they will be accountable through the election process -- the district boards are also accountable to the Government of Saskatchewan through the submission to the minister, in advance of each fiscal year, of the detailed estimates of the board, the sources of any revenues and the estimated revenue from each source, and the details of any proposed services or activities and their estimated cost.

They must also submit the following reports to the government on an annual basis: a report on their services and activities and their costs in an audited financial statement, which include a schedule of investments; a report on the board's internal controls; and a report on the board's compliance with legislative and related authorities. They must also submit any reports that the minister may request from time to time, including: continued separate reporting on a quarterly basis; information about health outcome measurement; improvement, for example, in the health of district residents; and so on.

The Department of Health will also continue to monitor the quality of the programming, and each program is governed by standards contained in legislation or regulations which have, like The Hospital Standards Act and regulations, which have not changed. Programs delivered by district health boards must continue to meet set standards for delivery of those services. Responsibility for meeting standards rests with district health boards.

So there's a whole range, a whole set of criteria and responsibilities that must be met by district boards. For the member opposite to suggest so simplistically that there's no accountability, is exactly that.

An Hon. Member: -- I didn't say that.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Yes, you made a statement that these boards weren't accountable. They're accountable to their residents and they're accountable to the government. And I've just outlined how this accountability is ensured.

These district boards are far more accountable to the people of Saskatchewan than some of the former boards that were in operation, because these boards have to go to the public, to the citizens of the district,

twice a year. And this is a first in Saskatchewan and a first across Canada. So I believe that there is a very substantial accountability.

Now with respect to your question about district board elections, I also want to make this point. When we were talking about whether or not boards would have the right to tax on the property tax base and levy a tax like union hospitals were able to do under your government, we had discussions with municipal officials. And some of them said to me, as long as they're not allowed to tax on the property tax base, we don't care whether they're elected or appointed.

This government still chose to put in legislation even though it wrote in that the district boards could not levy on the tax base, on the property tax base, it still went on, in spite of what some municipal officials were suggesting, to require eight members of the board to be elected. Because we believe this will result in more input from communities when we move through the election process. It will also generate debate at the local level about health care concerns. And we think that's good. And that's why we put in the election process.

But at the same time, we put in the legislation a statement to the effect that the district boards could not levy on the property tax base. These boards are not municipal boards; they are not education boards; they are different. They get their funding primarily from the provincial government. They don't have the right to levy a tax on the property tax base.

They get some funding under the hospital revenue tax Act and there may be some local contributions that take place or other arrangements that might be arranged which they cannot impose on communities, but they would have to talk and negotiate with them, coming to some sort of understanding or arrangement on a voluntary basis -- in other words, there's room for voluntary contributions.

So for people in this debate to suggest that these boards are like municipal government is incorrect, because they're not. They don't fit the same niche -- they're different. However, their call for elections, which we think is important and which we are committed to do, is to generate the debate about health care and to get more local input.

But it is absolutely essential that before we move to elections there is a readiness on the part of the interim boards that the structural changes that they have been asked to do have largely been done.

(1645)

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I find myself being drawn into the debate by some of the comments that Madam Minister was making and I want to pursue a topic and an issue . . . a little bit of accountability. I could not help but to catch part of your strident commentary there that dealt with the accountability of the boards. And you specifically said that this board is . . . these health district boards

will be accountable to the government.

Now, Madam Minister, I think that is appalling. I think that is appalling because the government is you folks across the way. That is not this legislature. So what you're telling me now is that these health district boards are accountable to you, but not to the people of this province through this legislature.

And I want you to answer some questions for me based on that premiss. Specifically I will first of all ask you this question: what is the expenditure, the total anticipated expenditure by the Department of Health in this current fiscal year? And secondly, what proportion of that total expenditure by the Department of Health is going to be funded through these district boards? In other words, what is the total amount of money that you will be writing out a cheque to these district boards that they will be able to spend in a way that they see fitting and suitable?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Now with respect to your first comment that these boards are not accountable to the public, I want to make this point. As I said in my earlier comments, they are accountable to the citizens in their district. They have to table budgets and justify them; so they're accountable to the citizens in their district.

They also have to provide the government with detailed information, as I've outlined. And through the government, because that information is available in this Assembly, they are accountable to the citizens of the province. So they are accountable to the Legislative Assembly and to the government. They have to provide the Minister of Health with reports and they are audited. So there is accountability by the boards to the Legislative Assembly.

The health budget is 1.5 million. The boards receive 873 million of the 1.5.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Madam Minister. That's 1.5 billion, I assume you meant, instead of million.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Yes.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you. And 873 million is the money that you turn over to the boards to spend as they deem most appropriate, to give the best bang for the health dollar. Is that correct, Madam?

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- They spend it in accordance with their budgets that are presented to the Department of Health and approved by the Department of Health.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Well, Madam Minister, you're making my point for me. These boards are not responsible to this legislature. You have just told me that you're going to give these boards \$873 million, and yet they are not responsible to this legislature; they are responsible to the government, and that is you. That's all. That's where our concern is. And, Madam Minister, it's not just my concern or my colleague's concern. It is the concern of the Provincial Auditor.

You are telling us now that almost a billion dollars worth of government expenditures will never be seen by the auditor. That the auditor has to rely on a report of other auditors. On an ongoing, continual basis, the Provincial Auditor complains about that. He cannot accept another auditor's report as being the total gospel. Not that he doesn't trust them, not that they're not competent, but that they have different ways of doing things. And they have a different piper that's paying them.

So, Madam Minister, that is not sufficient. The auditor wants to audit those books so that there is accountability to the taxpayer of this province directly. And the auditor, Madam Minister, tells us that he can't do his job. By law, by the auditor's Act, it is demanded of him to audit those books where public monies are being spent.

He tells us he doesn't have enough money, and do you know why? Because you are responsible for him being lacking in funding; because you sit on Treasury Board. It is your cabinet that makes the decision as to how much money the auditor is going to get, and he hasn't got enough.

So he has told us in committee that he has to make a choice. Which areas is he not going to audit? Because he hasn't got the money to audit them all. And the last I heard and the last I understood is that this is going to be exactly the district health boards that are going to be part of those that will not get sufficient auditing.

So, Madam Minister, the accountability is not there. The accountability is not there for \$873 million, because the money that is spent through this legislature, the money that is appropriated through this legislature, the money that you're seeking and the process that we're undergoing right now is not in place for that \$873 million. And that's what we're concerned about, along with the Provincial Auditor.

Now I hope you can get on your feet and say: Mr. Member, you've got it all wrong; that we as a cabinet have decided that the auditor is going to get enough money that he will be able to audit these books, and that we can go on to some new business.

So would you respond to that, please.

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- First of all, I want to let the member opposite know that there were some 400 health boards out there before and that the Provincial Auditor never audited them. Four hundred health boards, largely the same budget, 400 health boards. And they were not audited by the Provincial Auditor.

We now have 30 health boards. And they are, like the health boards that were out there before under your government, audited by private auditors. I think the Provincial Auditor is auditing some 6 this year of the health boards -- 6 out of the 30. The rest are being audited by private auditors. But this hasn't changed since when you were in government. When you were in government, all of the health boards were being

audited by private auditors, some 400 of them.

Now I want to also state this. The Department of Health is interested in ensuring proper accountability and we have put a number of measures in place to assist health boards in meeting accountability requirements. For example, an accountability guide which will assist health boards meet their accountability requirements was prepared by the Provincial Auditor's office in consultation with the department. And the department has sent this guide to all health boards. An audit guide which will assist health boards and their auditors to plan and meet audit requirements has been prepared then by the Provincial Auditor's office. And the department sent this guide to all health boards for distribution to their auditors on February 10, 1994.

A reporting and auditing orientation seminar for health boards and their auditors was organized by the department and the Provincial Auditor's office and was held on March 1, 1994.

A common information systems framework for the provincial health system is being developed by the department. And this will be information that boards need to manage and report on their activities, and this will be reflected in this framework.

So the government, in conjunction with the Provincial Auditor, has taken a number of steps to ensure that auditing requirements are properly met and that these boards are accountable.

I should point out as well -- and here's what the auditor says on this point:

The Act makes boards accountable to the residents of the district and to the Minister of Health for the effective and affordable delivery of health services. The Act sets out various accountability mechanisms for boards to follow including annual reports, auditing, and public meetings.

Those are the Provincial Auditor's comments on board accountability to the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Well, Madam Minister, we're talking about accountability and we're counting . . . and we're talking about the accountability of an appointed board. I think that in essence summarizes the concerns that my colleague from Kindersley has been talking about for the previous half hour.

There is no accountability if you have an appointed board. Surely you can understand that. And surely you can understand the concern that the auditor has. Now I guess one question I could ask you: if I'm not right in what I was saying, and you can count . . . couch that in some different kinds of . . . well rhetoric. No, I'm thinking of the word that you use when you quote . . . from quotes from the auditor's act and so on that happen to be appropriate in your estimation at the same time.

But then how would you ask the question: if I'm not right, that every district board should be audited by the auditor, if he had the resources to do it, then why have you got 6 boards out of 30 in that process already? That is what the auditor demands and that's what the auditor wants -- a direct accountability process, and that is not in place. You've got it out of 6 out of 30, the previous 6. Why is it not going to be 30 out of 30?

Well I'll tell you why. Because you as a member of Treasury Board, you as a cabinet, you as a government, have determined that you are not going to supply the auditor with the sufficient funds so that he can fulfil his mandate. And instead of doing that, you're adamant in your approach that you are not going to allow the citizens of this province to hold those boards accountable.

Because right now there are no elections in the offing, as far as I'm concerned; from what I've heard about from you this afternoon, those many people out there in Saskatchewan -- and I dare say by now it's pretty well everyone, whether it's SARM or whether it's SUMA or whether it's hospital boards, local hospital boards right now -- they're not going to get their way. There's not going to be an elected board because, for whatever reason, you are delaying the process and you're doing it purposefully. At the same time, you're appointing your own friends once more to influential positions at taxpayers' expense. And you're spending a goodly sum of taxpayers' money to delay these boards.

Now I have nothing against Garf Stevenson as an individual, but I think when you take his record and his association with the NDP Party, and you appoint him to do a one-man study at \$500 a day plus expenses, plus your own individuals that you are going to appoint and second from your department to be his assistants, then I think there's no doubt about it that the citizens of this province are being short-changed.

And they resent that, Madam Minister. They resent your approach to this whole issue, where you have always been saying, we are in a consultative mode; we're going to go out, we're going to consult with people. But, Madam Minister, whenever you do that, you do not listen. You do not listen. You ask the people, what do you want? And then you go ahead in your preconceived way and your preconceived notions, and that's what you implement . . .

The Chair: -- Order. Order. It now being 5 o'clock, the Committee of Finance stands recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.