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EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Executive Council
Vote 10

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome once again to the Premier and his officials.

I thought I might as well start the questioning tonight, because as usual the Liberals aren't around, and somebody has to do the work in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — So I would be prepared to start some questioning to the Premier this evening.

Earlier today, Mr. Premier, in question period we asked you about your broken campaign promises from the 1991 election. I think it's really sad that we've got to this state in this province, Mr. Premier, in view of the fact that you vowed to end poverty in your first term.

I know that you're contemplating shutting that first term down a little bit early, but simple fact is, sir, that we have over 80,000 people on welfare in this province now — highest number in recorded history in this province. Over 80,000 people on social assistance.

Mr. Premier, we have over \$4,500 per family in tax increases in this province. We have \$225 million in net tax increases — so your Finance Minister tells us the other day — and this in the face of all the promises you made about ending poverty, about taking the tax load off of Saskatchewan people. You said that taxes are the silent killer of jobs in our society.

Today, 1995, May, you still, sir, have fewer jobs in this province than you had when you took office back in 1991. So when you add it all up it's not a pretty picture. Yes, you do have a balanced budget. But you've balanced it on the backs of some of the people in our society that can least afford it.

So I'm wondering, Mr. Premier, starting with the promise to end poverty in your first term, how do you square the fact that with this horrific tax load which you have put on the backs of . . . and I remind you sir that your family of Crown corporations forces these poor people to pay every utility rate increase. They have no choice but to pay and pay and pay for your agenda.

So how do you square the fact that poverty, and according to the headlines in the paper the other day, that the hunger situation, in Regina is worse than it has ever been. How do you square that fact with the campaign promises of '91 and the fact that yes, you've balanced a budget but you have done it on the backs of those that can least afford it in our society. How do

you square that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the member's logic is not in a consistent flow here, but let me just try to address his question none the less.

First of all with respect to the social assistance numbers in terms of the cost to the provincial government, I think the hon. member, to be fair, would and should acknowledge the following, that the Liberals in Ottawa initiated an offload which in effect transferred onto the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, a yearly cost in the approximate order of \$20 million more by virtue of their position with respect to status Indians and social services.

That is a very big chunk of money, as the member from Thunder Creek will admit. And this is a change in the rules to begin with. Even at that, I want to be absolutely certain here lest I mislead the House, but I believe the Minister of Social Services was telling me the other day that the numbers of actual case-loads in February of 1995, for that period, showed a decrease of something over 500 in Saskatchewan as opposed to the month previous . . . and a decrease. That we have a job to yet do with respect to the question of employment and getting people off social service and working is admitted.

We've initiated programs like the children's action plan, the child nutrition program, the Children's Advocate program. Family income improvements have also been made. The Saskatchewan child tax credit reduction has been increased to two fifty per child. And we have JobStart, and Future Skills, and New Careers, of course, which is something which your administration was very active in.

All of these are at work and the poverty issue is going to require the concerted effort of governments, and the non-government organizations, and community organizations — the chili for kids program, as an example. There are many like that, on a coordinated effort, to really tackle and to reduce this problem. So I believe that we have made progress. We have not succeeded. As I said to the Leader of the Opposition, we have many goals yet obviously that we need to strive for attainment. That is clearly right very near the top of the load.

Now with respect to your other question, which is respect to the tax area, the Leader of the Opposition and I went through this debate earlier in the day, so I'll just simply repeat very briefly. A lot depends on how one computes the figures, but I will say categorically that for families, and categorically, that for families of 25,000 earning, or 50,000, or 75,000, all of these in the province of Saskatchewan see the total cost of living — that includes utility rates, includes mortgage and property taxes, auto insurance, telephone, home heating, electricity — we are at the very best level for people at \$75,000.

It was the Leader of the Opposition himself who earlier today was pointing out the fact that most people don't make \$6,000 a month, in his debates with respect to Mr. Dickson Bailey. Well up to 75,000, that's a pretty fair break, pretty good break.

I suspect as a Conservative member of the House you wouldn't admit that Mr. Klein in Alberta, with a medicare hospitalization premium of I think it's \$840 a year for a family of four, you wouldn't admit that that's a tax. But obviously it's a cost of living, whether it's a tax or not, and I think it is a tax.

Put all of those into the pot and you come out with a situation where we have (a) the most efficient provincial government . . . if not the most, very, very close to the most efficient government in Canada. I believe it is the most efficient government in Canada on a per capita basis in the provision of operating services of the government. And we have a tax load, given the huge deficit and debt we inherited, which is also the best to \$75,000 income in the province of Saskatchewan.

We haven't eliminated the poverty situation. We need to do more work there, there's no doubt about that. But we have the programs into place and in the weeks and months ahead we'll make better progress I'm quite sure.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Premier, you and I agree on one thing, that you've got to have a program. But what I don't find from your government is a program that equates into a job. Now you can criticize Mr. Klein for the way that he runs his province, but the simple fact is that Mr. Klein has got 80,000 jobs to his credit since taking over as Premier of that province. Mr. Klein's been on the job about half the time that you have, sir, and he's got 80,000 jobs to the plus.

And I wouldn't start crowing about my health care sector. I mean I can remember a time when a family in this province had a health care deductible of \$125 on their drug plan. That same family today could face up to \$1,700. That same family today in rural Saskatchewan can drive 100, 150 miles before they're anywhere near health care facilities, sir, that you closed. So all over this province we've got people with increased health costs. Now you may not feel that that 100 or 150 miles in between a family in rural Saskatchewan and a health care facility is not a cost, but I say to you it is.

So you can criticize other jurisdictions, but if you look in your own backyard . . . And when one criticizes the federal Liberals — and yes, you are proper to do that, sir, because of the havoc they wreak on western Canada every time they get into power — the simple fact is when it comes to offloading your government has been at the top of the list. There isn't an urban or rural municipality in this province that has not felt your bite and they have had to turn around and offload. You have got school taxes up, you've got municipal taxes up, you've got water tax, everything is gone up, up, up.

And at the end of the day, at the end of the day, if you had created the jobs . . . and I remember you saying, I think we can create 30,000 jobs in this province over our four-year term. If you had done that, sir, somebody would have given you credit. But the simple fact is that you are in a minus position. You are in a minus position and you are there because of your tax regime, the fact that you allow your family of Crown corporations to do what they do to Saskatchewan families. You allow your friends in the labour movement to ask for

unreasonable rules and regulations to drive up the cost of doing business in this province, sir, and you can't create the jobs.

And you can turn the Minister of Economic Development loose on this province as you've done in the last few months with a few million here and a few million there, and get himself invited out to every sod-turning he can possibly find where there might be a job created by somebody else, sir, but at the end of the day, you're minus.

You know, zero over zero is zero. And if you can show me some numbers today that says that there are more jobs in this province than when you took over as Premier, then show them to me. I'd love to see them. But they aren't there, sir. The welfare is there. The taxes are there. And the jobs flee this province because of your tax mentality. Tax, tax, tax.

Mr. Premier, tell us what you're going to do in your second term. Why should we grant you this budget? If you have not kept a single promise from the first term, why should we give you a second term and a budget to go into another term?

Tell us what you're going to do to create those jobs. What are you going to change with the family of Crown corporations? What are you going to change in labour legislation? What are you going to do to get the people off the welfare rolls in this province?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the members of the committee will know of course that what we're under study and consideration here this evening are the estimates for the '95-96 expenditures, and not some presumed election campaign. And the member phrases questions in the arguments about what we should do in the next term of office.

At the appropriate time, when there's an election called, we will outline to the people of Saskatchewan what our four-year plan is. Although we have indicated in this budget, '95-96, the four-year plan to debt reduction, to tax reduction, and to the augmentation of education and health services, roughly in one-third proportions. That's the plan. That's our plan. And we've set that out.

I want to clarify something here. It's not my job nor do I intend to criticize another province or another premier, another government of that province. That government, I assume, and the legislature knows best what's for that province, and I don't intend to criticize. But I think it is important to note that when you talk about health budgets, '95-96 budgets, in Alberta the budget saw for '95-96 a decrease of about \$276 million or 7.2 per cent. In Saskatchewan there was a slight increase of 3.4 per cent. I might add, very hurriedly, however, are still — totals that are being spent — are less than they were in '91, unlike the claims by the Liberal Party.

But on a per capita spending, I think you should make note of this. In Saskatchewan per capita spending on health is 1,535 and in Alberta it's 1,306, and we do not have any health care premiums. It's \$768 annually for families in Alberta and 384 for individuals annually in Alberta. And the premium's to increase on July 1, 1995 by 6.3 and there are scheduled further increases

of over 10 per cent over the next two years. Now that's the situation in Alberta.

Jobs — 30,000 — the partnership paper which was formulated in consultation with the business community. That indicates a target by the year 2000. And we think we're on the target for the year 2000.

Now I think the employment statistics that need to be kept in mind are as follows. We have, at the end of April, '95, 448,000 people employed in Saskatchewan. That's up 6,000 from April of 1994 — 442,000. And the unemployed has decreased from 43,000 to 36,000, and our unemployment rate is at 7.4 per cent, the lowest in the country. And lest anybody says it's a population loss, our population also has grown in the last several months.

Again, the question that has to be always asked is, are we satisfied with that? The answer is, no we're not. Can more be done? The answer is, it has to be done.

We do have, we think, a competent, sensitive tax regime, coupled with the targeted, focused partnership for jobs program, which together, given a little bit of luck, and a lot of hard work the Saskatchewan people are capable of, I think will lead to continued solid growth in job creation and improvement of the economic and fiscal climate of the province of Saskatchewan.

We could not have rectified the situation which we inherited three years and some months ago, overnight. I think the hon. member in fairness would admit that that is the case. But that we have made large strides toward turning things around, seeing the dawning of a new day, as I describe it, I think is also equally a fair statement to make.

(1915)

Mr. Swenson: — But you see, Premier, what I'm asking you for and you don't seem to grasp, is when I said a plan, it's something based on more than . . . I mean there isn't a whole lot of magic or a great deal of initiative to simply put up taxes. It doesn't take a genius, sir, to unleash on a population of people, a whole host of taxes — especially when they are captive. I mean most of your natural monopolies that you have in the Crowns don't have any competition so they can raise utility rates and they can tax through the back door and everybody has no choice. So there's not a great deal of magic to that.

And what we're saying to you is that if you are going to achieve the things that you say that you want to, then you're going to have to find ways to make this province both more competitive and encourage local people — as you claim to do — to invest their money without getting the taxpayer involved. And yet we don't see any of those initiatives from your government.

You say all of the right things but the evidence is clear and I'll give you an example. The Finance minister and I have talked about this a couple of times. You allow in this city, with one of the worst poverty situations in its history, according to the people that deal with the downtown core and other areas, you

allow your Minister of Economic Development to go off in downtown Regina as we speak, and sink over \$20 million into a casino — into a casino.

And I asked the Finance minister about it. Did she go through Treasury Board with it? Was there a proposal because he's being able to operate out of the revenue flow with the liquor and gaming corporation? And I get no answers.

She won't tell me if it went through Treasury Board. Well it sort of did. Well who did you . . . what's the analysis on it? Well it's privately built. And when we get something going down the road, we'll pay off the contractor. And we don't know. But there's huge amounts of money being spent in the downtown core of a city that has a poverty and a welfare problem. And yet that money is just allowed to be spent, and away it goes.

And I don't consider that a plan, sir. That doesn't make sense to me. People don't get a vote. You simply say to the Economic Development minister, go form yourself a casino corporation. Go downtown Regina. Hook up with a developer and start spending millions of dollars. Well I only point that out to you, sir, because that doesn't seem consistent with any kind of a plan that would generate the type of economic activity . . . And you've said yourself, you don't like this gambling thing personally; you're only doing it for external reasons.

But my goodness, what kind of a regime is it that doesn't even take a plan like that through Treasury Board? That is not the kind of regime that the people of this province want dealing with their tax system.

So again I say to you, is that the kind of example that you want to put out to Saskatchewan people as part of your plan of easing the economic burden? I mean for goodness sakes, all due respect, this province has had the lowest unemployment rate, sir, either lowest or second lowest for the last 15 years, back into the Blakeney administration, consistently near the bottom. And unemployment, that's never been our problem. Our problem today is poverty, welfare, and a tax regime that discourages job creation, when next door Alberta is growing like guns.

So, sir, I say to you, is that the kind of plan that you want to bring into the province of Saskatchewan, something based on a free-wheeling minister in downtown Regina spending over \$20 million on a casino? Is that the kind of plan you talk about?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the member, I understand his interpretation of the facts. He wants to make a point. But he's not being fair because he knows full well that it was the plan of the government, which we introduced in the early months of 1992, which got us to a balanced budget this year. It was a plan which we announced the reorganization of government, the tax reductions . . . sorry, the tax increases where necessary, of government, and the elimination of government expenditures. That's the plan.

And we have a plan for the future. This was set out by the Minister of Finance in this year's budget, which is subject to our debate. And in general terms the member will know that we

have a plan which says that now that we're in balance, every surplus dollar will be divided roughly into one-thirds.

One-third for debt reduction. We hope by the end of March 31, 1999 to knock off \$1.2 billion on the debt. That's in the financial documents. One-third is for continued tax relief, but we're going to try to focus it, going to make sure that it's the best tax relief for manufacturing and processing. That's why Cargill came to Saskatchewan. And thirdly, the one-third, the last one-third, is for the quality of life, for education and for health care.

Now there's the plan set out, and we think that with the estimates that are set out there, since we have been accurate on the estimates in the preceding four years, we'll be accurate for the estimates in the future four years. But we can get the kind of activity which is desired by the members of this province and by the members of this House.

I would simply close by saying that in the interests of time, I don't think it would benefit much for me to go through all of the various announcements which have taken place: Cargill at Clavet; the Sears call centre; the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) call centre; Riddles Inc. at Mossbank; Limagrain Canada Seeds; Royal Bank call centre; Langbank Seed Hawk Inc.; Melville, Babcock & Wilcox, 30 new jobs; Carrot River saw mill, modernization; Vonda High-Line Manufacturing.

You don't need to take my word for it. I mean these are actual announcements; some stemmed from developments during the former administration's period in office. The financial papers, I think, are quite clear about it. Oil production flows, Twinpak likes Regina atmosphere, prospects good, all eyes on Swift Current area, call centre confirmed.

And I could continue on. Why? Because it's a plan. And the plan is the plan dealt with in the *Partnership for Renewal* paper which we have set out. We have set targets. I think we've met most of them, if not all of them. Certainly we've met most of them, and we continue to work to achieve them.

So I strongly disagree with you. I think we have the credible plan. I do not think that the opposition parties do.

Let me just speak about yours for a moment. You say you're going to find \$250 million roughly in finding efficiencies in government. And for the purposes of this discussion, let me just say right now we can fire all the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) — just have no legislature, including the cabinet although even the Conservatives and the Liberals say there'll be half the cabinet — fire all the Premier's staff, take away all the pensions, from even the retired MLAs let alone the future MLAs, take all of that away, and you'll still have to look for \$220 million roughly speaking.

And I tell you where you're going to have to find it. You're going to find it the only place you're going to go to find it, and that is after health care and after education. And in your case, as in the Liberal case, you're going to have to find a debt reduction plan which will see the debt reduced in 25 years according to

your operation. That'll be \$500 million more on top of what I've just told you about a year in order to apply for debt application.

And if you think you can do that without absolutely destroying the poverty fight, the fight against poverty, without destroying social programs, without destroying the health care system and the education system, then I think you've got another think coming.

Look, we have made our mistakes in the health care renewal. It's things that we're going to rectify. Obviously that's the case. We've embarked on something which is brand-new. But believe me — and I think the people of Saskatchewan know this — that for all of our problems and difficulties, at least it was based on the philosophy of good health care. And they know at the end of the day — even with the errors that have been made — what we have done comes from a party that invented medicare, protects it, and will have it protected. And that is the plan — partnership to the year 2000, the one-thirds, and the successes which I've already told you about.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Premier, I appreciate your fear of the Texas audit style of health care reform proposed by the Liberals. But you are sadly mistaken if you point at this party as being people who short-change medicare; maybe a little over-exuberant in rural areas with providing first class health care.

And I agree with you, sir. There's the odd facility out there that probably on rethinking should have been dedicated to finding places for our senior citizens rather than trying to combine acute care with it. I'll give you that much. But as far as trying to maintain quality health care in this province during the 1980s, the only criticism I ever heard from you or any of your party was, you're not spending enough. And goodness knows you're on record thousands of times, right up through the '91 campaign, talking about the need to spend more money on health and education. And the fact today is, the fact today is, that your health budget's no different. But there's a whole bunch of people out there who feel disenfranchised by the party — as you say — that invented medicare. The inheritors of Tommy Douglas's legacy have disenfranchised their medical rights in rural Saskatchewan.

And that's sad because I believe, Premier, you could have achieved everything that you'd talked about in your last statement without taxing the people of this province into the ground. And that's simply by creating, by creating, a climate, Premier, by creating a climate that allowed people to invest and grow.

And I know you'll come back and give me this song and dance about the cooperative whatever. But the simple fact is, sir, that you can't do what you've done with your Trade Union Act and what you've done with union-only preference tendering. I mean how many Melfort pipelines can you stand to have around this province spewing water out of leaks all over the province? You can't have it, sir. You can't have it.

It's those kind of things and the 9 per cent sales tax that are harming your goals. The very things that you just said to the

Legislative Assembly that you want, that you'd rather have than a casino in downtown Regina with tens of millions of dollars spent on it. I know you would rather have the other.

So I say to you, how do you square it? How do you take Tommy Douglas's legacy and say to rural Saskatchewan, I'm sorry but we can't provide you; you're now a second-class citizen in health care. Had to have your minister announce . . . you know what she gave us today in rural Saskatchewan, Premier? She gave us 9-1-1. She said if you're sick and you're in trouble, phone 9-1-1. You might be 150 miles from a hospital but you got 9-1-1 courtesy of the NDP (New Democratic Party) and the gambling dollars. Yes, that's what gambling has given rural Saskatchewan, sir, is 9-1-1. Well if that's Tommy Douglas's legacy, you can't be very proud — 9-1-1 based on gambling dollars — because I don't have health care in rural Saskatchewan any more.

And I believe you could have achieved it without taxing the daylights out of us and driving out business. So how do you square that legacy, sir? How do you square it — 9-1-1 built with gambling dollars.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I have no difficulty in submitting to the House and to the people of Saskatchewan that our renewal is a logical, consistent, next development of health care in Saskatchewan and in Canada. And I have no doubt whatsoever in my mind that it falls within the tradition and within the dreams of those who pioneered medicare in 1962 and earlier and those who even thought about it in 1944 — absolutely none whatsoever.

You know today we are maintaining more acute care and nursing home beds in use than most of the provinces — 20 per cent above the national average even after the renewal system. You fasten in on 9-1-1. What about first responders? What about \$20 million for home care? All of these programs are going to be working their way into the system and felt. We have more physicians practising in Saskatchewan today than we've had last year as well.

We are working a philosophy which seeks to prevent illness, seeks to prevent accident, keep us healthier and happier at home longer and away for the institutions which we know is very costly and very often is in a circumstance where the medical profession is doing the best that it can, but after all it's just made up of human beings. This is a philosophy which is a natural, logical next step.

And that's why other provinces are looking at us, I would say, with full support. Other provinces are saying you've got a variety of models of health care renewal. I'll just come back to Alberta as an example, compared to Saskatchewan. Think what the federal Liberals are proposing. Here they're proposing block transfers and a 30 per cent cut to the provinces with no underlying philosophy behind this whatsoever. None, none, none whatsoever.

(1930)

So if I was to be able to converse with people with whom I

worked and respected at the time that medicare was set up in 1962, I have no doubt that they would endorse exactly what we're doing. I acknowledge it's not been easy. It's not been easy on the health care-givers. It's not been easy on some of the communities. It's not been easy on some of the patients. And for whatever it's worth, goodness knows, it's not been easy on us either. But it is the foundation of saving the health care system for this country that we've put into place here. That is what is essentially at issue and behind it.

And I say to you, sir, that at the end of the day people will say in the province of Saskatchewan: well maybe this didn't quite work; maybe that didn't quite work; but we know the history in this province, and the history is a history of Conservatives and Liberals — not all of them, but at least the organized political apparatus — opposing consistently.

You fought us in medicare in '62 and the same speeches were made; I was there. In '62 the same speeches were: you're destroying the best and finest health care system going. And Ross Thatcher was at the door of this legislature, kicking on the legislative door, demanding that we stop the progress. And this is the same line.

And when you say, well how would you have done it, then you get the general answer that sort of says: well we would have done it somehow a little bit differently; we might have done this, we might have done that.

The truth of the matter is, that if either one of the Liberals or Conservatives are elected, or some combination thereof, given the fact that you're both on the same track to find 250 million bucks, extract that last pound of flesh from the health care and education system, the truth of the matter is we will have Texas-style — although you eschew it and I applaud you for eschewing it, we don't need Texas-style solutions here, we need Saskatchewan-style solutions here . . . the result will be none the less a very, very fractured system. So to me I have no problems in squaring that whatsoever because it's a logical step.

One word on gambling. This is not something which is my favourite endeavour to support. I repeat this again. But the hon. member knows, and I don't suspect that he'll admit it tonight, anybody who would honestly look at this will say, it will be here in Saskatchewan. The question therefore then becomes a question of accountability, control, disbursement of funds, and providing health and support programs for those who are most in need in this particular endeavour. To be blunt about that, I think more people are prepared to put their faith in the NDP than they are in the Liberals or the Conservatives thereto.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I'd be happy, Premier, to put it on the record. Gambling — and I don't have the deep feeling against it that you evidently do, and you always tell people. I say, to each their own. But I do tell you this. I believe it's absolutely fundamental in our society today, that people have the right of self-determination. And I believe that there should be a vote. I know you read polls — you do it on a weekly basis these days, okay — as I do, as I do in my responsibility. And I know what people in the communities of this province feel about it.

And all I think you and I as politicians owe them, is not our personal views on whether gambling is good, bad, or indifferent; all we owe them, sir, is the right to vote. It's not difficult, you know. You have a ballot box, and people mark their ballot, and they say yes or no. And you and I as public servants, as the people who implement the wishes of the people that send us here, then would have to live with the result. And whether we like it or not, I believe that that's the way the system should work — that you and I would honour the results of the community.

It's not difficult. Our personal wishes don't enter into it. And the greed, the greed, sir, of government is taken away. If the vote says yes, then you do it with the community; if the vote is no, then you don't do it. Nobody asks any more.

And I would say to you, interesting how history . . . I don't remember there being any Tories in this House in 1962, in the medicare debate. I don't think there were any. I think there was just Grits and CCFers (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation). But at the time there were no Tories here. You and I both know that the major cost of government is in salary. It's wages.

And yes, you might have to get to a point in this province, to eliminate some of the poverty and the hunger and the welfare rolls, by saying to people like you and me, it's time to take a 5 per cent salary cut, or a 10 per cent salary cut. And you know what, we're going to expect everybody else to do the same. That's a tough pill to swallow, but you know at the end of the day, when you add up all of those other folks out there, it might make a lot of sense. And that's where the cost of government is, sir. It's not in infrastructure, it's mostly wages and salary, and buying this and buying that. And you full well know it — you know it.

So that's not unrealistic to talk about today in our society when we face a large deficit and we face big fiscal questions.

So I say to you, once again, why do you dismiss, why do you dismiss things like lowering the sales tax, things like a roll-back of wages, things like lowest tendering policy — things that would allow people in this province opportunities to build on the natural strengths of cooperation that you always talk about?

And we wouldn't have to then have our only link to health care through 9-1-1 funded by gambling. It's not the kind of society, Mr. Premier, that I really relish living in, where my basic supports in life have to be funded by gambling dollars that you've taken from the poor of this province.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I'll try to be brief in the response, although the question is a very important one. I think there are three or four issues buried in the question.

Let me say off the bat, on the issue of plebiscite, here the hon. member and I have, I'll say a disagreement. I will not cast it in 100 per cent opposition terms, but certainly there is enough of a fundamental disagreement here.

I'm not an advocate of plebiscitarian democracy. In California,

in the United States, talking about the United States, all you have to do . . . or many of the states of the United States, you have to see what they've done there. They have voted themselves into a state of anarchy and strait-jacketing.

Governments in the parliamentary, representative democracy sense are elected to make trade-offs of very difficult decisions. These are not easy. The member from Estevan has served for nine years and he knows how tough it is. And you know this, being a member of his cabinet.

You cannot go to the electorate on partial major issues because you have to go to them on all of the major issues. And as much information as they may have, the capacity to make those kinds of trade-offs is limited. So we need to consult, we need to listen, we need to be open-minded about it, but we can't shuck our responsibilities. We can't say, well you've elected me as Premier — at least our government as the government of the day — but we're going to toss it back to you; you tell us what to do.

I don't think people want that. I think people elected us and they say, look, you had a platform, we're going to judge you on what you've done or what you've not done, how you make those trade-offs. So I make that point about plebiscite.

And may I make one other point as well, that the idea of local option votes, anybody who has an ounce of history . . . you're not suggesting this, I know, but the Liberals have been on-again off-again suggesting this. Anybody who would be advocating local option votes knows absolutely nothing of the history of the local liquor option votes. So you have a local option vote shutting down the pubs in Rosthern, but you go 10 miles down the road, and there's a pub at Warman, for example. Or you name the community — Sturgis or Preeceville. That is a prescription for chaos.

Now the second point that you talked about is why do I oppose lowering the PST? I do not oppose lowering the PST if we can afford it. I'm not going to promise to lower the PST in order to try to get re-elected in '95 or '96 if I can't afford it. Your numbers don't work out. Your numbers don't work out. You can't find the \$250 million, let alone the \$500 million on the debt reduction. That's a conundrum that you have.

The 5 per cent across the piece you say is salaries. The truth of the matter is that salaries are a component of it within government. But your savings of the magnitude of 250 million are programs. Yes, there are people on salaries, but programs . . . I could give you a list — and I will at some appropriate time — of the kinds of programs which would be targeted by a Conservative-Liberal, Liberal-Conservative agenda if you're on the treasury benches in order to find that 5 per cent.

It's voodoo economics, with the greatest of respect. We have to lower taxes. We've got to make sure it's part of a strategic, well-thought-out lowering of taxes to promote economic development; that they're just, and that they're fair. That's what we have to do.

We cannot simply say across the piece we're going to lower it.

Believe me, I'd like to do that, but I'm not going to do that because it's not telling the people the truth. I'm going to work with groups and with this government to lower them as they become possible to be lowered, including the PST — including anything else that we can lower at the same time.

That is the position that we take. And I feel that the situation is a logical one. It's a thoughtful one. It's steady as it goes. It's a steady, firm hand on the tiller, on the rudder. You've got a course. You've got a plan. You've succeeded in the past four years, and you're going to succeed in the next four years.

That's what we're offering the people — a plan that's working.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier, just one more question because I see the Liberal leader is here now, and by previous agreement, it was agreed that she would have some time with you. So I am going to . . .

Sir, that statement almost hinges on the bizarre. In 1991 before you ever had a chance to look at the economics of this province from the Premier's chair, you promised to take off taxes. According to your Finance minister, about \$110 million worth of provincial sales tax, you were prepared to knock off for people in the middle of an election campaign when the price of wheat was half of what it is today, when the price of oil was less than what it is today; the price of uranium, the price of potash, every major commodity in this province, sir, was less, in some cases half of what it is today, and the revenue that you derived from that. And yet in the middle of that election campaign you said, hell no, there's no problem taking off taxes, \$110 million worth.

The Chair: — Order. I'll just remind the member to be cautious about the language that he's using.

Mr. Swenson: — My humble apologies, Mr. Chairman, I just got a little carried away with myself.

So here we are three and a half years later and people in the province are saying that 2 per cent that you put on us is very burdensome. In '91 you didn't hesitate to take off 110 million when you never even had a chance, in your own words, to look at the books. That didn't bother you.

And today when you've got whole sectors of your economy far stronger than they were then, sir, now it's bothersome to you. It was a great boon to people in 1991 not to have to pay that 110 million. And today with 225 million piled on them by you, sir, you now say, oh, I can't do it. How could you do it then and you can't do it now? Just answer that before you talk to our Liberal friend.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, let me say first of all there are two reasons for the decision that we took in 1991 and the campaign position that we took in 1991 with respect to the harmonization or doing away with the harmonization of the provincial sales tax and the GST (goods and services tax).

Well first of all you will recall . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

no, well hold it. First of all you will recall, I don't have the clippings here with me but we can produce them for you by tomorrow, you will recall that many business people — and our own analysis is the best we could do in opposition, and I think it turned out to be an accurate analysis — indicated that that harmonization tax would have an impact of approximately 7,500 jobs, negative impact. Because what it would do is it would tax a whole series of activities and services, or commodities and services, heretofore not taxed.

For example, restaurant owners. I mean go talk to the restaurant people and tell them that you want to harmonize the restaurant food GST with the PST. Speak to them . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, but that is the first argument, it was going to have a negative impact on jobs. But I want to say this as I sit down with respect to your exchange; you said the others want to get into this for the moment.

The second point is, I remind you that there was a letter which I received from the then minister of Finance, Mr. Lorne Hepworth, where I asked him what was the deficit for '90-91. No, I did. And I can table you that letter. And he says . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well the letter . . . you probably wrote it or looked at it. He said, I assure you the deficit is 250 million.

And we took our campaign decisions based on that projection. Don't get me wrong — 250 million is nothing to sneeze at. That's a lot of money. But when Mr. Gass came to the job of opening up the books and doing an independent review, and we found that it wasn't 250, but 900 million — almost a billion — that's a different situation.

If that number had been released before the election, well you know you might not have your 10 members or so that you came back with. That's why you didn't release it; and that's why we didn't know. And so all of us had to fashion our responses based on the numbers that were there. It seemed manageable. And as it so turned out, it has been manageable.

I'll close by saying, we want to reduce the PST (provincial sales tax). We want to reduce taxes. But we want to be able to do it not for election time, we want to be able to do it for a long time.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I welcome this opportunity, and I welcome the Premier's officials here tonight.

If this were the real world, Mr. Chair, here in the legislature, then estimates would really be about estimates, and the Premier and I would engage in a matter-of-fact discussion about how the budget items in Executive Council are allocated. I could ask questions and he could give me answers, and we would move on to things that really have an impact on people's lives.

The fact is that most people in the everyday world don't know, nor do they care, what Executive Council is. They don't know what it does. And by and large, they wouldn't miss most of it if it were gone. All they know is that their taxes are too high, and they're having difficulty in the province of Saskatchewan. And departments with names they don't understand, like the

Provincial Secretary, spend their hard-earned dollars on many services that nobody can really even identify.

(1945)

Now the Premier has been at this for what — something like 25 years, so he pretty much has all of this memorized and down pat. And to the best of my recollection of estimates in previous years, this is the time when he can indeed get very animated. He has at times shaken his fingers at me. He has pounded his desk, and I'm sure with all people watching in the province they observe with awe. Or in fact, at times he has lowered his voice prior to any condescending comments, and he begins with, with all due respect, but it really is just a show like so much of what goes on here. And I'm concerned that this is not about getting real answers from the Premier because I've watched him. The Premier waits for that one word in a question that lets him launch into a tirade about the federal Liberal government or the previous administration. Always looking for the escape valve and now we've actually seen this resorted to, doing it in advertising.

But I'm here to talk about the people. What about the people? What about people who are hearing that there may be an election soon, people who are thinking back to 1991 and wondering what kind of a government this has really been in 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, and now the year 1995. I really do think about the people who entrusted us to come here to represent them — and that's all of us collectively here — to tackle the problems that they face. And I ask myself, what is it that they would like to see and what matters to them?

And I ask myself those questions and I'm faced with a choice. And I can uphold the tradition as has gone on in last year's estimates or the one prior to that, and I too could choose to pound my desk or point fingers or do whatever, or we can all choose to represent the people of Saskatchewan in the manner that we choose.

Now I have made my choice and I'm sure the Premier made his choice as well no doubt, so let me begin by talking about choices. One of the things that people tell me that they expect from a Premier is an understanding of basic Saskatchewan values — fair play, honesty, doing the right things for the right reasons. And it all comes down to principles. And that's what this is really all about, Mr. Chair; it's about principle, and principle, I hope, will be the focus of our exchange this evening.

People may not understand about Executive Council estimates but they most certainly know about whether people in leadership roles are making decisions based on a set of beliefs and principles. And people certainly expect their Premier to demonstrate by his actions that he understands what the citizens of this province are facing. And people all across this province are telling me that they feel that he really is not in touch with them, that he's not in touch with what is happening to their families, and he's not in touch with what is happening to their communities.

It seems as though his government has become desensitized and

there's a certain defensiveness that has left people feeling unsettled. Now just the other day, the mayor of a northern town indicated that they no longer were willing to have VLTs (video lottery terminal) in their community. And the Minister of Economic Development, he scoffed at them and said that it was a joke.

I think those are significant issues with people because they begin to feel that government and the cabinet and those who are to represent them are out of touch and unwilling to listen. So when the Premier was asked in February this year about his moral values with respect to casinos, he said, and I quote, "The notion that you can earn money without work is a false ethic."

Now what I want to do before leading into my first question is to examine that statement as it relates to the issue of principles. If the Premier believes that money without work is a false ethic, then I presume that he thinks as well that people should work for what they get. Now most people believe that the purpose of a pension is to provide for people after they retire to maintain the income that they had, or close to it, when they were working so they don't have to have such a dramatic decrease in lifestyle in their elder years.

Now let's just go back a moment to this idea of false ethic put forward by the Premier. Let's say a person was in a situation where they stood to gain, gain substantially, because the rules had changed and suddenly that person would end up getting far more money to retire than they earned when they were working. Now I think most people would see this as unreasonable and most people would consider it unfair.

So, Mr. Premier, when your pension took a leap from \$78,000 per year to far in excess of even \$120,000 per year, as possible, sir, you had the perfect opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to principle. And there would have been absolutely no issue whatsoever even raised in this legislature or outside of this legislature about pensions. But instead, what you did was to defend yourself. And I in fact have a copy of an article in the Calgary paper and you are quoted as saying as follows. And the caption at the top, the heading, is: Romanow defends pension plan. The first paragraph states:

Premier Roy Romanow says the pension plan for Saskatchewan politicians is fair and opposition critics are grasping at straws.

Suddenly you were unable to see that what was going to be able to go into your pockets from the public purse at pension time was a false ethic. Even though weeks before you were quick to admonish the people of Saskatchewan for buying a lottery ticket or supporting fund-raising projects because money without work was a false ethic. People really have no idea what would motivate your decision.

Now, Mr. Premier, your decision . . . your pension, I believe, was a decision of principle. You had an opportunity to show people that what you've been saying and what you were saying even just a few weeks ago about everyone being in this together, a chance to show people that you really meant it and a chance to say, yes, I understand. You had all those opportunities and you chose not to do it.

And you didn't simply have hours to do this. You didn't only have days to make this decision. You actually had weeks to come forward and say, I acknowledge that this is an unfair situation, and in fact I'm going to lead by example. I'm going to set the stage for all of this. I'm going to be the person to take the cut, even talk about it in this legislature. And you chose to do none of those things.

My question to you, sir, this evening, is why? Why did you not take the opportunity to do the right thing on the basis of principle when you had the chance? Why did you only act and appear to act on principle when the issue was raised in this legislature, raised in the press, and raised on coffee row? Why?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I find it interesting that the Liberal leader's principles and her definition of what mine should be, somehow magically don't apply to her. When the rules provided her with a 37 per cent increase on her caucus grant, she took it. When the rules allowed for a big increase in her salary, she took it. I might add, she took it at the courtesy of the member from Shaunavon who jumped from this side of the House to her side of the House, something that you indicated that a principled leader would never permit without at least having a by-election and people in that riding deciding whether the switch was approved.

Why is it that it is unprincipled in one case and yet so principled in another case? I mean if the rules should be changed to show leadership, would you tell me why it is that you haven't shown your leadership?

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Premier, you're going to have to do far better than that because this morning in the Board of Internal Economy I agreed to a 9.6 per cent decrease for the Leader of the Third Party. The Leader of the Opposition agreed to a 5 per cent decrease. And you, sir, along with the Deputy Premier and others, agreed to zero. So I find this most interesting.

And I would caution you, sir, as well, before you start talking about people crossing the floor, to start talking with some of the people on your front benches before the people of Saskatchewan discover how it is some people get into your cabinet.

I have full confidence, in fact, in the member from Shaunavon, not only in the fact that he handily took his nomination meeting; he is going to handily be re-elected to this legislature as the member for Wood River.

Now it is indeed interesting. Everybody has alluded to this in this House and I really do appreciate, finally, the opportunity to respond to this accusation about my salary. You attack me for accepting pay for the duties that I perform. And that is not only a tiresome kind of argument; it is absolutely illogical.

First of all, provisions for pay for the Leader of the Third Party are in The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, which you know, sir, and they are a requirement of official party status. Those provisions were there long, long before I was ever elected as a member and before my caucus ever

attained official party status in this House. And for you to insinuate that I have somehow gotten some special deal by accepting payment for the duties that I perform is downright misleading, and you know it.

Now you have served in this House for decades ad nauseum. And I can't find anywhere . . . and we actually looked, we looked for any amendments whatsoever ever suggested by you to amend these provisions. And you never did it once.

If for one moment I were to accept your analogy, then every member of the Executive Council on the front benches with you received a 75 per cent pay increase the moment they accepted their portfolios. With the exception of course of the Deputy Premier, whose increase was 85 per cent when he accepted the duties of looking after the Great Seal. And then there's the Leader of the Opposition who, by your analogy, took a 79 per cent increase on his election to that position last November.

(2000)

So please, let's focus on facts rather than your old boys' back-room character attacks, because as much as it might be amusing in here, when people look at the actual facts it just doesn't measure up.

Now it is baffling. I've come to the conclusion that as usual in this House, you let the Deputy Premier speak each and every time on the issue of pensions. In his absence, periodically the Minister of Economic Development took it on. Not once did you accept responsibility. Not once did you go before the people of this province and say, I will set the example; I will accept responsibility. Now that we have this added information of these unconscionable pensions, I will show the people through my leadership that I will take this in hand and reduce my pension.

I've concluded by your non-answer this evening that you're going to do precisely what you've done for the last several weeks, and that is say nothing on this issue. I'll give you one more chance. Why didn't you? Why didn't you accept responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Chairman, this is what I find very interesting. The Leader of the Liberal . . . the Liberal leader says, we met in the Board of Internal Economy and I took — what was it? — an 8 per cent cut or whatever. And so did the leader of the . . . well welcome to the real world. Three years ago we took a 5 per cent cut. It's about time that you caught up.

Then her argument is on pensions. Then her argument on pensions is this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . excuse me just for a moment. Then her argument on pensions and her pay is as follows. You know full well it was in the statute that I had to get paid as a third party leader; this is what I inherited by the statute.

Well you know something? When I got elected in 1971 it was in the statute, the formula pension plan. That's what I inherited. You know when I inherited the Premier's pension bonus?

Thanks to your Liberal leader, Ross Thatcher, I inherited that.

It's okay because you inherited for you not to give it back. But because I inherited it — seven of us, everybody else in the Chamber on money purchase — we should give it back to show leadership. You accuse me of showing no leadership. Why don't you show some leadership? Why don't you show some leadership?

You can't say because it's not in the statute that you can't provide leadership. You can provide the leadership just as we did because we're changing the statute. So stand up today and say, change the statute and take back all of that money. Don't hide behind the rules, because I could have hidden behind the rules, and we didn't. Don't hide behind the member from Shaunavon who skipped with not a minute's notice to me. That's who you accepted without a minute's notice to me, without a minute's notice. And then you say to us somehow about principles . . .

And look, just on principles and pension, I presume that you'll get up and you'll be equally vigorous in your condemnation of what the Liberal Party is doing in Ottawa about their pensions. I assume that you will get up and you will tell us how you feel about the Prime Minister's pension. Will you? Because I intend to tell the people of Saskatchewan how you feel about that.

Ms. Haverstock: — Well I'm actually on record for doing that and I'm not here to discuss the federal Liberal Party as much as you would very much like to deflect from your record, sir.

It's most interesting that you mention Ross Thatcher. Do you want to know what the salaries of the premiers were in those days? They definitely weren't where you're at. We're talking about salaries of about \$6,500 a year. And no one ever had the expectation that things were going to change as they did over time.

We're talking about your leadership. We're talking about you being the Premier of Saskatchewan. We're talking about you understanding what people are going through out there when you raise utility rates eight times since you've been elected, when you raise taxes every time you turn around, when you are the person, sir, who has never had to look anybody in the eye in your family as a child and say, I'm sorry, we cannot afford this any more. You've never had to experience that.

That's what people are experiencing all the time in this province. They're having to make choices. They're having to make very, very difficult kinds of choices, and because of things over which they do not have any control.

This was an item over which you had control. I didn't have control over your pensions. Put me in a position like you are and I will demonstrate by example. I in fact never took an increase from the day I became Leader of the Third Party. I froze at that level just like other people in this legislature did.

And I find it very, very interesting that your only defence is an offence. Why don't you simply stand up and accept responsibility? That what you could have done — would have

been the right thing. You could have stood up and said, I won't take this; I will reduce my own pension. I won't be forced into it; I won't be a man of principle only when I'm forced to be one.

And I think that it's really of great, great disappointment to people in this province, who face the difficulties they face, that the leadership of this province did not lead. Now quite obviously this issue is not going to be addressed by you yet again.

It's very baffling that someone with as many assistants and helpers and communications people could be really so out of touch with what people in Saskatchewan feel about your pension plan. And I know that when we're talking about Executive Council, this is an office, in other words your Premier's office, that according to the budget estimates, and I quote:

. . . provides organization, record keeping and communications coordination services to the Premier and the Government. It also provides support to the Premier in his roles as Head of Government, Chair of Cabinet, Chair of Planning and Priorities Committee and Head of the political party with the mandate to govern.

Now I know that Executive Council is a large department, Mr. Premier. You have 88 people in Executive Council. All of them have very important-sounding titles like director of the Premier's correspondence unit and assistant director of the Premier's correspondence unit. And the Premier's correspondence writer, and the manager of the correspondence unit, and of course a contingent of secretaries all of them earning substantial salaries by private sector standards, and many, many people appointed.

But the question that really arises is whether you have so many people answering your mail and returning your calls that you really have become insulated from what is happening out there. We're talking about your office, the Premier's political office. And it's a group of people that the Premier relies on for political advice and operates the political side of government. And for this political support for you, Mr. Premier, 88 staff are required, and the people of Saskatchewan pay \$7.136 million year. That's a lot of bucks. That's a lot of money for political advice and letter writing.

So let me ask you this straight up, sir. When we are spending that much money, the people of Saskatchewan, on political staff, you have to wonder why. Why is it that your needs as the Premier of Saskatchewan are 88 staff in your office, when in fact if you look to two provinces on either side of us, they have substantially fewer people working in their Premiers' offices. Why is it that you need that many staff when we're looking at Premiers' offices elsewhere that measure up to about half in each office?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I'm very pleased that this is a debate on principle and not personalities, as carried out by the Leader of the Liberal Party. But that being the case, I will spare a little discussion about what kind of choices me and my

family had to face as compared to the kind of choices she and her family had to face, but that's another issue and our various backgrounds.

And I don't think I need a lecture also about the pay that Ross Thatcher had. When I was elected MLA, for the interest of the member opposite, the pay for an MLA was \$6,000. And you know, if you wanted to go to your Texas-style solution and eliminate all of the MLAs, you'd save \$7.1 million, and that's great. Now you're only 243 million short of what you're going to do, which means of course a wholesale attack on health care and education. I'll leave that aside for another debate.

But, Mr. Chairman, here's an example of where the Liberal leader is so fundamentally at variance with the basic facts on size. We took the time to take a look at the Executive Council in Ottawa, the staff; and also in Alberta, because it was the Liberal leader who said that the staff of the Premier's office in Saskatchewan was even bigger than the Prime Minister's staff. I have — in case she denies it — I have the newspaper quotation right here, *Yorkton This Week & Enterprise*, April 15, 1995. She was on the pension argument and then she's on the business of the political staff.

Now we're talking principle here, aren't we, Leader of the Third Party, and you will know that of the 88 people that are . . . you attribute to my office, that there are two functions. One is a proper function — both are proper but one is proper in the sense of being the traditional, legitimate civil service functions, those of policy and planning and advising, which every provincial premier in this province has always carried out. And another is equally proper but that is in effect what would one call more, in your words, the political staff.

You know what the Prime Minister of Canada has? The Prime Minister of Canada has 657 people working in his shop. Well the hon. member shakes her head. I will give her the exact breakdown and with the functions.

Office of the Prime Minister, 78; Privy Council — preparation, distribution of documents and reports for cabinet and cabinet committee, much like our Planning and Priorities, 310 people; administration — to which I have administration — you know how much in Ottawa? 212 people. Now there's something called ministers' offices. It's described as the administration of the offices discharging duties assigned by the Prime Minister. Somehow the Prime Minister has to have 57 people looking after them. That's a total of 657 people. You know what the cost is to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan that you Liberals are imposing to Canada? — 75.4 million.

Now you take a look at our structures and our, not exact parallelisms to be sure, but the essential parallelisms pertain thereto.

I wish the Leader of the Liberal Party would get up and say she made a mistake when she said that the Premier's office in Saskatchewan has a larger staff, all 88 of them encompassing all of those functions, compared to the Prime Minister.

Now comes the question of the Alberta administration which is

also an interesting discovery. Here we have in the ministry of the Executive Council, the total budget in Alberta on a gross expenditure of 23.6 million involving many of the same kinds of administration — Office of the Premier, general administration functions. That's what it is in Alberta.

When I took over as Premier, I reduced the numbers of people in the Executive Council and the dollar sums less . . . by a million dollars a year we're spending, and less on bodies we're spending than under the former administration in 1991. That is the facts.

And I tell you, I don't know if I have them here tonight, but we would table the Alberta estimates and table the Government of Canada estimates. Here they are. Here's the Alberta estimates for sure and the page number. I'll table it madam . . . Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. Government estimates '95-96, Alberta, I have them here, and I'm referring to page 151. And I'm tabling them as part of these estimates, and I would only hope that the Leader of the Liberal Party, before she asks the question, sets out the factual basis upon which one can answer correctly.

(2015)

Ms. Haverstock: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm really just absolutely so pleased that the Premier spent the majority of his time talking about the Prime Minister of Canada with the 29 million people over whom he must govern compared to of course the Premier of Saskatchewan who has to oversee one million with 88 people as his staff.

Getting around to these 88 people, the ordinary people of this province have truly had to tighten their belts, and the Premier cannot say no to the raises to his political staff, I understand, who's average wage is what? — \$49,000 annually. The Premier dipped into the public purse and came across with a wage increase of 4 per cent for the folks in Executive Council.

I think that, sir, this angers the people of Saskatchewan when they find out that the budget for personnel went up this year because the people in your office received an average of over \$1,300 increase in their salary when other people in the province did not have that kind of luxury. I don't think that's in keeping with the rest of the world. And we can't afford to support you with a staff of 88 people making salaries that average \$49,000 a year.

And this is really what we're talking about in terms of choices in the province of Saskatchewan. It's also what I'm talking about in terms of setting an example. I raise this because people understand what is going on. And they understand what it means when a Premier seems to think that this is his money — that you can use it freely for whatever you think is in your interest. And I think that people are very disillusioned about the choices that are being made.

Mr. Premier, the choice to have this staff stands against other possible uses for that money if we're talking about \$49,000 average salary and we're talking about 4 per cent increase, we're talking about the numbers involved. The \$2 million a year extra that we would pay in Saskatchewan for the Premier's office

compared to other places could in fact put in place 45 full-time nursing positions.

And that is the problem with this administration. We have more administration in this province than people can afford. And in the case of the Executive Council, we have more political administration than we can afford.

There are three areas within your department, the Premier's department, from which salaries are paid: administration, communications coordination in cabinet, and policy and planning secretariats. I would like you, please, to identify how many of the 88 position equivalents are in each of these three divisions.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Madam Chairman, I will give the Liberal leader the breakdown and provide the breakdown. I want to say to the Liberal leader that the argument about the 49,000 average is an argument which wilfully or perhaps unknowingly tries to in effect indicate that the pay rates that we will have to pay for a person with a certain set of qualifications from the university or public administration rates, and therefore in competition with other governments and private service, of necessity elevating the level of pay in some areas . . . What she has done is homogenized it and somehow tried to make it into some sort of large, average figure.

Ministerial assistants, these are people who act in ministers' offices, their average rate is — I'm now searching for the memory of this to make sure — is at about 37,000. But what you try to do is to mix, if I say so, apples and oranges and try to get the higher figure.

But your specific question is what happens. Well administration has nine full-time equivalents, and I will spare you the duties as to what they . . . unless you want me . . . but I think those are obvious . . . at a cost of \$612,000.

The cabinet secretariat has five at a cost of 300,000. I'm using this on a yearly basis. The deputy minister's office, Mr. Bogdasavich, who has worked for the federal civil service and is a career civil servant, nine full-time equivalents and 606,000. I'm rounding these out.

The planning and policy secretariat has 12 people. That's 781,000 a year. Communications and coordination unit, there's 13 people at 770,000. The office of media services and media relations is five at 399,000. And the office of the chief of staff, which is the other divided function, is 13 full-time equivalents at about 898,000. And the correspondence unit is nine people at 302,000 . . . people. Research and media review, 276,000 at six full-time equivalents. And there are four cabinet positions in Saskatoon at a cost of 233,000.

Now that's the breakdown; it works out to 7.8. Now that's a very lean administration. More than 50 per cent of this is in policy planning, cabinet, secretariat work. Please don't characterize it as some sort of political hackery.

The other portion is not political hackery either, but at least you could argue that these are people in the business of

communications and monitoring communications. This is not a large number. This number is the lowest number.

And I repeat again. Referring to your earlier admonition that we should continue this discussion along the lines of principles, I think it would be a principled matter for you to tell the legislature that you were wrong when you spoke to the Yorkton newspaper in saying that my office had more people than the Prime Minister's office has and more people than the Alberta Premier's office has. I've given you the stats; I've given you the books. And if you would do that, I think you would help speed things along a little bit. But none the less there's the breakdown.

And I'll tell you something else, you can use your Texas-style audits too. You were . . . I'll make this point. You could fire all the MLAs. You can take away all the pensions, take it away. Take them all away, those that are getting them and those that are going to get them. You can throw in all the people in the Premier's office, throw them all in. You don't need any Texas-style auditors to do that, even grant you that, I'll give you that. And your 5 per cent target will be something like 4.89 per cent short, which leaves . . . and you can throw in, if you want, advertising, and throw in the polling, which the numbers I went through with the Conservative members a few moments ago, throw all that in, you'll still have 200 million short.

And I would urge you, in the context of principled debate, to tell the nurses what that means. You can fire everybody in my office. I'll tell you \$200 million will tell the nurses in the health care system and the teachers what that means because you're not going to increase taxes either you say. That means a whole scale attack on them.

And by the way, you haven't said a word about what you're going to do with the debt. How much money you're going to hive off extra from the 250 million to apply to the debt. It doesn't fix. It doesn't mix. It doesn't match. It's voodoo economics. And I think it's not a principled thing to let the people believe that somehow by doing away with all the MLAs you can get more nurses. You know better than that. And you know better than that because you yourself advocated in 1991 massive rural hospital closure. But over and above all of that, I think those are the facts and I don't see how you can dispute them.

Ms. Haverstock: — Well, Mr. Premier, you know far better than to talk about Texas-style audits. I don't think the Provincial Auditor would be into Texas-style audits. I think that he would be into auditing. And I think that private sector auditors in the province of Saskatchewan are into Saskatchewan auditing.

And I think it most interesting that what you did today was to table what I already have a copy of, and that's the 1995-96 government estimates from the Province of Alberta. Page 151 indicates that the Office of the Premier and general administration totals 46 people.

Mr. Premier, I don't quite understand what it is that makes you so afraid of audits. Yet I find it most interesting when I look at what happened when audits were done in the state of Texas to examine all different parts of government as wide . . . what are

you so afraid of to have things done in the province of Saskatchewan?

They've done health and human services issues here, went through all of these different kinds of things to find out what there were strengths and what there were weaknesses in, and in the end of their audit, sir, recommended that 331 full-time equivalent people be hired. And they did that, and saved \$4 billion in the process.

I don't know what it is you are so afraid of in having your government examined for, in fact, making the people of this province pay the piper by having higher taxes, higher utility rates, pay every single licence fee in more money than they've ever had in the past. And what you've done is to say: well we can't really do anything about doing government better; heaven forbid if we have any audits.

Now I notice, Mr. Premier, that in the six subvotes in your department there have been no overall change in the level of expenditures. And what is different is the allocation of those funds between salaries and operating expenses. The dollars that have been taken out of operating have been used to increase the three categories of salaries in your department. Could you explain please what cuts were made in administration operating expenses in order to increase the salaries in that subvote by 2.7 per cent?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The answer specifically to the question is that the money was saved by freezing the positions vacant and holding back on travel and those kinds of expenses. And so therefore there's been no increase in the Premier's allocation this year over last year.

The second point I want to make is your comment about Alberta. And this is where I really wish the Liberal leader would just cease and desist on this selective recitation of the facts.

Look, here is page 151, Executive Council. There are five headings under the ministry of the Executive Council; Office of the Premier and general administration, that's the number you cite — 46 — and you stop there. But why don't you tell the people that there's item no. 2, northern development. Okay, let's say that doesn't apply to political hackery, but it's still in Executive Council. Item 3, personnel administration, 131.4 bodies. Take public affairs, 163 bodies. Science and research, 8 bodies or full-time equivalent employment of 364.4. It's right here on page 151.

And that's what . . . if you're comparing apples to apples, compare the Executive Council to the Executive Council. Why just to this particular one number? Please, this does not enlighten the debate or help us to the resolution of this issue one way or the other.

Now you talk about what is it that I am worried about with respect to audits. Absolutely nothing. We opened up the Don Gass books, audits. The Provincial Auditor has said that the books are now in the best shape that they've ever been in the history of Saskatchewan.

I tell you what the Texas-style solution does, however, is two things. First of all, I do not believe that the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, when it announced in its platform for this forthcoming election . . . had the foggiest idea of what the Texas-style review was all about, because there are people from *The New York Times* . . . I'll give you one right here. Mr. Tom Craddick, Republican leader in the Texas House of Representatives, says this about the Texas audit. Quote: "There's a lot of smoke and mirrors, shifts, robbing Peter to pay Paul; some of John's things were excellent ideas, but the great amount was not true savings."

Take a look at *The New York Times*. You know what *The New York Times* says? *The New York Times* in a quotation was very, very simple. One year the largest item in Mr. Sharp's package — he's the person in charge of the Texas-style audit which you want to employ in Saskatchewan — was an accounting shift that managed to save, in quotation marks:

. . . Texas taxpayers \$1 billion (how?) by transferring certain medicaid costs to the federal taxpayers. Hundreds of millions of dollars in what Mr. Sharp trumpeted as cost cutting have come from revenue from a new state lottery (Note those words. You're the one who's trumpeting Texas-style audit, and they've got a new state lottery there) or from reductions in pension payments that some public employees say will have to be made up later on.

I've given you Mr. Craddick.

I'll give you one other quotation here from an article in *The Houston Chronicle*.

When the Lieutenant Governor incorporated \$2.2 billion in cuts into the states budget *The Houston Chronicle* referred to them in an editorial as "smoke and money" bookkeeping tricks. *The Chronicle* and other critics said that many of the savings were only (part of the) . . . temporary illusion of cost-cutting . . . by pushing expenditures into a later spending biennium and accelerating (the) . . . tax collections.

(2030)

In fact *The New York Times*, the date September 12, 1995, said they did this exactly by waiting right till the very last day of the year in not making a certain registry in the accounting and then putting it to the next year and saying look at the money we saved in this particular year.

I don't think that you and your advisers had the foggiest idea what the heck it was that you were recommending because this is what the people say in this context. And I tell you, this is the Treasurer in Texas, State Treasurer Kay Bailey Hutchison, Republican:

Said American taxpayers should closely study the Texas performance review before buying off on the national one. She charged that the Texas plan contains "more

accounting tricks and money-shuffling gimmicks" than cuts of government waste.

. . . was the quotation that she said there.

But the one that I like the best is in an article which I commend to the Leader of the Liberal Party. It's an article called "The Big Audit", June 1993 by Mr. Dave McNeely and this is what John Sharp who's the head of the Texas audit, said to the President of the United States. He said:

It must do away with useless expenses and unproductive jobs.

I'll stop there to say I agree with that.

Get this though:

There must be a body count, specific number of programs eliminated and teeth on the sidewalk. Jobs have to go, programs have to go . . .

That's your Texas-style audit.

Now I'm going to give you, for the purposes of your Texas-style audit, fire us all. Even you say you're going to have a cabinet of 10 if you should make it, so you can't have all gone. Even you said you've got to have some premier's office. But let's say they're all gone; take all the pensions off; take all of the communications, the polling; it's all gone by a Texas-style audit. You still have to find \$220 million to make that 5 per cent.

You know where you're going to find it? Because the only places where governments spend is health care, education; you're not going to default on your interest payments of \$880 million a year. You won't do that because it will shut down this province faster than that, so you have to make your interest payments. You might attack social services — I think you will. You might attack municipal government; but I tell you where your money is going to be. Your money will be attacking health care: first responders, nurses, doctors, the health care system, look — teachers.

We have made our mistakes as we've proceeded along the way in health care renewal, there's no doubt about it. But we've done it in accordance with a plan and a philosophy designed to protect health care and medicare. And if we could do some things over again we would have done it over again, and we're going to work to repair those things.

But I tell you, anybody in this political environment that gets up and says they're going to find \$250 million, and use as symbolic things like the ones I've identified to find the money, is not levelling with the people of Saskatchewan. The truth is that the people of Saskatchewan will get it in the neck in education, and health care, and social services like they never got it; or in the words of Mr. Sharp: teeth on the street, body counts on the street.

I'm for efficiency. We have the lowest per capita operating expenses in Canada. The investment dealers of Canada say so.

They say second lowest.

We say we're the leanest government right now. We're leaner than Alberta and leaner than Manitoba. They're doing a good job. And if the numbers should say that they're slightly higher or better or we're higher, it's not true. It doesn't matter. Even in that range, we're doing a good job. We've got the leanest government now.

You're going to extract from all these people, by Texas-style approach, \$200 million. I say that's a matter of scariness. We don't have a thing to learn from Texas. We do not have a thing to learn about their health care system. We do not have a thing to learn about how they have the efficiency test to their health care.

I want to give you one other quotation. I know you're not defending the Liberal Party in Ottawa very much these days, so you say. But I want to give you one quotation. And this is a man with whom I've had my political differences, but I've got to tell you, if we differ, we differ, I like to think, on principle and policy.

May 13, 1995, right here. This is in the national news of *The Globe and Mail*. You may have seen it. The headline says: "Martin ridicules key promise by Tories: Conservatives can't cut taxes by \$4-billion while balancing (the) budget, federal Finance Minister says."

I want you to consider carefully what your Liberal Party says. This is what Mr. Martin says, quote:

"The fact is that seven of the 10 Canadian provinces have now announced a clear plan for balanced budgets . . . and not one of them has been able to do it, not one, including the government of Alberta, has been able to do it on the basis of large-scale tax decreases," he said.

Quote:

"You can't have a massive, across-the-board tax decrease at the same time that you're talking about deficit reduction unless . . . (you're prepared to do so by totally abandoning your social responsibilities).

And this is a quote that I think you should pay particular attention to, if I may say so:

"Liberals do not believe that government is something that you occupy in order to abolish," Mr. Martin said.

I'm going to read that to you again:

"Liberals do not believe that government is something that you occupy in order to abolish . . . What we believe is that government is something that enables people to fulfill their ultimate aspirations."

That's what the Liberals say, everywhere but apparently in Saskatchewan, where you're in a mad race with the Conservatives to out-Conservative the Conservatives, to

out-Klein the Kleins, to out-Texas-style the Texans, to find these kinds of social responsibilities that Mr. Paul Martin talks about, and he says it can't be done. Don't take my word for it; take Mr. Martin's word for it. Where do you stand? With Mr. Martin or with the Texas-style audits on health care and education?

Ms. Haverstock: — Well my, my, my, you must be terribly desperate, Mr. Premier. I think some of the people who wrote those articles are probably the ones making your commercials these days.

You sure didn't want any audits of health districts, sir, did you? And we will make sure that the Provincial Auditor approves of the process. If you have no faith and trust in the Provincial Auditor in Saskatchewan, that's your problem. We have implicit faith in Mr. Strelieff.

We have no interest in Texas-style anything but we do definitely have a grave concern about the cost of government in the province of Saskatchewan for 1 million people. They can't afford the size of government that you provide, and we don't like your choices. We don't like them one bit.

We have watched as different people in different places, be they business or otherwise, have been inclusive in being able to ensure that there's greater productivity and efficiency. There's no reason why one can't do that in government. And the only reason perhaps you can't comprehend it, sir, is you've been here so long that you believe everything has to be done the same old way. And so that's exactly the same way you approached health care reform.

You're darned right in 1991 I ran on health care reform. And what did we say we should do? We should have pilot projects and there should be one in the North and one in the isolated South, and there should be urban/rural split and there should be one urban area, and there should be some ways of being able to evaluate what impact there is actually going to be.

And I find it most interesting . . . in fact we had a member stand up in this House and say that she was going to read exactly what was out of our platform document. I read the three paragraphs you had in the 1991 election on health care reform. We were underwhelmed. The people of this province had no idea what it was you were going to be doing to decimate health care in this province, and I'll tell you they would most appreciate if there had been somebody who had taken the time to come up with an actual plan of action before they went forward, implemented changes and had absolutely nothing in place to be there for people when they needed it.

Now the fact is there is a lot of smoke and mirrors, and a lot of smoke and mirrors was referred to in those articles, and they're the stuff, sir, of your government. Crowns that don't even report full activities.

And we are going to lay out our full plan, and we have a comprehensive strategy for the province. And when we do that, that's when you can judge.

Until then, let's just continue to talk about you and your 83,000 people in the province of Saskatchewan on welfare. Let's talk about the 84,000 people who have left. Let's talk about 6,800 young people in 1991 on welfare who are now in the 11,000 number. Let's talk about some of those things and the choices that you've made and how all of your comments about how you're going to eliminate poverty . . . It hasn't happened. Maybe there are different choices you could be making. Maybe you could be more efficient and effective in order for money to be available to be placed in other places.

And if we're talking about choices, I think it's a very good thing to talk about taxes and your size of government. You're fond of reminding us that the cost of government services per capita in Saskatchewan is about the same as in Alberta. You've made that claim. What you don't say is that this takes into account only direct government services. It doesn't take into account the large and growing number of Crown corporations that perform many, many functions usually undertaken by government. And the new Crown corporation responsible for building highways, for example, will no longer show up in government figures for the cost of government.

And you know full well, sir, that when talking about the cost of government, one should include many of the Crown corporations as well. It is the way that government in Saskatchewan works, and you're always talking about the great pride you have in the family of Crown corporations. When you include the Crown corporations, we see the real picture. It is one where Saskatchewan public sector is out of proportion to its neighbouring provinces.

The other point that you must know, sir, but you don't say, is that it is not the cost of government per capita that determines what we can afford, but the cost of government relative to the GDP (gross domestic product). And on that matter as well, this government does not measure up. In Saskatchewan, our government spending, not including Crown corporations, makes up 30 per cent of GDP. And in Alberta, that's 21 per cent. And every other province west of Quebec is less than ours as well. That means too much is coming out of every dollar paid by the taxpayers in this province before it can ever be put through the economy in any kind of way.

In simple terms, it means in this province 30 cents of every dollar produced in the economy goes to government, and that means less money circulating, not only through the consumer economy, but the investment economy as well. So despite your claims to the contrary, government in this province is too big for 1 million people. And no matter what you say, the people know that it's too big because they, Mr. Premier, are the ones who have to pay for it. And they pay for it. How? In high taxes. And they pay for it in utility rates, eight hikes of them since you've come to power. And they pay for it by having insecure jobs, and they pay for it by having an insecure economic future. And some of them have paid for it by turning around and leaving the province.

Now your tax record is clear. You come up with all different kinds of statistics, as the Minister of Finance does, to state this is the wondrous state of affairs in the province of

Saskatchewan, and boy do we have it good. Our taxation is just swell compared to the rest of the nation.

Well let me tell you, the people don't feel that way one little bit. And some of these people travel elsewhere, and they know the differences when they're in other provinces. They definitely know when they've come back home, given what they have to pay here.

We do pay in this province the highest overall provincial taxes in Canada except for Newfoundland, and that comes from Finance Canada. Saskatchewan people do pay more for gasoline than almost anywhere else in the country, and we have the highest gas tax anywhere west of Quebec. And that's a fact. We are also burdened by the highest provincial sales tax west of the Atlantic provinces. And yes, that comes from the Alberta treasury. And we, by the way, we can welcome big business to Saskatchewan because they're sure going to be happy to come here. We have the highest tax rate on large corporations in the entire country of Canada.

Since 1991 — and you should have these numbers — the NDP government has added an additional \$1.7 billion in taxes, in revenues, in fees, in utility fees . . . would push that figure over 2 billion. And that comes from the Saskatchewan budget.

So my question to you, sir, how can you expect the people in Saskatchewan to be able to compete? How do you expect them to be able to have any disposable income to be able to put through our economy, so our businesses can grow here? And it's only in that way that jobs continue to be created. So you speak to the people of Saskatchewan tonight because they most certainly have been talking to me about the feeling that they have of being very disadvantaged by the taxes they pay here.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, it's hard to know where to start with this comment or question, but I'll try my best to parse it off into a point-by-point response if I can.

I must start, Mr. Chairman, by saying that — what was the figure, 1.7 billion? — it's grown already in a half an hour, faster than my pension has grown . . . by the Liberal leader. And I suspect before it's all over again, it'll be astronomical.

I would just simply say to the members of the committee, please don't take the Liberal calculators or researchers' facts in this regard because they have a — how should I put it — a slight history of being inaccurate on a few things.

(2045)

Let's talk about some of the big issues. One, big government. I'd like the Liberal leader to pay attention to this please, and to mark it down. We spend \$4,200 a year per capita on government programs. Every single government in Canada, including Alberta, spends more — Investment Dealers Association. Every Liberal government spends more, every Conservative government spends more.

We have 9.1 provincial employees per thousand citizens. Alberta has 9.9, almost 10 per cent more. New Brunswick has

13.8 provincial employees per thousand citizens, a 51 per cent fatter government.

That is the record and these are Department of Finance figures. They're Investment Dealers Association figures from a variety of areas they come at this. Please understand that that translates to one thing and one thing only — a lean and efficient government which you are committed to somehow magically making even supposedly leaner.

I say that it would surprise most people in Saskatchewan to find that even applying the techniques of other provincial premiers to the west or otherwise, that your party could find the more efficiencies. Certainly not by what they do in office. This is a government, this one that I'm talking about, which has cut and cut, occasioned by the fiscal mess that we inherited only about three and a half, three and three-quarters years ago, of necessity.

The second point you make is accountability. Again a wild statement of error. Here's what the Provincial Auditor — the Provincial Auditor, not me — March 31, 1992 . . . quote:

The government moved from providing what the Financial Management Review Commission viewed as the weakest and least useful financial statements in Canada to providing one of the most useful financial statements issued by a senior government in Canada.

Do you deny that he wrote that? You cannot. He wrote that.

Spring of 1995, what did the report of the Provincial Auditor say? Because you said the Crown corporations . . . you talked about this highways transportation corporation. The Bill was not even passed, I don't believe, by the House. It's not even in operation yet. How in the world could you make this statement? It's not even been made law. But you use that as an example.

What does the Provincial Auditor say:

Intersessional tabling of annual reports is now required by the Crown corporations under The Crown Corporations Act, 1993. Order in council approval and tabling of an explanatory report are now required when Crown corporations acquire shares in or create a body corporate to further their purposes.

And I could go on about accountability. So it is simply factually wrong. Those are the words of the Provincial Auditor. Do you deny that he said those words? Do you deny them?

Now this question of taxation levels. We went through this with the Liberal Party. I say the people of Saskatchewan, up to \$75,000 income — and I'll use the phrase, cost of living, and I'll tell you why I will in a moment — have the cheapest cost of living in Canada in this province up to 75,000. I'll tell you why I use the word, cost of living.

I suspect that you would not agree that in Alberta where they charge a health care premium of about \$800 for four, you would not say that's a tax. You would not say that a privately owned utility which has a rate increase, you would say that's not a tax, that's going to end up as a dividend in somebody's pocket

at the end of the day. But because it's done by a Crown corporation in Saskatchewan, it is a tax.

So let's take a word which encompasses the cost of living, the cost of doing business. And I will tell you that at the level of 25,000 and individual families at 50 and 75,000, all see the lowest cost of living when you put all of the essentials which are part of this into the mix.

These are not my words. Those are the words of those who do the independent audits and the examinations. And what you people do conveniently, you the Liberals and you the Conservatives, is you ignore \$800 a year premium; it's not a tax. Am I to conclude out of all of that that if you put an \$800 premium on families that you could say it was not a tax increase because you don't consider it a tax increase? It is absolute, utter nonsense on this question of the tax level.

Now I want to make one other point if I can, two other points. Make one actually, in the interest of time.

The Liberal Leader says, you doggone right I campaigned in 1991 on closing rural hospitals. She admitted it today in estimates that she campaigned in 1991 on closing down rural hospitals. But she said the way I would have done it is I would have done it by a pilot project somewhere.

Mind you, on the other hand she says, even after the reform — another error — we spend more on health care today than we did in '91-92, which is false. Now how you square that circle, I don't know, because if you'd only had a pilot project, for sure you would have had more than we are spending on health care today because it would have been existing all throughout the province of Saskatchewan. And yet on the other hand you say we implemented the program and we still are charging more, which is false. It's not fact. You know it.

Here's a piece of literature from a gentleman, I presume, Garry Johnson, Liberal candidate, Regina Lakeview: My pledge to the constituents of Regina Lakeview is to work hard to, amongst other things, "continue with health reform, encouraging input from those directly and indirectly affected." He is pledging to continue health reform. He is pledging to continue what we're doing. This Liberal candidate is pledging to continue.

Do you similarly today pledge to continue health reform or are you discounting and discarding Mr. Garry Johnson? And if you pledge to continue with health care, tell me how you're going to do it once your Texas-style auditors get at it and get at it big time. Once the Texas-style auditors start going through all those nursing positions and they start saying, in the words of Mr. Martin, Mr. Paul Martin, the Liberal leader, you've lost the compassion side of things. Boy, oh boy, I'd like to see these people at it. I'd like to see these people at it.

So what is the position of the provincial Liberal Party? Are you going to continue health care reform or are you going to follow the member back there, who sits behind you, the member from Shaunavon, who says, it's all over, no more health care reform, it's all bad? Which is it? We are having a principle discussion of course today and no doubt you'll tell me which it is. Which is it?

Ms. Haverstock: — Well I don't even know which topic you're on, Mr. Premier. I've come to the conclusion here that what you want to do is have a conversation about health care reform and I would think that the very last area that you would want a discussion on would be health care reform. There isn't one person I've met in Saskatchewan who did not agree with the need for reform. They just don't like your reform, Mr. Premier.

And one of the things that Mr. Johnson has said that you, sir, have not done is that he is going to be inclusive of people. Do you think that Jim Melenchuk, Dr. Jim Melenchuk, the person who stepped down as the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association on April 30 of this year, two nights later nominated as our candidate in Saskatoon, do you think that he is going to take a reduction in salary to be an MLA and be out of practice for four years, just because he thinks that things are going swell in health care?

Do you think that Harry McLean in Arm River, who was the immediate past Chair of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, is running for our party because he just figures everything is going so swell in health care?

Do you think Dennis Barnett, the previous mayor of St. Walburg for 13 years, one of the people who had led the Rural Health Coalition, that this is an individual who thinks that your health care reform just works so swell that we might as well just leave it as it is?

Let me tell you, sir, I was in Melfort this week, and I would suggest if you want a real education about your health care reform, you go and talk to the people who have had to put up with eight of their doctors leaving that community.

You talk to Dr. Wiebe, an individual who was born, raised, and educated, and trained as a medical doctor in this province. You ask him why he's leaving and going to Indiana. And this is a man who went out and worked for the Mennonite Central Committee, just like other people who were there who had gone out to different parts of this world working for World Vision.

These aren't people who wanted to make more money so they've gone off to Alabama like Dr. Crowe or Indiana like Dr. Wiebe. These are people who were shut out of the process and absolutely are appalled that they took one of the best places in terms of servicing health care in this province and wouldn't even talk to people. You wouldn't even include them in the conversation.

And what do we have? We have a Department of Health and a Minister of Health who still won't accept responsibility for what's going on. It's the district health boards, heaven forbid. You've done what you're best at. You've created more mini-governments all across Saskatchewan, more administration, more bureaucracy. You have taken the care out of health care.

And if you want to talk about the people who actually are genuinely concerned about human beings and are determined to put the humanness back in health care, it's the Liberal Party, or

we wouldn't have the kind of people running for us . . . You think you're so swell at what you've done. Maybe you should go and simply talk to people, like actually talk to someone.

Talk to the 92-year-old man in Saskatoon on oxygen every day, who's by himself and is afraid and needs help. And he's told through a wellness assessment, hey, it's okay, you can live on your own.

Talk to the woman who's 90 years old in Swift Current, whose husband died 43 years ago and she's lived every day of her life by herself. And now she knows she can't be on her own anymore and she's told, hey, you're perfectly all right; two visits from home care every day and your life should just be dandy.

You don't know what's going on. You are totally and completely out of touch with what is happening to people. Every single day I get phone calls.

I'm going to suggest something to you, Mr. Premier. You stop having people . . . you stop having them in your office answering all your phone calls and reading all your mail and answering all of it for you, and just maybe once in one week you might get some touch of reality here.

Now if we're talking about what Mr. Johnson's going to do, Mr. Johnson is going to be someone who includes people in what happens in their health care. And that's a heck of a lot more than what you've been doing. Now we were, I thought, before you raised health care, I thought we were talking, sir, about taxes. We were talking about taxes.

And you actually raised inaccuracies as well, which I find most interesting given that your Minister of Health talks about a \$15 million deficit with the health boards. But my goodness, what happens when the Provincial Auditor takes a look? It's 30 million. And everybody has to stay posted, until the election's over, on June 30 when we can find out what the deficits are for this year. And we're all waiting with baited breath, because boy, we sure believe people in your government when it comes to health care.

(2100)

Speaking of the new taxes in the province, speaking of the changing face of communities, here's another item in your budget that should not be overlooked — and I know that the official opposition raised this a bit — and that's gaming revenues.

Now this budget really only talks about the \$90 million that you rake in from VLTs this year. There's no overall figure at all for all the money that you actually take in through gaming. And I wonder if you have any idea what that total is. Do you have any idea what it is when you add in money that you redirected from Sask Sport into general revenues? I'm sure it certainly changes that number. Can you come up with one, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, before I speak to the other issue, the last issue that the member raises, I want to talk a little bit about health care.

The Liberal leader thinks the memory of the people of Saskatchewan is so short that they will have forgotten who it is that fought medicare tooth and nail in this province — the Liberal Party. The Liberal leader thinks that the issue is too complex, that they don't understand a 30 per cent reduction coming from the federal Liberal government in Ottawa to health care, that you are threatening medicare. And you think you can say, put the care back into health care.

I tell you, putting the Conservatives or the Liberals in charge of looking after medicare is like putting Colonel Sanders in charge of the chicken coop. It will never happen . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, it's not original, but it is truth. It will never happen.

Well the hon. member talks about Dr. James Melenchuk. Here's Dr. James Melenchuk. Here's what the good doctor wrote in the *Medical Post* . . . family practice, I'm sorry, January 3, 1994. I want the Liberal leader to pay attention to this.

“For starters, . . . This is Dr. Melenchuk; the good doctor writes this, quote:

For starters, most of the newly formed rural health care districts (keep in mind this is over a year ago he wrote) . . . (For starters most of the newly formed rural health care districts) have at least 12,000 people each. This is 2,000 too many per district.

According to Dr. James Melenchuk, family physician and vice-president, Saskatchewan Medical Association.

What's the next paragraph say?

Not only is the number of people in each district too great, but the actual number of districts, 30, is also too high.

I'll just read this again. The good doctor says, 12,000 people per district is too high. It's no good. Presumably one would say, more districts. And in the very next paragraph he says, but 30 is too high.

Well I tell you one thing, whatever it was that decided the good doctor to run so quickly from his association of SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association), I sure hope it wasn't any promise of a cabinet position. And if it was a promise of a cabinet position, let me give you a little piece of advice. Don't put him in as minister of Finance, because the numbers would really play a little bit down the line.

Then the member opposite talks about Melfort. Well the situation in Melfort is serious, there's no doubt about it, but not as the member paints it out to be the case. Since December of 1994, three doctors have left Melfort. There have been two that have arrived in February. The clinic in Melfort now has 10, 7 of which have, so far as we know, no plans of leaving. The recruitment committee has leads on other physicians to fill vacancies that occur over the course of the year.

Now province-wide here's what happened. In December of 1993 there were a total of practitioners and specialists in Saskatchewan totalling 1,177 — 1,177. December of 1994 they're up to 1,207. Now I am hopeful that the district health board in the Melfort area, local folks, with the assistance of the ministry of Health, will do all that we can to accommodate the concerns in the Melfort area. And no one likes to see this kind of a dispute.

But the member ought not to draw the excessively long bow as she has been doing, I say. And I hope she doesn't get angry for me saying this, with respect, tonight as she has in almost every issue — she draws this great big long bow relying on Dr. Melenchuk's mathematics to indicate that the whole system is going to collapse.

Well I don't think that it is. But I think the other side of it is what she still refuses to adopt or reject. Do you support Mr. Garry Johnson, Liberal candidate's, statement that he will continue with health reform, encouraging input from those directly and indirectly affected? Because I'll tell you that's exactly what our position is, has been — health reform with direct and indirect people affected.

Now I don't hear the member from Shaunavon, your colleague saying this. Mmh, mmh. Ponteix, that area, he's been out there riling the people up. He's not saying that. He's saying something entirely different.

And I tell you, I will — time doesn't permit tonight — I will bring you literature from Liberal candidates across Saskatchewan which vary from Saskatchewan from point to point on this issue. Look, that we have made our fair share of mistakes in this regard, I acknowledge. I acknowledge it to the Leader of the Conservative Party, I do to you, I do to the people of Saskatchewan.

This has not been easy. It's not been easy on the health care workers. It's not been easy on the patients affected. It's not been easy on the doctors. It may not matter at all to you — it's not even been easy on us. It's been very difficult, but it was necessary to do. People know it and it was necessary to do to protect, to save, health care. And it was the right, next logical step to do. And anybody who has looked at it thoughtfully has said so, and we are going to deal with this issue in this regard.

No, I think Texas-style audits on health care aren't going to put the care back into health care, far from it. When you start looking . . . if there should be that kind of an opportunity operated to you, as is the case, you will be putting not the care back into health care, but the scare back into health care — the scare back into health care. That's what the Liberals will be putting into this campaign, the scare back into health care.

Now you say a word about taxes. And I say to you as I said in the last answer about the figures up to 25, 50, and 75,000; we're at the lowest rates of taxes. I admitted that I changed the word to cost of living, and I've indicated that, because you people on the opposite side wouldn't take a medicare premium as a tax. So okay it's a cost of living; you must surely grant us that to be fair in this principled discussion which we're having here tonight

and not personal discussion, you must surely understand that those numbers indicate that we are the lowest in all of Canada, absolutely the lowest in all of Canada.

And while we're just on it, on the question with respect to tax cuts, I'd like to know how it is — and we've got lots to say about this too — how it is for the first two and a half years of your tenure here, you advocated over \$300 million new expenditures and programs. We'll give you the details on these too, by the way. Well I'd like to know. I mean do you deny you made them? We'll table them, and we'll put them on the radio and the television and newspapers. Do you deny that you made them . . .

An Hon. Member: — I have no idea to which you're referring, sir.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You have no idea.

An Hon. Member: — No. Table it.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well they'll be tabled. Our estimates will be back up tomorrow at 2:30, and they'll be tabled, and tell us whether you made them or not made them.

That's going to be interesting. Offer you 300 million, cut back government by 300 million. Well we don't know if you're going to continue reform or not. We think the good doctor says that he's going to either increase the districts or lower the increase; I'm not sure what the good doctor is going to do up there, and this person was going to take a salary reduction. If I were you, I would advise the good doctor not to worry about taking a salary reduction because somehow I have a feeling he'll never have to face that possibility. So don't let him worry about that.

No, I think that the Liberal Leader has been so consistently, factually erroneous in tonight's discussion whether it's the Prime Minister's office or the pensions in the federal Liberal Party or whether it's Alberta or the tax numbers or the per capita expenditures of government, not only tonight but consistently throughout the entire piece, that people obviously sort of say, what in the world is going on here? What in the world is going on here?

Well I tell you, this is no surprise. Liberals can sit on the fence and keep their ear to the ground; that's their politics. And I tell you, only Liberals can do that anatomically and get away with it, but not at election time. You won't be able to get away with it at election time.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee report progress.

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

Item 1

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I enjoyed some of tonight's debate, especially since a great deal of it was on health care and in fact the Premier liked to get into it. And I actually

hope he sticks around and perhaps will get back into it a little bit with us here this evening, because you know, Mr. Chair, what's happening is that we're soon to wrap up the first term of the government with the member from Riversdale as Premier.

And when we take a look back at this first term — not just the last year or two, or any particular year of it, but the full term — and we take a look at what in fact in this first term, perhaps the only term of his administration . . . what we see as the biggest failure in fact is the area of health care, health care reform, in the style that he has brought it forward.

(2115)

And what we see, Mr. Chairman, is in fact a closure of 52 rural hospitals. I know they talk about a lot of conversions but I know that when you drive out to Vanguard, or if you drive out to Kincaid, or community after community after community, nobody sees this as conversion. They see telephones, SaskTel telephones bolted to the side of their hospitals. That's what they see. They see in fact that they have no more services because this particular government has stripped them of those services.

We see a drug plan which has went from a small premium, or deductible, up to \$1,700 a year. That's no drug plan, Mr. Premier; that's no drug plan at all. But you know what's most confusing to the people is when health care reform was first going to be brought in, when the Premier was first talking about it, he was doing it for financial reasons. He made it quite clear to the people of the province that we had to have health care reform . . .

An Hon. Member: — Well to use the words of your leader, why are you so afraid about efficiency?

Mr. McPherson: — Well you're the one, Mr. Premier, that said you had to bring in health care reform because the cost was right out of control.

And yet we take a look at the numbers, the Premier's own numbers. He was saying they're going to have savings of \$20 million over three years. That's how you were first selling health care reform to the people of the province. You're saying we're broke and we're going to have this amount of savings. That \$20 million over three years amounted to something less than half of one per cent of the total budget. And the people knew that you weren't correct.

But you know, when we take a look at some of the recent news articles . . . and I had one from the *Leader Post*, Saturday, April 8. And the Health minister is making comments that in fact there's savings of \$400 million or higher if it were not for health care reform. And it makes one wonder which one of you is correct — the Premier or the Minister of Health. Is it \$20 million over three years or is it \$400 million this year?

You've never made that very clear to the people. Why are you doing it? Are you doing it because the system was unaffordable, or did in fact you think there's a better way to deliver health care. Because you know, in the latter case when you take a drive out of the two major centres, especially out in rural

Saskatchewan and you tell these people no, money didn't play a part in it; we just felt that we needed to shut down your health care because it was better for you . . .

How could it be better? How could it be better and safer to not have health care? How could it be better to have your seniors be afraid for a couple of years that they weren't going to have a place to stay? Because you've made that announcement. You've increased their charges dramatically and then threatened to take their beds away, telling them the best thing they can do is live out in the community.

Well it's your health care reform that's going to be the topic of this election. You were right before, Mr. Premier. But when we see these kind of numbers, yours is \$20 million over three years; the Health minister, \$400 million or more in one year, it makes one wonder.

Because you know, I happened to be going through some of my old files today and I found a speech. In fact it was from the then leader of the opposition, October 29, 1990. And it was you, Mr. Premier, giving a health care . . . while giving a speech to the Prince Albert Co-operative noon luncheon club on October 18, 1990.

And this is what people find so confusing because now, now when you're in control, when you're in control of the numbers or supposedly you are, there's such variances between the Health minister and yourself.

But what did you say back then just before the election? And I'm going to quote from a speech that you gave, speeches that you were giving around the province to try and get elected. Well it did get you elected, but what were you telling the people? Health care costs. And this is direct quote right out of your speech, Mr. Premier.

It says:

Let me now turn to the question of costs. Many people are questioning the ability of any government to implement new health care initiatives on the argument that health care costs are spiralling out of control. I reject this argument as being without fact, and moreover on the grounds that it is the political excuse used by those who wish to subvert the five fundamental principles of health care and direct us towards a market-driven system.

That's your own speech, Mr. Premier, before you became the Premier. These are things that you were saying to the people in rural Saskatchewan to get yourself elected, knowing full well that after you're elected you were going to devastate them. That's what you've done.

On the next page it states:

In the *Globe and Mail* on October 15, Dr. Mark Baltzan, a distinguished Saskatoon physician, wrote that under our system, quality of care has increased while costs have been adequately contained. On quality, he says that

in scarcely more than a decade, the annual chance of dying from illness or accident has fallen nearly 25 per cent.

On costs, he writes that:

Forty years ago, the average yearly increase was 12 per cent. Now it is 3.8 per cent. (He goes on to say that) Even with the technological change and the ageing population, two factors not foreseen by the Hall Commission, actual health care costs are less than the projections laid out in the Hall report.

He concludes . . . I wish the Premier would stay and listen because it is right from his speech. He has got to own up to some of this at some point. He concludes:

All this shreds the claim that the cost is too high. Cost and quality are better than we would have dared to predict. There is no need for radical restructuring. Its supporting arguments are reduced to rhetoric. Perhaps there are a few bad apples, the odd rotten tree. Replant them. Don't burn the orchard.

And what have you done, Mr. Premier? Well I tell you, in rural Saskatchewan you've more than burnt the orchard. You've burnt it good.

From your own speech, you're rejecting that this was . . . costs were spiralling out of control. Yet you get into power, and you're saying that we had to have this kind of a health care reform to save less than half of one per cent of the total budget in a year . . . or over three years. And the Health minister is saying 400 million. You wonder why people don't believe what you people are saying any longer? Well it's quite clear why they don't believe you.

We also . . . let me quote more out of this speech here.

While a clear overall strategy for health is the responsibility of the province acting in the interest of all our citizens, all of them, it is at the local level where the interaction between the provider and the consumer takes place. Therefore our long-term aim must be to have a system that is community based, community driven, and community controlled.

But if you were to think back to when you first brought in health care reform and in fact right up to present day, you go out into some of those rural areas and you ask them if they feel that they have any control. None whatsoever. No control whatsoever. You've taken the control of health care out of their hands.

Now you can make the argument that there were, whatever you use, 400 boards and they were costly. Most of those people were volunteering their time. You have now turned that around to where I think board chairmen get 5,000 or \$10,000 a year retainer alone, whatever it is, \$155 a day. But somehow you're trying to make it out that it's cheaper.

The fact of the matter is when you made these changes to health

care reform you did a lot of things, Mr. Premier . . . Mr. Minister. You did a lot of things to ensure that the people couldn't save their system, that you knew full well you were going to tear it down. That's why you made changes to the taxation in the way you did.

You had to make sure that there was only a flat 2 mills that could be charged by municipal governments for health care to ensure that places such as south-west Saskatchewan, with a lot of pipelines and oil fields, large community pastures, federal pastures in which you got grants in lieu of taxes, railroads, elevator companies . . . You gave up on millions and millions of dollars of tax. And you and I both know you did. We've discussed this before. You did that for ideological reasons.

You had to make sure that when you started this ball rolling you couldn't back down. You had to make sure that these communities could not save their hospitals. I say, shame on you for doing that because you brought in, you brought in rules, you brought in criteria, Mr. Minister, and you were part of that. You brought criteria in which ensured that these communities couldn't exist.

Now we looked at other parts of this speech here and I know the government of the day doesn't want to own up to some of the stuff they said before the election. In the part where it's . . . in the conclusion in the speech . . . I won't read the whole thing because I don't think even anyone opposite really believes much what's in this speech. You're a completely changed group, I guess.

Let me read a couple of the points. One is, the improvement of health care services to rural Saskatchewan in order to reduce inequities in the system. Well I'm telling you, the Premier used Ponteix as an example awhile ago. Mr. Minister, in fact it was recent, not too many days ago, that you called into question a document that I had sent to my constituents. And to combat that, because you refused to come out into my constituency and debate me . . . right now I'll offer that to you. If you would like to come out to a place like Ponteix and have a debate on health care to hear from these people if they feel that they have been treated equally, as you promised, October 18, 1990, at the P.A. (Prince Albert) Co-operative luncheon club, you should come out and debate me there, Mr. Minister, or send the Premier out. Because those people don't feel like they were treated equally at all. Not at all.

Another point is, a review and improvement of the prescription drug plan. You've taken the drug plan and you've brought it up to a \$1,700 a year drug plan. It's virtually telling the people of the province we're not there to help you. We're not going to be part of helping you with prescription drugs.

The establishment of a school-based dental program. And I recall when members opposite were continuously attacking the former government for making changes to the school-based dental program.

But what have you done? You've had no intention of bringing it back. In fact what the former government did — the Conservative government did — in many cases you actually

made it far worse. You made it far worse.

Some of those communities that had new integrated facilities, instead of taking a good look at what . . . If you didn't feel they deserved a hospital, really instead of taking a look and seeing what perhaps would have been better for the community, how to utilize their facilities, the new facilities, you wanted to close them down. You wanted to shut them right down.

Well, Mr. Minister, I think I'm soon going to have to give you a chance to respond. I see you're bouncing in your seat a good deal. I'm not sure if you want to get up and respond, or get up and run, but hopefully it's to respond.

But you know, I take a look at some of the other articles that you, Mr. Minister, have come out with. In fact a letter that you sent to myself on November 10, 1994 because there were so many concerns from the seniors in the community, and surrounding community, of Shaunavon in regards to their senior care. And they had a series of meetings at which the hall was completely filled with seniors. You weren't there of course. You didn't send a representative. I was there to answer to these people. You sent a letter was the best you could do.

At that time you promised them that you were going to present a strategy shortly. Have you done that? Have you presented a strategy? Other than every time you've gotten into a bit of trouble, you say, well we'll throw \$10 million towards acute care in rural Saskatchewan or we'll throw 10 million into something else.

The fact of the matter is, nobody knows where the money goes. We can't really put our finger on where you're spending any money. We see the announcements but nothing ever comes of it. And you know, when we look at these last — not last year — I think I've only grabbed these articles from the last months, where in fact changes, changes that your government has made . . . health board elections put off until fall. This one's February 8, 1995. In fact this, Mr. Minister, is something that your government should be ashamed of.

In fact in this speech, where it talks about giving some sort of community control, that the Premier gave in Prince Albert, and then he goes on to talk about the vision that's going to come from having community-driven, community-controlled health care. Well what does this mean? This means you didn't want them to have any control.

You have appointed people — appointed people — and when you thought that it really wasn't going to go over too well, you cancelled the elections. You put on some sort of a dog and pony show to slow-walk the process, just to ensure that there would be no health board elections until after your own election because you wanted to make sure that you weren't going to have to answer for something that was as embarrassing as . . . You know you'll take a look at other, so many other, letters to our caucus, or to myself, or newspaper articles.

(2130)

Here's another one, in fact, when you're in a great deal of

trouble over acute care services out in the rural areas. Your response was to throw a few hundred thousand dollars into a first responder program. Well I know your response will be, you know, I shouldn't attack volunteers. We're not attacking volunteers. We're saying use volunteers for the purpose that they are best to be used for. You can't take the doctors and the nurses out of rural Saskatchewan and say they can be entirely replaced with first responder programs. It isn't working. Doctors . . . it's not me that's criticizing it alone. I'm telling you that people out in rural Saskatchewan are telling the opposition parties that it's not working. You have health care professionals that say it's not working, it's not safe. A member of your own caucus in fact is not in favour with some of these first responder programs and such.

That, in fact, is why you ensured, your government, your caucus, or cabinet, or premier, ensured that that member did not get the nomination in the Wood River constituency. But you couldn't beat him out of the following one. Because he's not in line, he's not in line with your type of thinking. He felt that you had went . . . he felt that you had went far, far beyond what was reasonable. And this is a doctor from rural Saskatchewan, a member of your caucus that doesn't support it.

We looked through so many other letters. Here's one in the *Gravelbourg Tribune*, January 24, '95. Palmer residents angered by health care cuts. It goes on to talk about the terrible, terrible treatment of one of their seniors in that community.

Here we have a chamber of commerce letter from the Norquay and district where it gives not one or two, several examples of where health care, or your style of health care, health care reform, is failing the people. I won't go through it. I think you know what the letter is; it's been sent to you, Mr. Minister. If you want to respond later, feel free. We can get into each or any one of these cases. I don't mind talking about any one of these cases because I think each case individually is an example of the entire provincial problem that you've created.

Health care reform attack. This one is by Randy Burton of The LeaderStar Services, and here we have Dr. Joe Barretto has some advice for travellers in south-west Saskatchewan, and he quotes: don't have your accident around Ponteix. And he goes on to talk about doctors being so disappointed with the situation that they're faced with thinking of leaving the province.

How can you say, Mr. Minister, that it's better? It's not better. You can't fool the people. You can't fool them into believing that, first of all, your financial arguments didn't work as to why you got into health care reform, or else, either that, or you and the Premier should actually go and sit down and hash this thing out and find out whose figures you're going to use.

Because I think both of you are quite a ways out. Well perhaps you're not, Mr. Minister. Because I think perhaps it was the Premier who made a terrible mistake, if he's talking \$20 million savings over three years.

But yet you look at a thousand health care workers that have been displaced by your reforms, so perhaps you're far closer. You perhaps have saved the 400 million. I don't know how you

do your bookkeeping, because when we take a look at the budget estimates from '91-92 to present budget, in fact you're spending, I think, \$12 million more on health care than before health care reform. But if you say there's a \$400 million saving, I guess we'll have to accept your figures.

But you know, I think what the people of the rural Saskatchewan especially, Mr. Minister, would really like to know, since they had to give up not just a few of their services, but almost all of their services . . . in fact in some communities they gave up everything.

The Premier wanted to use the community of Ponteix as an example awhile ago. I'll use the community of Ponteix. You're going to shut down the long-term nursing care. You closed their hospital. You took out their SaskPower office, the SaskEnergy office. And I think the bus is gone. And you wonder why the people are angry. I think it's real clear. They're really disappointed with the way they've been treated by your government.

So perhaps once I sit down, Mr. Minister, you will make it clear which one of you are correct on the figures and really tell us where the savings have been. Because I think your savings have been firing of nurses, firing of doctors, firing of the service providers, the people that are out there. I don't mean first responders; I mean the trained medical people, personnel, that are out there delivering the service. Now I know that you've by and large replaced these people with administrators. We are now administratively heavy.

We take a look at some of these district boards, and I know I've raised this time and time again in the legislature . . . in fact Swift Current was one example where you spent I think it's up to 1.2 or \$1.3 million to renovate office space. And this is after, for the district board, within the district board, you fire nurses.

You see this is why people are angry. Because you've taken away the front-line workers in health care, the people that actually provide the service, and you thought it was best to have large oak tables and boards that have thousands of dollars in retainers, high per diems. That's why people are disappointed.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I once studied, at St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon, a class that was described as homiletics. It's a class in preaching. My colleague here from Saskatoon knows the phrase. And our professor at that time made it very clear to us that the head can only understand what the seat can withstand, and it was best to keep one's comments relatively brief.

Well I think we've been here now for 20 to 25 minutes listening to the member from Shaunavon ramble and ramble and ramble. Very difficult. Very difficult to pick out a single question in all that the member said. Now if there's an abuse of the system, it's the abuse of the member.

Now, Mr. Chair, the member is still talking from his seat, as he regularly does. Now I will endeavour to address some of the questions in this long ramble that we just heard. And then I think I have a few questions for the member.

Now he talks about the financing of health care. I've explained this to him before. It's been explained in this House any number of times, Mr. Chair. I'll do it again for the member's benefit. And mark these words. Had no change been made in the expenditures of health care in the province of Saskatchewan, if all of the programs would have continued unchanged and all of the expenditures, all of the continued growth had remained unchanged, then the budget for the Department of Health in this budget year would be \$400 million more than it was when we came to office.

Now, Mr. Chair, could I ask for a little order from the member opposite . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well now we've got the member from Moosomin joining the Liberal caucus.

Now I hope that the member understands that when we speak of the conversion of rural hospitals, the conversion of those facilities in 50 or so communities to provide other services in those communities, the cost saving from that move was something in the neighbourhood of \$40-plus million. It was our commitment from the beginning, Mr. Chair, that 20 of those million dollars would be returned into new services.

On that basis, there has been a \$20 million cost saving. But of course, Mr. Chair, as you well know and members well know, that is not the only activity that we have been involved in, in health reform. And so I will underline for the member, had no change been made, expenditures of the Department of Health in this budget year would be \$400 million more today than they were when we came to office. Now I hope he can understand that.

Now I have a question for him. Being delivered around Regina these days, the commitments being made by his colleague, the Liberal candidate in the Regina Lakeview constituency, Garry Johnson . . . Now Garry Johnson is saying to the people of Regina Lakeview, elect me — and elect the Liberal Party, I would assume he's saying — that we are going to and I quote: "continue with health reform, encouraging input from those directly and indirectly affected."

Now all I've ever heard from the member from Shaunavon is that everything that's happened is wrong and that we'd stop it, and we'd reverse it. Well now who's telling the position of the Liberal Party? Is it the member from Shaunavon, or is it the candidate here in Regina, or is it some commitments being made by other Liberal candidates around the province?

Tonight, Mr. Chair, in the course of the member's remarks, I heard some very interesting comment. He would suggest, by his remarks tonight, that in fact it was an error on the part of this government to reduce the health care mill rate or that portion thereof. I would assume therefore he's making the argument that more of the health care costs should be put on the property tax base. That was the argument that he was making here tonight.

I want him to confirm. Is that the position of the Liberal Party, that more of health care funding should go on the property tax base? Will he confirm in the House tonight that it is the Liberal Party policy to take 5 per cent of expenditures of government out of the provincial budget to lower the expense of the

provincial budget by 5 per cent? Is that his policy?

Because if that's his policy, Mr. Chair, he should know — and I'll just share it with him — that that represents 75 to \$80 million from the expenditures of the Department of Health. That's what it will cost, 75 to \$80 million expenditures in the Department of Health if it's their policy to reduce the expenditures of government by 5 per cent. I ask him therefore, Mr. Chair, would he please make public tonight in the legislature where in the Department of Health he intends to take 75 to \$80 million, because that's what he needs to explain to the people of our province.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, as has been stated earlier in the House, I'm the one asking the questions and we're trying to get you to give some answers. So I think we'll carry on with that tradition, where in fact you start to answer some questions and perhaps things will move along a little quicker.

And you know full well I didn't advocate putting on more property tax. I made it quite clear as to why your government made the changes to property tax . . . or health care on property tax. So that in fact you could wreak havoc on rural Saskatchewan, knowing full well it tied their hands for making any sort of response.

Since 1991 you've been referring to the wellness model. And in your '91 platform document it spoke of creating a Provincial Health Council. I notice here this evening, looking at this speech that the Premier gave to the Prince Albert Co-operative noon luncheon club, 1990, that in fact there's a couple of pages speaking on the Saskatchewan Health Council. And I'll just quote a little bit of it:

We suggest the creation of a Saskatchewan health council to develop a new health strategy; the health council comprising of senior cabinet ministers, individuals, communities, providers of health care. It would be chaired by the Premier, and report directly to cabinet, and issue, at the very minimum, an annual report. It will chart a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan.

(2145)

Now that would be unique, if you actually started off with a plan. You didn't. But you're promising to do a plan here in this speech, to promote health and well-being of Saskatchewan people.

So one has to ask the question, Mr. Minister, whatever happened to the provincial health care council? Why was it never formed? Why was the Premier . . . why did he not chair, I don't know, whatever it was?

You know, this health care supposedly means so much to you and your government. Well the people don't believe that any longer. But in fact how could they when really you're not committed to anything other than closing hospitals.

If you promised them a health care council, that we actually take a look at the problems or how things should be reformed,

and truly as it was in the speech, involve people, involve health care providers and community leaders and, you know, on and on and on, chaired by the Premier, why didn't you do it? Why in fact have you not done it?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, one of the things that I am proud of and this government is proud of is in fact the establishment of the Provincial Health Council. Mr. Chair, the Provincial Health Council was actually put in place in late 1992 or early 1993, I'm not sure of the exact date. This Provincial Health Council, as many will know in our province, given the wide travels that the council has undertaken, brings together community leaders, health care providers.

A decision was made, Mr. Chair, that we would not involve elected officials on the Provincial Health Council, and in that way to remove it from either the accusation or the threat of any political partisanship, but to bring together qualified people from all walks of life, including health care providers in our province. And we've asked that council . . . and they have done much work already and will do much more on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, and that's bringing together thoughts about long-term and the important public health policies.

I would hope that the member has received the reports of the Provincial Health Council. If he has not, we certainly will make them available to him.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I guess you better make some of these things available to the public at large because, you know, other than your little health care newspaper that you're sending around the province . . . supposedly you're doing this because I sent out a few constituents an MLA report, so you blanket the province at a cost of, I think it was almost \$100,000. And you tell me . . . if that wasn't an election paper, I've never seen one.

You know you've got some other problems that have come up and I think you're going to need to respond to them also. And that is telling the people what guidance or what direction that you've given district boards about what are acceptable ratios for nurses to patient.

In fact do you have ratios or have you changed any ratios for the nurses for acute care patients? Because, you know, some of the problems that are raised often — the fact that people are not staying in the hospitals as long as they want to stay in. I guess there's a . . . I don't know the procedures that allow for same-day releases of patients and such, but what we're hearing is that there's now a higher level of acute care, people more in need of acute care or a higher level, in the hospitals in the major centres.

But in fact — and you can clarify this, Mr. Minister — are the ratios of nurses to patient higher or lower than before you started with some of these reforms?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the member asks an appropriate question, and it essentially is the question, how do we maintain the standards of care province-wide. And in some ways that has not changed and in some ways it has changed.

The standards of care, essentially province-wide, are those standards which will be defined by The Hospital Standards Act and The Public Health Act. And those standards today remain in place as they always have. Now when it comes to a specific institution and the level of acuity of a patient load, the standards then are adjusted on the basis of the minimums set out by The Hospital Standards Act and Public Health Act to meet the needs of the acuity of a situation or a current institution.

And so then decisions will be made and always have been made actually by directors of nursing or the administration of the local facility. Provincially, the minimum standards are set through The Hospital Standards Act. Local decision making then, as has been the case almost . . . well always since we've provided hospital care and acute care.

I will say to the member that it is accurate to say that in fact levels of acuity in our acute care facilities have risen, that the treatments are intensive and the load is heavy on staff. I think that's a fair observation. But the standards — as they always have been — are maintained through legislation and then through, based on that minimum legislation, through decision making at the local level.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, I know others want to get into the debate tonight and so I won't get into too many . . . well I won't get into any other detailed questions. I would like to just make a comment that we're soon into an election. I think it's really important for you to understand that in rural Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, you are going to have to answer for what you've done, for what the previous Health minister has done, and the Premier has done, to health care in rural Saskatchewan.

I think you would be amazed how many times I've been in long-term care facilities or in some of the hospital facilities out in my area, but in other parts of the province, where I've had seniors break down into tears, where I've seen family members of some of the seniors worried sick about the kind of care that they've had.

In fact in case after case after case that I've brought forward in the last year and a half or two years in the House, where some seniors have been moved . . . the last one I think was a few weeks back. A senior from the community of Vanguard had been moved 13 times in a matter of months, finally to pass away.

Mr. Minister, those are the things that you're going to have to answer for when you come out into the south-west part of the province for sure, but out into rural Saskatchewan, to do your campaigning. I think in fact you should be ashamed. And you're also going to pay quite a price, I believe, at the polls. You have really done damage in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, it was interesting, the last time we met, as I was leaving, I was just going to walk out and head home for the evening, and a couple of young people called into the office and they had some very specific questions, a couple of questions that they'd like to ask and they'd like responses to. And so hereby I'm going to raise

them with you and ask if you could have responses to me.

Their specific question dealt with the abortion issue. And they'd like to know how many abortion procedures have been performed in the years '93-94, for '94-95; the cost of procedures for both years; and the total cost of the abortions performed in the province in those two years.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we don't have those exact numbers here tonight, but we'll sure put them together and get them to the member right away so that he can get them to those who inquired.

Mr. Toth: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister, as I promised I'd raise the questions and get them to them.

Mr. Minister, a question comes from Edam, the community of Edam, and it's a call we received from a licensed practical nurse employed at the Edam integrated facility and that's . . . Edam is in The Battlefords Health District. There's . . . in that district there's one hospital located in North Battleford. And I'm just going to go through the comments that were made and ask for a response.

Approximately a year and a half ago the LPNs (licensed practical nurse) were forced to sign an agreement with the district where it essentially lowered the LPNs to a nurse's aid level, which incidentally lowered their wages by \$1 an hour. Problems are occurring in this area now that the health district is up and running. The licensed practical nurses are being sent out on emergencies and are performing functions that they are not allowed to perform as nurses' aids. The districts have told them that they are not allowed to perform these functions but the former LPNs find they have no choice.

Mr. Minister, their question is: who is liable if someone is seriously injured if they are treated by a nurse's aid and if something goes wrong? Isn't the district putting both patients and LPNs at risk? How can licensed practical nurses work as nurse's aids when we had legislation last year changing the name of certified nurses aids to licensed practical nurses? How can a district be allowed to eliminate an entire profession at an integrated facility?

And their concern is, have you any responses or can you address this concern raised by this individual from the Edam district?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I thank the member for raising the concern of the situation. If I may speak generally, all of our districts do have all of the appropriate liability insurance for their employees. In fact I've had some cause to check this recently and I'm assured that this is the case, that there is liability protection for all of the employees of our districts delivering health care in their various and respective roles.

This is the first I've heard of the situation that the member draws to our attention here tonight. I'm going to ask his patience on this. That I'm going to have the department investigate . . . I think we've got enough of the specific we won't need the individual name. I think there's enough in what you've said to

give us sort of a description of the situation and we'll have this followed up and again provide that information to him.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, another question, and it relates somewhat to what the member from Shaunavon was talking about, a letter received from a Doreen, and I'm not sure if I'm going to pronounce this right, it's Prenevost. Ms. Prenevost was writing to voice extreme displeasure with your government's cuts to beds for Saskatchewan seniors in the personal care homes.

It seems her mother had been placed in a personal care home last December. Previous to this move she lived in the Tisdale area all her life. When her mother became ill she was admitted to Prince Albert Hospital. They informed her that her mother was unable to live alone but they wouldn't have room for her in the hospital, and advised that there was no 24-hour home care available, and that she did not qualify to get into a government home because she was still classed as a level 2. And due to cuts by the provincial government, personal care homes were only accepting level 3 and 4.

Because of this, this lady is now in a personal care home in Codette, and at the same time her daughter is saying she is unhappy, homesick, feels cut off from her former life. Both her daughters live out of province and therefore cannot provide the 24-hour care that the hospital suggested she have.

Based on this situation, Ms. Prenevost would like you to answer the following questions. Is this a humane way to treat someone who is 84 years old, has never been burden on society, and is still paying her own way in life? How can your government be losing money on their personal care homes when the people who are doing this privately are obviously in the business to make money?

And a final comment she made was is this the case . . . am I then to believe the government allows private operators to provide a substandard care and accommodation to the elderly in order that they do make some money?

(2200)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, again I think the member's identified enough information here that we can have a further look at the specifics of this individual family circumstance, and we will do that. And I commit to get that back to the member.

I think it is important for the record that we differentiate here in our conversation between the personal care homes and the publicly tax-subsidized, long-term care facilities. Personal care homes are understood to provide a more basic level of care as opposed to the more significant level of care that's offered in a long-term care facility. And hence the operational costs are quite different.

On average the monthly cost for a bed in a long-term care home will be around \$3,000; \$2,000 of that cost is subsidized by the taxpayer, and so the cost on average to an individual would be in the neighbourhood of a thousand dollars, less or a little more, depending on income.

And so there is significantly more care offered, heavier staffing levels, a different physical plant, and that would explain the difference between the care that is provided and subsidized through the taxpayer, and the personal care home which is paid by the individual.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, a question that I had raised and gone through a bit of debate with the Minister of Education who kindly informed me that the proper person to talk to regarding the subject is the Minister of Health . . . And you're probably quite well familiar with what I'm coming to now. And that's the symposium held in Saskatoon, entitled, working together toward sexual and reproductive health in Saskatchewan.

What I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, and I understand the symposium agenda was . . . and a quote of the agenda was:

The goals of the symposium are to encourage positive, healthy attitudes to sexuality and to promote the delivery of comprehensive sexual health education and services to youth.

Mr. Minister, there's a number of questions here. What I'll do is try and break them down to about three so that I'm not overloading you and your staff. And maybe you could respond to them.

As the Minister of Health, did you attend this symposium? Did any departmental representatives attend this symposium? If so, how many and from what division? And as you see it, what was the purpose of this symposium in your mind?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think I can answer the member's first three questions here. It's my understanding, and I do recall, that the former minister of Health did attend and gave, I believe, some opening remarks. I think the extent of her attendance at the symposium consisted of that opportunity to be there and bring the opening remarks. I was not there personally.

There were representatives from the Department of Health. We believe there were four people there from the Department of Health, all from the programs branch, including public health, public health nurses.

And in terms of the objectives of the symposium as I have understood them and believe them to be, the objectives were to, one, increase public awareness of some of the very important issues around this matter; number two, to provide some opportunity for dialogue about particularly teen and young people's sexuality and related health care issues among a broad group of Saskatchewan people, and number three, to examine a variety of approaches to sexuality education.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, following the symposium, did you receive a report, or your office or the former minister receive a written report, from the department representatives attending the symposium? And what did they have to say about the symposium, if you received a report? Could you inform us? And would you please indicate what any of the officials might

have felt they achieved by attending this symposium.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, as I understand it, it was not intended, nor was there, as a result of the symposium, any formal report or formal list of recommendations. And no such recommendations or report were expected from the symposium, and none have been delivered to myself or to the Minister of Education.

There was a follow-up evaluation done with the various participants. And of those who were part of the symposium — I believe there were something over 200 people involved — through the evaluation process there were 130 who did the evaluation. That evaluation was put together and was provided to the Advisory Committee on Family Planning, and so in that sense there was some reporting. And the understanding that I have is that the vast majority of those present expressed appreciation for the symposium.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I guess the question that really begs asking is, are any of the ideals or the ideas that were put forward at the symposium, are they being adopted by the Department of Health? Are they being implemented, if you will, in some of the sexual reproduction courses? And certainly issues pertaining to contraceptive uses, are those being implemented into the wellness program? As well, is the Department of Health pursuing a dialogue with the Department of Education suggesting that some of the ideas that were brought forward at the symposium be included in part of the . . . whether it's health education or the sexual family life program within the Department of Education in the school program?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think just again to be clear about the purpose of the symposium, it was a symposium that, as I indicated earlier, had as two of its first goals was simply to increase some public awareness around some of these very important issues, and number two, to provide a forum for dialogue about people who are involved, both through health and education and other fields. And also in that context to examine various options in terms of sexuality education.

I know that the Minister of Education, under questioning by the member, made it very clear that the Department of Education, nor for that matter the Department of Health, is recommending or talking about mandatory sex education in the schools, that the process which has existed will continue to exist, that it is a matter of local decision making by the local school board authorities.

There are ongoing discussions, as I think are appropriate, between the Department of Health and the Department of Education, utilizing some of the expertise now of our Advisory Committee on Family Planning, to look at the very important issues. I don't think anyone will disagree that the issue of teen pregnancy in our province is one that we need to deal with very . . . consider and deal with very seriously. The issue of the sexually transmitted diseases, not just among the young but among the young and among all ages in our province, these are very significant health and social issues.

And so there are ongoing discussions between the Department

of Health in terms of health education and the Department of Education in terms of the public school system and the tax-funded school system. But I can assure the member that some of the materials which I think the member is aware of that were shared as part of this symposium, those materials are not being incorporated into the discussions and will not be utilized in this province.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'll take your word for it, but I'm trusting that you'll even go further and maybe as Minister of Health give some direction, because I'm sure that the letters that I've received, your office has probably received as many if not more. No doubt the Minister of Education has received them as well. Because there are a lot of people do not believe that this type of a symposium and the type of . . . the topics that were discussed there were discussed just by chance, but the fact they believe that eventually they will become part of the educational program or even the wellness clinics in this province.

And there are a lot of people in our province who still firmly believe that the majority of the sex education should come from in the home. And there's no doubt there are the concerns . . . and some of the reasons that why you would address some of the issues at a public level. But, Mr. Minister, I would like to add, you may have seen the newsletter or the paper that was put out by the journalism . . . I believe it was the journalism students out of the University of Regina, I think it's about a month ago.

And there was an article in there done by one student about this sex education program a student had attended where basically this very information that was presented at the symposium was viewed, distributed, and shown. And they had some interesting comments from a student who had seen the video, also from a parent and from other parents.

And the concern is that while you would say, or while the Minister of Health would say — or pardon me, Education — would indicate that this isn't really part of the program, the fact is, someone is continuing to, subtly if you will, bring it in and introduce it in the hopes that it would become part of the long-term educational program.

And one, unfortunately I don't have it here tonight, but one school board member — while the Minister of Education, she happened to be watching — said that school boards have the opportunity — and parents can through the school board say no, we don't want that part of the education, of the sex education program, taught in our schools — can have input. This parent indicated to me that their board had a directive from the Department of Education that while they had the opportunity to choose, they would prefer that they left that course in, made sure it was available in their school.

So I guess there are many people who still feel that they really do not have the option of speaking out, or the ability of voicing their concerns and that their concerns are realistically listened to and accepted.

So, Mr. Minister, I would encourage you to at least voice your concerns and take some leadership and maybe give some

direction that would establish some of those guidelines down the road, because there's no guarantee after the next election — or even if an election isn't called — that we may not have a cabinet shuffle. It just means someone else is in place. And then your promise to us tonight falls by the wayside.

So I would encourage you, Mr. Minister, to indeed take a stronger view and make your views known more publicly, if you will. Maybe you'd like to comment before I go on to another issue.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'll just make a short comment. The member is right that I've received many letters about this particular symposium and about the subject matter in general. I received letters of all sorts, from all varieties of positions, on this very important issue.

I will commit to the member that with the family advisory committee we're struggling through these issues and trying to be as sensitive to all the points of view as we possibly can.

But I will also say that we recognize that here we have a very significant health issue that faces the young people of our province and indeed the whole population of our province. And I think working with members of the opposition, working with our educators, working with health care providers, what we need to do is find the appropriate tools for both treatment and prevention for the people of Saskatchewan.

(2215)

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, a couple of questions related to the recent brochure sent out by the Department of Health. What was the total cost of printing the brochure, the cost of distribution, the cost of producing, and what was the total cost of advertising or communications consulting associated with any aspect of the production of this brochure?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, if I could just ask one bit of qualification. Is the member referring the Health Update that was recently delivered to households in Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The Health Update, yes, that's the Health Update. We'll have the numbers in just a moment.

Mr. Chair, the total cost, the total cost of the Health Update which was delivered to every home in the province, the printing costs were \$19,520; the production costs were \$23,000; creative development costs, \$4,300; the distribution costs, \$10,000; the postage costs, \$19,000. Mr. Chair, the total cost was \$87,478.55, which, by my quick calculation, represents about 21 cents a household.

The Chair: — Order. I want to draw to the attention of the members something that is contained in the appendix to our standing orders, our *Rules and Procedures*, concerning laptop computers. And it indicates:

That the use of lap-top computers be allowed in the Legislative Chamber subject to the following restrictions as interpreted by the Chair:

Including section:

(b) they must be programmed to operate silently;

Yet I can distinctly hear some laptop computer being anything but that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for having such a good ear, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, we do have, I don't know if it's a large complaint or a small complaint, re your office. We've had a problem in one case of getting any calls back regarding a message of questions . . . a question that's been asked . . . actually six messages are still waiting for a return call on an issue regarding a constituent, and we haven't had a call back on that, and our staff are just getting a little frustrated and trying to respond to the issue that's been raised.

And I'm not exactly sure what the issue was because it hasn't been directed here. But we're just wondering, Mr. Minister, what kind of attention the public would get if even as MLAs we're having a difficulty responding. And I'll have to get some further details to maybe double-check on this. But maybe you could indicate to us what policy your office follows up if there happens to be a slip-up and someone doesn't get back a response to personalized questions that are raised with any of your ministerial assistants.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we do deal with literally hundreds of calls in my office. And we endeavour as best as we are able to get responses back very quickly, as quickly as we possibly can.

Either there is something here that wants further follow-up, that's for sure . . . If you want to just . . . Mr. Chair, if the member would please give me the details, we'll ensure that there's follow-up right away.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll follow up on that.

Mr. Minister, would you be able to provide us with a list of the health boards indicating contact numbers for each board and specifying the location of the head office? As well, Mr. Minister, would you have a response to a number of our questions regarding the last . . . I believe you received . . . what was it? About a month ago, not even a month ago — two weeks ago when you released the document that indicated the auditor's report regarding the health boards. Would you be able to release that to us so we could see what all the expenditures of the different health boards were?

We've had a number of questions that we've raised and we've been waiting for some responses. And regarding the total amount spent on board members' remuneration for '94-95 fiscal year; number of employees on staff working directly for the board; support services, administration, communications, etc. for the fiscal year; total spent on communications and advertising; total spent on severance packages for the '94-95 . . . or '93-94 fiscal year, because '94-95 isn't in; and whether employees severed by the health board were rehired; and if yes, providing names and severance packages.

And this would be for all board members or all boards, Mr. Minister. Would you be able to provide us with that information, please?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I want to ask the member if I can address his question in some parts here. The first part in terms of addresses and head offices for the district boards, we'll have those to him right away. There's no problem there at all. I know that some of the information he asked for through a motion in the house here, which had been a motion for return (debatable).

And some of the information is available to us already and that will be provided. Some of it we need to secure from the district boards. We're doing that. And some of it isn't technically available until the district boards are finished their auditing process, which is reported to us then at the end of June. And so that which comes through the auditing process and available at the end of June, then we make available when it's available to us after the formal audits.

And I also want to report to the member, just this day we finished the compilation of another bunch of information that he's asked for. I signed a letter to the member today with that information. He should get that tomorrow.

Mr. Toth: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. So I understand, Mr. Minister, you're giving us your assurances that all this information we've asked for will be forthcoming as it's available — what's already here, what's coming, and what will be finally reported at the end of June — I'd just ask for those assurances, and thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, one final question. It comes . . . and this is another one where we've . . . actually this is my colleague, the member from Kindersley, has written a couple of letters, and he's still waiting for a response re an issue about ambulatory service.

An individual at the Alsask area, Ron and Joanne Murray from Alsask whose mother was visiting from British Columbia. She became ill and was hospitalized in Saskatoon. And she had indicated that she did not have ambulance coverage, and that if they were to release her, if they were going to release her to please notify her daughter and son-in-law, I believe — that's right, her daughter and son-in-law — and they would come and pick her up. Unfortunately they discharged her and sent her home in an ambulance at the cost of \$827 which she didn't have insurance for.

And what I'm wondering is, why the hospital would have sent or ordered an ambulance when specific instructions were given to call the family and they would have been more than happy to go and pick her up. I don't know if you'd have a response, but maybe you could give us an idea of what may have happened and why their wishes were not followed, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'll ensure that the inquiry that the member has made and that the Leader of the Opposition may have made in advance will be followed up. Immediately I can't respond to why that would happen, but we'll find out.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, officials. I heard earlier this evening the Premier commenting that there were more doctors in the province now than there were last year. I wonder if you could give us the numbers for the number of doctors active in Saskatchewan in '93, '94, and '95.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, now we don't have, we won't have, of course, the end of year figures for 1995, but I'll share with the member the numbers as they exist for the years in which he asks.

It is important, Mr. Chair, to remember that these numbers are physicians who are actually practising. There will be physicians who are registered with the college who may be retired and not practising, so that number would be a different number. The numbers that I'm bringing to the member's attention tonight are physicians who are actually practising in the province in each of the years.

And so we will go back to . . . let's start at 1991. In 1991 the total, and this will include GPs (general practitioner) and specialists, the total at the end of 1991, 1,539; the total at the end of 1992, 1,492; the total at the end of 1993, 1,526; the total at the end of 1994, 1,558.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So these are the numbers who are not just registered with the college but are actually on the rolls for the medical billing services. Now how many of those are practising full time and how many of those are practising part time?

Because I know of a number of doctors around various communities that perhaps practise one or two days a week or who have a very limited number of patients. They're not taking on any new patients, they're just carrying on with their patients that they've had for 20 or 30 years in their home communities. And so in reality they have very few patients, and while they're still billing, they are not taking on new patients and they're not providing for a great number of patients. So how many doctors would there be in those categories?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I don't think we can answer that question with any accuracy. We of course are not the employers of doctors. They do bill, but the billings alone will not indicate part time or full time in any strict sense. So I, to be fair to the member, I don't think we could accurately provide that answer.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, perhaps you can work it another way. What would the average billing be for a GP in the province and how many would be above that average, how many would be below the average, and how many would say be 50 per cent below the average?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think what I'll do is I'll share some of the numbers with the member, but I'm also going to have him provided with the annual statistical report from Sask Health, which all of the tables and all of the numbers are there, and he may be able to glean the more specific information that

he wants.

As I review the tables here — and here again we're speaking in this case of all physicians — the average payment will be \$171,400. There are a fair number that will be over that, and some who are under. I won't read the whole table to the member, but we'll provide the statistical information, and you can work from it. And again, these will be fee-for-service physicians, fee for service, which make up about 80 to 84 per cent of doctors.

(2230)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The reason I bring this up is because there is a number of . . . you're giving numbers that suggest that there are more doctors in the province today than what there were a year ago. Well I can think of one circumstance — I believe in Moose Jaw — where approximately five doctors have semi-retired. They still provide some service to old clients. They perhaps provide service to one of the nursing homes, but in general they're not available to the public for general medical services. Two doctors have come in, two GPs, to replace the five that have semi-retired. So you've got two doctors. Say you got three doctors on average that are providing full service out of those seven, but you now have seven doctors on your list as being billed . . . as billing.

So rather than having a decrease, you actually have an increase because now you have seven. But they are only providing the service that would be provided by three or four doctors. So the net effect on the system is fewer doctors, fewer man-hours of medical service being provided in the communities. So you're splitting hairs, Mr. Minister, when you're saying that we have more doctors, but we're getting less service for it.

And I realize that the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, I believe it is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . okay, Palliser has a problem with hair, talking about splitting hair. But perhaps he could seek some medical service that might rectify his problem.

But, Mr. Minister, I think you need to inform the public as to how many doctors are actually providing full service in the province rather than simply the number of doctors that are billing.

The other issue I wanted to bring up is I received a letter from a constituent, Jeanette Biberdorf of Frobisher, and I'd like to read the letter because it deals with her sister. And she's asking for assistance. And it's a letter to you, Mr. Minister. It says:

Dear Sir: I'm writing on behalf of my sister's husband and family. Sharon was in a motor vehicle accident September 20, 1992, and has sustained a brain injury. She is presently taking therapy at Life Skills Centre in Airdre, Alberta.

From a recent conversation with the centre and her family, I understand that Saskatchewan Health is planning to cut the funding for her to continue therapy. This therapy is probably the only hope she has from being admitted to long-term care here in Saskatchewan.

When Sharon was admitted to Life Skills she was addicted to medications. For the first few weeks she had to be oriented to a new place, surroundings, people, and then the withdrawals of medication which has taken three months. Four months have passed, and the qualified staff at Airdre really have not had a chance to work with Sharon in therapy for her to gain her independence.

And she goes on to describe the brain injury and Sharon's age, etc., Mr. Minister. And her final paragraph is:

I beg that you will make an exception in this case and use it as a pilot project to extend the funding for Sharon and give the brain injured people of Saskatchewan a chance to gain their independence, which they can't do on their own. In two years a facility could be opened and our brain-injured would have therapy and live closer to home.

So, Mr. Minister, she's asking for assistance for her sister who has been brain-injured. She would like the therapy to carry on for her, to provide for her independence. And she's also interested in having a facility built in Saskatchewan to deal with those people who suffer brain injuries. Which in Saskatchewan at the present time, we have very small capabilities of assisting.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I believe the member indicated that the letter has been sent to me, and we'll be investigating all of the specifics of the case. And we'll look at it very seriously.

I want to just return a bit to the doctor's discussion, just to say to the member just for clarity, that the numbers that I refer to in terms of the numbers of doctors will only reflect those who are currently billing in excess of 40,000 per year.

And so there is some work happening there in each case. And there is absolutely nothing that would indicate that the ratio of physicians who will be practising full time opposed to those who will be practising on a more part-time basis has changed for many years.

The actual number of doctors practising in Saskatchewan is greater today than it was a year ago, and greater than it was two years ago. And there's nothing that would indicate to the department officials that the ratio between those practising full time or part time has changed for a considerable number of years.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a couple of questions before I make a few comments to . . . in closing.

Mr. Minister, a couple . . . the questions I have, first of all a while back I think you recall a time we met in the corridor and I said hello from Father Kushko and he has brought to my attention, I believe he's already as well brought it to your attention, talking about chelation therapy in the province of Saskatchewan. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what the

department has done to date in regards to chelation therapy.

Is the department looking at and reviewing the process, the mandate, and possibly with the idea of introducing chelation therapy into this province as a means of preventive medication. Certainly it is a much cheaper form of treating heart problems and problems with the veins that are plugging up than open heart surgery. And in many cases, information that I have read, would indicate that it certainly is effective and can be used and prevents that major expense of a bypass surgery. So I would like to know what the department is doing in pursuing that matter.

And the other question I would like to raise, Mr. Minister, and I'm giving two right off the bat, is when the district boards were formed and the . . . A lot of local communities are wondering what happened to the capital funds that they had basically been donated to them — through donations, or bequeaths, or through fund-raisers — was there anything that would have indicated that capital money, whether it was for capital construction or whether it was for equipment, was to stay with that community. What has happened to those funds? There's two questions there; I'd like a response, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, in relation to chelation therapy, and I know this issue came up in question period a few days ago, I said then and repeat tonight that of course the member and I have some mutual acquaintances and friends that have experienced chelation therapy. I think we all know neighbours in the province who have experienced chelation therapy whose personal testimonies on chelation therapy would indicate that it's been very valuable to them in some cases. Others would say it has not.

We know in terms of Canadian approvals, the Canadian approvals for the drug does not exist for the purposes of chelation therapy and we know that it has not received the endorsements of the medical profession in our province.

One of the, I think, important issues around chelation is the need for further study of its efficacy, a study that's well established with good parameters and so on. We know that kind of study has been recently announced in Alberta. And as I reported in question period, and again I report to the member tonight, that we have been in discussions, in some very close discussions, with the Alberta study and what's happening there. Further, I may say to the member, perhaps he could just stay tuned for a few more days and I believe we may be having further discussion about the matter of chelation.

In terms of the capital funds and any funds that were collected in a community for a particular project or a particular facility, those funds, through the pre-amalgamation agreements that were signed in each of our communities and districts, those funds have been held for use within that facility or that community. If the reserve funds were dedicated funds that were raised for capital purposes on a local basis, those funds have been secured for that community or for that facility through the pre-amalgamation agreements.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister,

there are certainly a lot of other issues and questions that I could get into. But for the sake of time I'm going to take a moment to do a bit of a wrap-up and my wrap-up will depend on the length of time your response may be following.

First of all, Mr. Minister, may I just . . . I guess a question I'm posing here is, you made a comment about staying tuned regarding chelation therapy. Am I to guess or presume that there's another election promise coming down the road in a day or so and that chelation therapy is going to be something that will be a norm in this province? I think the people of Saskatchewan would appreciate something like that if it was done well in advance or even had been done two or three years ago versus the number of election promises and announcements that we see taking place at this time.

But, Mr. Minister, let me talk about where health care is today. Last night I sat down with a care-giver in our community, an individual who wanted to chat with me who is a home care giver. And she was going through this wellness pamphlet that had come out. And just to put it mildly, she said it just made her sick to think, to read through the different things that you were espousing as a government, how much better our health care system is versus what she as a care-giver is seeing and the problems she is running into. And I just want to remind you of a few things.

Maybe I'll just bring them to your attention, what your Premier said back in October 3, 1991, when it comes to health care.

Well to answer your specific question, we will not charge premiums or deterrent fees, or utilization fees as they are called, for a number of reasons. Basically the fundamental is they are not a fair way to finance a health care program.

Well I'm sure, Mr. Minister, if you would have taken the time to ask the people of the province whether they'd be willing to pay for some health premiums, or whether they'd be willing to pay for — if you will — deterrent fees, you may have found, rather than what we see today, people would have said yes, we are more than prepared to put something into our health care system to maintain it.

The Premier again, back in March of '88, through *The Commonwealth* said:

New Democrats will continue to fight the fight to restore social programs such as medicare, the dental and drug plans to their former place of leadership for Saskatchewan.

And yet if we look over what's happened in the last three years, none of those programs are available any more other than the dental program is still available to government employees.

And it's also interesting, Mr. Minister, to note a few comments from some of the other colleagues. The former minister of Health, while in opposition — and I see she's come to visit us tonight — November 20, *Leader-Post*: the Conservatives cut back on public health nurses, provided stingy increases for

home care and slashed programs.

April 27, '91, *Leader-Post*, Simard said: "The Devine years have meant cut-backs, health bed closures, and fired health care workers."

Atkinson in *Hansard*, November 4, '87:

The health situation in this province is out of control. We have a drug plan where people are making decisions between (guess what) groceries and prescription drugs. Too little, too late.

Atkinson, *Hansard*, November 5, '87:

In view of all the evidence and all the concerns that have mounted over the last several months, will you, as Acting Minister of Health, on behalf of your government, stop hacking and slashing away at our health care system.

Again Atkinson, October 20, '87:

In view of the fact that nearly 100,000 Saskatchewan citizens have sent you a clear message to reverse your harmful and hurtful health care cuts, will you now listen to the people of Saskatchewan?

And I think that was following a period of time when there was members on this side of the House standing up and presenting one petition after another and tying up the whole process of the House for days on end.

Mr. Minister, it seems to me that the comments that I'm reading here, while they were coming from prior to 1991, it looks like they should be coming today because I don't know if there's a government that has slashed and cut and hacked and dispensed with so many services while at the same time suggesting they have done so much more.

And so, Mr. Minister, it would seem to me as I would close and suggest that it's not only the people of Saskatchewan, but even your own members have a problem in dealing with the way health care has progressed in the province of Saskatchewan over the past two and a half or three and a half years. And it would seem to me, Mr. Minister, that it would have been appropriate, rather than rushing into these district boards, rather than appointing board members, if you would have taken the time to look at some other options, that it could have included more community input. Because if there's one thing I hear, time and time again, it's a lack of community input. And it's not just patients themselves. It's not just . . . It's care-givers. It's doctors, and even some of the local boards are becoming frustrated.

And I chatted with a board member who called recently and said, I really don't care any more because I'm not going to let my name stand for election because I am just sick and tired of what has happened and some of the decisions we've been forced to make. We really haven't had the ability to make decisions based on what the community around us has been suggesting.

So, Mr. Minister, you can stand in your place tonight, and you can brag about all your accomplishments, but there are many people out there who feel that you are really lacking when it comes to health care, unfortunately. So I can only close by suggesting that maybe it's time we sat back and took a serious look at where health care is.

And if we're really interested in helping the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, in these final moments, will you give a commitment to this Assembly that you'll go beyond electing eight health district board members and electing all 12 so that the district boards actually have the ability . . . and feel that they have been placed in leadership in their district to represent their constituents. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

(2245)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, no, I will not. We have established by legislation that 8 of the 12 district health board members will be elected, and four will be appointed. And that will be how we proceed through the first elections which will be held this fall.

With that, Mr. Chair, I do want to personally welcome the former minister of Health to the House this evening, as she has joined us earlier. Now she's saying I shouldn't be doing that.

And I want to, Mr. Chair, simply extend my appreciation to the critic from the opposition caucus, from the Conservative Party, who I think through the course of these estimates — and I think we've been in the House together now 9 or 10 times — I think has brought some very appropriate and important questions to the floor of the legislature. And I've appreciated the good work that he has done.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 32 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1994-95
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Health
Vote 32**

Items 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 32 agreed to.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, at this time I'd like to take a moment just to thank the minister and his officials for the time they've spent in this Assembly, and the deliberations, and certainly we look forward to responses to some of the questions that will be forthcoming. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I want to certainly add my personal thanks to the officials from the Department of Health who have been in the legislature assisting us through the

process of estimates. I want to thank those who have been in the House and to thank, through them, many other members of the Department of Health staff who work so hard to provide the quality care from what I believe is the pre-eminent Department of Health in all of Canada. So my thanks to each and every one of our officials.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**General Revenue Fund
Environment and Resource Management
Vote 26**

The Chair: — I would ask that the minister please introduce the officials who have joined us here this evening.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I'm honoured again to have the opportunity to answer to my friends on the other side of the House. And with me for that purpose I have my deputy minister, Mr. Michael Shaw, on my right; behind Mr. Shaw, Ross MacLennan, the assistant deputy minister of operations; directly behind me, Les Cooke, the associate deputy minister of policy and programs; and immediately to my left, Bob Blackwell, assistant deputy minister of management services; and behind Bob, Donna Kellsey, the director of finance administration. I'd like you to join me in welcoming them to the House.

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in your duties as Environment and Resource minister, I also believe that you're responsible for the SARCAN operations and SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres), and that you work with that particular board structure in how they manage their affairs to the province of Saskatchewan. I wonder, Mr. Minister, could you tell us what the current financial position of that organization is?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. I understand the SARCAN operation is in good financial position.

Mr. Swenson: — I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if the minister could tell us exactly what that good financial position is.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — If I could just ask how much detail the member opposite wants, or whether he'd like me just to forward to him on another occasion or even today, the documents with the full financial outline and performance of the operation.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I note in the year-end report ending 1994, that there was excess revenue over expenses of \$2,766,248. Can you tell me, is that normal or is there an accumulated surplus there? What would be that position?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, there is an accumulated surplus in SARCAN, I'm told, of about \$6 million, some of which was contributed to by the current surplus. The SARC operation is designed to break even operationally and

generally the salvage value of products that are sold are used for other SARC projects with respect to examining new recycling opportunities or some of the programs that the association uses, so the numbers though, are larger than previous years because of the upturn in the value of some of the recycled materials.

Mr. Swenson: — And what do they do with that revenue, Mr. Minister? Do they invest that in any way? Do they invest in treasury bills, that sort of thing, with this particular money?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The relationship between ourselves and SARCAN is a contractual relationship by which we contract with them to do certain things. We do not manage SARCAN; it's a contractual relationship that's reopened periodically. So that we're not directly involved in the financial decisions with respect to the reinvestment of surpluses that they may earn, but I'm presuming that they would use sound financial investment processes.

Mr. Swenson: — So what you're saying, Mr. Minister, is that you have a contract with them, but you don't intrude into any of their financial dealings or into the conditions with which people — disabled, handicapped people — within the organization work or the pay levels of those individuals or any of the working conditions. That's of no concern to you in your contractual arrangement with them?

(2300)

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, sorry for taking so long to understand this. I have understood it several times in my life but it is a complex arrangement.

We contract with SARCAN for services directly. They operate it but they also then have extensive relationships as an organization with Social Services in terms of the management of the human services. And they would then also be required to abide by all the labour standards in the province just as a provincial operating agency, as an independent agency.

Mr. Swenson: — So who would determine, Mr. Minister, on the expenditure of these funds, of whether the money would go toward SARCAN depots or whether it would go toward, for instance, some of the sheltered workshops? Is that totally out of your hands or is that made by Social Services or is that made by the board of SARCAN? Who makes that determination of how that money gets spent?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The contract requires, on depot location, for them to consult with us. The network that's set out, there was an original requirement for a certain network in the province so that there would be a comprehensive collection system in the province. But with respect to expansion of that network, they would come to us with their own plans and consult with us before they would expand it.

Basically their decision making, as I've heard comments on it before through my office, are that they are often having to make decisions with respect to their own intentions in that regard against the profitability of additional services relative to the volume of recycled materials that are available in various places

in the province.

Mr. Swenson: — So you're saying that they do consult with you. If workers in some of these situations were working in substandard conditions and there were complaints, who would they go to? Would that go to you, or would that go to the Social Services minister? Where would that go? Who has the authority and the responsibility to deal with decisions being made by the board in this situation?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — As I've indicated before, we're involved in the establishment of the network. But with respect to the specific working conditions of people working in the system, that would be under the Department of Labour.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I say to you, Minister, that not all is right in that system. I know in my own community of Moose Jaw, where there have been numerous attempts to have someone look at the working conditions of the SARCAN depot and have had very little results in getting anyone to pay much attention to what was going on in that particular situation where — in my view, in talking to people — there actually was danger to life and limb because of circumstances. And no one seems to want to take this very seriously.

I'm told that in other areas of the province similar concerns have been raised about the working conditions of the people who I believe the system was set up to benefit in the very first place. And yet they seem to have no opportunity to improve the working conditions or in fact have the fruits of their labour rewarded by the current system. Do you agree or disagree?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Well in general I disagree. If however you're aware of a circumstance that we should be investigating, I'd appreciate alerting to it. I know there are concerns expressed to my office from time to time, and when concerns are expressed I've asked officials to look into those sorts of complaints when they're serious, because we want to make sure, I want to make sure, that the contractual arrangements under which the relationship operates is such that the best benefit for everybody in the system is obtained.

And so I can tell that we have done reviews on circumstances people have drawn to our attention. If there are some, I'd appreciate hearing about it, because it's certainly not the intention of the system to put anybody at a disadvantage. It's a system that has substantial benefits for many and that's our goal.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I'm told, Minister, that an occupational health and safety officer had to be called into that situation and made some recommendations because any pleas for help that had been made both to the board of SARCAN and to your office were totally ignored.

And I don't understand why, as the minister responsible, you would not find it serious enough to have somebody at least do something about it. Thank goodness others felt that there was some concern there and asked that things be done. I mean don't you feel that you do have some responsibility in that area?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I'm having difficulty responding because I

don't know if the member is referring to a specific case. If he is, I would appreciate him detailing that so that I would be in a better position to respond. But I can say that in general, the system operates soundly and the proper safeguards are there through labour legislation in the province, through the Social Services monitoring, and through the contractual arrangements we have with the SARC board and the SARCAN operation, which does generally operate in the interests of all the people in the system and for the Saskatchewan public.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, how many CEOs (chief executive officer) of SARCAN have you had since coming to office?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, we were discussing a matter here when the member was asking the question. Was the question how many CEOs have been in the operation since we've come to office?

Mr. Chairman, it's been one change since we've come to office.

Mr. Swenson: — So when was Walt Koehler; what was the term of his office?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — My officials inform me that Walter Koehler was in place from sometime in 1991 until 1994, at which time Archie Balon has taken over.

Mr. Swenson: — And what role did Julian Bodnar play in this particular organization during that period of time?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, there are, I'm told by my officials, 36 branches of SARC in the province. And each of them appoints a board member to the provincial board and the provincial representatives then choose their Chair. And Mr. Bodnar was apparently the Chair chosen by the representatives.

Mr. Swenson: — So he was the provincial chairman of the organization. And it would have been Mr. Bodnar then that terminated Mr. Koehler's employment as the CEO (chief executive officer) of SARCAN?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I'm not sure of the terms under which Mr. Koehler left, but Mr. Bodnar was the Chair of the board at the time when Mr. Koehler left.

Mr. Swenson: — And he also would have been the individual in charge of hiring Archie Balon as the new CEO of the organization?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, the officials aren't absolutely certain of the timing of who was there exactly at which moment, but they believe that Mr. Bodnar was the Chair at which point Mr. Balon was chosen. They believe also by a selection committee.

Mr. Swenson: — And since that time now Mr. Julian Bodnar has also resigned from his position as chairman of that organization?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, my officials informed me that Mr.

Bodnar resigned as Chair.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, does the name of Lorna Purdy mean anything to you in regards to any of these individuals?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The officials may know something about that name; it means nothing to me personally.

Mr. Swenson: — And I'm curious about a lot of things, Mr. Minister. Ms. Purdy used to work in the SARCAN operation in Outlook, Saskatchewan, and was involved in a situation with one of the local board members there, an individual by the name of Jim Wankel who was charged with sexual assault on Ms. Purdy. Also some other allegations. Were you aware of this particular thing, especially after Ms. Purdy was terminated from her employment by SARCAN?

(2315)

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, these are matters that are, as we described earlier, matters under the management authority and jurisdiction of the SARC board. And they're not matters that would come to me for a resolution, or decision, or advice.

Mr. Swenson: — Well the reason I asked these questions, Minister, is because I know that you and a lot of other members of your government have been made aware of all of this stuff. It's a very well-documented report by an individual who was also terminated because of bringing a lot of these issues to the fore. And this was discussed by a large number of your caucus members, in fact.

And today we have Lorna Purdy Greenaway, who was terminated because of raising concerns. We have another lady by the name of Pat Olson who made, I believe, some allegations concerning the leadership in SARCAN, lost her job. Mr. Carter Currie of Moose Jaw, who I think you probably know. I'm sure that the member from Moose Jaw informed you of probably where I was going in this questioning. And I'm really concerned that you, the minister responsible of dealing with an organization who employ literally hundreds of disabled people in our province, under a contractual basis with the government of Saskatchewan, would be going through a whole series of changes at the top. Dismissals, which as I understand, to this point aren't in some cases resolved; that individuals have been terminated because they were suffering from stress and mental illness, which according to the legislation that your own government recently brought in, is not acceptable.

And that today we have in excess of \$6 million in various forms of which you're not quite sure what they are but with your contractual partners performing, I say, a great service to the province of Saskatchewan. And yet I haven't, until recently, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, heard about any of this. And I am really wondering why all of these terminations, resignations, clouds of suspicion.

The board member from Outlook was charged and yet this very day I am told still has under his jurisdiction, under his roof, a handicapped person. I know that's not your responsibility. That's probably Social Services. But this organization that you

do all of this business with appears to be less than pristine from what I've been able to determine . . . and interviewed several people across this province, and I'm wondering why, if this problem exists, you as minister have not been proactive in cleaning it up, especially when it was brought to your attention some time ago.

And I know it was because I've got the correspondence here, all of it. There's all sorts of letters to yourself. There's letters to other ministers of the Crown, all very well documented, involving a whole host of people. And I'm wondering why you would allow this situation to go on when we're dealing with the lives of people that sometimes can't really defend themselves like you and I can. And I'm wondering why you would want this to be prolonged and swept under the rug apparently and not do something about it.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, just to respond to the question that the member has made specific reference to, a particular series of concerns that were reported, just to assure the member and the Saskatchewan public that the information that was sent to ministers was referred to the responsible bodies, and internal investigations were done with respect to each of the concerns that were raised. And it's my belief that they have been dealt with. On the side of the contractual adequacy between ourselves and SARC, that contract is up for renewal from time to time. And it either just has been or is near ready for renewing.

That has been under negotiations, and in preparation for those negotiations our officials have reviewed with SARC their management structures, and there are provisions for improved accountability within the system in the new contract. And hopefully people will continue to be well served by this organization.

I think it is unfortunate that from time to time in systems, these sorts of concerns arise, and it's unfortunate if in fact people are hurt in circumstances, but we must have provisions and manners in which to deal with those. And we do through Social Services, and labour legislation have ways of dealing with concerns.

And the contract between ourselves and SARC is one that is there to provide a service, environmentally, and the other areas of concern that have been raised with respect to the nature of management and the concerns raised between managements and staff, do have other ways of being dealt with. And we will continue to ensure that they are dealt with soundly.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I would hope that would be the case, Minister, because some of the correspondence that I have is fairly graphic. And I know that this correspondence has been made available to your office and to other . . . You know, when an individual brings forward allegations about board members touching clients' breasts and that sort of thing, I would think people would get sort of upset. And when employees are forced to put up with that kind of stuff for several years and then find themselves terminated because they raise those concerns, I would think that people within government would be very concerned.

And I would really wonder at you wanting to continue on a contractual arrangement when there has been these types of allegations. And there were convictions, by the way. So they're not unsubstantiated; there were convictions.

This isn't hearsay. This stood up in a court of law. But those individuals still found themselves terminated. And I think that that is indeed very shameful, that an organization which, as I say, was developed in this province, I think with the best interests of handicapped people first and foremost, and as a growth industry in environmental management, certainly one that every citizen in this province appreciates, and yet we appear to have an unfortunate circumstance where we have a number of employees shoved out in the cold and your government turning an absolute blind eye to them.

And these concerns brought forward on several occasions to you, the members of your caucus, and yet still there appears to be no resolution. And I didn't want to just take hearsay so I've interviewed most of these individuals on a personal basis. And those are tough stories to sit and listen to and yet this whole issue appears to be something that no one wants to deal with.

And I ask you then, why was this contractual arrangement that you have, not reviewed some time ago given all of what appears to have been a very unsavoury situation occurring? Why would you want to prolong this relationship if there are very substantive issues involving abuse of handicapped people, disabled people, and employees? And why would that not be exposed to the public instead of, in my view, covered up over quite a long period of time?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I can assure the member opposite that there has been no covering up. The comments that were received by our office — you've got the mail in front of you — was received quite a long time ago. Can you give me a date possibly on that? It's, I think in my recollection, a year or year and a half ago.

Since that time, as I had indicated earlier, the processes of law and the processes of the Department of Labour and the processes of the Department of Social Services have been applied to the various concerns that were raised. And in terms of our own contractual obligations and arrangements with SARC, we believe the organization is doing a good job.

And in every instance in independent management systems, people can make mistakes where other people are hurt and we have processes in law to deal with those and they have done. We have processes in management to deal with them and it's my understanding that those have been dealt with. And in terms of the contractual obligation and arrangement that we have with SARCAN, the new agreement will continue to give authority to them as an independent body, and we will continue to ensure that a good service continues to be provided for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Swenson: — I believe the latest correspondence I have which you would have had, Minister, would be September 29, '94, and October '94. That's not that long ago. And I've been

assured that you were made aware of this correspondence, an open letter to SARC board members, SARC members, and SARCAN staff and workers. And I believe that correspondence was provided to your office at least, if not to you directly, talking about many of these issues, some of these outstanding dismissals.

And I'm wondering, Minister, are you contemplating as you negotiate this new arrangement, are you contemplating, putting in both more safeguards for the employees within the system and a process that perhaps the public can become more involved in, vis-a-vis the disbursement of funds? Or are you going to leave it as it was with control of an organization that looks like it's had difficulty controlling itself over the last few years?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, we have, in the new contract, included measures for public reporting which were not there before.

But with respect to the matters of employee safeguards and management responsibility, we will continue to provide the same protection in this situation that every other Saskatchewan citizen has under Justice, under Labour, under Social Services, and continue to encourage people to make the various systems aware when there are concerns, because certainly it's our intent to see the system running wholly well and not putting people in any difficult circumstances.

(2330)

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, would you think it fair to suggest that perhaps before that new agreement's signed that maybe some of these outstanding issues concerning personnel and some of these, what I would consider to be very serious allegations, would be cleaned up?

At least you would want to make the organization aware of your intent to sign a contract with people that obviously are wholly reputable when dealing with the people within their own systems. Could you give me the assurance that before that new contract is signed that you personally will make sure that some of these issues are looked after before you sign that contract?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I can tell you that the SARC board is a responsible and reputable board that has done good work for a number of years and they, I'm sure, are no happier with incidents of this sort that arise than any of the rest of us are. I will, on your behalf and on my behalf, pass on the concerns that have been raised so that they are aware that, as I'm sure they already are, but they're aware that others are as well concerned with the circumstances that we've discussed here tonight.

Mr. Swenson: — Well thank you, Minister. I was quite hesitant to even bring this issue to the Legislative Assembly. I am not one that chases ambulances or fire engines or . . . and I certainly don't want to end a 10-year career in this House by bringing some spurious garbage to the floor. But when one sits down and talks with these individuals, you understand that there is a lot of concern and a lot of hurt, and I found it very strange that people

weren't taking more of an interest in some of these issues.

This is very serious stuff. And if this organization is going to carry on the good work that it does, I would think that its employees, the working conditions surrounding disabled people in this province, and the ability of those kind of people to integrate into our society, would be first and foremost before we, as a government, would want to be involved in signing contracts or doing all sorts of things with them.

And if the people don't come first in this thing, then maybe the environmental stuff doesn't matter quite as much, is my view. And I'll leave it with you and I don't know where it will go beyond that. We're probably going to have an election, but it is on the record, and I hope in future that people will be watching this and see where it goes. And if your commitment to the House tonight isn't lived up to, I would hope that somebody would take you to task for it in a fairly strong way.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I appreciate the concerns the member opposite has raised. It's obviously a concern to any of us who have become aware, and I want to just conclude this part of the discussion by saying that there has been . . . that the matters have some time ago been referred to the various responsible bodies and thoroughly investigated. The letters you referred to secondarily must be subsequent to that discussion because this began long before September of '94 in terms of the original reporting to me.

I say extensive review has occurred, and it's my understanding that the issue has been relatively fully dealt with through one of the courses that's available to people when they find themselves in difficult straits. So I thank you for your concern because it's a concern of all of us that systems do function for the benefit of all Saskatchewan people including the people that work in the system.

Mr. Swenson: — One final question, Minister. Do you know how I would obtain the board expenses — say of the last three years — per diems and that sort of thing of the SARCAN board? Where would I go to find that information?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The SARC board does run independently, as we had indicated, and so if you would just contact the board and ask for that information.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, officials, one of the issues that has been ongoing within Environment around the province is dealing with water. And this particular spring we have a significant amount of water along the eastern side of the province. And I know that some of you over there are thinking I'm going to ask about Rafferty-Alameda, and I'm not. We've got lots of water in Rafferty and Alameda . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well there was a young gentleman down in Rafferty who found out that there was a little too much water in Rafferty unfortunately.

The question I have though deals with the Langenburg east project. Mr. Minister, I wonder if you can give us an update on what is happening on that project and why an environmental assessment was ordered to be done on that particular project?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes I will, to the extent of my responsibility for that area. The whole issue is a matter that is more directly under the responsibility of the minister responsible for Sask Water. But we have indicated that an environmental impact statement will be required on the project, so that's where that's now at.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. How small or how large of a project do you have to be involved with to warrant an environmental impact study?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The Environmental Assessment Act doesn't define size of the project as a criterion. It defines impact on the environment and on people, and on the . . . in this case it was decided that there was significant enough concern about the impact of the application that an environmental impact assessment should be done.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is it a function of the volume of water that is being considered? Is it a function of the amount of land being affected? Or is it some other criteria in which you measure whether or not an environmental impact study is done? Does it take one complaint to generate an environmental impact study if your assessment is done by your department to say that yes, there will be some impact so we should study it?

What is the criteria that you look at, that your department looks at, to make a determination as to whether or not an impact study is needed or not needed?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the easiest way of dealing with this question might be to just encourage the member to ask of the department, the file. We, this spring . . . earlier this winter actually made a change in the access to information in this regard, so that the information that the member opposite is asking for in greater detail than I can give it here, would be available to him through that source.

But to speak generally that, as the member is aware, there is division within the community and it is significant . . . there are significant concerns on both sides of the question of drainage. And the best way to resolve those questions then from the environmental side is to actually have an impact study that can examine the impacts both locally and downstream in Manitoba where others are expressing concern about the impacts of the project.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I've been out and had a look at the Langenburg project and there seems to be a large amount of drainage already in the area. I believe there are three separate projects, and the Langenburg east project is an extension of one of those projects.

As we toured the area and had a look at it, there seemed to be already within that project a significant amount of drainage that was being done — some of it legally, some of it illegally. And in fact it was pointed out to us that some of this drainage was on the land of the people that were complaining about the project.

So there is, I agree, a large amount of conflict within the community there. And I think that one of the problems that is generated there is some of the people downstream who have already drained their land both legally and illegally, are concerned about other water coming onto their land from upstream that would have an impact on it. Whereas the impact of their drainage downstream does not seem to be of great concern to them. That's the Langenburg east project.

But there's another project in this province that also needs some consideration, Mr. Minister, dealing with some drainage, where the neighbours are not happy about the drainage that's involved. And that is up in the Tisdale area, where one Jack Messer of SaskPower fame perhaps, or infamy, is carrying on some drainage in that area, Mr. Minister, because of a beaver problem that is occurring on his land and draining water. That's a problem to his neighbours. Well, Mr. Minister, are you going to carry out an environmental impact study on the drainage being done by one Jack Messer, past president of the NDP Party?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — If there, Mr. Chairman, if there are concerns with respect to drainage by any individual in Saskatchewan, then it should be brought to the attention of Sask Water. We become involved only at the point of environmental impact statements on projects that are proposed. So the Sask Water does have the responsibility for water management in the province and for drainage, the nature in which you're expressing concern about.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, this project has already been proposed and is perhaps even completed. So when that happens, if someone drains a piece of project or a piece of land, when do you become involved? Does it take a written complaint from somebody? Because it's been in the newspaper that the people have been complaining up there about Jack Messer's drainage. So what does it take to get you involved?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I wouldn't become involved in those projects because that responsibility is the responsibility of Sask Water.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So as long as Sask Water doesn't have any concerns about it, the Environment then is not involved. So unless Sask Water is involved in a project or complains about a project, your department will never get involved. Is that what you're telling us?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — If there is public concern about a proposed project, a legally described project, and it needs an assessment, then we would become involved. I'm not certain from your remarks whether you were contending that someone drained without permission but the normal procedures, the normal procedures that Sask Water uses for dealing with conservation developed projects is a relationship between the community that's established that it wants to do something within that framework and Sask Water. If through that process as in the Langenburg east case, public concern is raised, then the request for an environmental impact assessment can be made and responded to. So I'm not sure exactly how you're characterizing the project that you're concerned about.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, the public has raised concern about this. Now I'm not aware whether Mr. Messer has a permit to do this draining or not, but if the public brings the concern to you and under the auspices of that it's affecting the environment, would you investigate it and would you conduct an impact study?

(2345)

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Without knowing more details of either the project or the state of it or the extent . . . well the magnitude or whether it's proposed or done, or with permit or without, without knowing any of that it's very difficult to respond. But I can assure you that if there is a concern and someone writes us, we can respond appropriately.

And certainly at the end of the day if there are projects of significant environmental impact, it's within our authority to make sure that they're properly examined for impact and conducted in such a way that the environment is protected.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Have you received any complaints or concerns about this particular piece of draining?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I don't recollect having been made aware of it, and our officials don't either.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure that someone will be in all likelihood contacting you about Mr. Messer and his drainage project.

I'd like to talk to you about another environmental concern that's taking place in the southern part of the province, and that's at Bienfait, dealing with Plains Environmental Inc. and their proposal to put it in an incinerator at Bienfait.

I wonder if you can give us an update on what the circumstances are with that particular proposal, and you have the environmental impact study report available on that — or it's not the study, but the proposal from Plains Environmental.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Our environmental assessment process provides a time and an opportunity for the public to respond to environmental impact statements. The department has received the environmental impact statement, it has done its technical review, and the environmental impact statement along with the technical review have been made available for public examination and comment for a 60-day period beginning May 5. And it's my duty to, during that period, hear public comment before making any decision at the end of it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. It says here that the . . . normally it's a 30-day review period and that has been extended to 60 days, so when will that extension expire?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — July 4.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, under the circumstances, with the spring that we're having this particular year, most of

the people in my area are not on the land at all yet. So that would in fact give them some opportunities now but they're all busy out there trying to see to it that they can get on the land. And I'm not sure that an extension to July 4 will be sufficient to provide people with the opportunity to prepare submissions either for or against the proposals. Has any consideration been given to extending that perhaps for another 30 days to allow the people to have the opportunity to prepare their reports?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The Act, as it is constructed, provides for a normal public review period of 30 days, and because of the request of the community raising some of the concerns you've raised, we extended it to a 60-day period to give them the maximum time under the Act in order to respond.

When I receive the responses at the end of the 60 days, if significant issues are raised that need some other process for further review, we have options at that time. But the Act for this process allows for 30 days and an extension for 60 days after which I have to then make a public response to what I've heard.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you can give us some information as to what this proposal entails. What kind of volumes is this incinerator looking at and what kind of products would they be incinerating?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I don't want to duck that discussion. As the member opposite knows, we've had elements of it before. I feel constrained by the period of public review that we're in to not get into a detailed discussion of the project personally, although the documents are available to you. And if any clarification by officials is necessary, I can ensure that they'll do that for you. But I would personally appreciate your understanding that in order to maintain impartiality that I not discuss the details of the operation in this public review period.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could supply me with a copy of that report that you have available because it is a very contentious issue. I receive quite a few phone calls and letters dealing with that issue, and the communities have had a number of meetings also.

I'd like to move on to the other half of your department now and that being the resource side of it. I have here a copy of the Saskatchewan big game draw, and this is probably the area of your department that most of the public has contact with this and the fisheries parts of it.

You're proposing to make some changes to the wildlife management zones, particularly along the forest areas where they transition between farm land and forest. I wonder if you can give us an indication of what those proposals are and to what extent they are, and how they're going to affect the outfitters in those areas.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, as the member may know that outfitting is carried on principally in the forest zone in Saskatchewan. It has been an area, a transitional area between agriculture and forestry where outfitting has as well occurred.

The concerns have been raised by farmers and RMs (rural municipality) that because of the longer seasons in the forest area, it causes some concern for the farming community. So what's been proposed is that we create a transitional zone in areas where there is also farm land, where the seasons for hunting will be adjusted to remove that conflict, but to do it in such a way that there is a cooperative relationship between the hunting community and the farmers and the people that live in the area.

So we've met a number of times with the people who have had concerns, and we're going to be working with the committee that the outfitters will put representation on in order to make sure that this transition happens in a way that does not threaten their businesses but addresses the concerns that farmers have raised in the past.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. It's my understanding that these changes were initially to be implemented this fall. And these changes occurred after a good majority of the outfitters had already gone to a number of the shooting shows, the hunting shows, where they were booking hunters to come up to hunt in these areas, after which you went ahead to change the rules, which caused a great deal of consternation and problem for them because all of a sudden their hunting times were shortened up, and there were fewer tags, I believe, available at that particular time.

Also a change that you were making in there was going to charge the hunters, I believe, upfront \$75 per permit, or to the outfitter \$75 a permit, without them having the knowledge of whether or not they were going to be able to sell those permits, and yet they had to pay for them upfront. Have you made necessary changes so that the bookings that have already been made prior to these regulation changes can be honoured? And what changes have you made in relationship to the \$75 per permit?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I should preface my remarks by saying the outfitters in Saskatchewan have been working with us in trying to enhance the quality of outfitting in Saskatchewan. And I can say that I have very much appreciated the efforts of the outfitters' association who have worked with us very strongly in developing some new processes, but also those who express concern as you described, who felt that some of the changes were premature relative to their own operations and because they also when they met with me, were most understanding and cooperative with respect to making adjustments.

I make that comment because we did then reach an understanding about what would happen this year and what would happen in future years that everyone is generally happy with. There is significant support for the idea of an allocation fee. Outfitters are as concerned as anyone that we use our hunting processes, whether they be outfitting or hunting in the South as a process for wildlife management. And it's important that we use those management tools with as much precision as we can.

That's of course the reason while we have the opportunity, that I want to add one more time for the record, the concern of the

hunting community in Saskatchewan, and my own concern, and that often expressed by Mr. Mitchell for other reasons about the current federal proposals with respect to gun control; that in fact if it begins to affect the nature of hunting in Saskatchewan, be it outfitting or be it regular hunting by Saskatchewan or other Canadian residents, that this seriously impacts on one of the key tools we have for maintaining wildlife populations in balance with other activities in the province.

(2400)

And as I said in the rally in Rosetown, we've seen what the European fur lobby has done to beaver populations because the prices have dropped and the market has vanished, and we have significant concern in that area. And I again have serious concerns that if there are serious impacts on the hunting in Saskatchewan that we again could have other wildlife population imbalances in the province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. It's unfortunate though on our initial topic — we'll get into gun control later; as you know it's one of my favourite topics — it's unfortunate though, Mr. Minister, that these changes that you did implement to correct the imbalances that you had put into place through adjustments in your department, that that only happened after we brought the issue up in question period with a whole group of the outfitters sitting up in the galleries.

Now it would have been nice if your department and yourself had taken their concerns and considerations into place before they had to drive down from Nipawin and across the northern forest fringe area to come into the legislature to get the solutions. It shouldn't have to be that you have to go to the opposition or to the government and sit up in the galleries to get solutions to your problems. But unfortunately with you, Mr. Minister, it seems to be that is one of the few ways in which changes can be made.

On the gun control issue and the impact on hunting, I agree with you that this will have a very detrimental effect to our wildlife. Unfortunately a good many of those people who are not in favour of firearms also aren't in favour of hunting, and they really have no concern as to the impact that that will have on the wildlife within the province of Saskatchewan or indeed across Canada. Their sole purpose seems to be the elimination of firearms.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you have prepared any financial information as it relates to hunting and fishing in this province and the impact that diminishing firearm use would have in this province if Mr. Rock's Bill goes through and the American hunters and the offshore hunters find it unfavourable to come to Canada to enjoy our hospitality and our hunting opportunities.

I realize that the member from Saskatoon Fairview has spoke out a considerable amount on this, but he's not the only one in this Assembly that has been dealing with this. I have spent a considerable amount of time in this session, indeed prodding the Minister of Justice to be a little more proactive on the firearms issue rather than simply sitting back and talking about it. I wonder if you have some financial information that would

be pertinent to the hunting in Saskatchewan if this legislation does indeed go through.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have the extent of the detail that the member opposite wishes, but we do have it in the department and we'll make sure we forward that detail to him.

I just want to say again that with respect to the earlier issue the member had raised, that the original consultations had been with the outfitters' association, taken at great length, and it was only after that extensive consultation that occurred that we discovered that there was a group of outfitters who found themselves, their concerns, not to have been represented, they believed. And they came to us, and unfortunately the day that the members came here I was not here to meet with them because I was elsewhere.

And I appreciate the member raising it and I'm happy that the issue is resolved because the outfitting industry in the northern part of the province is a significant part of the economic activity and the wildlife management activity that goes on there and I'm happy that they are working harmoniously again.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would appreciate it if you could put some of the financial numbers together, because I think it would be a valuable addition to the arguments in relationship to this firearms legislation and the impact it will have on hunting and fishing in this province.

I have another concern dealing with provincial parks. A number of our provincial parks have commercial enterprises being carried on within those parks. If such an enterprise wanted to change the focus of its activities, something that it may have been permitted for, would it need another permit or can it simply change its focus and provide new services?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Presuming . . . it depends on the extent of the change. If the change was substantial, we would enter into negotiations with respect to the new activity that a lessee wanted to engage in.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If, say, a commercial outlet had a small store in a provincial park and they wanted to provide some other service such as an auctioneering or a flea market or something like that, would they need another permit for that or would they simply carry on under their current retail permit?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — My officials inform me that within all of our park leases we have a competition clause, so that if a new activity wants to take place it has to be examined against existing services already provided. So there would have to at least be a discussion so that the question could be examined, and depending on the nature of the outcome of the discussion, possibly new negotiations for a different sort of contract.

Mr. D'Autremont: — When this determination is being made, Mr. Minister, would it simply be an activity being carried on within the park, or within a certain distance away from where that would be carried on in the park, even though it may be

outside of the park boundaries?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — We would not generally be permitting businesses whose main purpose would be to function outside of the park. If there were a store in the park and it happened by accident to serve some people who lived outside of the park that would be fine. But we wouldn't generally be set up in such a fashion as to serve a population outside of the park.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think maybe you misunderstood the direction of my question there, Mr. Minister. If the establishment in the park was wishing to offer a service that was available just outside of the park, would that be considered as under your consideration for permitting?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — While the department is concerned mostly with activities inside the park, we're also concerned with what is necessary to be done in the park. And so if a service was adequately available close enough to the park for park residents, then it's unlikely we would permit a new activity. But it would have to depend on distance and access and convenience.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that answers that particular question. I have another concern down at Moose Mountain Provincial Park. I believe that this summer on July 9 they will be holding a 90th celebration birthday for Saskatchewan.

At that particular celebration they have asked the Friends of Cannington Manor to participate and to help out as volunteers within their birthday celebration. The Friends of Cannington in return, would like to be able to put up a small advertising platform or display dealing with the Cannington Manor site and the old Manor house.

They have been told that they can't do that; that they can work at the park, provide their volunteer services, but they can't provide a display of the Cannington Manor site and historical area. Is there any particular reason why they should be denied that opportunity when they are more than prepared to provide their services for free?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I can say to the member opposite that we're very pleased that this new association has been formed, but it is brand-new and they've just begun discussions. And barring difficulties, there haven't been . . . no no has been said, and barring difficulties, we appreciate the work they're doing and would want to work cooperatively with them.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, a couple of questions to the minister, depending on his responses. About three weeks ago the minister was aware of the fact that I attended a meeting up at Maidstone regarding the Bronson forest. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what you have done to address the concerns of the citizens in that area regarding the Bronson forest and native land entitlement, and have you been in contact with people in response to the number of questions? Actually I've got four pages of questions if you want me to go through them all, but maybe you can save the time of going through all of those if you can address them with a positive response to the concern that's been raised.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — As the member opposite is aware from his attendance at the meeting, that there were departmental officials there. They have the list of questions as well and they're working with the group to try to address the concerns that have been raised. The member knows this is a matter of longer standing discussion. It's been going on for some time. Significant progress has been made in the discussion with a number of people through the facilitators who've been working with the Thunderchild First Nation and many of the people involved there. And I hope that discussion continues to bring forward cooperation.

Mr. Toth: — Well what would be the concern that would continue to be raised, that would suggest that it would be appropriate to continue to deal or to offer this land to the Thunderchild Band other than looking at other provincial lands available in the area, or land that may be available in the area, and indeed putting the Bronson forest under an environmental protection, if you will, umbrella and leaving it for every citizen of the province of Saskatchewan in its present state.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — While I don't have the documents before me this moment, my recollection of my last reading of them is that there have been very broad offers of access by the Thunderchild First Nation in terms of access to the lands.

The issue has arisen because it grows legitimately out of a treaty land claim adjustment process that was begun under the previous government and completed under ours. The request for this land was made legitimately under that process and it was offered to be made available. And under the process, once land has been offered to be made available, then third-party interests must be met. And so discussions have been going on for roughly 18 months with respect to the understanding between the third-party interest and the Thunderchild First Nation.

I don't know what the proportion of people who were out at the meeting the other night were third-party interest and how many were other community citizens. But I know that Thunderchild, through the mediators and negotiators, have been in a discussion. And it's my hope that the significant progress that occurred over the last 18 months will continue over the next short period of time so that everyone's interests can be met because that is the intention of the treaty land entitlement process: to provide an avenue for first nations to access lands that they have deserved and have not yet been given access to, but do it in such a way that it meets the interests of the community within which they are accessing the land.

(0015)

Mr. Toth: — So what you're basically saying, Mr. Minister, is that even though the individuals . . . and there must have been around 200 or so people at least were at that meeting, passed a motion that . . . first of all, some people were suggesting that at least the resort property, none of that land be made available. But by the end of the meeting, the motion was that none of the Bronson forest be considered as part of the treaty land entitlement.

What you're telling me tonight is that you're not really going to take notice of that motion, that negotiations will continue. And if the Thunderchild . . . rather than asking the Thunderchild . . . or offering land that may be available outside of Bronson forest, you will just let it continue to progress and allow the usurpment of some of the land within the Bronson forest for the Thunderchild Band.

And it seems to me that the people within the Thunderchild Band are more than willing to look at other alternatives and that maybe . . . I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, why you can't give us assurances that you will or that the department or your officials will offer some other alternatives that are quite conducive and will work with the people of the surrounding area?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I can assure the member opposite that there is no resort property in the land that's been offered and that the first nation has requested and been offered significant lands outside of the recreational area.

The good news is that there has been very sound discussion. And I can say to the member opposite that in fact I not only took notice of the concerns recently, but I took notice of them 18 months ago or two years ago when they were first raised and put forward . . . the facilitator that could help people understand each other's concerns in order that they could be resolved. And I can tell you that I am very proud of the progress that's been made today. And I'm hopeful and optimistic that further progress would be made so that the community can see this issue through as a common interest and not as a matter of division.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, one of our favourite topics that we haven't had the opportunity to discuss yet in these estimates and that's underground tanks. So, Mr. Minister, I have a few questions for you dealing with the underground tank situation.

The Environmental Fairness Association has tried to work with you in the problems that are associated with the underground tank regulations that you have in place. They've worked with you on the committee that you struck with your department. They've come up with alternative solutions to those that you've put in place, and yet they still seem to have a great deal of problems in working with you. In fact they tell me that they're waiting for reports from your action committee to come forward with some recommendations on new means in which to deal with this.

And it seems that either your department or the back-bench MLAs that are on this committee are somewhat reluctant to come forward with the report. Or if they have come forward with a report, that the Environmental Fairness Association . . . I don't believe the last time I talked to them that they had this particular document in their possession, that they could deal with it.

And it's not just small businesses that are being affected by this, Mr. Minister — and a lot of the small-business service stations across the province are being affected — but it's also school boards and rural municipalities that are being impacted because

they also have underground tanks that they have to deal with. And some of these removal costs are running as much as 2 and \$300,000 which is not an insignificant amount of money as I'm sure that the Minister of Finance would point out to you if you were to ask her for that much money for your department.

So, Mr. Minister, there needs to be something done with this particular situation. It's my understanding that in Alberta they've taken a somewhat different approach to this particular situation. In fact, is one of the issues . . . manners in which they're dealing with the issue is the revenues that are being generated from their environmental regulations are being turned around and used for environmental projects such as the removal of storage tanks or other environmental concerns.

It's simply not just being funnelled back into the Consolidated Fund to be swallowed up by government as a whole and perhaps that's one of the solutions that you should be looking at for this particular environmental issue, is that some of the monies that are coming from the environmental funds be used to provide support for the environmental concerns of this province.

So, Mr. Minister, what is the status of the underground tanks? What new proposals have you put forward to help alleviate the costs to the service stations, to the school boards and the municipalities, both rural and urban, that are going to have to deal with this particular circumstance?

You've had three and a half years now to deal with it. If the Premier doesn't call the election, you could potentially have another year and a half to deal with it. So surely, within either three and a half or five years you can come up with some solution that would be amenable to every one involved in the province — the service stations, the school boards, the municipalities, and all those that have to deal with it.

I guess the other solution that is available to you and through the Minister of Justice is to simply fight it out in court for the \$200 million that the Environmental Fairness Association is suing you and the government for. So hopefully, Mr. Minister, you can come up with some solutions rather than simply going ahead in the manner that you are, that is, in such a fashion that it's going to be a detriment to, in particular, rural Saskatchewan, small town, small village, rural Saskatchewan, where they have perhaps only one service station, that is facing these very serious impacts.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Well the hour is late so I won't remind the member that I inherited this situation from the members opposite who left service station owners in somewhat of a dilemma with a set of rules that were difficult to respond to in the time frames that were allowed.

And I can tell you that I very much appreciate the cooperation we've received from people in the Environmental Fairness Association, from service station owners, from others who participated with us in redesigning the regulations so that they both meet the environmental concerns and the public safety concerns around underground storage tanks, but also provide some flexibility with respect to how people can respond in such

a way that it minimizes the impact on their business; is only done when there is risk there.

The system that we've changed to is now a risk-based system, and so there will be changes for a number of owners in terms of when and how they need to do their upgrading. And I think for the most part people have accepted that that new set of regulations will now meet their needs and the public need.

The issue that the member raises with respect to contaminated sites, however, is a very much larger issue that applies universally to all of us who do business in Saskatchewan. And we therefore have consulted on it broadly as I've indicated here before, and we have not yet fully brought together the results of that consultation. But there has not been unanimity with respect to the outcome of those discussions. But as soon as we have the opportunity, we will continue those discussions and find a solution that meets all the business people's needs in Saskatchewan.

With respect to applying environmental funds to these sorts of clean-ups, there essentially are no environmental funds in Saskatchewan outside of the ones that are within SARCAN, the area we were discussing before, that have to do with the collection of beverage containers.

We are looking for solutions, in a Bill that we have yet to pass with respect to used oil collection, that we use a different resolution. As the member opposite may know, there are from time to time on the bills of the public . . . sometimes on my dry cleaning bill it says environmental fee. And sometimes on my oil change bill it says environmental fee. I can tell you those are not government environmental fees; those are business environmental fees that businesses use to deal with these issues in their own way. And I can tell you that I appreciate that businesses are responding responsibly to the need to be environmentally sensitive. I also want to assure you that those are not government funds. Those are business fees put on for the purpose of helping them handle the product in a responsible fashion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Unfortunately when you say that it's the responsibility of each and every one of us in society to deal with the environmental concern such as pollutants of leaking underground tanks, under the regulations though there's only one group that's paying for it, and that is the owner of those tanks: be they the service station, the school board, or the municipality who's left holding the bag at the end of the day when somebody else is either gone or bankrupt.

So, Mr. Minister, you had a committee together of your back-benchers and your department that has set out a timetable for mandatory removal of tanks, that when they reach a certain age limit or are within a certain soil category. But unfortunately that particular committee did not address the question of who is liable, who has responsibility to deal with this. That responsibility has been left solely on the landowner, on the owner of the establishment or the site. And if that owner can't be found, then it's being left up to the municipal district in which that site is located. And that creates a great deal of stress and problems for those areas, for the people involved.

I think, Mr. Minister, that there needs to be some more work done on this, some more enhancement, some more government involvement to deal with some of the costs available to that and I would hope that before we come back again, Mr. Minister, if you happen to be lucky enough to again be the Minister of the Environment, and if you happen to be lucky enough to still be sitting on that side of the House, that we will have the opportunity to discuss this with you again and perhaps to resolve this issue once and for all.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 13 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 26 agreed to.

(0030)

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I want to take this opportunity to first of all thank my department for the work they're doing. The responsibilities of this department are substantial and in this day and age when both the proper competitiveness of Saskatchewan business and the proper protection of the environment are key in the public mind, the work of our department is absolutely central to the areas of environmental management, forestry development, parks, wildlife, and fisheries, in the province. They have a very broad mandate and a mandate in which the public is significantly interested. So I want to thank them for the work they've done, and work they've done in cooperation with the public, in continuing to represent these areas well.

But I also want to thank the members opposite for their cooperation with respect to dealing with the business of our department and the questions in the House. We may even see them here sometime later on this summer. Thank you very much.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to thank the minister and his officials for coming in this evening and for answering our questions. We look forward to working with them again.

The committee reported progress.

ROYAL RECOMMENDATION

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce to the Assembly the receipt of Royal Recommendation of the following Bills which were not received in time to appear in the order paper. Therefore I beg to inform the Assembly that his Honourable Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of Bill No. 67, An Act respecting the keeping of Vital Statistics; Bill No. 71, An Act respecting Victims of Crime; Bill No. 74, An Act respecting Non-profit Corporations; Bill No. 73, An Act respecting Elementary, Secondary and Post-secondary Education in Saskatchewan; and Bill No. 75, An Act to amend The Provincial Court Act; and recommends them to the consideration of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — The recommendation has been received. It now being past our normal . . .

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — What's the member's point of order?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Because we sit pursuant to an order of the House which did not specify time of adjournment, I believe that you could not adjourn the House pursuant to Rule 3(2), and you would have to entertain a motion to adjourn.

The Speaker: — The member is absolutely correct.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:34 a.m.