

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 60 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the liquor and gaming commission regarding the International Gaming Business Exposition: (1) what was the purpose of the trip; (2) how many delegates from the province of Saskatchewan attended the International Gaming Business Exposition; (3) how many delegates from the Saskatchewan Gaming Authority attended the exposition; (4) how many individuals had their total or partial cost of the trip covered by the province, and would you please provide a breakdown; (5) what was the total cost of the trip, including air fare, registration fees, meals, accommodation, etc.; (6) please provide a brief outline what information was gained through the attending of this convention.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the House I would like to introduce a couple from Aberdeen, Doug and Cathy Button and their young son, Cory, up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're here today to observe the proceedings of the House and I'd like to ask everyone to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, a group of 23 grade 5 and 6 students from Rosemont School -- a good crew up there. They're sitting up in your gallery along with their teacher Joe Milligan, and Gord Stickle who is the chaperon. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like you to welcome, along with the other members, welcome these fine students here to watch the proceedings today.

We'll be having a photo opportunity at 2:20 in room 218. Let's all welcome them.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to all members through you, sir, two good friends of mine, Clair and Edna Lethbridge. Clair Lethbridge is a retired United Church minister. The Lethbridges have served in pastoral charges across Alberta and Saskatchewan, notably in Zion United Church in Moose Jaw and Whitmore Park United Church here in Regina.

It's a real pleasure to have them in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, they are seated in your second pew and I would ask all members to welcome them this afternoon.

Hon. Members: hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Tribute to Saskatchewan Police Officers

Mrs. Teichrob: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure we all are accepting of the fact that high technology is upon us and that resist or not, Detroit television is now part of the daily life in many Saskatchewan homes. But I think we should remind ourselves from time to time that the Detroit Lions are not our football team, the University of Michigan is not our Alma Mater and the Detroit crime rate is not ours.

The Saskatchewan Police Commission's annual report was recently released, and as an article in the **Star-Phoenix** suggested, there are some interesting statistics. For instance in 1993 the 1,000 police officers of Saskatchewan discharged their firearms exactly 13 times in the line of duty.

I don't know about other members, but I find that statistic highly comforting and reassuring during these times of public alarm and media hysteria about the rising tide of violence. Further, none of these 13 incidents resulted in injury to any person. Unfortunately, two skunks, one rogue steer, and two injured deer were not so lucky.

Mr. Speaker, I do not claim that our Saskatchewan society is free of problems. I realize that we're susceptible to the lure of violence found in other areas of North America. I appreciate the public's concern for its safety from violent criminal acts, but I also believe we have much to be thankful for, and one of those things is the comparative safety of our streets and homes.

Furthermore, as a former police commissioner myself, I recognize that to some extent the ability of our police officers to enforce the law without resorting to violence greatly reduces the incidence of violence in society. For this I congratulate the peace officers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Election in South Africa

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today marks the first day of voting in South Africa, a truly historic event. There are 19 parties on the national ballot. The ballot is 2 feet in length and is written in 11 different languages.

Even more incredible, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that 85 per cent of the electorate in that country will be voting for the first time. I understand that in Saskatchewan we have 800 individuals who will be exercising their right to vote in this election.

It is my sincere hope that the elections are carried out without further violence or bloodshed. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that this momentous day has been marred by acts of violence against innocent people.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is a freedom which all people have the right to exercise, a freedom which we in Canada take for granted. Until today, democracy in South Africa was but a dream. It is our hope and prayer that the people of South Africa are able to overcome the prejudice and interracial strife in order that the election procedures may be carried out peacefully without further incident, and that they will be able to develop and build a prosperous and peaceful South Africa.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too wish to comment on the historic event that is taking place in South Africa today, tomorrow, and Thursday. Mr. Speaker, in 1948, the South African writer, Alan Paton, writing in **Cry the Beloved Country**, commented on the racial conflict that even then was tormenting his country. He said:

I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when the white people are turned to loving, they will find that the black people are turned to hating.

Well, Mr. Speaker, today the whole world is watching South Africa, sharing Paton's fear and hoping with him that he is mistaken. For the first time in its troubled history, South Africa is holding an all-people election. Finally, the nearly 35 million black, ethnic Indian, and mixed coloured people will join the mere 5 million whites at the polls. The odious rot of apartheid will finally be cleansed.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, of the role that sanctions have played in bringing to an end the role of apartheid, and I am proud of the role that many people in Saskatchewan have played in insisting on those sanctions.

Mr. Speaker, people of goodwill all around the world send their hopes and best wishes to the people of South Africa and to their political leaders, Nelson Mandela, F.W. de Klerk, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

This is perhaps the world's best chance for the

peaceful transition to democracy from totalitarianism, a transition that history tells us . . .

The Speaker: -- The member's time is up.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

National Broomball Championships

Mr. Scott: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Returning to closer to home, the national junior girls and boys broomball championships were recently held in Regina for youth 18 years of age and under. The girls' team from Quebec won the gold medal while the Manitoba boys' team took home top honours.

I'm very proud to report that both the girls' and boys' teams from Saskatchewan won silver medals. I am even more proud to report that both Saskatchewan teams are from Odessa in my constituency. To the players, coaches, families, and the community of Odessa, I would like to offer our sincere congratulations to both teams for a job well done. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Tourism Saskatchewan Publication

Mr. Johnson: -- Mr. Speaker, today I would like to inform the Assembly about a new publication for Tourism Saskatchewan called **Get-Aways 1994**. This booklet is an easy, hassle-free way of getting information and planning a vacation in our fair province. As we all know, Saskatchewan offers diverse opportunities for tourism. There are hundreds of events, activities, and attractions each year within the borders. The **Get-Aways** booklet, featuring six broad categories -- events, arts, culture, heritage, history, golfing -- is one of the easy ways of using it.

The booklet offers over 50 adventure-filled vacation packages, one of which is in the Turtleford constituency in the community of Spiritwood, and the Carlton Inn is the place to phone. The government supports the **Get-Aways 1994** booklet because it helps showcase this great province and will bring many interesting tourists to the province.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Prayers from the Associated Gospel Church

Mr. Draper: -- Mr. Speaker, sir, I've received a letter from Pastor Rick Garrison of Cornerstone Associated Gospel Church in Mossbank. He greets me on behalf of the church congregation and says in the body of his letter, I quote:

The purpose of this letter is to encourage you that we as a congregation are praying for you and your government. Please be assured of our prayer support as you face so many varied and difficult issues.

The order of service he encloses includes a list of

prayer requests. One of these requests, and again I quote, is:

for Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Premier Roy Romanow, MP Allan Kerpan, MLA Lewis Draper, and all in government positions in our country.

I wish to take this opportunity to pass these greetings on to the main persons. And I'm sure that although he doesn't mention them specifically, he includes you, Mr. Speaker, sir, your staff, the Clerks and members of all three caucuses in this Assembly, and I would like to convey our thanks back to Pastor Garrison and his congregation for their good wishes.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Western Canada Midget Hockey Championships

Mr. Toth: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment as well to acknowledge a special feat. The Weyburn Red Wings last night won the western Canada midget championship, and on that team are three individuals from my constituency -- Robert Bratton, Michael Currie, Kris Porter. I want to commend the Red Wings for the job they've done to date; wish them well in the upcoming Centennial Cup playdowns in Alberta next week.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Labour Legislation

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday over a hundred small-business people met in Davidson to discuss how they might be able to get the provincial government to listen to the very real concerns they have over the Trade Union and Labour Standards Act. They are being forced, Mr. Speaker, into considering tactics that are unheard of for these hard-working people. For instance they are now talking about taking a time from their business to organize rallies against these two pieces of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. Mr. Minister, you have received hundreds of letters and phone calls that tell you there will be significant damage to small business around this province.

Mr. Minister, the first step to solving a problem is admitting that you have one. Let's take that first step, shall we? Will you admit that there are significant problems with your labour Bills. Would you do that, Mr. Minister -- admit it today?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- No.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- I'm sure there will be a great deal of comfort, Mr. Speaker, in that answer to the business people who met last night in Davidson, Saskatchewan, to bring forward their concerns.

Mr. Minister, it would be more useful if you told us, and you have told us in this Assembly, that there is nothing wrong with what your Bills are proposing for the business community. Mr. Minister, would you answer these people with more than a simple no to the real concerns that they are bringing forward?

We have received already, Mr. Minister, a number of faxes from the program that they are beginning today, sir, that say, and I would quote to you:

The proposed changes have a profound effect on our ability to compete in an open market, especially on taxpayer-funded projects.

And another one says, and I quote:

We had a good year and we were looking at expanding. We will now be taking a serious look at our plans and possibly moving to Alberta.

Mr. Minister, small business is talking. Will you listen, will you act, before job creation and business investment go elsewhere. Would you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I wish to answer the question on behalf of the government. And I want to say that the Minister of Labour, in his one-word answer to the previous question of the Leader of the Opposition, said so because the fundamental assumption behind the Leader of the Opposition's question is major economic damages behind this Bill. It is the typical Chicken Little, sky-is-falling, approach which both the Conservatives and the Liberals, now in the legislature and historically in the legislature, have always argued whenever it comes to any kind of legislation to help working men and women.

Now we've indicated right from day one in our economic strategy, including the **Partnership for Renewal** paper printed some months ago, that we would be rejuvenating the labour market policy and that we'd be reviewing and updating labour legislation, including amongst other things, The Trade Union Act. We are doing that. We've introduced the amendments.

We've also said at the same time, and I repeat again, that we are open to suggestions for improvements to the Bills, whether they come from small business or from the trade union sector or from the community at large. Those discussions are ongoing. It's a proper and fair way of consultation and that is the way we hope to proceed in order to help the working families and the working people improve the climate for labour and for business, and to do it in accordance with our partnership paper.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, they are saying your **Partnership for Renewal** isn't worth the paper it's printed on. It is simply another broken promise. And I am sure there will be a great deal of comfort to those people, Mr. Premier, that you referred to them as Chicken Little. They have proposed change after change to you and your Labour minister over the last month. Your Labour minister simply says no; you compare them to Chicken Little.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, their concerns are real. These are the people that create the jobs. These are the people that take the folks off welfare, that make up the job deficit in this province. Mr. Premier, can you do more than refer to them as Chicken Little? Would you promise this Legislative Assembly that you will indeed listen to their concerns?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have said in the answer to the previous question, and I repeat again: the Chicken Littles in this situation are the 13 or so that are seated over there in the official opposition.

It is you people -- you, the Leader of the Conservative Party; you, the Leader of the Liberal Party -- every time in the history of the province of Saskatchewan get up and you say, whenever any labour legislation's recommended or suggested: Chicken Little, Chicken Little, the sky is falling, the sky is falling. We don't listen to you.

The second point that I want to make is that we are going to listen to the business community. We are going to listen to the business community; we have listened to the business community. They know about the objectives that have been set up; they know the consultations that took place with respect to The Labour Standards Act and the amendments which we have proposed as a result of those consultations. With those we will do as we will with the trade union movement.

But please, the main objective here is to improve the position of working men and women, to improve the climate for economic development, and to do it without the kind of confrontationist fearmongering and totally unrealistic statements that you make, sir, and the Leader of the Liberal Party makes.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

No-fault Insurance

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, the law firm of Brent & Greenhorn informs us that they have a client who is unable to secure employment as a result of injuries sustained in a series of accidents, none of which were her fault. Despite several requests for an advance, no reply of any kind has ever been

received -- not a single reply.

Mr. Minister, this isn't over the course of a couple of months, but rather the course of several years. The point here is that your no-fault proposal will put even more pressure and responsibility on SGI adjusters, who are already overworked, and takes away the injured person's right of redress in the courts. And that doesn't help anyone.

Audrey Brent, a lawyer who studied under the professor who invented no-fault insurance, says in her letter, that, and I quote:

If you persist in proceeding without reforming what is already there, then no-fault would be a fraud upon the injured persons of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, will you pull this Bill and allow all those affected to bring forward concerns such as these that I bring to your attention today?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, in regards to the specific comments on that client, I would have the member to please forward that to me right after and we will pursue any individual matter in that way.

In regards to the no-fault aspect, it is completely inaccurate when you say that the right to sue has been taken away. People will have the right to sue on loss of income.

Also, Mr. Speaker, what is improved in the Saskatchewan plan is this, that we listened to the people of the province. They said, you should have an independent mediation process. And there will be an independent mediation process. Even after the independent mediation process, a person will still have the option, if they disagree, to going to the Court of Queen's Bench.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is inaccurate for them to say that the right to sue has been taken away. It has not been. And also that there is a more thorough process in regards to mediation.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'll indeed pass this on to you; but I'm surprised that you would need me to do that, since I have a copy of the letter that was addressed to your office from April 21 of this week.

Mr. Minister, the Saskatchewan bar association has already accused you of breaking your promise with consulting with the public. Now the Consumers' Association of Canada, is one of the most comprehensive and influential groups who look after the interests of Saskatchewan consumers, has recently told you to put the brakes on your no-fault insurance plan because you haven't done your homework and you've failed to consult with the public.

They say, and I quote: "Not only do consumers have the right to be informed, but they have the right to be heard."

Mr. Minister, that does not mean a series of news conferences and advertising. That's not consulting, that's just propaganda.

Mr. Minister, why the rush? Why are you going full speed ahead with your no-fault insurance plan in the face of widespread concern and misunderstanding? Mr. Minister, why not a full round of public consultations where you listen and gain understanding before you pass this Bill?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, I have indeed listened to the people of the province. We are looking at a 24 per cent rise, increase, if we didn't do anything. We have made the decision to go ahead and come out with an alternate solution. We have proposed a personal protection injury plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to remember that in terms of consultation we had the SOBECO report, and we had members from the legal profession, we had a member from the medical people, we had members from the Paraplegic Association, from the Head Injuries, from the consumers' group. The consumer at that time was the president, you know, the Consumers' Association.

Mr. Speaker, we have consulted and we had a report. And even after we had the report a year ago we listened to more people, and the report that said we should have a pure no-fault plan, and we had come out with a modified no-fault plan that is indeed one of the unique plans in the history of Canada. So, Mr. Speaker, we have indeed consulted and we are open to further consultation in the future.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Crown Land Leases

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon my question is for the Agriculture minister.

Mr. Minister, when the government has Crown land which is suitable for pasture, it leases that land to farmers. And when there are two or more farmers interested in land, you accept bids to decide who gets the lease. For some reason, in 1993 you added age as one of the criteria for awarding leases.

Mr. Minister, what is your rationale for making age a factor in the decision to lease land to a farmer?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: -- Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, age has always been a factor in leasing land. We have three criteria that we use: resource base, age, and distance from the land.

We revised the system last year. One of the things that

we implemented into the new system is we will allow the local RM (rural municipality) to change the weight of those various factors to fit local conditions and that will be . . . the RMs will have a chance to make those formulas suit the local conditions.

But to my knowledge age has always been a factor in determining land. I think the desire is to lease it to younger farmers where possible.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's rather astonishing, Mr. Minister, for a government that claims to care about human rights legislation. I received a call at my office today from a Mr. Wayne Galloway of Shellbrook and there was a piece of Crown land right next to his own, and in February he put in a bid for it, but he didn't get it. Based on the government's bid rating system, he lost points because he's 51 years of age. And the fellow who won the bid, he won by a very, very tight margin of only a few points, and that's because the winner was 28 years of age. So all things being equal, Mr. Minister, Wayne Galloway lost his bid because your government decided that he was too old.

How many farmers have lost bids for pasture land based on age?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: -- Mr. Speaker, again to the best of my knowledge, through Liberal, Tory, and NDP (New Democratic Party) administrations, this has always been a factor. And I think it's public policy that we would like to see younger farmers on the land. I don't know how the Liberal leader would suggest that we ration land. It obviously has to be some formula for allocating these leases. And I think age is a very appropriate, a very appropriate factor.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I don't know what you consider old, but when a 42-year-old is able to outbid someone simply because they're 32, that discrepancy doesn't seem to make any sense.

Mr. Galloway thought it wasn't right for you to discriminate against him because of age, so he took the next step in the bureaucracy that you've created. He went to the Saskatchewan Lands Allocation Appeal Board.

The staff at the appeals board said that they didn't even have . . . they hadn't decided if they would allow him to appeal; they said that they were far too busy. But if they did, it would take a while. They're claiming that they're far too busy is going to create real problems for this gentleman because it will be far too late. By the time this appeal occurs, the winning bidder could have already spent considerable dollars and built new fences.

So, Mr. Minister, recognizing that your government appears to be guilty of age discrimination, will you

immediately reconsider this gentleman's attempt at an appeal and retender the lease?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: -- Mr. Speaker, I think, as I pointed out, this is a very tough issue as to how you allocate land, and there's always people who feel that they should have had the land allocated to them.

We think that resource base, age, and distance from the land are three fair criteria, and I think that is the policy upon which the land has been allocated. And certainly I don't know what the Liberal leader would have us do. Do away with the appeal board, or she wants the minister to make the individual decisions? But I think the criteria are fair, and I think it's been a long-standing government policy, and we certainly are standing by that policy.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I wish I could have heard your response. Part of the concern here is one of discrimination. You say that there are other things taken into consideration as well, such as distance. This gentleman's land was right beside what he wanted to lease. The younger gentleman's land was not close by whatsoever.

You had to deal with a very similar case with Mr. Gord Chapin of Meadow Lake who lost a bid because he is 42 years of age, and the winning bidder was 32 years of age. Mr. Chapin has taken his case to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and there are other cases just like these, Mr. Minister, which have not become public yet.

Recognizing that there appears to be a very serious breach of human rights, will you commit in this House today to change the agricultural land lease policy to eliminate age discrimination?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: -- Mr. Speaker, that policy, as I say, is there; it's not a secret. We do allocate land on the basis of those three factors; age is one of those factors.

We do not believe that that violates the Human Rights Code. We certainly are not prepared to change that policy. I don't know if the Liberal leader expects the Minister of Agriculture to interfere in individual cases and allocate land or what exactly policy she would recommend to replace this with. But we think it's desirable to keep young people on the land and provide young people with an opportunity to farm in this province.

It's a major problem trying to get young people into farming, and our policy is designed to help do that.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Government Appointments Review

Mr. Britton: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, in spite of the fact that you have appointed at least 37 former NDP MLAs (Member of

the Legislative Assembly) or candidates to government positions and in the face of recent revelations that your government has appointed Dickson Bailey, a former federal NDP candidate to the position of executive director of the Saskatchewan infrastructure program, you continue to deny that your government is engaged in patronage.

Mr. Premier, the government can't and won't tolerate that level of patronage. We found that out in 1991, Mr. Premier. We are all guilty of it. Even the Liberals. And the only government position that they have influence over, they still managed to appoint a prominent Liberal.

Mr. Premier, the solution to this problem is before us. We have a private members' Bill which will promote an all-party committee to review and establish strict procedures to protect against rampant patronage.

My question to you, Mr. Premier, is simply this: are you prepared to act on what the public is demanding of us? Will you allow leave this afternoon to proceed to Bill 31 to establish the appointment of a review committee?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I have some sympathy with the hon. member's question, but I must say that the hon. member will understand if I'm somewhat confused about exactly where it is the Conservative Party in Saskatchewan is coming from on this issue. Because I have in front of me here a photocopy of a third-page story in the Saskatoon **Star-Phoenix**, a paper I don't read very often but one of my friends mailed this to me. And it's dated March 28, 1994, and what it says, Mr. Speaker, is "Tkachuk defends patronage." Now who is Tkachuk?

An Hon. Member: -- Read the rest of it.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- The Leader of the Opposition says, read the rest of it. Well the rest of it says: Grant Devine defends patronage as inevitable.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- You know, Senator Tkachuk said this:

"Being a patron comes from a king or queen giving Beethoven money to play his piano, for example," . . .

"Patronage to me is negative only when you put someone incompetent in that position."

Now if that's okay for Mr. Tkachuk, if it's okay for the former premier of the province of Saskatchewan, why is it all of a sudden not okay for the Conservative Party? And, I might add, if it's okay for the Liberal Party as well, why is it not okay for us? I say that if competence . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Because you said you wouldn't

do it.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- We said we would not do it and we're not . . .

An Hon. Member: -- We said we would do it; you said you wouldn't.

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Utility Rates Review

Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Premier. Mr. Premier, we have received numerous letters of support for Bill No. 1, our Bill to create an all-party committee to review utility rates. The most recent came from SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), Mr. Premier. They said, and I quote:

In less than 30 months SaskPower has increased its rate three times. SaskEnergy has increased its rate three times, and SaskTel twice.

And I continue to quote:

This underscores the need to establish a regulatory agency to review rate increases by Saskatchewan publicly owned utilities. The legislative utility review committee proposed in Bill 1 is consistent with a position SUMA members have taken through resolution, and therefore SUMA supports its passage.

Mr. Premier, will you at least agree that this Bill deserves debate and that this Bill will be voted on in this Legislative Assembly? Will you give us that assurance today, Mr. Premier, that you will do that?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, this looks like a day of contradictions and confusion on behalf of the opposition parties.

First of all, I remind the House again that it was the Conservative government of the day that established something called PURC, Public Utilities Review Commission, and then summarily abolished it.

By the way, if SUMA had written a letter to you when you were in government saying you shouldn't have abolished PURC, might carry a little more weight with me than them writing me today saying that they support your legislative review committee, to make sure that there's consistency in that approach.

But I think the hon. member has to tell us why it is that you did away with PURC in the first instance. You have to tell us why you did away with PURC. You must have had a policy reason for doing away with it.

And I'll tell you what your policy reason was. PURC sets up a bureaucracy of several millions of dollars. It requires consumers' associations to have the capacity

financially and otherwise to be able to mount the defences or the examinations of the rate increases, and that of course is impossible to fund. And the whole result is an extra added burden to government and has absolutely nothing to do with the rate changes.

In fact PURC didn't change any of the rates that your government set up at all -- not once. It simply approved it after millions of dollars. Now you want a legislative review committee. Well look, I say why don't you folks get to work and do the work where the legislative committees now permit you to do the work, which is in Crown Corporations.

And by the way, in the question of The Automobile Accident Insurance Act, you can't have it both ways. You can't be attacking us on no-fault, and then when we say okay -- we're not going to say it -- okay, you've got a good plan in no-fault; we're going to stand by for the moment; attack us when the rates go up by 24 per cent on insurance. Get consistent.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Fixed Election Dates

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've never had the pleasure of listening to such a perfect man who doesn't make mistakes and doesn't make any contradictions. It's a pleasure listening to that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for this perfect man, and perhaps he can also prove again that he does not make contradictions. Because, Mr. Premier, Bill 4 of this legislative session is an Act to set election dates every four years. And in the NDP **Democratic Reform** document under the heading, standardized general elections, it recommends, and I quote:

That The Election Act be amended to stipulate that provincial general elections be held every four years.

And that:

The Lieutenant Governor may dissolve the House sooner in the event that a government is defeated on the floor of the House or has an insufficient working majority.

Unquote, from your document, sir.

Mr. Premier, Bill 4 follows exactly your party's stated policy on this matter. So now that you are not going to contradict yourself, Mr. Premier, will you agree to give leave to move to Bill 4 right after question period so that this Bill which follows your party's policy -- your party's stated policy -- so that this Bill can be debated in this Assembly and voted on?

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, the specific question is whether I would give my leave. I

suppose I would give my leave but of course I cannot speak for the other members of the legislature because our caucus of course is very independent minded and does things of its own situation. So whether we can get that leave today, I don't know.

But I do want to say this, that it's funny how the hon. members get up now and after having had nine years opportunity of doing the things which they urge we should do in less than a thousand days of office, somehow we have not rewritten the whole world or rewritten the whole rule book overnight, we're at fault.

I tell you we aren't waiting here for an election to five years plus one day, which is what you did in November of 1991 -- five years plus one day. And the idea of regularizing the proceedings of this House are now well established. We have budgets more or less on regular times, we have openings on more or less regular times, the reports are being tabled on regular times, we've now got the six-month on the by-elections rule -- that is fixed in six months -- there are Crown Corporations and other committees' changes, the Board of Internal Economy has made tremendous improvements and changes; and do we want regular, four-year elections? The answer is, as a general rule, yes.

But I'll tell you this, Mr. Member, as I close, in taking my seat: what is more important here is not so much the legislation of the statute, it is the actual words -- words speak louder than deeds, and deeds speak louder than words, and our deeds have spoken louder than your words. We've actually acted in a way to regularize the . . .

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Penner: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request leave to move that a Bill to repeal The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act and to enact certain consequential provisions resulting from the repeal of that Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 59 -- An Act to repeal The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act and to enact certain consequential provisions resulting from the repeal of that Act

Hon. Mr. Penner: -- Mr. Speaker, I move that this be first reading of the Bill to repeal The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act and to enact certain consequential provisions resulting from the repeal of that Act, 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.

Mr. Neudorf: -- By leave, Mr. Speaker, I ask the

opposition, particularly the Premier, for leave to now go to Bill No. 1.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Complete Government Financial Plan

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, at the conclusion of my remarks, will move a motion, seconded by the member from Kindersley:

That this Assembly urge the government to present a complete financial plan outlining the budget of all government spending and revenue, including the Crown corporation sector, to the legislature each year, in order that MLAs and their constituents know exactly how and why tax dollars are being spent, as recommended in the Provincial Auditor's report.

Mr. Speaker, I want to outline today just a few points why I believe that we need to take this opportunity in this Assembly to discuss and provide an opportunity for the members of the Assembly to discuss the reasons and the rationale behind the **Report of the Provincial Auditor**, which says that the financial plans of the province of Saskatchewan as presented by the government are inadequate.

And I want to point out to the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of occasions that the auditor has stated that there is not a complete financial report given by the government of the day. And I want to quote a number of statements by the Provincial Auditor that show that changes have to be made in how we record and how we report and how we set together or put together an opportunity for the development of budgets within the framework of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as I've calculated from various papers from the government and various papers from the Crown corporations, I find more and more, Mr. Speaker, that the shift for government spending is moving to the Crown corporation sector. As I see it also, Mr. Speaker, there is more and more shift in revenues generated for the government by the Crown corporations.

(1415)

I want to point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that the auditor has pointed that out very succinctly in a number of graphs that he has put in his report. Mr. Speaker, they are I believe the work of a considerable amount of time and effort. And also I want to point out to this Assembly that the auditor has made some significant changes.

I also want to begin by saying that the government has allowed some opportunities for change within itself.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, there comes a point in time when they start to drag their feet, and I think they have begun to do that. And that's why we want to, in this discussion, encourage them to become more active in providing planning for how they raise revenue, how they deal with the various areas in the Crown corporation sector.

Mr. Speaker, in the revenue side in previous years -- I'll take the end of 1993, for example, Mr. Speaker -- the general revenue raised under programs was 55 per cent. The spending on general programs constituted 64 per cent of the spending. And that, Mr. Speaker, comes from one basic area, that area being the involvement of the Crown sector in the discussion. And the Crown sector, as we see it day after day in this Assembly, even today in question period, we see over and over again, Mr. Speaker, that the government does not want to deal with the budget aspects of the Crown corporations.

The expenditure under Crown corporations is at 36 per cent of the budget and the income is at 45 per cent of the budget, which tells me, Mr. Speaker, that 9 per cent of the total revenues generated over and above expenditures are revenues that accrued to the Consolidated Fund and various areas of government, and there is no way that they have an opportunity to come to this Assembly. And that is very important for us to consider.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that as we discuss this, the importance of the issue is placed before the Assembly this way: there is in total revenues generated a little over \$4 billion . . . \$4.4 billion generated in the Consolidated Fund by the taxes that accrue in the province of Saskatchewan.

What do we have, Mr. Speaker, on the other side? We have the Crown corporations, the user-fee organizations of this government -- they collect in the neighbourhood of \$3.6 billion.

Mr. Speaker, that added together puts a total revenue generated about \$8.1 billion. And what do we talk about in this Assembly? We talk about \$4.4 billion or \$4.6 billion worth of revenue, and we do not have an opportunity to discuss the others. That is not the way it should be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the members opposite say it's wrong.

Well I want to give you an example, Mr. Speaker. I want to give you an example that in my mind is as clear as can be. We do not have any opportunity in this Assembly to discuss gaming. We do not have any opportunity in this Assembly to discuss gaming, and that is a fact, Mr. Speaker. We cannot talk about the gaming minister, nor can we in fact discuss issues with the minister responsible for SGI, because those issues do not come before the Assembly because they are not in the **Estimates** book. They are not there, and therefore we cannot speak about them. And that, Mr. Speaker, is wrong.

The members opposite have said that, oh yes we can speak about them. Only one place that we can speak

about them and that is if they are required to borrow money, then we are allowed an opportunity to address the narrow aspect of what the money is being borrowed for; and we do not have an opportunity to discuss how the revenue is generated, what the plans and opportunities that the Crown Corporation sector is going to provide to this province. Nor do we have an opportunity to discuss any of the boards and agencies that are directly related to those Crown corporations, i.e., for example, the Liquor Board -- we don't have an opportunity to discuss that.

And as I see members opposite look in their **Estimates** book, they're going to find out that we do not have an opportunity to ask. And that is also a point, Mr. Speaker, I want to make -- they don't have the opportunity in this Assembly to ask. And that is really where the nub of the problem exists, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I raise this point. I believe it's necessary to consider in every detail those inequities that we find.

We do not have, for example, an opportunity in this Assembly, either from the Minister of Finance or the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), we do not have an opportunity to question him on the volumes of dollars that he is going to generate from increased utility rates. We don't have an opportunity to discuss that. The only place that we have an opportunity to raise that is in question period, Mr. Speaker.

And we don't believe that that is right. We don't believe it's right in this Assembly. Do we have a right to raise those questions in Crown Corporations? No we don't. We do not have the right to raise issues on the basis of current information in Crown Corporations. We do not have any way that we can raise issues as it relates to utility rate increases for 1994. We don't have a right to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And it's time that we changed that. We don't have a right to raise the questions of whether SaskTel is going to raise their rates. We don't have a right to raise the question of where SaskTel is going to spend the money. We don't have the right to say to this Assembly and ask the Assembly to show us where they're going to spend the money on SGI CANADA. We don't have the right to talk about the Sask auto fund in this Assembly. We don't have the right to talk about the Saskatchewan Forest Products Crown corporation. We don't have that right, Mr. Speaker.

We even have difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Sask Crop Insurance should have questions asked about it in this Assembly under Department of Finance or under the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, those are problems that I believe that we have to address. As we come into the 21st century we need to address those questions. Because, Mr. Speaker, the agenda of the public is on the information provided to them and they want us to make decisions based on rationalizing the opportunity for economic development.

This morning in Public Accounts Committee, Mr.

Speaker, we discussed considerable amount of issues related to this topic. And, Mr. Speaker, in Public Accounts Committee, and I'm the chairman of that committee, the only way that I can raise issues under the current year which we're in is to have permission from the committee to do that. That is the only way. I cannot raise it as a matter of ordinary discussion. I have to have permission of the government members in order for me to raise that issue.

It is no different in the Crown Corporations Committee. It's time, Mr. Speaker, that we have two functions in this Assembly: one is to deal with audits and the one that is to deal with budgets.

And we have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, as members of this Assembly, to consider how we do that. And I believe that we need to begin by allowing the Crown Corporations Committee to become the conveyor of an opportunity to develop the time when we can talk about utility rate increases; the time when we can talk about the budgets of the Crown Corporations; talk about the budgets of Crown Investments Corporation; talk about how transfers of money are made from one Crown corporation to the other.

How long does it take before we have an opportunity to discuss issues like that, Mr. Speaker? At least a year and a half after the fact; six to eight months after the audited statement comes out, Mr. Speaker; a year after the time when the decisions are made? People in this province want to know today whether in fact they are going to have an opportunity to talk about their utility rate increases, whether they should talk about various organizations, including those, including those, Mr. Speaker, which are of a commercial nature.

Those are also ones that need to be discussed by individuals in this Assembly, and that is also, Mr. Speaker, what we don't have an opportunity to do. We don't. And we only speak about these after all of the issues have been dealt with. And that is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and it's time that we take a serious look at this responsibility and this opportunity that we have.

I'm presenting this opportunity for members of this Assembly to deal with this on a forthright basis. And I will probably see members in the government side say no to this kind of a format. No, why? I raise some questions: do they have something to hide, or are they not willing to participate in change? Are they not willing to participate in some suggestions that would create an alternative?

We, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, have introduced seven Bills asking this government to be open and forthright and deal with the issues, and what have they said? We asked the questions in question period today -- three questions and there was a no to every one of them.

They, Mr. Speaker, will make this government more accountable, and it's necessary for that to happen. SaskPower, for example, needs to have somebody looking into some of the dealings that have been going

on. We raise some questions here about the responsibility of the president in relation to hiring his family to do certain contracts. We raised the question about how many people it really takes to move to Toronto to talk about SaskPower.

We raised a number of questions. Those, Mr. Speaker, should be raised as items under the direction of what is the plan for SaskPower Corporation. What is the responsibility of its president and chief executive officer to this Assembly? And those are issues, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we need to deal with. We need to deal with them precisely. And because of that, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly urge the government to present a complete financial plan outlining the budget of all government spending and revenue, including the Crown corporation sector, to the legislature each year, in order that MLAs and their constituents know exactly how and why tax dollars are being spent, as recommended by the Provincial Auditor's report.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am fully in support of the motion as presented by the member from Morse, Mr. Speaker, and for a number of reasons. Presently it is difficult for MLAs and for the Provincial Auditor or for the public to assess the province's spending.

There is good reason for this, Mr. Speaker, and that is because the NDP government has failed to provide a financial plan for the total government. They provide a plan for the Consolidated Fund generally, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately that isn't the total, overall picture with which we have to deal with as government legislators.

The budget in the **Estimates** document only provides information in the General Revenue Fund which means all Crowns, boards, agencies, and commissions are excluded from scrutiny.

Last session the Finance minister compared the province's financial situation to a household that had overspent its budget, that its credit card was over the limit. Well, Mr. Speaker, if the budget is like a household, what is the power bill for this year? Does the household receive cable services, or will it be getting service from SaskTel?

The Department of Finance borrows for all governments, including the Crown; therefore they are aware of the Crowns' overall budgeting. To alleviate this problem, the Provincial Auditor has recommended that the government provide a budget based on programming rather than on government departments. If this was the case, the government would be able to put forward the actual budget of specific programs.

For example, as it currently stands, agriculture programing is spent in the Department of Agriculture, the Agriculture Development Fund, the Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Agriculture Credit Corporation. Using our current **Estimates** document, it is almost impossible for the Provincial Auditor to track the government's expenditures on agriculture, let alone all other departments and crowns.

Now we've all heard the excuses the members opposite use when it comes to the accountability and opening up departments and Crowns. They say that Crowns need secrecy in order to be able to compete. And we heard that argument expressed in Public Accounts this morning from the member from Humboldt, Mr. Speaker -- that it was important for them for reasons of competitive advantage.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know about anyone else but I don't believe this argument is credible at all. The budget of a corporation is far from being confidential information, yet this is the line Mr. Ching uses over and over again to defend his keeping 40 per cent of our province's revenues under his own supervision.

(1430)

Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder what the president of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) is afraid of. What is the NDP government afraid of? That someone is going horn in on their monopoly on power, their monopoly on natural gas, their monopoly on auto insurance?

Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe the members opposite should be reminded of what a monopoly really is. The precise **Oxford Dictionary** states that the monopoly is exclusive possession, control or exercise. Exclusive control, exclusive possession -- that means that there is no competition, there is no reason to keep the budget secret.

Mr. Speaker, until the government puts forward a financial plan for the total government, they will continue to move money from pocket to pocket in order to paint whatever financial picture they feel is necessary to enhance their electoral chances.

The Provincial Auditor advocates including Crowns, boards, commissions in the rest of the **Estimates** document in order to provide true accountability and the NDP continue to refuse.

The way it stands, when someone from the Kindersley constituency walks up to me and says, why did you let the NDP hike our power rates, I have to say quite simply to them, Mr. Speaker: well we have to wait a year from now and then I can ask them about it, ask questions about it to the Crown corporation at the Crown Corporation meetings. Sounds pretty absurd, Mr. Speaker.

But that's one of the excuses the members opposite has given for not supporting the official opposition's utility review commission. They say, well the opposition can scrutinize in Crown Corporations,

forgetting to add that the meetings don't take place until a year after most hikes have already been in place. That's our first opportunity, other than in question period, to ask the government questions about utility rate increases. One year from the date.

Furthermore, when was the last time the NDP government said, you're right, power rates are too high in Saskatchewan given these tough economic times, so we'll drop them by 5 per cent? It's never happened, Mr. Speaker.

When was the last time you heard the Energy minister say the costs of providing natural gas to consumers has dropped by quite a little bit, so we're going to drop the rates by 10 per cent for SaskEnergy? It's never happened either, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these things have never happened and never will happen, because the NDP likes to control the finances of this province through Crowns, Mr. Speaker. They did it in the '70s when utility rates went up by ridiculous amounts, and they're doing it again now.

When the NDP were in power the last time, Mr. Speaker, auto insurance rates went up by 80 per cent, power rates went up by 13 per cent, telephone rates went up by almost 79 per cent, and natural gas rates went up by a whopping 188.5 per cent during the last term of office of the NDP administration.

No wonder they don't believe that a utility review commission is necessary. They don't want to be held accountable for their decisions. That's the bottom line, Mr. Speaker.

This government does not want to accept the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor because we'd be able to better see their war chest, and we'd be able to get a better, closer look at the election goodies the NDP are building up in order to buy back the thousands of votes that have left them since the last provincial election. Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: -- You mean a war chest.

Mr. Boyd: -- That's exactly what it is. A war chest for the next election is being built up presently, Mr. Speaker. And the member from Biggar knows very well of what we speak because that's exactly the discussion that goes on in your caucus. And you know that's the case. The now member from Shaunavon spilled the beans and told us exactly that's what happened in your caucus.

Mr. Speaker, we all have the opportunity to see what the NDP are really talking about. If the NDP government continues to hide the financial plans of the Crowns, it will remain impossible to monitor where the money from the utility increases are going or how the NDP are spending it.

Mr. Speaker, there's a very large portion of the total government spending is outside of the budgetary process. And that's the reason for a motion like this

being presented, Mr. Speaker, and that's the reason why I believe the people of Saskatchewan would support it. And that's why I am supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker, and hopeful that the government will do the same.

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak to this very important motion urging the government to present a complete financial plan of all of its spending and revenue.

Mr. Speaker, although the word accountability is not contained in this resolution, public accountability is at the core of this motion. As members of this House should have come to appreciate by now, accountability is the fundamental principle of democratic societies. And it is a principle that is very important to the Liberal caucus. We have previously demonstrated our belief in this principle during prior proceedings of this legislature and its committees.

Coincidentally or not, the very subject of this motion was the topic of the Public Accounts Committee meeting this morning, where there was a very helpful and healthy exchange of information between members of this Assembly who are members of this committee, with the auditor.

It is perhaps serendipitous that we should now have the opportunity to further examine this concept as an entire Assembly while that discussion is still fresh in so many people's minds.

As all members know, this legislature is currently engaged in the detailed examination of the spending plans of government departments. That exercise provides us as legislators the opportunity to seek out details on the government's spending priorities.

We are asking such things as the following: What are the objectives and goals of each department? Who do these departments serve? How will those departments measure their success in meeting their goals during the year and at the end of the year? What action will they take if their projections are overstated or understated?

These are the kinds of meaningful questions that we in the Liberal Party have asked the ministers during Committee of Finance, and which we will continue to ask throughout the remainder of that process.

But regardless of the answers, or how assured we may feel at the end of the process about where government is spending the taxpayers' money, we will still have only been given half the picture. And this requires us to pose the question, why? Why?

Because as the Provincial Auditor tells us in his 1993 annual report, revenue for the Consolidated Fund, which is now called the General Revenue Fund, accounts for a meagre 54 per cent of all government revenue. And expenditures from the government revenue fund account for only 56 per cent of all government expenditures.

The remaining 46 and 44 per cents of revenues and expenditures for government as a whole are actually outside of the purview of this very legislature.

The arguments against the proposal, Mr. Speaker, for a complete financial plan by the government as advocated by the Provincial Auditor, are very few. In fact there seem to be only two broad types of argument.

One is that this kind of plan will compromise the ability of the Crown corporations who must compete commercially. The second is, loosely put, one of tradition, and covers several paternalistic arguments. In response to the first argument that disclosure of a complete financial plan would negatively affect the commercial viability of Crowns, it is simply misleading, given the broad and general nature in which this information will be presented.

The auditor has asked only for a one-line statement, Mr. Speaker, a one-line statement of projected revenues and expenditures for each enterprise for the coming year. I don't see any of the Crowns being threatened by such a disclosure with such minimal information. Perhaps eventually we can move toward more detailed disclosure on the part of the Crowns, but I think that we need to start with this very minimal amount of information, and that that would be considered to be progress.

The second argument against this proposal was one which I refer to as the argument of tradition, one that at some point always contains the phrase, and I quote: because we've always done it this way. End of quote.

Government as a whole has experienced many breaks with traditions in the last few years, all of which I view as being very positive. The auditor in fact commends the government for many of the reforms it has made to its financial dealings and reportings, and he credits the elected officials of all parties for their role in bringing about these improvements.

I realize that all change is incremental and that having made some advances, we cannot be content to stop now. We must push forward to the next small but significant symbol of openness on the part of government and we must get away from the type of government that says trust us, we'll do what is right for you; trust us, we'll show you at the end of the year or at the end of our term that we have acted in your best interests.

To those who still advocate that decision makers should be trusted and left alone, public opinion polls and election outcomes over the past two decades would fail to support that notion.

Mr. Speaker, our government departments and agencies have a plan. They share that plan, often in some detail, with us as legislators and with the public as shareholders. Crown corporations have a plan, or at least we all would like to think that they have a plan. Together those plans show us where we are going, not just where we have been.

We as legislators and our public as shareholders must be privy to those plans at some level. This sharing of information will mark a point in our development when we, as government, cease treating our citizens as trusting children. It will represent a turning point where paternalism end and consensualism actually begins.

For years our governments have asked us to trust them, the general public to trust them. And time and time again, governments have disappointed the people. The people of our province are now wanting government that they can trust. In fact they're asking the government to trust them as citizens -- trust the people to know the plan and by knowing the plan be part of it, contribute to it, and work toward it.

I think that we owe the people nothing less, and indeed we probably owe them much more. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Lorje: -- I will at the conclusion of my remarks be moving an amendment, seconded by the member from Yorkton. The amendment will read:

That all the words after the word Assembly be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

that commend the government for its commitment to financial reform as demonstrated by the passage of The Crown Corporations Act, 1993, the provision of summary financial statements and the mid-year financial reports and the other reform initiatives recognized by the Provincial Auditor in his most recent report, and further that this Assembly urge the Crown Corporations Committee to continue its mandate review and to make recommendations to the Assembly with respect to further reforms designed to improve public accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to enter into this debate. I would have wished that we could have waited at least one more week because my committee that I chair, the Crown Corporations Committee, will be bringing in a report within the next week or so, detailing many, many positive reform measures that will go a long way towards addressing the kinds of concerns that the members opposite all of a sudden have discovered.

I find it really interesting, Mr. Speaker, to see the opposition standing up on its hind legs and talking about the reforms that this government must implement when they know very well that we inherited a very sorry mess that they had created. Indeed the Provincial Auditor refused to endorse the **Public Accounts** of 1990-91, because the members opposite had made such a mess of it. They didn't follow proper accounting procedures. With respect to Crown Corporations Committee, they refused to call regular meetings. Crown corporations were created that nobody even knew about -- ghost corporations. They had a total mess in this province. There were no timely reports and the whole situation begged out for

reform.

And reform is exactly what we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker. I find it very offensive to hear the one member talking about the possibility that we have a war chest for the election. I want to point out to him that Crown Investments Corporation's financial statements and related records have been audited by the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor issued an unqualified opinion, stating that the financial statements represent the financial position of CIC fairly. The Provincial Auditor did not identify a hidden pool of funds.

Mr. Speaker, the only war chest in this province is the strength of the people's commitment and conviction. We will continue our financial reforms. We will clean up the financial mess that we inherited from the members opposite. And we welcome their suggestions for change.

(1445)

I was pleased to note that the Leader of the Third Party commented, as did the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, commented on what occurred in the Public Accounts Committee this morning. I also attended that meeting. I was very pleased to see them talking about the Provincial Auditor's report and initiatives that might occur for reform. I would have wished though that there had been a member present from the third party, rather than only a staff person.

Similarly, I would hope that the third party would start to send members to the Crown Corporations Committee on a regular basis. And I would hope that when they do attend we don't see the sorry spectacle, as we did in an earlier meeting this year when we were reviewing SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) and the minister responsible was asked by the member from Shaunavon, well what kinds of questions should I be asking anyway? Now I hardly consider that that sort of a statement gives anyone any degree of faith and trust in the ability of legislators to actually look at proper accountability practices.

But, Mr. Speaker, the members of the government, unlike the members opposite, have been working diligently to reform the accountability procedures for this government, both in the department side and the Crown side.

We are continuing to improve our management and accountability practices. The departments' annual reports, for instance, have been vastly improved. The Department of Finance has introduced better accounting principles for its management of the General Revenue Fund and there is now a much more complete and timely financial information that is brought to this Assembly. This is a reform that the New Democratic government has implemented, and I am very proud of it.

We have improved management measures all throughout government. I would specifically

comment on the improved management measures in the departments of Health and Justice, and Highways and Transportation. I would also point out, as the chair of the Public Accounts Committee is very well aware, that the departments of Social Services and Education, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) are working with the Provincial Auditor's office in order to examine and improve their management systems.

Now dealing specifically with the Crown sector side, since I am chair of the Crown Corporations Committee, I want to comment on the kinds of things that are occurring there that are positive reform measures that will improve accountability for the people of Saskatchewan.

CIC, Crown Investments Corporation, now the holding company, provides much better information to both the Crown Corporations Committee and to the Public Accounts Committee. They are working -- actively working with the Provincial Auditor's office -- on further improvements, and as the chair of the Public Accounts Committee knows very well, there's a working group consisting of representatives from the Department of Finance, the Provincial Auditor's office, and Crown Investments Corporation that is looking at the whole issue of financial plans.

We have already implemented Bill 42, The Crown Corporations Act of 1993, Mr. Speaker, and that Bill made a major step forward in terms of improved accountability. And I'm not saying that we've reached nirvana or perfection yet, but we are continuing to work towards it.

But we have implemented very definite improved accountability. We now have timely filing of annual reports. We have something that's quite unheard of or had been quite unheard of before, we have consistency in the annual reports; consistency in terms of what kinds of information is provided and how it is provided. The content of those reports have been improved dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, the question is not whether or not there is a financial plan. This government believes definitely in openness, transparency, and accountability of public finances. The question is what we mean specifically by a financial plan and where that financial plan will be analysed. And that I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is the whole substrata for this debate.

Committees in this legislature have a long-established role in looking at the accountability of the governments of the day; they review and they analyse the finances of government. So I would suggest that that analysis may not necessarily occur best, the financial plan analysis may not necessarily occur best in this august, red Chamber. Perhaps it might best occur at the Crown Corporations Committee and Public Accounts Committee level where they can get into more detailed analysis.

As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, on Crown Corporations Committee we have for the last few weeks been looking at various reform measures that we will be recommending to the House. To make our role a much more forward-looking one, to make sure that what we are examining is much more timely, we are fine-tuning our role to focus more on organizations that receive significant revenue from outside the General Revenue Fund.

We are making a major reform, Mr. Speaker, by asking Crown Investments Corporation now to give us an annual statement that will reflect the mandate, goals, objectives, and performance indicators of CIC. We expect that this will be a much more comprehensive opening statement when it appears before the committee and we will view this as a performance review statement and planning document for CIC.

We want to take a look at what the mandates and goals are of CIC and how they've measured up in the past year and how they're moving forward. We want to look . . . we want to ask CIC now to give Crown Corporations Committee notification when they have significant financial transactions.

We intend to hold regular and timely meetings. We intend to ask CIC to report to our committee on the rationale for its investments, the structure of its investments, and the prospect and rationale for retention or divestment of those invention . . .

The Speaker: -- Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Would you stop the clock, please. I just wanted to remind members that the member from Saskatoon Wildwood had indicated at the beginning that she was going to move an amendment but her time has elapsed; and the member is to move her amendment within the time that is assigned to her, that is the 10 minutes. But I will allow the member to move her amendment, but in the future that amendment is to be moved in the time that is assigned to her or to any other member, and the member may move her amendment.

Ms. Lorje: -- I thank you very much for your indulgence and tolerance. I'm sorry I forgot to watch the clock on this one. I would like to move an amendment:

That all the words after the word "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

commend the government for its commitment to financial reform as demonstrated by the passage of The Crown Corporations Act, 1993, the provision of summary financial statements and the mid-year financial reports, and the other reform initiatives recognized by the Provincial Auditor in his most recent report; and further that this Assembly urge the Crown Corporations Committee to continue its

mandate review and to make recommendations to the Assembly with respect to further reforms designed to improve public accountability.

I do so move, seconded by the member from Yorkton.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this afternoon to have the opportunity to enter the debate and to second the motion from my colleague from Saskatoon Wildwood.

Before I state my comments, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that in response to what the member for Morse had indicated in terms of the auditor's report, that the financial plan was inaccurate, I believe he said, I think what the Provincial Auditor has indicated, is that the financial audit is incomplete. And what the auditor states is that he would like to see a more and deeper and broader inclusion of the financial plan. And by that, meaning the management of the financial affairs of the province, which includes financial plans and accountability and certainly timely reporting.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment first to recognize the momentous work and step that our government has taken to open the books in this province and to ensure that never in the history of Saskatchewan again can a government put the Saskatchewan people in the kind of financial mess that we found ourselves in the case of the past administration that we had in this province.

And to begin with, the Gass Commission of course helped us to set our strategy in a direction for what the future might be, in terms of financial accountability and management.

Mr. Speaker, in three consecutive years we have budgets that are presented in advance of the year end. And this ensures that we have adequate time available for organizations and departments to do their planning because budgets in fact are planning documents.

Mr. Speaker, our government's decision to provide third parties, schools, and municipalities and health care services with notice a year in advance, ensures that the planning process can be developed in concert with the priorities that they have and that there are no surprises of course that elevates the hardship of having to make decisions in a time of crisis or crisis management, as was the previous administration as they put us in a number of occasions simply by not having a budget in 1991 and having several budgets tabled in late June of a year, well after the financial year had been completed.

Mr. Speaker, in my role as the past committee chairman of local government and education, we have heard on several occasions from delegations that we met with, who have expressed the positive decision that our government has made in allocating a year in advance the funding that they would be

receiving. That, Mr. Speaker, we would view as being good financial planning.

Mr. Speaker, as I review the 1993 Provincial Auditor's report I think it is important to recognize in chapter 1 of the Provincial Auditor's report where he states that:

In 1992, (and I quote) the Government took an important step forward (to prepare) . . . Summary Financial Statements.

He goes on to say that:

Summary Financial Statements are essential because they provide an important starting point for planning and managing -- a complete financial overview.

Readers are assured that the statements contained in the financial report of the many organizations in the government . . . uses to carry out the public policy objectives.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a Provincial Auditor recognizing the provincial government acting on its commitments as outlined in the Gass Commission, putting before this legislature and to the people of Saskatchewan an accounting process which is critical for planning and managing the financial affairs of our province.

Mr. Speaker, it is also clear that in the Provincial Auditor's report 1993, that without a doubt there is a commendation, and he has seen the practices of the management and the accountability of our government and it's officials. And he indicates again, if I might quote, Mr. Speaker, from page 6, chapter 1, where he indicates that:

The Crown Investments Corporation (CIC) is improving its practices in several areas . . .

And goes on to state what they are, and then it proceeds to indicate:

The Department of Finance introduced more rigorous and useful accounting principles to manage the revenues and the expenditures of the General Revenue Fund. Such principles help ensure the Assembly and the Government (to provide a) . . . more relevant and reliable financial information.

And goes on to give several examples of how the government through its departments has established audit committees and value-for-money audits, and how the Department of Social Services and the Department of Education and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Arts and Science and Technology are managing their corporations and involving his office in a management systems to do an in-depth and broader evaluation of the financial expenditures of the province, of their departments. Mr. Speaker, in today's climate, there is a demand for principled governance and public accountability, and our government is responding.

Mr. Speaker, there remains the outstanding question that we debate today in this legislature and that we have been discussing at length in our Public Accounts Committee, which is the presentation of a financial plan. Well, Mr. Speaker, the budget document that has been presented to this Assembly and to the people of Saskatchewan is the most detailed and revealing financial document or planning document that can be found anywhere.

Our government's budget plan not only indicates the annual operations of the income and expenses, but it explains in detail the manner in which we're going to achieve many of our objectives. It charts the history and our future goals.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the financial plan for Saskatchewan is obvious, and everyone who is paying attention is seeing that we are meeting the financial objectives as we've set them.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we debate the inconclusiveness of the budget document or the plan and use the **Public Accounts**, recognizing it as a statement, and it is included in our 1993 report.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, the burning question remains that compromises the comprehensive plan and how detailed should that comprehensive plan be. And I say that this is not an easy question nor will the resolution be simple. But I'm personally somewhat surprised to see us debating this particular issue today, particularly led by the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, when in fact it is clear that we are going to be proceeding in putting together a committee that's going to be addressing this issue in great detail, as quoted in the resolution .31 of the Public Accounts Committee on page 27, by the Provincial Auditor, where he says that:

In February of 1993, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts asked our Office to work with officials of the Department of Finance and the Crown Investments Corporation to prepare a report on a complete financial plan for the whole Government. We plan to include the results of our initial work in (that particular) future Report.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important here to recognize that we need to define what this financial plan looks like.

And through the process of inclusion, when we're talking here about individuals from the Crown corporations, people from the Finance department, and people from CIC would be sitting around and discuss what in fact constitutes the financial plan. Today we believe that we have a detailed plan and our plan is our budget.

The question that I think we need to ask is: is the government utilizing sound and acceptable

accounting principles in reporting its transactions? And to that, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we are, as is highlighted in many of the sections in the Provincial Auditor's report.

The second question, I suppose, we will be asking in the Public Accounts Committee and through this Assembly is: should we have the government make the decisions and bring those facts forward through this Assembly in some detail?

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that there is ample opportunity for us to be debating the issues of the expenditures and the revenues of the Crown corporations. And to date we've not seen or heard of any of that debate in this Assembly. And so I ask the question as to why that hasn't occurred to this point in time.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the motion of the member from Saskatoon Wildwood and take my place in response to some of the questions.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate that as I view this particular resolution initially, is that it indicates, to me at least, that there is a lack of understanding as to how the Crown corporations get their authority, and where that authority is provided, and what it does in when the debate was held in how a corporation should function in the province of Saskatchewan, and what it should be doing.

If you take a look at the statutes of the province of Saskatchewan, you can go to any one of the Crown corporations that have been formed or sold by the Conservatives during their reign as the government, and you will find that in the statutes there is the detailed listing of what the corporation is legally able to do and how it is to achieve that and to cover those particular things.

So what we have is really a . . . in dealing with the Crown corporations which appears to me that the members opposite didn't understand, is that we really have in statute what the objective of those Crown corporations are. And because there has been . . . hasn't been a number of new Crown corporations being formed, it leaves this Assembly with a number of people who, number one, were only here during the 1980s when corporations were being disposed of rather than formed, and those that came after that without the understanding of what the power of a corporation . . . and the fact that really the direction and what the corporation should be doing is there in the statutes.

Now these same individuals are moving from this Assembly where the discussion should have taken place in that regard to Crown Corporations Committee and other areas, asking for more detail and in essence wanting to go over the discussion that took place with the formation of the corporations to begin with.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has moved in a number of different ways to make more and more information available. I say that it isn't necessarily providing information, but rather providing an educational experience for some individuals, in that the minister and the officials that are now at the Crown Corporations Committee respond to the questions of the members and have over the past year, two years at least, been giving answers that relate to more than just the year under review, and in fact come up fairly close to the date when things are actively . . . the active date.

And the other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that in doing so, the answering of those questions, you'll find that most of the answers are based in the corporations themselves. Now the member initially, from Morse, when he stood up and said that there was no place that the results of the Crown corporations came into the **Estimates**, I'd like to point out to him that some of the Crown corporations which get most of their funding right from the Consolidated Fund are found in the **Estimates**.

And let's take a look at one and give . . . the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation which is a Crown corporation; it's found in the **Estimates**. And the reason that it's found in the **Estimates** is that it does not secure its funds indirectly from the public for providing a service to the public, but secures its funds from the government for providing services to the government.

The member opposite is talking about some of the Crown utilities, the SaskPower, SaskTel. And I point out to him that he should take the time to read the statutes of the province where SaskTel is included in there as one of them to understand that the previous discussion of what the corporation should be doing and how it should be spending its money and the relationship is actually right in the Act.

But in stating that it doesn't come into the **Estimates**, he's totally wrong. If you look on page 10 in the **Estimates** for 1994-1995, transfer from Crown entities, the Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan is expected to transfer \$60 million into the revenue of the province of Saskatchewan.

So the question then comes: why he would stand in this Assembly and indicate to the Assembly that there is no information coming to this Assembly? The reason that he is doing that is that he simply wants to generate in the public's mind opposition to Crown corporations so that they can be privatized, so that we can have a situation in this province where the corporations that provide utility operations can generate a profit that can be pocketed by some private individual and moved out of this province and leave us in a poorer economic condition than we would have to be if we maintain and operate these Crown corporations as part of the governing of the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are some problems that we could solve, related to the committees of this Assembly. And one of the problems is that with the

Crown Corporations Committee and the Public Accounts Committee, that there's a tremendous amount of overlap which I feel, if we were to stop doing the overlap, we could reduce some of the expenditures of this Assembly and meet the needs of the public in the province quite nicely.

And that would require from the auditor, I believe, two separate reports so that the reports could be sent either to the Public Accounts Committee or to the Crown Corporations Committee and handled then in the committee that this Assembly chose for the identity to be reviewed, or for the accounts of that identity to be reviewed.

Mr. Speaker, there has been an increase in the number of reports being made available to the members of this Assembly. The Crown Corporations now have a full management plan and we've been asked in the Crown Corporations to move forward with a presentation of that report prior to the year under review as one of the reports that the Crown Corporations Committee would look at.

Mr. Speaker, it has been indicated that this morning in the Public Accounts Committee that the comptroller indicated that the CIC in its completion is covered in the Consolidated Fund for the funds coming into the Consolidated Fund.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just so that the members opposite who haven't taken the time to look at some of the different Acts and statutes of the province of Saskatchewan and don't realize just what the authority and the discussion that carried on in assembling the one, I'd like to point out to them what the Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation had for powers.

The indication that some of the powers that they were given and the objectives that they were to do, and one of them is the power to explore, to acquire, to open or develop mines, to participate in joint ventures, to regulate by resolution or by procedures at meetings, etc. That is some of the powers that were provided to them.

They were provided the powers to purchase shares, the power to acquire assets or to sell them, to accept advances from the department, the Minister of Finance, the power to borrow separate from the Minister of Finance. And all of these powers in the end, if the assets that they acquired remained . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the amendment before us.

It's been an interesting experience to be a new member of the Legislative Assembly and in particular a new member of the Crown Corporations Committee and experience a very steep learning curve on what is

contemplated by the members opposite in the information they try to present through their so-called reform package and in reality whether or not they are walking the talk.

And I would point out that, as a member of the Crown Corporations Committee that is putting forward a whole series of reforms and package of reforms, at the calling of the chair she outlined a number of those areas that would be discussed. And you would think that someone who is seriously looking at participating in reforms of accountability of information to the public and in particular their new-found zeal to look at the Crown corporations sector, that they would come prepared. I found that it's the exact opposite, Mr. Speaker, in that I've seen no evidence that members opposite have come prepared to be a part and an active part of reform.

And in the experience of having the two members of the Liberal Party come to the committees without any paper in hand, I think the order of the day has been quiet except to always reject or try and distort the information that's being brought forward because of the lack of knowledge of the Crown corporations and their sector. And the complete lack of preparation or the ability to put forward aspects of reform speaks to their ability, not to want to go forward in a serious way with reforms that are presented.

(1515)

So when we have the motion that's before us, I think it's sort of hoping that the public won't look at closely what the performance is of accountability through the Crown Corporations. And it's no doubt and no wonder why. Because members opposite would have us say, well let's forget what happened in the past. And it's a serious mistake to forget what's happened in the past and let bygones be bygones. You always learn from those experiences.

And what did we have was a committee of the legislature, the Crown Corporations Committee, that in the past had been less than effective in its performing of its duties because during the late '80s and early '90s you saw this committee did not meet at regular times or regular intervals. The annual reports which formed the knowledge base for the committee were not filed in a timely manner. The government of the day made major spending and investment decisions in the Crown sector that in no small way contributed to the fiscal nightmare that we inherited and the problems that are now facing this province.

And a lot of it was able to occur through the Crown corporations side of the operations in a cloak of saying that somehow this sector had to have commercial confidentiality which would hide a lot of the kinds of mismanagement and transactions that occurred. And we can list over and over the areas where the deals that were made by the previous government did not reflect the best interests of the province.

Well we can say, well that's just in the opinion of some of our members, but we can look then to the

auditor's reports of 1990 and the year ending March 31, 1990. And the auditor says that CIC's public accountability to the Assembly is not well served with the current financial statements that are being provided; those financial statements do not give the Assembly the information needed to judge CIC's management of the assets entrusted to it by the Assembly.

The auditor goes on to state that in his opinion, because these consolidated financial statements include financial results of corporations that are not subsidiaries and because an investment in shares of an investing company are accounted for on an equity rather than a cost basis, these consolidated financial statements do not present fairly the consolidated financial position of the corporation as of December 31, 1989 and the result of its operations and the changes in its financial position for the year then ended in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

I did not hear at that time the members opposite come forward and say, the auditor has a point to make and we're going to change some of these things; we're going to bring forward a reform package and make sure that we walk the talk; that our deeds will match our actions and our words will match those actions as well.

It's only just recently that we've looked at the auditor's report, year ending March 31, 1993, and, lo and behold, the auditor's report states:

The Crown Investments Corporation . . . is improving its practices in several areas:

This government is committed to a package of reform. And we're not using the words to say we're committed; we're walking the talk and bringing in a package of reforms to the Crown Corporations Committee. And in the management of CIC you can see the auditor go on to state:

officials of CIC are now proactive in providing information to the Standing Committees on Crown Corporations and Public Accounts:

More accountability to the people of the Province of Saskatchewan.

CIC is improving the budget information provided to its Board. More complete and timely budget information will be valuable to CIC in carrying out its management responsibilities . . .

Another positive change for accountability to the province and to the people that they are having a trust relationship with in the managing of the financial affairs of the Crown corporations side of the organization.

CIC (is now) working with (the office of the auditor to examine) . . . the systems and practices . . . (used) to manage its significant

investments.

Working with the auditor, unlike the kinds of performances we saw from the members opposite who would attack the auditor if he dared to state that the members opposite were in some way not providing the information that was needed to make a fair and complete analysis of the financial situation in the province at the time, unwarranted attacks upon the Provincial Auditor in trying to discredit the auditor's office when they did not have the information . . .

The Speaker: -- Order. Order, order. The 65 minutes allotted to this debate has elapsed. I do want to remind members that now, as agreed to, there will be or may be up to a 10-minute question and comment period. A member does not need to ask a question, can make a brief comment also. So it will now be open to a question and comment period for those who wish to participate.

Mr. Sonntag: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take an opportunity to make a brief comment with respect to the discussion that has taken place today. There were accusations by the member from Saskatoon Greystone that there were possibilities that our government could be hiding funds in a slush fund in the Crowns.

And I want to take the liberty of referring to a question and answer session took place on February 5, 1993 where Mr. Kujawa asked the auditor:

If (for instance) the Liquor Board of Saskatchewan in the next three years makes \$7 billion profit, can that be hidden? And if so, how?

The auditor, Mr. Strelieff, answered as follows:

Mr. Chair, members, as far as I know, it wouldn't be hidden under the practices of the government. I don't know how it would be hidden unless you change your practices.

Mr. Kujawa: -- Did you say it can be hidden?

Mr. Strelieff: -- Well under your current practices, it would not be hidden.

I don't know how it could be hidden. So I just want to say parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, the only changes made since that statement was made, if anything, is that the auditor has acknowledged that we've improved the accountability of the Crowns.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a comment I'd like to address to the member from Saskatoon Wildwood. That member is the chair of the Crown Corporations Committee who is presently dealing with the processes that the Crown corporations have put into place, and that committee has been at work for some time.

Now in her opening remarks, that member mentioned and made mention of a setting of objectives for the Crown Investments Corporation. And my specific question to the member is what, in her opinion, should the objectives of the Crown Investments Corporation be? I was wondering whether the member would favour us with a couple of remarks in that aspect, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously I do believe that there are very major and important objectives that can be served from the Crown sector side. And dealing specifically with the question that the member from Prince Albert is asking, I think that one of the major tasks that the Crown Corporations Committee has is to ensure that CIC is keeping its strong performers strong, and also that they are stemming the losses of money from the Crown Corporations Committee.

For too many years there were losses. Whether they were deliberate losses or as a result of mismanagement, I don't know. But it clearly caused the people of Saskatchewan to all of a sudden have a major deficit and a major debt.

I think we also need to make sure that we can improve the return from CIC's investments. There's not much sense having these investments and not having them be reasonable and profitable. We need to have positive returns to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Finally I would suggest that one major objective in CIC is to improve . . . is to restructure CIC's financial position. And I would hope over the coming months that we can see measures that will bring all those objectives into play. Thank you.

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the chairman of the Crown Corporations Committee whether in fact the budgets of the Crown Corporations will be reviewed in your new mandate as it relates to SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskEnergy, STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company), all of the Crown corporations. And will you allow the members of that committee to ask questions under the current year to show what those budgets are going to be, what the plans are going to be, and what the revenue is going to be also, and where the money is going to be spent? Will you give us that assurance that that is what you are planning on doing?

Ms. Lorje: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Morse, I would say that the Crown Corporations Committee will review as a priority those Crowns that obtain significant resources or revenue outside the General Revenue Fund. And those specifically will be CIC, the parent holding company, and then SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskTel International, SGI, SEDCO, Sask Opportunities, Sask Crop Insurance, STC, SGGF (Saskatchewan government growth fund), Sask Forest Products Corporation, Sask Water, Sask Liquor Board and

licensing commission, and the Workers' Compensation commission . . . compensation commission, yes.

We will also be asking for an annual performance indicator from CIC, the parent holding company, detailing its mandate, goals, objectives, and performances. And we will not be asking for that, at least at this juncture, from the specific, individual Crowns because we do believe it is important that we look at the broad, overall picture. And the best way that can be accomplished is by looking at CIC.

That's the initiative that we're proposing, the reform that we're proposing, and I would hope that the members opposite would join us in making sure that that reform can be a workable reform.

Mr. Trew: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for someone who is very fond of criticizing the government and our accountability. And I want to ask the member for Saskatoon Greystone if she will acknowledge -- the Leader of the Liberal Party -- if she will at least acknowledge there have been major changes, major improvements, in the accounting of the Crown corporations.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, again a question to the member and the chairman of the Crown Corporations Committee. Is that to assume then that the information that will be provided to the committee will be on the year that is the present year? Is it the present budget that will be reviewed? Is it the present expenditure that . . . as it relates to revenue and expenditure, are those the issues that you will be reviewing in Crown Corporations Committee?

Ms. Lorje: -- I thank the member from Morse for his persistence. I knew when I stood up that there was one question that I hadn't answered and, I'm sorry, I forgot the specifics of it.

Basically I would say to the member opposite that the annual report does and will continue to form the basis for the examination of the operations of a particular Crown. The primary work of the committee, I believe, is to review the operations of the Crown, as outlined in the annual report.

Nevertheless, what we will be doing as a reform is to entertain general questions about future objectives and also about past performance indicators. No longer will we be confining ourselves to a narrow interpretation of only looking at the year under review. We will also be allowing questions about future objectives. So that the work of the committee will be much more timely and much more forward-looking.

Mr. Martens: -- Then, Madam Chairman, then the answer is no. You will not be reviewing the budget as it relates to revenue and expenditures.

The answer you gave was a no, and I want to ask you

this question: will you as chairman of Crown Corporations give equal opportunity for the opposition to ask questions as you have given opportunity for the government side to ask questions when it's perceived by the chairman to be in order to have the question raised because it might reveal some things that the former administration did?

And will you give that same opportunity for the opposition to raise those questions that are current in the year that we are in so that we can have that discussion about those issues that are current in the Crown Corporations Committee? Because your history has not shown that you have been prepared to do that.

Mr. Lorje: -- Well now we're going to get into a down and dirty criticism of my functioning as chair.

I would like to point out to the member opposite that I customarily, when we begin our review of any Crown corporation, I look first of all to the opposition to see if they wish to speak on a particular matter, and I have tended, simply as a matter of courtesy, to recognize the members of the opposition first and to give them as much opportunity as they choose to take to ask questions. It is not my responsibility if they come to the Crown Corporations Committee without having done their homework, without having prepared, and without knowing why they are there.

(1530)

Mr. Serby: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the member from Morse. During the past three years there has been a concerted effort by the Public Accounts Committee and this government to ensure that the work and reporting of the Public Accounts Committee and the government are timely and meet with the guidelines of the auditor.

Recognizing, Mr. Member opposite, that you have been a member of both the previous government and a member of the Public Accounts Committee and with a very strong perceived conscience today for scrupulous accountability of principles and process, tell me why it is that in 1991 when we formed government, that the work of the Public Accounts Committee was nearly three years in arrears.

Mr. Martens: -- Because the chairman, who was a member of the opposition, did not call the committee together.

The Speaker: -- Order. The time for the debate, the 75 minutes and the 10-minute question period and comment period has elapsed. We'll go on to the next item on the agenda.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Resolution No. 71 -- Ownership and Use of Firearms

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In addition to my colleague's response, it should be pointed out it was the NDP opposition of the day that

did not call those meetings.

However, we are on to another topic, Mr. Speaker. And to set the stage for my remarks, I want to read into the record the motion that I will be making in a few moments time. And this motion, Mr. Speaker, is going to be made by myself and seconded by the member from Moosomin. And it reads like this:

That this Assembly recognize the importance of firearms to the daily lives of farmers, hunters, trappers, and aboriginal people, the accomplishments of Saskatchewan shooting teams at the international level, as well as the other important sporting and economic benefits of firearms, and that therefore this Assembly urge the government to support in principle the continued right of residents of Saskatchewan, both urban and rural, to enjoy the lawful, safe, and responsible use and ownership of firearms, including rifles, shotguns, and handguns, in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will be so moving.

And to begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I want to say first of all that I guess we'd have to go to the United States and to take a look at their constitution to find out that there are countries that are more persistent, I guess, and precise in their regulations in terms of firearms; where the right to bear arms in the United States is actually enshrined in the constitution.

And of course as such it is not in our case. However, most of our constitution is a constitution that is tradition; it's unwritten. We follow somewhat the British form of constitutions where, in large part, it is rather unwritten but made up rather of tradition, precedent, heritage, and certainly lifestyle, Mr. Speaker. So clearly it seems to me that the right to own firearms and use them responsibly is part of the tradition of Canada, and particularly in Saskatchewan in our rural areas.

And I think all of us, as members of the legislature, are aware of some of the inherent dangers of irresponsible gun use. And all too often, in fact, it has become a common occurrence in the media where guns are involved in all sorts of violent crimes, from murders to robberies to sexual assault, and so on. And then we do have incomprehensible acts of violence like we saw, for example, in the Lepine mass murders in Montreal. And they are abhorrent I think to all of us, they are repulsive, and they are to be condemned.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in each of these instances guns are not in themselves the problem, but rather the symptom of much deeper problems that exist in our society. As we all know, guns themselves do not kill.

I think this violence that we've been talking about now over the last few moments is endemic to a society that has lowered its standards, it has dulled its sense of right and wrong, and quite frankly, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, I think it has lost its moral compass.

This violence is endemic to a society where more people are living in poverty than ever before, and quite literally out of desperation are looking for a quick fix. It's endemic to a society where there's increased crime, where individuals need a quick fix to satisfy their alcoholism or their drug use or their gambling addiction. It's endemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a society and to a society where there is racial intolerance, where young people with nowhere to turn become involved in gangs.

Now these are the problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are the underlying causes. These are the causes, not just the symptoms, and these must be the ones that are going to have to be addressed. And then there is no reason why we cannot all reap the benefits from the responsible use of guns.

I liken it somewhat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the rules that we have in hockey, and there is much talk about violence in hockey. I have always been a strong proponent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we do not necessarily have to change the rules in hockey. They are there. It's a matter of the will to enforce the rules that exist, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I am pleased to note that the member from I think Saskatoon Wildwood, if I am correct, or River Heights, pardon me, in her member's statement, made reference to the fact that we have over 1,000 police officers in Saskatchewan, and only around 13 times during the course of an entire year was there an official discharge of the firearms' use, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in not one instance was there an injury to a human life.

And of course unfortunately we can't say the same thing for the two skunks and rather a feisty steer that suffered the results of those shots. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that illustrates the point that I'm trying to make.

I'm going to spend a few moments now and go over, for the benefit of people who may be listening, some of the gun laws that exist in Canada right now, the most recent change being in 1991 when this gun control legislation was passed. And we take a look at the fact that there are different categories of weapons, and they are called weapons in most instances instead of handguns, and I think that is a misnomer to begin with.

So we have the category of the unrestricted, like shotguns and rifles that must be reloaded after each shot, and we do know that there are still some semi-automatics that are allowed in hunting situations. We have the restricted weapons as well. These are handguns, some semi-automatics, and so on. And they need extra monitoring to make sure that they are handled properly. And then of course we have that category, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the guns that are banned -- banned outright -- and the new law added over 50 types of semi-automatic and military-style weapons, including assault rifles that can easily be converted over to an automatic function,

so they were banned.

We also find that buying of guns was tightened up tremendously, where the new law requires all gun purchasers, who must be at least 18 years of age, to complete lengthy training courses, to complete lengthy forms, and it imposes a 28-day waiting period before the permit will be issued to purchase that gun.

All weapons, as far as the category of storing is concerned, all weapons must be stored unloaded. If not stored in locked containers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they must have the bolts removed, trigger locks installed, or in some other fashion be disabled. There's a 10-shot limit as far as the magazine capacity is concerned for handguns; 5 for shotguns and semi-automatic rifles.

Now there are penalties in place. And the penalties are that having a handgun -- simply having a handgun without a permit -- is punishable by five years in prison. The first offence with firearms carries a one-year jail sentence to be served consecutively, and second and subsequent offences carry minimum 3 years and a maximum 14. We have some of the most stringent law guns and gun regulations in the civilized world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, right now.

And I would just like to point out that some of the problems I think that we are facing in our society, in so far as gun law legislation, was begun 15 years ago by the then minister of Justice of Canada, the Hon. Warren Allmand. And, Mr. Speaker, I think Warren Allmand is still behind the scenes pushing for stricter regulations.

Then another situation, another problem arose, and that was under Kim Campbell. And as far as I was concerned, this was one of the reasons why I could not support her because of the strict gun law legislation that she was bound and determined to bring forward. But even worse, right now is the current Minister of Justice, the Hon. Allan Rock, and Allan Rock has literally put us between a rock and a hard place in so far as the gun laws are concerned.

Now what do all three have in common, Mr. Speaker? All three have one thing in common. They are lawyers, and they are big-city lawyers who have never really been outside of the major cities of this country, or if they are, it's still on the 401. And there's a total lacking, a lack of consideration and understanding of how the rest of Canada lives.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn you to an article, and I'm not sure of whether this is off the **Leader-Post** or the **Star-Phoenix**. I don't have that on my paper. But the heading says, "Confer with provinces over gun laws: Mitchell." Now I want to spend a little bit of time on what the Minister of Justice of Saskatchewan has to say about that. But certainly one point I would agree with him is where he said: before these changes are instituted, there must be consultation with the provinces, and there must be good consultation with the provinces.

And I have to admit that maybe this is going to occur because I understand that Mr. Rock is going to be in Saskatchewan within the next couple of days and will be meeting with our Minister of Justice. And what I'm hoping that the result of this discussion this afternoon is going to be is that we will send a clear, unequivocal message to Mr. Rock as a united Assembly in some of the concerns that we have about his gun control measures as he is purporting them to . . . what he is intending to do.

Now the alarming thing is that it seems to be that there's no rhyme or reason because at one time Mr. Rock is saying, well we're going to have an outright ban on all handguns, completely. And we'll possibly ban all guns including rifles and hunting rifles in cities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what he's proposing to do then is, well when the hunting season comes, you can have your rifle. You can sign them out for the hunting season, but as soon as the hunting season is over, if you live in a major urban area you're going to have to bring them back in to a central depot somewhere in that urban centre until the next hunting season. Now it's scary when you hear a lawyer from Toronto talking that way and he's going to represent all of Canada, and it's just almost impossible to believe the restriction.

Another problem here is the proposed restriction on the sale of ammunition, where you basically have to have your ammunition certificate in order to be able to buy that. But more so, he says, well I really recognize that we have an urban Canada and we have a rural Canada, so I just had a good idea, he says; I have a good idea. What I propose is we have a two-tier system, a two-tier system, one set of regulations and rules and laws for the urban centres and another one for the cowboys out in ranching country. How is that for a situation?

Well the people of this province are standing up on their hind feet and they're saying, enough is enough. And I know that we have an organization called the Saskatchewan Responsible Firearm Owners who are now saying this is getting too much, it's getting to be ridiculous. And I'd like to make a quote from Mr. Larry Fillo; he was the president of that organization, where he says:

We're paying \$50 to the police to collect files on the economic, financial, and sexual history of every hunter and trapper and rancher and farmer and rural resident in Canada because they have a crime problem in Toronto and Montreal. It's absurd when you think about it.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether that is an overstatement or not, he certainly is making the point that there does come a time when we are over-controlled.

(1545)

This firearms group is urging the members of the legislature to pass a resolution in support of their

stand. And that's one of the reasons why we're having the debate this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to have one more quote, and I quote from this article, and it says:

Mitchell said the government will not make such a motion since gun control is a federal issue and he does not want to waste the legislature's time on an issue over which it has no control.

But subsequent to that, I understand from members opposite . . . and I'm looking forward to hearing members from that side speaking to this motion that I have made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and if we have to make a slight change to the motion, so be it, but certainly I am hoping that it will be endorsed and passed so that we can send this message to the minister.

Because things are over-controlled, they're getting out of hand, and all I have to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that right now I can still make an application to buy a firearm; but on May 1 I can't because my old firearms acquisition certificate is going to run out. And I have with me here now the application for firearms acquisition certificate and it's a convoluted type of a situation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member across says item 35. Do you know what item 35 is?

I'll read it for you. It's a good point that you make, Mr. Member across the way. On question 35 is literally a total and complete invasion of privacy of the people of this province. In fact, no self-respecting criminal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is ever going to fill one of these out. And that's the sadness about this whole situation.

Question 35: during the last two years have you experienced a divorce, separation or relationship breakdown? Yes or no? So if you are going to buy a firearm, we want to know this about you. (b) Have you experienced failure in school, loss of job, or bankruptcy?

Now, Mr. Speaker, all I want to do is buy a .22, and yet we're having an invasion of privacy here where a false response to any of those questions put your ability to buy a firearm in jeopardy. If you failed your grade 8 exam or if you failed your grade 10 exam and you're 18, you're going to have people coming around wanting to know, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are three references required.

As we understand it, by law, the people whose name you give as a reference will be interrogated by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), by the police. They are going to go to each of your three references and they are going to interrogate them and say, what's this guy or what's this gal really like?

And if one of them or if anyone in the community has an objection to you getting a firearm, it's hauled up, not before a court, but an investigation where any kind of statements can be made because they do not

have to be proven to be . . . as in the case of court. But you certainly could become the talk of the town from all of the information that you're going to have to be giving out.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of this stuff is an invasion actually of privacy and that is some of the reasons we are saying, is it really needed? What are we doing here? Are we making the condition more difficult for the law-abiding citizen who just simply wants to be left alone, do his hunting, do his target practising, do his competitive shooting, and continue on with life.

Another interesting thing is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the federal government has also introduced a new firearm safety course, a new firearm safety course that all of us are going to have to be taking. Guess what? Who wrote that new federal safety course? None other than another Toronto-based psychologist. The training is a Toronto-based . . . is it somebody who has some experience? Is it someone who has some experience with rural life? No, it is not. In other words what we're going to have is another duplication of this form that we have here where we see a very, very complex bureaucratic form that probably was more intended for the ease of bureaucracy rather than for what it was intended.

So the thing that I think we have to also remember is that . . . We talk about firearms; some people mention them and talk about them as being weapons. Well statistics are proving right now that there are .27, 0.27 per 100,000 people that are either injured or seriously injured in firearm-related accidents. They go on to say that you are four times more likely to be injured on a fishing trip than you are by a rifle or by some form of firearm.

There are other implications here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because of these restrictions, hardware stores who carry a few guns are going to be impacted because there's a new fee structure that will make it difficult or impossible for the local hardware simply to sell a few rifles during the year as a convenience to the customer or maybe even make a little bit of money because that fee structure that's going to be imposed is going to be so high that it's just not worth their while to continue on with it.

Another thing that it does is it attacks craftsmen. We have skilled craftsmen in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who make a few rifles or few black powder muzzle loaders and so on. They are also going to have to make a substantial contribution to the federal coffers because of the fee structure that is being imposed.

So we could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, on this. I have a number of things that we could say, but one point I want to make and that is, where is the proof that guns are going to cause much damage in a larger-scaled scenario? Because, because even the Auditor General, the Auditor General of Canada has said no one has ever attempted to assess how well or even if firearm legislation is achieving its goal or reducing violent crime. So if this is the case, where are the

studies? Where is the proof? Where is the evidence? Where is the evidence that indeed this will work?

Well the question is raised, who's paying the price for this scapegoating? And I would say to people in Saskatchewan, you are. The average, responsible gun owner is paying the price because they are the ones that are going to be truly affected by law. It's not going to be the criminals; it's not going to be the criminals in the long run.

So instead we're making criminals out of law-abiding citizens by making gun laws that are so complex that you can hardly look at a gun without being in danger of breaking some sort or some part of the law. And I don't think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we can allow this kind of thing to continue on.

I think I'm pleased to say that . . . and I hope again that members of the caucus opposite us are going to be supporting this move to bring the federal Minister of Justice to his senses; that there's no point in overreacting. There's no point in overreacting because as I have listed numerous economic, social problems that are going to result by this tightening up of the firearms regulations in this province and in this country, Mr. Speaker.

And so I would now then move, seconded by my colleague from Moosomin:

That this Assembly recognize the importance of firearms to the daily lives of farmers, hunters, trappers, and aboriginal people, the accomplishment of Saskatchewan shooting teams at the international level as well as the other important sporting and economic benefits of firearms, and that therefore this Assembly urge the government to support in principle the continued right of the residents of Saskatchewan, both urban and rural, to enjoy the lawful, safe, and responsible use of ownership of firearms, including rifles, shotguns, and handguns, in the province of Saskatchewan.

I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to enter the debate in the Assembly today regarding the motion brought forward by my colleague, the member from Rosthern.

Mr. Speaker, I think recent events certainly brought to our attention the fact that gun laws are something that are continually on people's minds, and that politicians would look at gun laws rather than maybe the major problem in our society regarding the violence that we continue to see taking place, and that is that we really do not appear to have a judicial system that is willing to stand up and finally admit that when a person has committed a crime that that person should be held . . . person or individual should be held accountable for their actions.

Mr. Minister, we're aware of the drive-by shootings

that took place in the last month or so, one in Ottawa, and then most recently in Calgary; and then the fatal shooting of a young teenage girl in a fast food restaurant in Toronto. And as soon as we end up with shootings such as this, and with innocent people so horrendously losing their lives, Mr. Speaker, and basically in the prime of their life, and individuals just being cut down, the public in general, especially in our major centres,-- jump on the bandwagon. Politicians in the large urban centres get on the bandwagon and decide that the only way we're going to control this type of action is to control the firearms and the availability of firearms to people across this great nation of ours.

And I'd like to quote from an article, the **Leader-Post**, Tuesday, April 26: "Justice minister not attuned to crime fears." And this article is talking about the federal Minister of Justice, Mr. Rock:

. . . Rock's only gesture to the Liberal promise of safer communities is to declare war on owners of guns, usually respectable people who have kept weapons as war souvenirs or for target practice in legitimate clubs. If every weapon were scooped up, these people would comply, but that would not end bloodshed. Crooks would steal, buy or make others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think if we took a very serious look at the weapons that have been used and the guns that have been used, and indeed some of the firearms that have been used in the recent incidents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we may find that the reality is these firearms would have been picked up by the individuals who use them whether or not we have such strict gun controls that it limits totally the use of firearms by individuals across our nation.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of groups that have worked very diligently and very long and very hard to establish and to set up some responsible guidelines and courses for people to follow and understand the use of firearms. I think of wildlife associations across our province and no doubt even across Canada. I think of local gun clubs, and I think of local organizations that have taken the time to establish and host courses so that individuals, young and old, could attend these courses and learn the proper procedures in handling of firearms -- learn how to handle them with respect, learn how to handle them responsibly.

And most notably, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think one of the things we must also learn is the fact that in our society even as young people we have toy guns that kids play with, and what we see in the media and what we see on TV, children tend to imitate.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, one thing we must always learn, as we have learned in firearms safety, you never point a gun or a firearm at an individual, be it loaded or unloaded. That isn't the proper thing to do because you never know when an accident may . . . you may end up with an accident because you may think a firearm is unloaded. And certainly there have been cases where individuals have been hurt because they

thought the firearm they were working with was unloaded and it went off on them accidentally. But those cases are few and far between. And yet because one person should pick up a firearm and discharge it in a very harmful way, not mindful of the rights of other individuals, we now have people clamouring for stricter gun laws.

(1600)

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that stricter gun laws are the way to address the growing crime we have, and the violent crime we are seeing not only in our province, but across this country. And I must admit and I must say we should be thankful that in the province of Saskatchewan we have been quite well or fairly well protected from the very violent crime we see in a number of centres in Canada, and most notably even in the United States of America and other areas of the world.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think when we talk about gun laws, we should be talking about the responsible use of firearms. We should be talking of ways in which we can continue to maintain and encourage people to think responsibly when they think of and ask for the right to own a firearm.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure that rights as we hear them interpreted today . . . and I just wanted to bring to your attention. This is an article, again in the Saskatoon **Star-Phoenix** on Friday. It's entitled "Charter of Rights a waste of time . . ." this was an Alberta MLA.

Municipal Affairs Minister Steve West said federal human rights law has been hijacked by special interest groups and by criminals who use it to frustrate the legal system and the courts.

"It doesn't work in application and it sets up expectations by some citizens and interest groups of absolute rights," he said, adding that rights cannot exist without responsibility.

And I think that's one word we have continued to forget about and we've continued to leave out of all our discussion, whether it deals with firearms or whether it deals with justice, is the fact that, Mr. Speaker, we have laws in our nation, laws that are set out to . . . so that we, each and every one of us as citizens, will grow and live in a responsible manner, realizing that there are neighbours around us that we must give consideration to. And I say, responsible manner.

Mr. Speaker, when this article was written it was written following the tragic death of an Edmonton woman who was awakened during the night when three young offenders entered her home and began to ransack and steal. And she had been awakened and she went down to confront; she thought she would scare the intruders off. The result was, Mr. Speaker, these young offenders turned on her and took her life.

And the unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is these young offenders are going to hide behind the laws of our land. They will probably plead innocent, and they will probably be protected by the law because they are young offenders. And at the end of the day, the law will probably grant them, at the max, three years in prison for their actions. Three years, even though they have taken the life of an individual who had the same right that they do to a free trial. She had the same right -- she had the right to live but she wasn't granted that right.

Mr. Speaker, I look at some of our gun laws as we see them today and I look down the list of a number of the laws that were passed by the former government and by the former prime minister, and certainly the debate that took place at that time. And I know out in my constituency, I spoke out; the member responsible at the time, the federal member spoke out and raised a number of concerns in the federal House.

However when it came down to the final vote, the vote in favour of the gun laws far outweighed the individuals who were speaking out against those gun laws.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at what the penalties are for carrying firearms:

Penalties: having a handgun without permit is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Basically what that's saying, Mr. Speaker, is that anyone who has had a handgun over the past number of years, has used it for target practice, has used it in sport competitions, has used it for his own personal use and even around the farm or whatever -- he used it responsibly -- if that person doesn't happen to have a permit, the new laws indicate that that person could face up to five years in prison simply for owning a handgun.

It says:

First offence with firearms carries one-year jail term to be served consecutively. Second and subsequent offences carry a minimum three years and maximum fourteen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what in the world is happening to our laws? What in the world . . . where in the world is our justice system when simply by holding a handgun or happening to own a handgun -- which many people have through the years owned and treated and handled very carefully -- they could face a minimum of three years and up to a maximum of 14? And yet you can take the life of an elderly lady and hide behind the Young Offenders' Act and get a maximum of three years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe one of the biggest problems in our nation today is that we have laws that are set out for us to follow, we have laws that are set out to address the growing crime and to address the seriousness of different crimes and different criminal actions. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we find

that the criminal is actually getting a slap on the wrist and the law-abiding citizen of this country finds on a daily basis that their rights are basically being taken away one by one and that they really don't have any rights any more.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that we're more interested in protecting the rights and protecting the criminal elements in our society than we are in standing up for the rights of the honest, law-abiding individuals in our province and across our nation.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are so many more things that I could add, but I want to just bring to the attention of this Assembly an incident that took place recently -- or basically two years ago -- in one of my communities. And the Dove family . . . when Mr. Dove was . . . his life was so abruptly and horrendously ended, Mr. Speaker, and the minor sentences that were handed out in that situation.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, when we look at laws that we have and the new laws that are being brought forward by the present Attorney General and Justice Minister Rock, those laws, as I indicated earlier, are basically being aimed at law-abiding, honest, responsible citizens. But individuals who would take and flaunt the laws in our nation because our justice system has not stood up and has not applied the laws fairly, Mr. Speaker, individuals who are law-abiding begin to ask themselves what is going on.

And one would have to say, and we trust that the Justice minister, and I trust that the Justice minister of this province in his meetings with the Hon. Minister of Justice, federal minister, Mr. Rock, will indeed stand up and bring to his attention the concerns that are being raised not only at the floor of this Assembly but by many people across this province, bringing to his attention that it's time we not only talked about rights, but it's time we talked about responsibility. And it's time that our justice system indeed started acting in a formal, open manner and administered justice fairly and that people receive the just reward for the crimes they've committed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Scott: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. members opposite for bringing this important motion forward for debate and I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of this timely motion. I would, however, at the end of my remarks like to move a "friendly" amendment that I believe complements and expands the original motion presented by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, hunting has been a way of life since the beginning of time. For generations a traditional sign of adulthood was when the young boys were allowed to accompany their fathers and elders on hunting trips. From the outset of such hunting expeditions, safety and proper care and handling of weapons was of utmost importance.

During the past 100 years many things have changed. There has been an ever increasing sophistication in weapons and guns, and many laws governing the handling of firearms and the harvesting of game have come into place. One thing that has not changed with the passage of time is the close relationship and excitement experienced by a young boy or girl on their first hunting trip with their father or mother.

Unlike large eastern Canadian cities, many residents of rural Saskatchewan rely on firearms in protecting their livestock and property from predators and pests. Throughout the province, trappers carry firearms with them on a regular basis in checking their traplines.

In remote areas of the province people to a large extent still live off the land, hunting for food in order to survive.

Hunting is a major activity in Saskatchewan each fall, with 70,000 licensed hunters taking to the field. The value of hunting to the Saskatchewan economy last year was over \$49 million. Licensed hunters harvested over 73,000 big game animals in Saskatchewan in 1993.

Saskatchewan has one of the most respected and successful hunter safety education programs in North America. Over the years, 135,000 residents have successfully completed the hunter training course and about 5,000 new students graduate from the Saskatchewan course each year.

A few years ago, the Saskatchewan hunter safety education program was recognized as being one of the best in North America. The number of hunting related firearm accidents has declined from 106 in 1960 to 13 last year. This remarkable achievement is attributed to the large number of gun users completing the hunter safety program.

Many Saskatchewan residents collect firearms worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Each year dozens of gun shows are held throughout the province, generating public interest and respect for firearms. Again, thousands of dollars are generated in the communities hosting gun shows.

Shooting competitions are another very popular form of recreation, creating significant economic spin-offs. Such activities range from home town turkey shoots to Olympic competitions.

Mr. Speaker, the ownership and use of firearms is considered by some to be the exclusive domain of men. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many women own firearms, hunt game on a regular basis, and participate and excel in shooting competitions. Over the years, Canada has had three competitive shooters bring home Olympic medals. The three world competition medal winners were all women, including Linda Thom in pistol shooting, Susan Natreff in trap shooting, and most recently, Myriam Bédard in the biathlon.

Legitimate and responsible gun owners are the first to promote safety and the proper use and handling of firearms. Unfortunately, like in every other human activity where rules and responsibility provide some standards and public acceptance, there are those that choose to ignore and break the laws of the land. Despite the strictest and more rigorously enforced laws, there will always be the criminal element in society who choose to ignore and break the laws for their own personal gain.

Whether it is poachers illegally killing wildlife, vandals destroying property, or robbers using a weapon against innocent people, they are all criminals and should be dealt with through our justice system.

Removing legitimately owned firearms from law-abiding citizens will not eliminate the criminal element in society who are intent on breaking the law. Canada already has one of the most strict firearm acquisition and ownership laws in the world. Law-abiding gun owners do not need more restrictions and bureaucracy. We sympathize with those who are facing and dealing with crime in our large urban centres. We support rigorous law enforcement and stiff penalties for all criminals, including those who misuse firearms.

Because there is such a vast cultural and environmental differences throughout all the regions of Canada, we urge the federal Justice minister to fully consult with all the provinces and territories before considering any amendments to the Criminal Code respecting firearms. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that if guns are outlawed, outlaws will still have guns.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the following amendment, seconded by the member from Melville:

That all the words after "principle" be deleted and the following substituted:

that residents of Saskatchewan, both urban and rural, should continue to enjoy the lawful, safe, and responsible use and ownership of firearms in the province; and further, that this Assembly urge the Minister of Justice to advise his federal counterpart of the expressed wish of this Assembly that all provinces be thoroughly consulted on any proposed amendments to the Criminal Code respecting firearms, to ensure that the diversity of Canada can properly be reflected in a way that balances the need to protect the public with the lawful, safe, and responsible use and ownership of firearms.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

(1615)

Mr. Carlson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to be able to enter into this debate to

talk about a very important issue to Saskatchewan, and specifically the area in the amendment talking about any further changes to gun legislation should be done in full consultation with all the provinces. I think you can look at various provinces and things are different. You can't always necessarily make a law that can fit all provinces and all provinces necessarily would be treated equally within a particular given law.

A lot of comments have been made earlier on by various speakers about why they believe that any changes or any further changes to the gun laws should have wide open consultation with all the provinces.

I just want to spend a few minutes talking about sort of my experiences and my family's experiences with hunting and the responsible, I believe responsible use of firearms in our family.

Prior to Christmas the **Melville Advance**, the local newspaper, phoned me and wanted me to comment on what was my memorable Christmas gift that I got that sort of sticks out in my mind. They were doing a little article in the paper. And I said without hesitation, it was when I was eight years old and I got a .22 for Christmas.

And that's sort of the rural way of life. I used a .22 from a very young individual; I used it responsibly. I was taught by my parents and my older brothers how to use a rifle or a .22 responsibly.

I remember my mother telling stories about her going out on an afternoon in the Depression with her .22 to shoot partridges for food to eat. And I mean that was an important aspect of our life at that point in time.

Later on in the early '70s, as an economic spin-off, my father had a little trap line, and he used his .22 as an important tool on the trap line. And we used to take enough furs to the tune of about \$3,500 just off of a couple of quarters of land that we had a little trap line on. And that was a substantial bit of income to our small farm operation.

So that talks a bit about some of the history of rural families in Saskatchewan, some of the economic spin-offs of it.

And I just want to talk a little bit about -- and it's been mentioned earlier on -- about violence and why guns are used. And I think that by restricting or controlling the use of guns and making them harder to get, is not necessarily going to change people's attitudes towards violence.

And when I think of a lot of the violent acts that have been sort of highlighted in the media in the last few years, it's mainly been violence against women. And by having harder regulations against guns, that does not necessarily mean that people's attitudes are going to change towards women.

And it was mentioned earlier on about Marc Lepine. Marc Lepine shot a bunch of people with a rifle

because they were . . . simply the fact that they were women. And by the fact that he did, that shows violence, and I believe violence in particular in that instance -- and in a lot of instances -- violence against women. And these are some of the attitudes that we have to look at changing, is our attitudes against certain segments of our society and educate people so that they understand what the implications are.

I think another act of violence and use of weapons is poverty. When you are poor and you're hungry, I mean some people will use that crime element just to get some food. And I think if we can alleviate the poverty, we can alleviate people's attitudes towards certain segments of society, crime rates will drop. And that is some of the issues that we should be talking about, in my opinion, as opposed to talking about restricting the access to firearms, especially in Saskatchewan.

So I think it's important that this motion is debated today and that the Minister of Justice has that as his opportunity and has the backing of this Assembly in speaking with the federal minister, sort of to relay the feelings of what we feel the feelings are of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

So with that I'm going to end my comments, and I will be supporting the amended motion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Thompson: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a few comments on the amendment that's been proposed here today regarding firearms, that this Assembly recognize the importance of firearms to the lives of farmers, hunters, trappers, and aboriginal peoples.

Firearms have always been a part of a large percentage of Saskatchewan families for whatever reasons they use them for. And, Mr. Speaker, there are many different kinds of firearms used for different types of hunting in Saskatchewan.

Different types of firearms are used for game birds, and then you have different types of rifles and firearms that are used for big game. And it's always been a major part of Saskatchewan. When we're talking about using smaller firearms such as .22s and .410 shotguns, this was usually used and still is used today by many people to hunt chickens and ptarmigans and spruce hens and things like that. Then you have your large game, and a different type of rifle is used. It will deal with the .30-30s for bush hunting and the .30-06 in the larger rifles for moose and larger game.

I want to indicate the importance of rifles and being able to have rifles, especially in northern Saskatchewan. Many Northerners rely on rifles, not only for game and for meat for the table, but they also use this for protection.

There are certain times of year, Mr. Speaker, where it is important for trappers and fishermen to have a good weapon and know how to use it to protect themselves. And I speak specifically of in the spring at this time of

the year when the bears come out of hibernation and they have their young ones. They're thin, they're hungry, and let me tell you, they're dangerous.

I give you examples of trappers who will go out and will be trapping muskrats and beavers and otters along the rivers and lakes and have their tents. And they skin the animals; they hang them up; the meat is there. And a hungry bear comes out looking for fish along the open water of the river, and on many occasions, had those trappers not have had a weapon to protect themselves, not only would they have lost all their belongings . . . because when a bear takes a notion that they're going to go into a tent, they'll usually tear a hole to go in, and they'll destroy everything that's in it and will never ever come out the same hole. They'll tear another hole in the tent to come out. And they literally destroy it. And if a trapper or anybody gets in their road, well so be it. They will maul them and kill them.

And I give you a good example of just how important rifles are. An individual on Doré Lake was coming in in the evening, and he happened to have a shotgun in his hand, and it was in the spring. And he all of a sudden come upon a bear and startled the bear. And the bear had cubs, and he didn't know that; he was just walking along.

But she charged him, and he turned around and he shot -- it was just getting dark -- he shot, dropped the shotgun, and continued to run as most people will do, from a bear. And as I said, it was getting dark. And in the morning he came back to retrieve his gun . . . and he had blood all over him. The blood had splashed; this is how close it was. And he went out there in the morning to retrieve his . . . he had a shotgun, and the shotgun was lying there and the bear was lying on top of the shotgun, and it was dead. And that just gives you some reality of just how dangerous a bear is in the spring and how important rifles are for their protection.

And I say the same thing, and it is even worse, in the rutting season for the moose, because a bull moose is one of the most dangerous animals that we have on this planet. They're large, and they're very vicious. And I think when we talk about restrictions and the federal government coming out with some restrictions, we have to be very careful as to how that is handled.

Trappers use different types of weapons when they're out trapping fur. They use a different weapon or a rifle when they're trapping muskrats, and they use a different type when they're going out after otters.

But I think that it's important that individuals in this province learn how to handle guns properly. We have gun clubs around the province. We have firing ranges, and they're utilized at all times. And young and old alike are taught how to handle safely the weapons, the rifles -- I shouldn't use the word weapons. They are rifles. And I think that this is good. Training is so important. Like my colleague from Melville, he indicated he learned how to handle a rifle from his

mother and father, and I did the same thing. Both my mother and father used to hunt up in the Big River area and Doré Lake. My mother on many occasions took the shotgun and went out and killed partridges for meals. She killed the big game. But she also taught myself and my other brothers how to handle a gun, along with my father. So we were taught at home.

But I think it's important that we have these gun clubs and rifle ranges around the province so that young men and women from all walks of life are able to learn how to handle a gun and to handle it safely because it's so important to handle that rifle in a safe manner.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to urge our Saskatchewan Minister of Justice to urge the federal Minister of Justice to clearly consult all provinces before any amendments to the Criminal Code respecting firearms be implemented, to ensure that the diversity of Canada can properly be reflected in a way that balances the need to protect the public with the lawful, safe and responsible use and ownerships of firearms.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the member from Rosthern for bringing forward this resolution on the control of firearms in Saskatchewan. I believe the presentation of resolutions by private members is an excellent way to bring issues into the Legislative Assembly in a positive way so that there can be a level of debate which opens people's thinking on the issue and allows us as elected members to absorb the variety of public opinion on issues that concern the people of Saskatchewan.

Firearms, like motor vehicles, can be extremely valuable tools for Saskatchewan people or they can become dangerous ones which can result in death and destruction. We have very strict and wide-reaching rules about what people can and cannot do in a motor vehicle in order to protect public safety.

In spite of those rules, 170 people were killed in traffic accidents in Saskatchewan in 1991. Some of those accidents are simply unpreventable, but many result from a conscious decision on the part of motor vehicle operators to break the laws set out for their protection. I suppose we could consider the abolition of motor vehicles but would the detriments outweigh the benefits?

Of course the concept of abolishing the rights to own or operate motor vehicles is consider absurd by virtue of the fact that the number of people killed or injured by vehicles is minute when one considers the number of trips taken.

But what about guns? What are the benefits of gun ownership for society as a whole? In what situations are they necessary? To whom? Can we live without

them? Do people have a right to own them? Will they exist whether or not they are prohibited by law?

The facts are that in 1990 there were 65 shooting-related deaths in Saskatchewan. In 1991, the figure dropped to 54. Interestingly, one death was a legal intervention, or police shooting; three were homicides and deliberate shootings resulting in death; and 51, or 94.4 per cent of the deaths, were suicides and self-inflicted injuries.

There has been a steady decline in the incidence of gun-related deaths from 1.2 per 100,000 in 1950 to .27 per 100,000 in 1990. Still, there is a public perception that guns contribute to violent crime and it must be addressed.

What must be determined is what role illegal weapons play and how, if at all, legislation directed at registered gun owners will impact on the illegal weapon. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we must take a balanced approach to what could become an extremely emotional issue for the province. Because shootings are such dramatic incidents, they make headlines in a way that physical beatings do not.

What we must realize is that there is an extremely high prevalence of physical violence within many homes in Saskatchewan that should be of far greater concern to us than the rather isolated number of gun-related deaths. At the same time, I want to make it clear that one needless death as the result of an illegal or careless use of a firearm is too many. And we must keep that clearly in focus at all times in discussing this issue, when trying to arrive at some resolution.

The fact is that many of us live in different realities in Saskatchewan. For those who live on farms and in the North, reality is that a gun can serve as an immediate protection against imminent danger posed by wild animals. A suffering animal can be put out of its misery in a moment with a single shot when veterinarians are often hours away.

Some Saskatchewan communities earn a substantial economic benefit from hunting and fishing, and few guides in the North will take a fishing expedition out without a reassurance of having a firearm at hand in the event of having a bear or moose stop by the camp-site to share in the day's catch. Thousands of hunting licences are issued annually, yet the number of gun-related accidents and deaths outside of violent crime was relatively low.

In cities we are exposed to a different reality where firearms are concerned. City residents, who comprise a large percentage of the provincial population, have no need to protect themselves against wild animals, and few rely on a weapon to stock their freezers with wild game to feed their families. However, I must stress that because this is not a reality for city dwellers does not mean that it should be dismissed.

City residents more closely associate the presence of guns with violent crime and gun-related accidental deaths because that is their reality. Six o'clock news

headlines and front-page coverage underline the dangers of guns. Those dangers are real. They are of enormous concern and we have to deal with them.

Therefore, I contend that there are two separate and recognizable issues with firearms. How do we develop laws and regulations respecting firearms that acknowledge the realities of those who rely on the safe use of firearms for protection and sport hunting as well as private collectors' rights to own special collections, with a full view to ensuring the safety of society by restricting the unlawful and violent use of firearms?

In order to develop a thoughtful strategy and ultimately useful legislation, we must look at the situations in which firearms are used and the situations in which they become dangerous.

I believe that regulations restricting weapons used in rural areas for hunting and protection have served society relatively well, and in spite of a few necessary adjustments, we may not require major changes to these laws. But what about the use of firearms for violent crimes? This opens a Pandora's box of issues and all of them need to be carefully examined.

Is the increase of the incidence of violent and armed criminal activity reflective of deficient gun laws? Or is it indicative of the frustration and social unrest that is brewing in many provinces and across Canada?

I would certainly like to have more detailed information about the incidence of violent crime involving shootings, and how that breaks down demographically in terms of the victims, the criminals, the locations of the crimes around the province, and the economic conditions as they relate to the people involved.

Although I recognize that we cannot cure all the ills of poverty, I believe that there is likely to be a direct correlation between desperation and violent crime. I'm convinced as well that movement towards increased gambling activity may put direct upward pressure on the level of crime and violence as people take desperate action to recoup losses.

It is of interest to note that in order to obtain a firearms acquisition certificate, certain questions must be answered. I believe that the questions themselves point at many of the societal concerns which should be addressed as part and parcel for the issues surrounding gun-related deaths and injuries.

To get a licence to have a gun you must answer these questions: in the past two years have you experienced divorce, separation, relationship breakdown, failure in school, loss of job, or bankruptcy? If you answer yes, your application is reviewed in detail.

The question this poses to me is what if someone who has a gun, has a gun licence, experiences divorce, separation, relationship breakdown, failure in school, loss of job, or bankruptcy? Does the government come around and check to see how people are doing,

whether they may have developed a reason to use that hunting rifle on themselves or someone else?

According to the Association of Saskatchewan Responsible Firearms Owners, more than 35 per cent of households contain firearms. This says that there are many places that could be broken into by someone wanting to acquire a firearm illegally and make it untraceable to them, which could be used in a violent crime such as robbery or a shooting.

What I'm saying is that all suggestions should be on the table for complete and thorough discussion before policy is formulated. If conditions under which guns exist could be restricted while respecting the rights of the owners, particularly in urban areas, I believe we could set the stage for far more serious penalties for those who fail to comply with perhaps safe storage requirements.

I'm not saying I have the answers. What I'm saying is that I believe firearms serve a purpose of considerable value for those who have earned the right to use them responsibly for very distinct and restricted purposes.

I also believe that there are many innovative and effective ways we can use to restrict the access of the criminal element and to prevent many of the unnecessary deaths which occur through gun-related accidents.

Through the collective cooperation of legislators, firearms collectors and enthusiasts, law enforcement agencies, sport shooting associations, and citizens concerned with the dangers presented to society by the very existence of firearms, I am certain that we can come to a workable solution to this problem.

Ultimately guns will be acquired by those wishing to perpetrate violent crime. The onus is on us as legislators to make those individuals far more identifiable by restricting possession of guns to certain clearly defined circumstances. Once that is done, it will be far easier to question the people about where they acquired a gun and why they have it in their possession.

Think for a moment about it being illegal to have a gun in your home. How much of a problem would that solve and how many problems might it cause? And if having a gun in your home would result in confiscation of the weapon and a stiff penalty, would that encourage people to comply?

If you were only able to pick up your hunting rifle from a security depot operated by the wildlife federation or the police, what chance of success would that offer to someone looking to break and enter in search of finding a firearm? That would create additional responsibility for gun owners, but it would not be done with a view to hassling people. It would be done with a view to reducing violent crime and saving lives.

The representatives of gun lobbies with whom we've talked were reasonable people, and I feel that they would be willing to discuss and evaluate some of

these suggestions that might allow hunters and collectors to continue their hobbies while reducing the threats firearms pose to society.

I am committed to development of public policy that protects the needs of the majority without showing disrespect for the legitimate rights of the minority. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I urge the creation of a committee to investigate the issue of firearms control with a view to creating that balance in public policy respecting the issue.

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to add my voice to those who have spoken in favour of some logic when it comes to gun control.

Laws, Mr. Speaker, are for responsible people and there are a number of people who are not responsible and who cause responsible people a lot of grief. And I contend, Mr. Speaker, that hunters are responsible people. And we can see that through the many activities that they partake in, through the rules they've established as hunters, through the programs that have been established to school young people as to how to handle firearms, the responsible use of firearms, gun safety, and in fact learning from hunting with others as to what the unwritten rules of gun control are, and that is knowing that the barrel of a gun is a deadly weapon.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the target shooters are responsible people. Those people who use their guns to target shoot as a form of entertainment and a skill that is recognized worldwide, as in the Olympics, as some of the members before me have said, it's very important to our countries. And guns have been within our society for a long time, and target shooters are a very important part of that.

Mr. Speaker, there are very many responsible people who handle guns and who use weapons for their own entertainment, for recreation, and who are very conscious of the weapon that they're holding in their hands.

Mr. Speaker, guns are a very important part of our economy. As I look around the province of Saskatchewan and I see the number of people who are gun collectors, the number of gun shows that there are around the province and that the economy of this province -- and I know some of the other members have given a lot of these numbers -- the economy responds to people moving and trading and selling and buying.

Mr. Speaker, that small part of the economy, that is the gun shows and the gun traders of this province, provides a necessary aspect of the Saskatchewan base to ensure that we do have a viable province here, and it's an activity that has gone on for a long time and it's an activity that is very well monitored.

And the problem is, Mr. Speaker, what we have here by Mr. Rock is a reaction -- it's a reaction to a problem of enforcement. The problem isn't that the responsible

people can't have guns -- but that's what Mr. Rock says -- the problem is that there is an enforcement problem.

In Montreal and Toronto and some of the larger cities of the country, there is a definite enforcement problem whereby the policing agencies simply do not have enough people, enough time to control the underground supply and movement of weapons.

But I ask this question of Mr. Rock and the federal government and indeed our Liberal friends over here who should have some influence on this. Is the solution to an enforcement problem in basically what I call eastern Canada, is the solution to increase the limitations of gun control, or is the solution to take a new look at the enforcing of weapons?

We have a registration; we have all the rules that we need right now, Mr. Speaker. But the reaction is . . . and I'm sad to say that the reaction is a political reaction because we know where the population is, and we in the western . . . and I'm not creating an east-west rift, but I think that the federal Liberal government is, and Mr. Rock in particular.

He's got an election coming up in Montreal and Quebec and in the province of Quebec, and there are a number of people who in that province do not want people to have guns. The population of Ontario is totally Liberal except for one Liberal . . . totally Liberal MPs except for one. Mr. Rock is reacting to the pressures from those societies, and that is not the right thing to do.

(1645)

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'd ask the Liberal government in Ottawa to do is don't react to the political problems that you have by first of all taking away the livelihoods of many of our hunters in Saskatchewan, taking away the livelihoods of many of our target shooters, or taking away the livelihood of many of our gun traders via gun shows.

That is not the right reaction because what you're doing is you're pitting one part of the country against another part of the country. And I'll tell you that I'm tired of this. And I thought I'd see a fresh new face on the Liberal government in Ottawa where they wouldn't try to split the country up because we saw that so long with the previous federal government.

So I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to be able to stand in this House and join with the number of colleagues who I think . . . a number of them have solidly put forward arguments that explain to Mr. Rock and the federal Liberal government that we do not want to see you playing politics with our livelihoods, with our entertainment, with our recreation. That's not what it's all about.

So the answer, as the previous speaker, the Liberal member for Regina North West . . . is not another commission. All we have to do is talk to the people who own guns and the police officers, and we know

the problem. But another commission isn't the solution because all that is, is a postponement of the problem, because this issue is not going to go away. And it's been researched that now all the numbers are available -- as the member from Indian Head-Wolseley put forward -- as to the number of the crimes that have taken place and the reduction, the value for the economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask, in supporting this amendment, I would ask that the federal Liberal government, and Mr. Rock in particular when he's out in Saskatchewan, put aside his partisan politics, listen to the hunters, the target shooters, the gun traders, and indeed the society -- take a look at the society we have out here. And don't react to a problem that you might have in another part of the country by coming down hard on a province and a region that has a very, very good record, very good record of handling arms and safety.

In fact, as one of our members said, Saskatchewan has the best gun safety program in Canada. And that was witnessed just recently when the federal Liberal government tried to make changes. And we went through a whole other hassle about registering guns until thankfully, through convincing arguments from our government -- the Minister of Justice -- the federal government did recognize that we had the best program and so we could keep our program. And we kept our gun safety program and all we had to do was add a couple of features to make sure that it was passed in Ottawa.

And that's the kind of cooperation we need. But we don't need the scare tactics through the media, by the federal minister, that throws everybody into a panic and a panic because they say this isn't rational. We need a rational approach to the gun control and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I do support this amendment, along with the other colleagues in this House. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because time is short, I'll keep my remarks brief. I support the original motion, Mr. Speaker, and I will support the amendment by the member from Indian Head-Wolseley even though it does water down the original motion.

I have to disagree though with some of the comments made by the member from Regina North West in her delivery. And I want to take issue with one particular item. She talks about storage sites where guns would be collected. Mr. Speaker, we've seen a number of times across North America where thieves have broken into military armouries and stolen firearms, and that will happen if firearms are all collected into one particular spot, Mr. Speaker. It won't work.

I will support the amendment, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

Ms. Bradley: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wanted to rise today to support the amendment and the motion. I myself have never been a gun owner and I was raised on a farm in which we never did have a gun. But our farm was located near a marsh and a small lake called Bratt's Lake. It was a prime hunting spot, good farm land, and also a place that bird-watchers came. What I learned is that all these interests were not in conflict; that hunters, farmers, and nature enthusiasts could all get along responsibly.

Balance is always what is important. Gun legislation must balance and recognize the seriousness of the issue relating to violence in our society with the need and responsible use of firearms in our society. Legitimate and responsible gun owners are the first to promote safety and the proper use and handling of firearms.

Many members today have already stated the importance of responsible gun use to our province's culture and to our economy. And we do sympathize with those who are facing and dealing with crimes in our large urban centres. We support vigorous law enforcement and stiff penalties for all criminals, including those who misuse firearms. For an effective gun control program, we must balance the need to protect the public with the need to avoid unreasonable interference with law-abiding shooters, hunters, and gun collectors.

In conclusion, I just want to urge the federal government to take under full consultations before there is any further expansion of the gun control program, and that all changes must balance the interests of all Canadians.

I must agree with my colleague from Indian Head-Wolseley who said that if guns are outlawed, outlaws will still have guns. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will keep my comments brief because most of what needs to be said has already been said. But it certainly would not be proper to finish this debate without the member for Maple Creek making a comment, because in south-west Saskatchewan we do have probably the biggest claim to fame for being a rural area of any part of Saskatchewan.

And in terms of guns, the reality of life is that guns are a way of life in our community. You most likely can find most people toting one in their half-ton truck, or if they haven't got it in their half-ton truck they certainly don't have it very far away.

They don't have any higher crime rate down there than you have any place else in the world. In fact, I think maybe we have less crime because we know how to treat criminals down there -- we just run them right out of the country. And we definitely support guns and we do support controlling guns and not letting criminals run around with them. But for people that are trained and properly using these weapons and

know how to handle them, we see nothing wrong with them whatsoever.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to support the motions and the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: hear, hear!

Amendment agreed to on division.

The division bells rang from 4:55 p.m. until 4:56 p.m.

Motion as amended agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Lingenfelter	Sonntag	Shillington
Roy	Johnson	Scott
Atkinson	Kujawa	Kowalsky
Stanger	MacKinnon	Kluz
Penner	Knezacek	Cunningham
Jess	Upshall	Carlson
Hagel	Swenson	Bradley
Neudorf	Koenker	Martens
Pringle	Boyd	Lautermilch
Toth	Renaud	Britton
Murray	D'Autremont	Draper
Goohsen	Serby	Bergman
Whitmore-- 37		

Nays

-- Nil

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I would make a motion:

That the debate of today on the just voted-on motion be forwarded to Ottawa to the federal minister in charge.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Regina Centre:

That moved that the transcript of this debate be forwarded to the federal Minister of Justice.

The Speaker: -- Order. Did the member ask for leave? Does the member have leave?

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.