

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of the people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition — I see most of them are from Moose Jaw area, many from Carlyle, Regina, and I see many actually from Regina Albert South constituency and Regina Elphinstone constituency.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present petitions of names from throughout southern Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The petition is signed from people from McLean, Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, numerous southern Saskatchewan communities including Regina.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to present petitions of names from people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Regina, Melville, but they're also from Bredenbury, Pilot Butte, Dubuc, and a number from Brock.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of concerned citizens about the future of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Signatures on this petition are from Vanguard, Melville, Regina, McLean, Balgonie, and Qu'Appelle.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present petitions of names of people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre closure. The prayer reads as

follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition are all from Moose Jaw.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise too today to present a petition of names from people throughout southern Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed from people from the city of Regina.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And those who have signed this petition are from Pilot Butte, Lanigan, Wishart, Bankend, Moose Jaw, and a number from Regina.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 34 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture regarding the closure of eight Crop Insurance offices: (1) are there leases for Crop Insurance offices that were closed in February in the towns of Wilkie, Kyle, Wynyard, Carnduff, Outlook, Melfort, Canora, and Wolseley; if so, (2) who holds the leases; (3) what will be the cost incurred in the termination of the lease at each of the said offices; (4) since the rural service centre extensions offices in Leader, Kamsack, Melfort, and Fort Qu'Appelle are to be closed immediately, what is the date for the termination of those leases by the rural service centre extension offices; and lastly, what costs will be associated with the termination of these lease agreements?

Mr. McPherson — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 34 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for SaskPower regarding the management conference in Banff attended by Carole Bryant, the vice-president of corporate affairs for SaskPower: (1) what is the focus of this conference; (2) what is the fee to attend this conference; (3) why is Carole Bryant there; (4) what is the full cost to the Saskatchewan taxpayers to send Carole Bryant to this conference in Banff; and (5) does this include lift tickets?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Palliative Care Week

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to recognize Palliative Care Week in Saskatchewan, which begins today, and to pay tribute to the gift of life that palliative care workers give to those who are dying.

It is easy to measure life in terms of material goods or to make assumptions about how long we'll all live, especially if things are going fine for us. But anyone who has ever had to walk with a loved one or friend through a terminal illness will know that the quality of life assumes greater importance as the quantity of life is diminished.

And so today we honour all those who provide palliative care and we thank them for the faith and the hope and the love that they give so gracefully and unselfishly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Closure of Royal Bank Branches

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to express my concerns about the Royal Bank's recent announcement of its plans to close five branches in Saskatchewan; this in addition to the other Royal Bank branches that have already been shut down in rural Saskatchewan. Even though the Royal Bank made over \$1 billion in profit last year, it says the closures are needed to stay competitive on the banking scene.

My main concern is about the accessibility of banking services, particularly for rural clients. Now that the Royal Bank has an exclusive contract on Saskatchewan student loans, I have had several complaints from constituents. They are post-secondary students who are worried about access to fewer and fewer Royal Banks in the rural areas.

This latest round of closures will create similar problems for students in other parts of Saskatchewan. I urge the Royal Bank and the other major financial institutions to consider the negative impact this trend is having on rural residents in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Focus on Trade/Tourism in Moose Jaw

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this will be a very exciting weekend in the city of Moose Jaw. This weekend Moose Jaw will host not one, but two trade shows — a Focus on Tourism and a Focus on Trade.

Our Focus on Tourism show will be held at the Heritage Pavilion on the Moose Jaw Exhibition grounds and will have information on great Saskatchewan holidays. Mr. Speaker, at the tourism show the visitor will be able to see a number of displays highlighting Saskatchewan's parks, outfitters, events, and great tourist destinations, including one of the newest of Saskatchewan's tourist destinations — the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw.

The Focus on Trade show will be held at the Hillcrest Sports Centre. And at the trade show there will be over 130 exhibitors with everything from agricultural services, financial and personal services, home and yard improvements, along with great food and even child care for parents who want to browse through the displays.

There will also, Mr. Speaker, be a moving display by the Moose Jaw 5, 6, 7 Car Club and the Tired Iron Car Club, and even a high-tech kites display, Mr. Speaker. Visitors to the show will be able to enter for a number of door prizes. A free shuttle service will operate between the shows.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to congratulate all of the organizers in our community for this event and remind everyone that it'll be held this afternoon, Saturday, and Sunday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Langenburg Achievements

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The town of Langenburg in the east side of the Saltcoats constituency is the home of many leaders and talented individuals.

Claude Desnoyers, a history and English and core French teacher from Langenburg High School was recently selected to participate as a monitor at the Terry Fox Centre in Ottawa. Canada's youth will gather to demonstrate their leadership abilities and learn more about our country. As Claude spends April 13 to 27 in our nation's capital as an exchange teacher, the core of his stay will be focused on arts and culture as well as Canada and the world. I wish him good luck for the challenge that awaits him to be a leader among leaders.

Also Ms. Sharla Andrews, a student from Langenburg High School, will also go to Ottawa to spend the week at the Terry Fox Centre, and Sharla's week will be focused on technology in Canada and the world.

Ms. Kerri Buchberger, also from Langenburg and sister of Edmonton Oilers Kelly Buchberger, has recently been named as a member of the Canadian National Women's Volleyball Team and is now destined to the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. The Buchberger family are proud of their children, and many hours of dedication on behalf of the parents and the

athlete are the only reason that this young lady has achieved such a remarkable goal.

I congratulate these three individuals by saluting their accomplishments and wish them the best of luck as they rise to new challenges on a level beyond their home community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Maymont's Award-winning Centre

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twice in recent weeks I have mentioned the new multi-use facility in the village of Maymont, a facility that includes the new school, a skating arena, a seniors' centre, doctors' offices, a regional library, and the town office. I mentioned the innovation and the cooperation and the nature of this facility, and I praised the people of Maymont for their smart planning and their energetic fund-raising which brought this facility into being.

I am happy to announce today that I am not the only one that is in recognition of this facility. Last night in Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Recreation Society and the Saskatchewan Recreation Facility Association held their annual awards meeting. Winner of the Cec Nobes facility award of excellence was the Maymont School and Community Centre, an award I obviously think is richly deserved.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that in giving this award, the Saskatchewan Recreation Facility Association made special mention of the volunteer effort of the people of Maymont in providing both labour and fund-raising. Also singled out was their cooperation method by which all the interested groups came together to plan and complete the project.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, hats off to Maymont, which is leading the way into the new era of cooperation and shared use of facilities. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ukrainian Easter Greetings

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as most MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) present in the House and people in Saskatchewan, last week was Easter weekend and everyone celebrated that event.

I would like to bring to the attention of members, and of course I know many people in Saskatchewan, especially those who are of Ukrainian Orthodox faith, that of course this weekend is Easter weekend, today being Good Friday.

So to all residents in Saskatchewan who are celebrating Easter this weekend, to any of the MLAs opposite who are celebrating Easter, like myself, I would like to wish them a Happy Easter, and a traditional greeting, Xyryctoc Voskres.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Tourism Strategy

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, recently the member from

Regina Qu'Appelle Valley mentioned the Saskatchewan aboriginal tourist strategy, a plan to assist the development of first nations tourism in our province. I want to mention an attraction which is rapidly become the lynchpin of this strategy.

In my constituency just outside Saskatoon on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River is Wanuskewin Heritage Park, a recently developed site which has already gained national attention, has now received international recognition.

Wanuskewin Park was featured as the international attraction at the Maori Tourism Federation's first conference and trade show held in Auckland, New Zealand last month. The Maori community has a vast tourist experience, so recognition of Wanuskewin's unique operating partnerships and interpretive approach is particularly significant. It is because of this that the Saskatchewan park, which exhibits and dramatizes traditional first nations life on the Prairies, was selected for the conference's international component.

The chief executive officer of the Maori Federation, Roana Bennet, said that for many delegates, meeting with and hearing from the Wanuskewin delegation were the highlights of the conference, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all members of the Wanuskewin board and staff for their work in bringing this world class park into being and to world attention. And if members have not yet visited it, I urge them to do so soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ukrainian Easter (Velykden)

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise this morning to offer congratulations to Canadians of Ukrainian descent on the Orthodox Easter celebration.

I'd like to inform the Assembly, as the hon. member from Canora-Pelly, that this weekend many Canadians of Ukrainian descent will be observing the Easter weekend. Today, Mr. Speaker, is actually known as strasna pyatnytsa, which means frightening Friday. Easter Sunday, which is called Velykden, which translates to, a very significant day.

In the Ukrainian tradition, Mr. Speaker, Easter begins with a morning high mass which happens very early in the morning. It is then followed by an exchange of greetings amongst those attending church. The traditional greeting is Xyryctoc Voskres, which translates to, Christ is Risen! And the response given is Voyeesten Voskres— Indeed He Has!

People then go back home to have their Easter feasts. After the church service, decorated baskets of traditional foods are blessed. These include Easter breads called babka and kolach which are beautifully decorated; as well as Easter eggs known as pysanka, which are essential to the Easter celebration. In many cases these foods are given to friends and relatives.

Ukrainians in Canada treasure these practices, Mr. Speaker, and

on behalf of all members of the Assembly I'd like to congratulate them on this their Easter celebration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskTel Revenues

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the minister responsible for SaskTel. Madam Minister, SaskTel, according to your news release, made a record profit last year of \$200 million. Now first, are we going to see the revenues from the sale of the LCL (Leicester Communications Limited) cable go towards paying down the SaskTel debt? And are we going to see the operating profits translate into lower power rates . . . or lower telephone rates, rather, for the people of Saskatchewan? Or are you going to continue to use the SaskTel rates as a form of back-door taxation the way you do with all of your other utility rates?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to answer that question. Let me say that in the annual report for SaskTel which was tabled yesterday, which showed a profit of some \$190 million for the year 1995, of that, 114 million was a net gain on the capital sale of the assets of LCL, and 10.5 million was another capital gain on the sale of ISM (Information Systems Management Corporation) shares. SaskTel, I would point out, their actual revenue from the telecommunications company has reduced from 88 million in 1993 to 55 million in 1995 — a reduction of some 40 per cent. And this has been a pattern since the deregulation of long distance telephone rates.

So SaskTel has diversified its operations in order to make up some of the lost revenue from long distance and has done very well. I would also point out that in terms of the local service, SaskTel is the only telephone company in Canada which did not increase its local rates by \$2 last January 1, 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplemental question to the minister responsible for SaskTel. Madam Minister, once again we have to accept your assurances that your long distance rates are fair. Of course we have no way of knowing this for sure because there is no independent body set up to review the utility rates. And with SaskTel making a record profit of nearly \$200 million, it seems like customers might be getting just a little bit gouged here. Madam Minister, we need some way of knowing that your government isn't simply using the utility rates as a form of back-door taxation. That's our point.

Immediately after question period, my colleague, the member for Cannington, will be introducing a private members' Bill to establish an all-party committee to review utility rates.

Madam Minister, if you're so sure that your phone rates will stand up to independent scrutiny, then, Madam Minister, will you support this legislation that we will introduce today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's curious that the member opposite would raise this subject when it was the Mulroney government in Ottawa, their Progressive Conservative friends — an oxymoron if I ever heard one — that introduced the deregulation of the telephone industry.

And just before SaskTel won, just before SaskTel won, if you like, a five-year temporary immunity from the new regime of deregulation, I asked the minister in charge at the time, then Perrin Beatty, who is now the minister responsible for the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), what is your vision for the telecommunications industry in Canada? Where is deregulation going to lead?

Where did it lead in the airline industry? They've deregulated that. What did we get? Higher fares, rotten service, and a bunch of bankrupt airlines. I asked him, is that your vision for the telecommunications company? Is that how we're going to worship at the altar of competition — to all end up broke?

And we were granted the immunity. Our rates are competitive throughout Canada. Our service is bar none. And we are the only telephone company in Canada — in the United States and Canada — that has digital, individual line service to every subscriber, when there's 370,000 people in the rest of Canada still on party lines, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Casino Development

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the minister responsible for the Gaming Commission. Mr. Minister, now that the NDP (New Democratic Party) has gotten a taste for the gambling business, it seems like you want to take the whole thing for yourself. And now we see that you're even taking steps to get rid of the competition.

With the new government- and Indian-run casino now open in North Battleford, you are forcing the North Battleford exhibition association to cut back its hours of operation by 75 per cent. And there is no plan in place to compensate the exhibition association for this loss of revenue.

Mr. Minister, aren't you already getting enough of the gambling action? Why is it necessary to use strong-arm tactics to force exhibition-run casinos out of business?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member for his question. Under the agreement on the development of the new casinos, it was always understood, and this was discussed with the exhibition associations, that there would be some scaling back of their activity. They would still be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We could complete the whole answer; just a minute here.

And I'll point out that on those agreements, we made a commitment to keep the exhibition associations whole in their

revenues. Now whether it is that exhibition association, the Regina one, we have discussions with them on what constitutes keeping them whole in relation to their gaming activities and related activities.

So this is a discussion that's taking place. It's not completed, but the commitment is there, and always has been there, to keep the exhibition associations whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Well, Madam Minister, your government is both a player and a dealer in this game, and you've stacked the deck against the exhibition associations.

The North Battleford exhibition association says this comes as a complete surprise to them; not any negotiated stance that you say. They had no idea you and your casino were going to come into town and start muscling them out of business, just like some sort of Vegas mob-run outfit in the 1930s. And they also see no confidence that you're . . . They have no confidence that you're ever going to see any compensation for their loss of revenue.

Madam Minister, why is your government so greedy when it comes to gambling revenues? Why do you have to be the only game in town?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again this is an agreement that involved consultation with the local community, with the local business community, with the municipal councils. It involved all the business community and the areas affected.

I would have to say that . . . All I can really say to the member today to reassure him is that there will absolutely be compensation. The only thing in question is the discussion of how much and the method of delivery of payment. But he can reassure the people in North Battleford at the exhibition association that there will be compensation as we committed to. And I presume that that will be resolved in the near future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Effects of SaskTel Strike

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of SaskTel indicated in this House yesterday that SaskTel will save about two and half million dollars in wages for each month its Crown employees are on strike. However the minister also admitted that management personnel are being paid \$50 for each hour of overtime they work. Using only a 28-day working month as an example, the overtime bill will total \$2.6 million each month. Will the minister explain to me her math and indicate where the savings are?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to apologize to the House. Reflecting upon *Hansard*, I realize that I made an error yesterday where I said that the regular payroll was two and a half million dollars a month, where in fact it's two and a half million dollars a week. And so I just

wanted to make that correction, Mr. Speaker.

Again I say that you cannot determine ahead of time exactly how much overtime will be paid because it will depend on how many emergencies arise and how many hours are actually spent in service, Mr. Speaker.

In the meantime, I do believe that when those 650 management employees left their homes on short notice, were deployed all over the province in order to keep the service up and running to provide continuous service to people of Saskatchewan, which two days ago in this House that member said that he had concerns about, which side is he on? He was concerned about service. Now the management personnel are providing service; now he's critical of the cost of that. Which side is he on, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the minister's numbers are completely out because in many cases we're getting reports that two managers are riding together at one time in a truck — so that's a hundred dollars an hour.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has consistently stated that the number one priority during the strike with SaskTel employees is to ensure that telephone access to emergency help must not be jeopardized. Today's *Regina Leader-Post* contains an article which indicates that technical problems knocked out the phone system at the Regina General Hospital three times before the outage was finally repaired early yesterday. Regina Health District spokesman Bob Allen is quoted in the article as saying:

For some periods you could call locally, but not dial out . . . and no-one could dial in . . .

We were actually without our entire communications system.

Mr. Speaker, it is apparent that there are problems and the emergency access is being jeopardized. How does the minister explain . . . minister plan to address the situation that is clearly putting people's lives at risk?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite talks about the cost of maintaining the service in the form of wages to the employees, I wonder if he's advocating the same as his friends beside him yesterday, of replacement workers, which is their vision — Alabama north in Saskatchewan — which is not our vision, Mr. Speaker.

We respect the collective bargaining process. We respect the rights of the employees to take job action if they feel that's necessary, although unfortunate. We feel the appropriate response in the circumstance is for management to do the best they can to keep the service running and to protect the integrity of the service of communications to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

This is no laughing matter, Mr. Speaker, but when they talk about economies and they criticize two people riding in a truck

— this is car pooling, Mr. Speaker. Would they want them to each take a separate truck? That would cost more yet. When they make criticisms, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to answer questions in this House or anywhere about the rationale for our decisions, but we ask that the members opposite be consistent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wildlife Damage Compensation

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday a number of farmers travelled to Regina to meet with government officials to discuss the crop damage caused by big game. Following the meeting, the Minister of Environment indicated to the media that it appears as much as 200,000 crop acres have been wiped out, counting for at least \$8 million in total damage. The minister also stated, and I quote, "We've never had the circumstance before with so much crop out."

Mr. Speaker, if the level of crop damage is as unusually high as the minister contends, will he agree that the equally unusual step of providing special compensation must then be taken?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. With respect to the 200,000 acres of crop out, if I did quote that this has all been damaged by deer, this is not the case; only a small portion has been damaged. We gather there's approximately 600 landowners that have contacted us, either with haystack, bale damage, and crop damage combined. There's no real sure estimate yet, but we've heard anywhere from 3 to \$8 million of potential crop damage in the fields. And until the crops are harvested we will not have a final figure on that.

But as I indicated to the people, who I really appreciated coming in to meet with us yesterday, that we simply do not have a pot of money that we can dip into to pay out several million dollars of damage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quoting from a headline in today's paper, the headline reads: "Gov't speeding demise of rural Saskatchewan?". It appears it's another step, Mr. Speaker, in that process.

The Minister indicated to the media yesterday, that his government will continue to look at this issue and are working on solutions for future plans and for future years. Unfortunately, as the minister so aptly puts it, and I quote again, Mr. Speaker: "We've never had the circumstance before with so much crop out", but the fact is the farmers are in need of a commitment for assistance now. These farmers' livelihoods are at stake, Mr. Minister.

We need to address the current problems, not a promise that will take place for next year or two years down the road, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister make a commitment today in this House to take the request back for a special compensation package to the cabinet for consideration?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the hon. member's request, certainly we have gone around this subject many times in caucus and cabinet. A number of my colleagues met with the landowners yesterday. We're well aware of the situation. We are looking at a number of programs, which many landowners appreciate, for the coming year—earlier seasons, increased bag limits, potential lure crops, and the establishment of a fund in cooperation with groups like SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation.

So we are doing a number of things for the . . . none of us have experienced this before, as the hon. member indicated. We've never had a situation with so much crop out, relatively high deer numbers, and a long, severe winter. So all of these factors did come together to create a situation we have not seen before. But again, as far as a pot of money for this year, we simply do not have several million dollars to provide this year for compensation. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teacher Stress

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation convention, teachers identified workplace stress as one of the major problems facing our education system — stress caused by overcrowded classrooms and inadequate funding from this government for counselling, resources, and extra staff.

The STF strongly believes the government cuts to education funding are hurting our children. Mr. Speaker, teachers are asking the provincial government for help. The problem is too big for them to handle alone. Will the Minister of Education tell the people of this province what plans her government has in place to help teachers to cope with stress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. On behalf of the Minister of Education, allow me to make a couple of comments. One, there is stress in the classroom. There is stress in many occupations, and it's not . . . There are stress among government workers. There are stresses among private business people and probably stress among our educators. And the Department of Education is trying to work with the school boards to deal with this problem.

It's not at all self-evident that a lot more resources would make the stress any less. Stress is caused by a changing world, a changing environment. Education is changing; they've got to learn to live with it.

The Department of Education is concerned about it, is working with them, and is doing, I think, all that is reasonable and probably all that can be done at the moment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) has stated that there are over 40 teachers who were forced to take stress leave last year, and there are countless others who continue to work despite the stress they are under. Mr. Speaker, for 12,000 teachers in our province, there are only six STF counsellors. STF president Dwain Drew said: "We have reached a breaking point".

Will the minister tell the people of Saskatchewan, and especially the 12,000 teachers, why her government has stood back and watched the situation get so bad that our teachers are at a breaking point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Again, the question is largely repeated, and I suppose I'll largely repeat the answer. The answer is that there's stress in all occupations, this one included. It's caused by a changing world, changing conditions.

I want to just say in passing, that when we're dealing with the question of stress, that we've been certainly getting some varied responses from members opposite. I don't know if they caucus at all. You've got the member who just asked the question suggesting we should spend more, constant refrain from the member from Thunder Creek suggesting we spend less. The public servants and teachers are really going to know stress if you people ever form government and provide that sort of confused leadership.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — The government's good-news stories haven't fooled anyone yet. And I would like to point out, in their own public opinion poll released to us last week, the people of Saskatchewan confirmed what we've been saying all along — education cuts are a very serious problem, Mr. Speaker. The poll states, and I quote:

Almost everyone in Saskatchewan today thinks that the most important issues facing the province's education system are generally related in some way to cut-backs or decreased program spending in this area.

According to your own poll, people are unhappy with post-secondary education, downsizing, and the elimination of facilities, curriculum changes, high student-to-teacher ratios, and the quality of education. Will the minister please explain why the government is ignoring the concerns not only of teachers, but of Saskatchewan people, and still planning deep cuts in 1997-98?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — As I think the member well knows, there has not been deep cuts in provincial spending on education; there have been deep cuts in federal spending on education. I can see the member's voice ringing with sincerity. I know that he'll want to help. I know that you'll want to join us in trying to bring some influence to bear on the federal government, who are the direct authors of the problem and at

whose door the solution lies.

So I invite the member opposite to join us in going to the federal government and doing what we can to stem the cuts to health, education, and social services in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Low Income Housing

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I attended a meeting in Saskatoon this week to hear concerns from many low income renters, and the Muttart housing units in which many of these tenants have lived for years have recently been sold to a Calgary firm. The new owners say that they will begin raising rents as of October 1 until market value is reached.

Unlike Social Services' tenants — and the question will be directed to the Minister of Social Services — who can turn to government for help, most of these tenants are on fixed incomes and they will not be able to afford higher rents. If they have to move at a time when there are already zero vacancy rates in Saskatoon, rents for everyone will surely be forced upward. Mr. Minister, has your government measured the financial consequences to your own Social Services' budget if the shortage of affordable rental housing forces rents up?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad of the opportunity to respond to the question by the member opposite. Members of our caucus, including the member from Eastview in Saskatoon, were in attendance at the meeting which the member opposite attended briefly on Tuesday last. As we speak in this House, the member for Broadway is meeting with this group. The tenants in the housing complex, which has been sold by the Muttart Foundation to liquidate part of an estate, have formed a self-help group and they are exploring some alternatives of turning it into a cooperative, of changing the mode of ownership, in order that the tenants who live there, whose rent is now pegged to their income, Mr. Speaker, will be able to maintain reasonable and adequate housing for themselves in their circumstances.

But I would add that if the federal government had not totally abdicated their responsibility ever since 1993 for social housing in this country, the low income renters in this province wouldn't be in the situation they are, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think most of the people in this province are getting very tired of a government that has abdicated its responsibilities and accountability for the last five years that it has governed the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, rental units are being converted into condominiums; rental units are being sold for private housing; low income units are being face-lifted and rents are being raised as a result; quality low income units are deteriorating because of an inadequate security deposit compensation.

Now landlords have been telling this particular government that higher rents . . . or pardon me, the government has been telling landlords that higher rents are the solution if security deposits are inadequate. All of these things are warning signs, and they're warning signs of an impending crisis. By refusing to work with responsible landlords to stop the erosion of quality rental units, and by ignoring the housing concerns of responsible tenants, it is this government that is forcing higher rental prices.

Now I would like the Minister of Social Services please, to respond to this question, since it was directed to him in the first place about his own departmental budget. Mr. Minister, tell the thousands of people, the landlords and the tenants in our province, what is your strategy to avert this crisis?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to respond to the more general question that the member puts now. And I would want to reassure her on the first point of the Gladmer tenants, that members of this government have been meeting extensively with that tenants' association and will continue to do so. The Minister of Education is meeting with them even as we speak in the House, as opposed to a short visit by herself with those same people.

On the question of housing for low income people across the province, this circumstance is not assisted — not assisted when certain landlords and their associations take irresponsible actions. It is our goal as government, Mr. Speaker, it is our goal as government to work with tenants, to work with landlords, to work with several departments of government, to strategize an appropriate response to the low income housing needs of our province. And there are needs, Mr. Speaker — there are needs — and we are, in the processes of government, working with the community, working towards solutions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to correct the minister, indeed the landlords' association has attempted to meet with both the Minister of Justice and yourself and it was the government that cancelled that meeting after assurances that it would take place.

There are responsible people in this province. There are responsible landlords. There are responsible tenants. They want solutions for quality housing in which to provide to people and for people to live in. And if landlords continue to sell their properties — many because they're not prepared to subsidize inadequate security deposits — and if people who buy them continue to raise rents, your Social Services budget, Mr. Minister, is going to have to absorb higher shelter allowance for recipients.

So please do answer two short questions. First, would it not be simpler to deal with the reasons behind the shortage of quality low rental housing. And secondly, would it not be simpler to deal with the security deposit issue, which is causing much of the problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I think the member and I will have a disagreement on the causes of the issue of low income housing. And I repeat, as the Minister of Municipal Government indicated to the House only moments ago, if the federal Liberal government had not pulled out of social housing across this country . . . Now the member smiles and shakes her head — the Liberals of course are embarrassed. What else would they be? Mr. Speaker, they're at much of the root of the low income housing shortage across Canada.

There will need to be further discussions about the matter of a security deposit, but the matter of the security deposit is not going to bring the solution, Mr. Speaker, to the needs of low income housing across our province from north to south. Nor, if I may say, Mr. Speaker, are the antics of certain former candidates for the Liberal Party who now head the landlord association.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 68 — An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act (Legislative Utilities Review Committee/"LURC")

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act (Legislative Utilities Review Committee/"LURC").

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 35

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Anguish that **Bill No. 35 — An Act to amend The SaskEnergy Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to discuss the amendments put forward by this government regarding this SaskEnergy Act. This Bill is short and contains few amendments. Still, the amendments proposed may have a significant impact on SaskEnergy and on the entire natural gas industry in Saskatchewan. I feel that some key issues must be raised in the House today before the debate is passed into the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, the natural gas industry in Saskatchewan is expanding at a significant rate. A growth in the industry should create new jobs and, as the members opposite know, we are badly in need of job creation. Therefore I feel that any Bill affecting the industry in any way must be discussed. We as a

Liberal caucus definitely don't want any Bill to pass through this Legislative Assembly if there is concern that it may adversely affect the profitability of the natural gas industry, an industry that provides jobs for the people of this province.

With the stifling tax policies of this NDP government, we as the official opposition must do everything in our power to make sure the industries that have set up shop in Saskatchewan stay in our province.

Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy is part of an extremely important business sector in Saskatchewan. Amending the Act that regulates this industry has some stakeholders concerned, and those concerns are not unfounded.

This Bill, for the most part, deals with TransGas, the wholly owned subsidiary of SaskEnergy. Currently TransGas has the exclusive right to transport gas within our province. With the amendments proposed in the above-mentioned Bill, this right to transport gas will no longer belong exclusively to TransGas. Mr. Speaker, the stakeholders we have talked to fully support some of the amendments proposed in this Bill, which chip away at TransGas's exclusive rights to natural gas transportation.

Maybe you remember, Mr. Speaker, that our caucus brought some of these very concerns to the public last fall. We were particularly upset that TransGas was increasing transportation rates to the direct purchasers of natural gas. This caused a financial strain on health care facilities, schools, and private businesses. Even at that time, I criticized the NDP government for trying to regain a monopoly at the expense of small direct purchasers.

Mr. Speaker, there are some particular amendments in this Bill which give producers more flexibility in field operations — more flexibility because it relaxes the regulations dealing with the transportation franchise in two vaguely defined situations. It appears from this Bill that TransGas will no longer have a monopoly when the gas is transported to a production facility from a gathering and processing system, if they are both owned by the same individual or corporation.

The second situation in which TransGas will no longer have a monopoly is when gas is transported to and from a storage facility that is integrated into the processing system of a company. In our view, this is a step in the right direction. We see this relaxation of the franchise as an action to encourage more natural gas recovery projects by various producers across Saskatchewan.

More importantly, many stakeholders in the natural gas industry are happy. They see the movement to encourage producers to do more gas recovery work in Saskatchewan as a positive step towards enhancing and promoting the natural gas industry in our province. They seem to agree that the second section of the Bill is positive even though TransGas is not giving up much of its monopoly to these isolated cases. Many projects that will go ahead with the new capability to transport one's own gas would not have gone ahead with the current system.

This is for the simple reason that TransGas has prohibitive rates that do not make gas transportation by TransGas economically

feasible. Stakeholders seem to feel that constructing their own pipelines will be more economically feasible than TransGas's current postage prices.

Currently producers pay the same rate to transport gas through TransGas's pipelines no matter how far the gas must travel. The stakeholders and our caucus share the view that the first part of this Bill and its first amendment seem to be somewhat irrelevant. The definitions have changed somewhat, and pipeline pressure is no longer to be used in defining TransGas's franchise. But apart from that, there just is not much there.

As I've stated before, we feel strongly that all Bills with relevance on industries that keep this province viable need to be discussed. This is the only way all members of this Legislative Assembly can be made aware of the impacts, both positive and negative, on stakeholders and the public alike.

We would all like to see the natural gas industry flourish now and in the future. That is why we as legislators must work today to ensure that legislation that we allow to pass through this House will not adversely affect the private companies involved in the natural gas sector.

We all want to see jobs created through the growth of industries in Saskatchewan. Whether it's in forestry, oil, potash, uranium, natural gas, or any other natural resource, we all need to work together as interest groups, as stakeholders, and as legislators, to ensure that the companies that invest in Saskatchewan today will still be investing in Saskatchewan tomorrow.

Not only will SaskEnergy change the way it does business, but so will all companies and individuals involved in the natural gas industry. And this will happen not only in Saskatchewan but across this vast country.

We as a caucus have had some time to discuss this Bill with various stakeholders involved, and they are in favour of this Bill and its proposed amendments. We see no reason to hold up the debate on this Bill any further. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have also examined this Bill and we find it to be mainly a housekeeping Bill. But we do praise it for the elimination of red tape and for allowing business to get on with the job of business.

We see the main effect of this Bill as to clarify the definitions of TransGas and its transportation monopoly by removing references to specific pipelines' pressures and changing it to a reference to the purpose of the pipeline. Obviously across this province, pipeline pressures vary in different services, and the definition of a high-pressure pipeline is rather an arbitrary decision, depending upon what TransGas is trying to accomplish at that particular time or what lines it's trying to gain control over.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the Bill relaxes the transportation franchise, giving flexibility to producers in instances of transportation of gas to an oilfield production facility from that person's gas-gathering and processing system. In a number of locations, Mr. Speaker, gas is transported from

the production area to the same company's, say an oilfield treatment centre, where gas is used to heat the oil or used to run compressors. In those cases, there's really no reason for TransGas to be involved in that transportation since it's basically an in-house thing. This will eliminate that difficulty, Mr. Speaker, and we agree with that.

It also relaxes TransGas's transportation franchise in cases of transport of gas to and from storage facilities that is integrated in a gas-gathering or processing system. In these circumstances, the company is producing the gas, storing it for . . . generally production in the summertime and store it for winter use. Again, it's an in-house system and no reason for TransGas to be involved in the transportation of the gas to and from the storage system. It's simply when that was occurring is another means for TransGas to gain some revenues off the movement of gas not only just the one time, but on a continual basis as it transports back and forth.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is an effort, and a rare effort I might add, by this government to reduce the red tape to business. And as I said earlier, we applaud that move to eliminate red tape as it hinders business in the process of business in this province. And we would certainly encourage the government to do more of that rather than put impediments in the road of business. We applaud that effort and we know that the producers appreciate having this legislation remove the confusion.

In general, Mr. Speaker, we do not object to this Bill and we acknowledge the positive effects that it will have. Of course it's a particularly technical aspect in this particular Bill dealing with various gas transportations, and the clarifications of that, I think, will be needed when we get to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, we have no problem in allowing this Bill to proceed at this point in time, and we would encourage the minister to come back with it so that we can debate the technical points that need to be clarified.

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

(1100)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 34 — An Act to amend The Electrical Inspection Act, 1993

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce his official please.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Chairman, I have with me today from SaskPower, Dennis Felgate will be with me to help answer any questions the opposition may have.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to you, Dennis. We have a few questions on this. We recognize that this is a largely housekeeping Bill, but there are a few things that we'd like to have answered. For example, will there

be any additional cost to corporations or to the general public to have the permits and notices delivered by the electronic system other than or different than what is currently the cost?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Chairman, the cost should actually be less if you consider the time and the convenience by using electronic means. There will be no additional fees or charges. The permit fee will be required to be submitted, and of course the cost of the fax transmission if that's the mode of electronic transmission.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you. Minister, can you tell me as well what is the proposed implementation time line on these changes after the Bill is proclaimed?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We will be starting this year with the implementation, and it will be available to the entire province at the start of 1998, so it will take some time to get the entire province onto stream with it.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Can you . . . I don't quite understand what the problem would be to almost do the whole province instantaneously if we're talking about faxes or electronics. That network system is largely in place. So what are the impediments to quicker implementation?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well what seems like a very simple question got a little bit complicated because I wanted to understand it quite well; because I wondered myself why it would take until the beginning of '98 to get the entire province onto stream. It's not the same system as if you would fax a transmission to me where I manually pick it up and read it and put it into a process. The software and the system has to be modified at SaskPower to some degree because the transmission will be received directly into the computer system. And it will take some time to put the hardware and the software into place to accomplish that.

The initial target area will be the Regina area. And SaskPower just wants to make sure — the electrical inspection division wants to make sure — that there are no bugs in the system before they open it to the entire province.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Well maybe I was assuming that there was something different implied here, but are these the permits that would go out to electricians that would actually be working on a house or a shop or anything of that nature? Is that the kind of permit we're talking about here?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, that's they type of permit we're talking about. Instead of the old legislation requiring it to be delivered by some means in hard copy, we'll now receive it electronically without people actually having to handle it at the electrical inspection division. It'll go directly into the computer. And because of that technology, it'll take some time. We want to make sure that the system is operating correctly for everyone.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Now I'm really getting confused because it strikes me is, what you're implying is that every electrician that wants to operate with a system not only will have to get a computer, will have to get this software in order to receive these permits. Is that what's implied? Like, it seems silly.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well if that's what was implied, it would be rather silly. But that's not what's being implied. In the interim you can still use the traditional means to get your permit into the electrical inspection division.

So if you were an electrician in Humboldt and didn't want to invest in the equipment for the electronic transmission of the permit, you could bring it to Regina yourself. You could mail it by registered mail; you could send it by courier. And those traditional means are still available to get the electrical permits into the electrical inspection division.

Mr. Gantefoer: — But I maybe don't understand. If the permit is a piece of paper now, that's delivered physically, why can not that physical piece of paper be transmitted over a fax machine? Why do we have to go to this very expensive, very elaborate computerized system, which seems to be a great additional cost somewhere in the system, when a simple faxing has been accepted in many legal quarters as a proper method of transmitting documents?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I'm sorry that I confused you. I'm more . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Be polite. I may have misunderstood the member. Upon the proclamation of this amendment to The Electrical Inspection Act, you can in fact do that from any area in the province. So that if you're an electrician in Meadow Lake and you want to get a permit into the electrical inspection division, once the Act is proclaimed or this amendment to the Act is proclaimed, you can fax that to the electrical inspection division; it will then become a valid document, a valid permit for you.

The other system I'm talking about is electronic transmission as well, which would go directly into the computer. So there would be . . . there's actually in the way you describe it, the way you're asking questions, there's two additional approaches that can be used by electricians to get their permits into the division.

Mr. Gantefoer: — But then surely when we're talking the implementation time line, the fax system that you just described to me could be almost instantaneous rather than 1998. And I guess I don't quite understand if the fax system, which I agree is very efficient and very practical because almost every electrician has those kinds of technologies available, why do we need the dual system? Like what's the advantage of the fancier computer system that's going to be implemented later?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I said to you, on proclamation of the Bill you will be able to do that. That doesn't have to wait until 1998. Upon proclamation means as soon as this Bill passes, it becomes law. Therefore as soon as that happens, those that want to use a fax, can use a fax. What we want to do is reduce paper burden to businesses and the administrative kinds of burdens that are there.

The Act that was just discussed previously, the SaskEnergy amendment Act, has the reduction of regulation and paper burden in mind for businesses in the Saskatchewan community. And it's keeping up with technology. I think that businesses will be excited about being able to use either the fax system as soon as this Bill passes, as soon as you allow it to go through.

And they'll also be excited, I think, in larger electrical companies where they do have the computer equipment, that it will further reduce the paper burden for them. And because they have in some cases, the computer systems already at the sender's end, it will be even a greater savings to them. And certainly the direct access into the computer is a savings for the people at the electrical inspection division.

So immediately, you can fax it when the Bill passes. It'll take some time for the entire province to get on to the electronic direct into the computer system, but no one has to be obligated to do that. You'll still have all the traditional methods. You'll have the availability of the fax as soon as this passes. And in the future, people will have the access of direct electronic communication to transmit the permit.

Mr. Gantefoer: — In the computerized system that you're going to build for the future, are you looking or considering the possibility of using the Internet connections that seem to be just mushrooming across the province and across the world? Is that part of your consideration in this new electronic transfer media?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The system that is being put into place for electronic communication certainly will be compatible with that in the future. In the immediate . . . because we are dealing with the Saskatchewan community for the most part, I don't think that we get electrical permits from outside of the province. I don't see an immediate use for the Internet where you wanted a broader, global audience. This is confined domestically within the province of Saskatchewan. The system is compatible, but I don't foresee a use of the Internet into the system that we're talking about.

Mr. Gantefoer: — In the software development, there are all kinds of softwares from \$69 software to 6 or \$700 software. Is there any indication of what type of software, and more generally what the cost of this software may be for the electrical contractors that would want to install it at their end?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I don't have a breakdown for you of the hardware and the software program. It's an oracle program that's contemplated being used. The hardware and the software combined would be about \$500,000. There is no cost to the sender. The cost will be borne by the receiver. And there won't be any additional charge. It will be picked up with the efficiencies of the electronic system.

So it's worked in through efficiencies. It will be a positive situation, both for electrical inspection division as well as the people who require electrical permits within the province.

Mr. Gantefoer: — When we talk about cost savings and efficiencies, quite often and almost always that really means job losses. Are you contemplating or have you contemplated how many administrative or technical jobs that are currently there with the existing system that will be reduced in order to gain those cost efficiencies back that you outlined?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No, we don't anticipate any change in the staffing component in the inspection division. There's various roles. The division is getting up to speed with the technological era and we don't contemplate any change in the

staffing.

Mr. Gantefer: — Then would you please outline where the cost payback will be on the 500-odd thousand dollars that you say have to be spent in terms of capital cost and that this would be recovered from efficiencies, I think you said. Would you please outline where those efficiencies may come from, if it isn't people?

(1115)

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well it was found a short while ago that many people who require electrical permits were not submitting them. And the electrical inspection division now has an audit program, and the increased number of electrical permits that will be coming in through the electronic system over time will make up for the initial cash outlay, the capital costs for putting the electronic system into place.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Minister. That answers the questions that I had. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. . . . the Chair of the committee is I guess what your official title is today.

I was interested in the comments and the questions that the previous member was asking, particularly dealing with e-mail. And I was wondering why you wouldn't include e-mail into the system, because a large number of people are starting to use e-mail addresses through the Net, through the Internet; and since they already have the software in place to do that, why you wouldn't accommodate them in that manner. What kind of an e-mail transmission system are you talking about that would not be able to access the Internet?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I think you may have misunderstood me. I said that the system is compatible with electronic mail. It is compatible with the Internet. What I was saying to the member that was asking the previous questions is that I don't foresee us getting onto the Internet with the system because our permit submitters, the senders of the permits, are confined within the geographic area of Saskatchewan and therefore not in need to get into a broader scope such as the Internet.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But your department will have an e-mail address that people can call. So in that sense you are already on the Internet then if you have that capability. People will have your address and can then send it to you through the Internet if they so desire.

I was wondering then, if since you have this capability now to use e-mail to submit your permits or to send the permits back out to the electrical contractors, what type of security measures do you have in place? What kind of fire walls do you have in place to ensure that there are no false permits applied for, or that the person receiving the permit knows that it comes from your department and not from some place else?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The oracle system is designed to provide that fire wall. Some financial institution will provide that service for us. It's not yet been tendered but there are

discussions with financial institutions to provide the actual service.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you very much. You mentioned hardware would be needed within the department or SaskPower to provide this service. What are the hardware costs going to be?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I don't have the breakdown of the actual hardware costs, as I mentioned to the previous questioner. The entire package, software and hardware, will be in the area of about \$500,000.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And what is your expected savings then if you're going to spend \$500,000 on this system? It's obvious any savings from the contractors' point of view is going to be absorbed by themselves, so the savings can only be handled by your department, you know, that's the only savings you have the opportunity to gain. So how much savings is there going to be in place?

You're going to have to have a person who reviews the application for the permit, somebody who inputs it into either the fax machine or the computer for an e-mail system. So other than actual printing of paper, how much savings is there going to be? Because now you're going to have, rather than the 45-cent stamp that you would pay to Canada Post, you're going to have a charge to SaskTel for the transmission of that information down the telephone line at least for a minute. I'm not sure how big the permits are, if they're just a simple one page or if they're multiple pages, but it seems to take about a minute per page to transmit. So how much actual savings are you going to have in place?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The projected payback for the investment in the hardware and to get the system up and running is a four-year period for the payback.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What do you expect to be the elimination of man-hours to generate your savings? Man-hours and paper?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The man-hours, which we refer now to in state of the art language as person-hours, would be not reduced but more often used for other functions.

As I mentioned previously, there is an audit system. Once the electronic system receives the permits, the function, instead of people in the electrical inspection division actually handling the paper, there will be periodic audits done to ensure that people are complying, businesses are complying, with the transmission.

So there won't be a reduction in the person-hours, but the function of what the people within the electrical inspection division are doing will change somewhat.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well they won't have a piece of paper in their hand, but surely they have to review the application to determine what's being applied for so that you can issue a permit on that. So you're still going to have the inspector at your location at your department is going to be reviewing the application. The computer simply can't say, well I've got an

application from Joe's Electric, and turn around and send him back out a permit to do . . . to put a blank in there and do whatever you want.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I need, I guess, to explain the system a little bit. Once the transmission is received from the sender, there's not a permit that's sent back out. You would . . . the electricians have the permits already. They're sent out to them by the electrical inspection division, I believe, and we trust that they comply with the laws and the regulations.

The repetitiveness of the customers is quite standard. The people that are sending in the electrical permits, for the most part, are the same people doing the electrical work — the electrician in towns within your constituency, the larger electrical companies that do large commercial work. So they're people who are used to dealing with the system; the electrical inspection division is used to dealing with them. There's some trust relationship built up.

When the electronic system is all up and operating, there will be periodic audits done that are drawn from the computer to make sure that people are continuing to comply with the regulations.

We trust the electrical contractors within the province. We have an audit in case there's new people coming onto the system to make sure everyone's complying. We feel that that audit periodically will be sufficient to make sure that Saskatchewan people who require electrical permits are in fact following the law, and we trust that the vast majority of Saskatchewan people are law-abiding citizens.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So your system then, is not in fact . . . Issuance of a permit is simply the notification that a permit has been issued by the contractor to perform a duty at some place.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — That description is correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you very much. You mentioned that this will be in place in 1998, that people have a choice until that point in time of submitting a paper copy of the notification, faxing it in, or e-mailing it in. Will that choice remain after 1998?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, that choice will remain, but we expect that the vast majority will use electronic means. But for example, if there is someone in a remote area of Saskatchewan who has not been doing electrical work or does not expect to be doing much electrical work, may have a situation where a permit may be sent in, and they would have the choice of using that.

But we want people to have choices. And so the wide range of options that are there now, which will become cumbersome for the vast majority of businesses, will still be in place as well as the fax transmissions and the electronic transmissions.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you very much. I believe that people across this province want choices, and we can certainly discuss other policy initiatives that this government has in place that would certainly deal with choices, but that the government seems to be most reluctant to discuss.

How have the contractors reacted to this? Have they been asking for this type of a system, or is this something that was initiated by the department?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I think it's almost safe to say that all contractors, all electrical contractors in the province, are anxiously awaiting the introduction of this system and the passage of this Bill in the legislature.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, you say that this is going to be more efficient. You expect a payback on your hardware and software costs in four years. What studies have you done to determine that?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I haven't done any studies. I trust that the people in the electrical inspection division are professionals. Some of them are very long-term employees. They know their business. They've asked for assistance from the supplier of the software. They're a reputable company as well. I trust the word of the officials within the company.

If at four years we don't have a payback, then maybe you can raise that question again, but I'm very confident in the word of our people who are dealing with this system that there will be the anticipated payback in four years.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, if in four years there hasn't been a payback, it's going to be a little tough for the taxpayer of Saskatchewan to get their half-million dollars back because we already have the software and the hardware.

Now surely someone within your department, within the electrical inspectors branch, has done a study to determine whether or not there is a cost savings to be had here, and that's what my question is.

Not whether you personally. . . I don't expect you to do much other than sit in your chair. But when it comes to doing some determination of expenses and whether or not there are inefficiencies . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And not even the member from Regina Albert South do I expect to do much more than sit in his chair and holler, which is basically all he's good at.

So, Mr. Minister, has there been a study done, and if so, will you provide that study to us?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — ISM did a study. We'll provide it to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I look forward to that study.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and his official for their answers today.

Bill No. 37 — An Act to amend The Water Corporation Act

The Chair — I would ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Chairman, I have with me today the vice-president of Sask Water, Wayne Dybvig, and behind me the general counsel, Micheal McDougall.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, and welcome to the officials. Mr. Minister, I have a couple of questions for you today on this Act. The first one, if the bed shore leases will be allowed for Crown mineral and land leases, why will they not be allowed for private and public land leases?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — There's not an anticipated problem in that regard. The mineral leases that we're referring to, to find a remedy through this legislation, deals with mineral dispositions in the North. There's a particular case where there was some jurisdictional concern with a mine in northern Saskatchewan where the mine actually went out into the water. What this Bill does is correct that. So I don't think that private lands are at issue here.

Ms. Draude: — What protective clauses are in place or will be in place to protect the environmental concerns with regards to these Crown water beds and shores?

(1130)

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Everything is still subject to the environmental assessment process, and if there was a project wanted to proceed and they could not meet the environmental specifications or environmental concerns, the environmental assessment approval would not be given.

Ms. Draude: — Are there any environmental, political, or financial impacts of this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Not really. There has been concern. The joint panel that looks at mining in northern Saskatchewan is aware of this; they are not opposed to it. The environmental process or processes that are in place, they're aware of this. There's been consultation; there's no objection.

If anything, in terms of financial there would be a financial benefit to it, a financial benefit to — in the particular case of why this Bill originated — a mining company able to mine an ore body, which in turn brings revenues into the province, jobs for people in the North, and hopefully profits for the company that's doing the development. So the financial side is a positive financial side, not a negative one.

Ms. Draude: — Since one Act has already allowed for these proposals, will there be any real, discernible impact on the mining industry by the implementation of this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, there will be an impact on the mining industry in such cases where there are mineral

dispositions that are overlaid by bodies of water where they may want to dam the body of water, move back and be able to mine the ore body. And so it's a positive benefit where there could be cases where you might not be able to mine it because of the water. There's full remedial measures in cases where that would happen, and once the ore body would be mined the water would be allowed to come back to its natural state.

Ms. Draude: — I'm just wondering if the shores of water bodies, do they belong to all the people or just to the people that you grant the lease to?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — In terms of this legislation, the shore bodies, unless it was on private land which this doesn't apply to, it belongs to everyone. However the system we have both for oil and gas and hard rock minerals are mineral dispositions whereby the company applies for a mineral disposition through a process. There's prospecting and claims filing, and it takes quite some time from the identification of an ore body until the ore body is actually mined if there's sufficient material within the ore body to make it commercially viable.

And so the shore line technically is owned by everyone, but sometimes there is temporary access by a company because they wish to develop something along that shore line.

Ms. Draude: — Have you ever had a case where a company may be requesting this easement or this lease agreement, have you had at the same time a farmer who may also want this lease? Is there now an opportunity where you would have to decide between the two?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well if the farmer owned the mining company I suppose it might affect the farmer. But I don't foresee any particular case where what you described would be applicable.

On Wollaston Lake there used to be a mine there owned by Gulf Minerals, and Gulf Minerals eventually sold it to Eldorado Nuclear. Eldorado Nuclear joined the Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation, became the company Cameco, which incidentally was just listed this week on the New York Stock Exchange. They had a situation where this would apply, where they wanted to take the ore body out into the lake, into Wollaston Lake. It was cumbersome because of overlapping regulations that seemed to contradict each other.

This legislation streamlines that so that there's no overlap of the jurisdiction from one Act to another. And as I said, they still have to pass all the environmental regulations, all the other hurdles that we'd have to go through.

And I can't see any application where you talked about, for example a farmer competing with a mining company for access, under the changes that we're making. I just don't foresee any situation like that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, this Bill, how will that impact on native reserve lands that may be abutting up against the shore line or on native entitlement lands that are being contested at the present time?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the situation as I see it would be that if there was a mineral disposition sought on treaty Indian land, they would have to make that arrangement with the Indian band that had treaty land there. And it would not be with the province that that would rest, so that would be a determination made by two other parties.

Sask Water may have some involvement because of a shore line, but basically what you describe I think would be more a situation between the band and the company that wished to do the mining. And there would also I think be some concerns as to where the water body was in proximity to the treaty land.

In terms of treaty land entitlement where there's been selections made, it's not the practice of the Department of Energy and Mines to issue mineral dispositions until such time as the treaty land entitlement process has been concluded, either with the land put into place or with the land not put into place. So the mineral dispositions in a case like that, if it was questionable, would not be issued, so therefore this Act would not be an issue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would this Act have jurisdiction on the reserve lands that may abut up against the shore line?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — A couple issues. If there were jurisdictional questions, those would be dealt with before it would go to a lease. The lease wouldn't be issued if jurisdictional issues could not be resolved.

The issue of this particular legislation we have before us today does not apply to federal Crown lands, does not apply also to treaty lands.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to again thank the minister and his officials for answering our questions today.

Bill No. 22 — An Act to amend The Radiation Health and Safety Act, 1985 and to make related amendments to The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Chairman, I have beside me today, Wayne Tiefenbach from the Department of Labour; and behind him, Jeff Parr, also with the department.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the officials from the department.

Mr. Chairman, we have a great number of questions to ask you in relationship to this Bill because we think it's a very

important Bill in terms of clearing up the uneasiness that many people have in regard to the whole radiation technology and some of those things that requires particular attention.

One of the concerns that we will have, and I would just like to make notice now so that you're aware of it — I've asked the Clerk to distribute — the fact that we are going to propose an amendment in regard to regulations because we think, as a matter of course very often, that the devil is in the detail and regulations are something in many Bills that are absolutely essential and key to understand as part of the whole process that we as legislators have to be held accountable for.

And so under section 12, I do make notice now that we will be proposing an amendment that will allow us to make sure that this Assembly is held responsible and fully understands the regulations in regard to this Bill for your consideration. I'm very much optimistic that members opposite will see their way clear to support that initiative.

Section 1 . . . in section 2, (1) is repealed and replaced to make the level of radiation that occupational workers can be exposed to the same as the level of exposure of the general public, as we understand it. My questions are these: was this change made in a proactive attempt to ward off undesirable effects of radiation, or have there been health concerns on the part of occupational workers in the field of radiational therapy and radiology?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No, the motivation for this amendment to The Radiation Health and Safety Act is not one that was moved forward by a question of worker or employee or user safety. The whole intent of this Act is to clarify the qualifications of workers who are allowed to operate ionizing radiation equipment, X-ray equipment.

And so this legislation, as far as I'm concerned, only deals with X-ray equipment and ionizing radiation equipment.

Mr. Gantefoer: — In order to ensure that no person will be exposed to radiation over the new allowable doses, are there changes that are going to be required to the equipment that is currently in use?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The answer to that would be no.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I believe under the current legislation, occupational workers can be exposed to limits of 10 per cent above allowable doses for the general public. Does there have to be changes to monitoring equipment, or any adjustments, in order to make sure that that 10 per cent is not allowed?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The answer to that is no.

(1145)

Mr. Gantefoer: — I've got to go to longer questions.

Section 6 has been repealed and substituted in order to clarify requirements to be able to operate radiation equipment. Under section 6(1)(b), a person can own ionizing radiation equipment as long as a qualified person is there to operate that equipment.

If any person can lease or purchase this type of equipment, is it . . . can anyone own the stuff as long as they have a qualified operator for that equipment?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — There are no restrictions on who can own the equipment — and you're correct — as long as there is someone who is operating the equipment that is trained to do so.

Mr. Gantefer: — So that the . . . If, for example, in a dentist's office or things of that nature, the owners of the equipment wouldn't . . . it would not be necessary for them to have any special qualifications or things of that nature as long as the technician had the approved qualifications?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No. If you're a dentist or I was a dentist, I could own the X-ray equipment. If we're not trained to operate it for some reason, we wouldn't be able to operate it. We would have to have on staff someone who is trained to operate the equipment.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. I understand in section 6(2) as well that the owner of the equipment must ensure that each operator is qualified. Are there penalties or things of that nature or things that would ensure that there's enforcement for the owner to make sure that they have employed qualified technicians?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — If someone is in violation of the Act, we will enforce it. And there are penalties prescribed within the Act if a person is found to be guilty of an infraction of the legislation.

Mr. Gantefer: — Can you share with us, please, the magnitude of these penalties? Are they related to the size of the equipment or the size of the physical operation that the equipment is installed in, or how does the penalty structure work?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well it's a safety issue, and section 21 of the Act says that:

Every person who:
 (a) fails to comply with an order or direction of an officer;
 or
 (b) contravenes this Act or the regulations;
 is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$15,000 and, in the case of a continuing offence, to a further fine of not more than \$1,500 . . . each day during which the offence continues.

Mr. Gantefer: — And I understand that that would be . . . the owner would be the person penalized rather than the technician that would be in violation?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — It would be the owner who would be penalized.

Mr. Gantefer: — Again, under section 6, a person who is trained to use equipment and seems competent may operate this equipment. What are the demonstrated standards of

competency?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The answer to that question would be that, in consultation with the associations affected by this — it would be dentists and obviously physicians; the college of physicians and surgeons, likely — there would be consultation between them and the department to establish what it is that would be a person who has the qualifications to run the equipment. And the approval, once there's agreement on what those qualifications are, the approval will be done by the department.

You see, this is a good example, if I might allude — and I don't want to say this as anything other than advice — but your amendment that you wish to submit to us is a very good example as to why this amendment is problematic. And I know it's frustrating — it was when I sat in opposition — to not see the regulations and yet you're approving something in a Bill.

The Bill gives my department officials the authority to then go out and develop these regulations with the professional groups who are in a good position to determine what those qualifications are. So I hope that's an answer to your question and some guidance on why the amendment you propose is problematic.

Mr. Gantefer: — I don't think it's appropriate to debate the merits of the amendment, but I do want to say this, that I am not at all taking anything away from the necessity of the officials to make those kinds of negotiations. The concept here is that once those negotiations are completed, it's the responsibility of the legislature to understand the full ramifications of the Bill, and while it would have some time considerations. And that's why it's introduced in terms of coming into force that we think it's an essential thing to do.

I'd also suggest that you could negotiate with these bodies and say standards that are set by these bodies as minimum levels of qualifications for handling this would be sufficient in regulation.

I want to know if we're dealing like with the College of Dentistry or the college of physicians and surgeons, or do we deal with the radiation technologists' association? Is there an association or a body that deals specifically with the operators of this equipment?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — All of those that you mention.

Mr. Gantefer: — In terms of meeting these new standards, then who monitors the training? That's done through that associations on an ongoing basis so that as equipment and technology changes that the people are constantly upgraded to meet the challenges of new equipment? It would seem to me that this technology probably is moving forward on a rolling rate that may require upgrading.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I guess the ultimate responsibility for monitoring lies within the division of the Department of Labour.

We would hope, through consultation with the associations that you've mentioned and I've mentioned today, that they would be of great assistance in terms of making sure that the ongoing safety and the ongoing qualifications are updated and in fact complied with. I would believe that the associations would deal with a dim view of members of theirs, for example, who were violating standards that have been developed in conjunction with them.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Section 18 is amended to acknowledge the establishment of a new association for certified lab and X-ray technicians. Are the association . . . is this new association going to be bound with similar standards and criteria as currently in place for other associations?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The section 18 that you refer to, the association already exists. It's just to identify a name change with the association.

Mr. Gantefoer: — A new section has been added after section 18 that deals with ministerial approval and issues of codes of practice. With regards to consultations with the committee and interested person that the minister may deem important, the minister may issue or repeal codes of practice. Are these consultation processes open to the general public?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, I think it would be a standard practice. The government has put into place, upon coming to office, that did not exist before under the previous administration, a code of . . . a consultation code which requires us to do consultation when undertaking such contemplated changes. And I don't think anyone on this side of the House would want to try and make any kind of a change like that with the ministerial authority that's vested in us without doing consultation.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Would the timing of this consultation be immediately after the proclamation of the Bill or before implementation, or how would that process relate to the coming into force of the Bill?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the department has done some consultation already. A more formal consultation process is done as soon as the Bill is proclaimed and becomes part of the Act. And at that point it's when the officials of the department start developing the regulations.

And I don't get involved in it until such time as they report back to me that they've done consultation — this is where there's agreement; this is where there's disagreement.

Hopefully in a process like this there's general consensus on what it is that the regulations are that are coming forward, and if in fact there is general consensus on the regulations that have been developed, then the process is for me to move it on to the Regulations Committee. The Regulations Committee then report it to cabinet and the regulations come into effect at that time.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Section 20 is amended to allow for the maintenance of government standards in order to protect the reproductive health of any person. Current legislation only

protects the reproductive health of women of reproductive age. Have there been complaints and complications to the reproductive health of men and women of any age affected by radiation, as they are not protected by current legislation?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — It's just to bring into line gender neutral language. It's not been complaint driven or not been experience driven. It's just a state of the art language, I guess.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Section 20(h) is amended to require the development and implementation of procedure manuals. What is the cost of this development and implementation of the manuals?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The manuals are already in place with the appropriate institution or governing body that have been complying with the legislation as it is to date. If there were changes it would be the responsibility of the individual institution to update their manuals, and I believe that in the case of the dentists, the dentists' association would have a role in that. If it was in a physician's clinic, the college of physicians and surgeons I assume would have some role in that.

So each profession that would be associated with using X-ray equipment would have their manuals in place and update them as necessary.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Under section 20 as amended as well, which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to be able to establish categories of occupational workers and persons and prescribe which rates of radiation these people can be exposed to, what criteria are going to be used to establish categories of occupational workers, and what doses of radiation are going to be acceptable for each category?

(1200)

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — International standards are what is used. The change of the wording from occupational workers to a category of persons allows the public in general to be brought in to the limits. And I think that answers your question. If it doesn't, please ask any further clarification of what it is you're wanting to know.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I think if the answer is for these categories that there is an international scale or an international set of standards that we would then implement as well, is that the way it would work? And if that's the case, then I was concerned about how we would find these standards — if it was done arbitrarily or internationally. And I accept your answer.

Mr. Minister, I would like to thank you and your officials for the answers to my questions this afternoon.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 12

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to propose an amendment. Mr. Chairman, I was going to forgo

giving a long speech about this amendment, and if the members opposite would like me to change my mind about it, I'm certainly quite prepared to do that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Do you want the good speech or the short one?

What I'd like to propose, or move, is that:

Clause 12 of the printed Bill be amended by deleting the words "on proclamation" where they appear therein and substituting the following words therefor:

upon consideration and acceptance by the Committee of the Whole of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly of regulations proposed pursuant to this Act.

I so move.

An Hon. Member: — Rod, give us the weekend to think about this.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Oh no. This isn't real difficult.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 12 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 34 — An Act to amend The Electrical Inspection Act, 1993

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 37 — An Act to amend The Water Corporation Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move the Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 22 — An Act to amend The Radiation Health and Safety Act, 1985 and to make related amendments to The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Department of Labour

Vote 20

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, will you please introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Chairman, I have beside me the deputy minister of the Department of Labour, Mr. Brian King. To my left is Noela Bamford, the executive director of labour support. Directly behind me, John Boyd, the director of planning, policy and communications. And beside him, behind Mr. King, is Jeff Parr, the executive director of occupational health and safety.

Item 1

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the officials from the department. I know that we will have an enjoyable 45 minutes and look forward to the next session somewhere in the future.

I guess the first question I have is sort of timely, and that is particularly the Department of Labour and the Minister of Labour, and that is how did you manage to cross the picket line outside the legislature this morning?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I'm not in the habit of crossing picket lines. My parking stall is not in front of the buildings. Some day, if you ever get to be in cabinet, you will find that you don't park out front any more then either; you have a different parking spot.

I crossed no picket line. I did enter the building, and the door I came through, there were no picketers present on my entrance into the building this morning or yesterday.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Minister. I am sure that the employees will be glad to hear which entrance you're using and they'll rectify that for Monday.

I guess I have some general questions. And first of all, I'd really like the minister to outline what he sees as a vision and direction of your department.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I view the department historically as being one to react to situations. My goal is to take the department into a direction for the future whereby they are proactive in the work that they do; that they try and promote good harmony between the workers and the employers of the province; to be a department that helps compliance with legislation; and as a last resort, if there is not compliance with the legislation that's under our direction, to provide fair enforcement of the legislation for which we're responsible.

It's not been an easy task. I don't pretend it will happen in a short period of time. But we do want to take the department from one of being reactive to proactive, to serve working people, for the most part, and to have good harmony with the employers in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantfoer: — What are the specific public policy objectives that drive your department?

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well there are various divisions within the Department of Labour. I can't point to any one policy that drives the department. There's certainly specific legislative statutes that we are responsible for making sure there's compliance with within the province.

For example, The Occupational Health and Safety Act gives the basis for the activities of the occupational health and safety division. And the person who is responsible for that that's here with us today would be Mr. Parr, who is sitting behind the deputy minister.

We also have The Labour Standards Act and the labour standards branch. The Labour Standards Act provides the basis for particular activities within that division.

We also have a number of other areas. One I would like to mention, I think is the best example of where we can be proactive and provide a good service to Saskatchewan people, is within the labour relations and conciliation.

Too often, I think, in the past, the department has reacted to a crisis situation. The labour relations and conciliation, I believe should be out there in the workplaces, working with employers, working with employees, to prevent situations from coming to a crisis situation; being out there in a proactive way to make better and safer workplaces for the working people of Saskatchewan; and having realistic goals in which all employers can comply with; and in some cases, unfortunately, if an employer does not comply, to have the teeth to enforce the legislation of which we are responsible for.

Mr. Gantfoer: — When you've established these general directions and objectives, how are those objectives and standards communicated to the employees within the different branches?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well that's the responsibility, first off, of discussions between myself and the deputy minister. We have to look at what is there presently, not only within the department but at the legislation. We have to look at and consider who the groups are that we affect in society. In our case, it's mainly employees and employers. We then have discussions amongst ourselves.

It's then Mr. King's job, as the permanent head of the department, to call together his managers and directors and work out a system whereby the employees work within the department to carry out the policies that we have asked to be put in place. And of course an important part before policies are changed or a direction is changed and the system is put into place, so to speak, that there should be consultation with all the employees by the directors and managers and the deputy minister so that there's a fair degree of understanding, so that everyone within the organization knows the direction in which we're proceeding.

There's nothing more demoralizing than for employees to lack direction, where they would feel demoralized or afraid to make a decision, not knowing whether they have the backing of

people who are above them within the department or being backed by the minister in that case.

So it's important to have everyone involved in trying to forge new relationships, to be proactive, to protect the interests of working people in Saskatchewan, and at the same time to provide a good deal of harmony out there in the workplace. We try to accomplish that through discussions.

And we know it's not easy to move from a department that is reactive to a department that is proactive, to provide what I think would be better service. But I think that we're working toward accomplishing that. In answer to your question, everyone has to be involved in this process, but there are stages that it goes through.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Minister, I appreciate the way you're outlining the objectives and involving employees in the whole process.

Is there a standard or a set sort of measurable criteria that you have to see if these objectives and things are being met? Have you established any objective criteria that actually determines from time to time what progress you're making in terms of meeting these objectives?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I have some personal standards and I know that the directors here and the deputy minister have standards. If you're talking about standards from what I would use for the employees within the department, when everything is working well and employees are happy within the department you know you're achieving your objectives, at least internally.

Your external objectives, to affect the employers and the employees throughout the province, I use as a standard there is that if there have been a lot of complaints coming to me as the minister, things aren't going well. If the complaints taper off and there are not a lot of complaints coming to me, there's not a lot of issues on day-to-day within the electronic and the print media, then I have to assume that things are going well.

We also, I think, have some standards in whereby if you look at the stability of the workforce in Saskatchewan for example, Saskatchewan has less strikes than any other jurisdiction in Canada. We have a very, very stable workforce within Saskatchewan and I think there are measuring sticks, statistical measuring sticks, like that that we can use and certainly we'd be aware of within the department.

Mr. Gantfoer: — I appreciate that you say that we all have standards and we all do. I guess I'm looking for more objective measurement of the objectives being realized. Quite often that if you're being proactive you look at the objectives that you lay out for a department or a project and that you actually have then a measurable sort of way of seeing if that has been met or realized, other than just sort of a subjective feel-good that everything is going wonderful kind of a thing, or waiting for the media, or us, to beat up on you. And the media seems to me to be pretty subjective standards, in terms of measuring if your objectives are actually being met.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I think feel-good is a pretty good

measure. If people are feeling good, whether it's in the workplace or whether in the department or my own personal office, if people are feeling good, things are going fairly well.

But there are other statistics, and I know what you mean by measuring sticks. For example the numbers of accidents in the workplace. If we're being proactive in the occupational health and safety division of the department, there should be a corresponding number of reduction of lost-time accidents within the workplaces in Saskatchewan.

If you had a industry, for example the mining industry, if you put some emphasis on occupational health and safety and have success at it, you should see the number of accidents within the mining industry decrease.

There are a number of cases whereby employees will feel that they've been wronged by an employer. They'll make a complaint to the labour standards branch of the department. If the complaints are going up, obviously there's some reason why employers are not complying with the labour standards legislation. We would then have to determine what that is.

On the other hand, in terms of complaints by employees against their employer, we would look at statistics such as whether or not our labour standards officers are able to determine whether the employee has a valid complaint. And if the employee does in fact have a valid complaint and it's monetary issue, does in fact our labour standards officer have the capability of recovering the money for the employee who has made the claim against the employer.

So there are a number of statistical issues like that that we use as measuring sticks. And we can tell beyond just feeling good whether or not what we're doing within the department is working, whether or not it can be improved upon, or in fact in some cases whether it's not working very well and what we have to do to remedy the situation.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I note, Minister, that in your examples that you make a number of references to representing the concerns and the issues of employees. Do you also see your department as having a very important function in terms of looking after the interests of employers?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well we have to be fair within the Department of Labour. If someone makes a vexatious complaint against the employer, in the case of a labour standards complaint, we would have the labour standards officer investigate. The labour standards officer does the investigation to determine what the true facts are of the situation that has arisen and then make a judgement as to whether or not the facts dictate that the employee is right or the employer is right.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Does the minister see any program or services in your department that overlap with other areas of government that could perhaps be more appropriately dealt with in other areas?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well we're going in, in the fiscal year that we've just currently entered into, in doing some planning in terms of how our department is organized and whether or not

we have overlapped with other agencies or departments, or whether or not there's some better way in which to provide services that are currently provided through the Department of Labour.

In regard to your previous question, we also have the conciliation/mediation that I think is fairly effective. And I guess it applies to both of your questions, in that the conciliation/mediation does in fact help both sides. It's a neutral issue. It's trying to keep a situation from getting out of control.

We believe, and I think the vast majority of Saskatchewan people believe, that employers want to comply with the law. If an employer doesn't know what the law is, and there are some cases like that, we first want our people to make sure that the employer knows the information, knows what the law is, knows what the regulations are, and ask for compliance by that employer. If the employer at that point refuses to comply with the legislation, we in fact will enforce it.

But we firmly believe that the vast number of people in the province want to comply with Saskatchewan's laws, and in fact do comply with Saskatchewan's laws.

Mr. Gantefoer: — In terms of looking at the efficiencies and the best way programs can be delivered, I appreciate an inside-department review that I understood is what you were suggesting. Have you looked beyond that to see if there are certain things that maybe would better served to be delivered through the Justice department, for example, as compared to your department and vice versa perhaps? I guess I'm thinking of a larger picture that would reflect more of the general government's operations.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — That's a large part of what our planning process is all about. In days gone by, you would know that within the Department of Labour they had the apprenticeship program. They had the electrical inspection. They had the gas inspection within the Department of Labour, and the previous administration chose to change all that.

The internal review we're doing will in fact look at overlap and duplication and whether or not we can better serve some program for the province or maybe some program we have that can be better served with another agency or department.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That sort of covers the general area that I'm at, and I would like to ask some questions later, but I can see that the Tories are very interested in asking some questions, and I'd like to give them the opportunity.

(1230)

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm surprised that they don't find estimates today to be of importance in asking questions. Perhaps they're well on their way home to their constituencies.

However, Mr. Minister, there was a set package of questions — and I don't have them with me, and you'll know what I'm referring to — that have been asked in previous years in regards to employees' in-scope and out-of-scope benefits. And it was

standard practice to just bring the packages forward at the beginning of estimates. And I was wondering if you brought your package forward at this point?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I didn't bring a package because I didn't get the questions. I'd be more than happy to guess at the information you want, based on previous years. And I'd give you my undertaking that I would in fact provide that to you. But I didn't receive a list of questions. If I had received a list of questions, I am sure that the package of answers would've been here for you today. So it's either something has gone astray somewhere . . . so if you have the questions with you, send them over, and I'll answer them.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Actually I guess it should've been a question more directed to the House Leader because this was an agreement of previous years.

But, Mr. Minister, it had to do with the number of employees that are in scope in your department, out of scope; all of their benefits, their complete packages; the date of hiring; contracts; consultants' fees; legal fees, and a description of what those fees were being paid for. Do you have any of that information with you today, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No one has seen your list of standard questions for this year . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Excuse me, could we continue on the conversation and maybe the House leaders can get together a little later and sort this out.

The Chair: — Order, order, order. I'd just remind all members that the process here is, questions will be directed through the Chair from opposition members, through the Chair to the minister. The minister will answer questions through the Chair to the opposition and we recognize one hon. member at a time.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you for referring to me as an hon. member, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. member opposite, we would be more than happy if you want to use last year's questions and just give them this year's answers. We can comply with that. I just wanted to make the point that we had not received those packages of questions and I would anticipate that we would have had the answers here had that happened.

That information is readily available. I do not believe that we have it all with us here today, but if we had it all available I would provide it. I'll give the member my undertaking we will provide it if in fact that's what he wants.

Mr. McPherson: — All right, then we won't have to deal with that again. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I will ask the questions through you.

Mr. Minister, looking on page 81, administration has risen quite an amount of money. Could you just give me a quick reason as to why that has increased?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The answer would be that the increase in that particular line in the budget is because other services, other functions, have been amalgamated within that vote.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. At this point I think I'll pass a few questions on to the Conservatives or perhaps another member.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few questions here. With the construction season starting . . . And my questions are more to do with SaskTel, but with the construction season starting and the SaskTel employees are often required to come out and find cable or lower cable in the case of rural municipal road construction and others, is there any contingency plan being made if this strike continues on into the summer months to take care of things like this, or will this strike hold up construction in the rural?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — That's not really a question that I can answer through the estimates perspective. You'd be better to put that question to the minister in charge of SaskTel or minister responsible for SaskTel.

The only function that our department would have within a situation where there is a lockout or a strike is to provide conciliation or mediation or, in some cases, arbitration. And what I mentioned to the member who was doing the initial questioning from your side of the House is that we want very much to try and be proactive in Saskatchewan so that the labour relations and the conciliation branch of the department tries to spot trouble areas and get out there to prevent the situation from escalating to a strike or a lockout.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Chairman, then I'm not sure if I have any more questions for the minister . . . but is what I'm being told is really you don't want to . . . you're not in a position to answer SaskTel questions. I mean that's satisfactory if that's the way it is, but all of my questions are to do with the SaskTel and possibly the strike implications of.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I'm sorry I'm not responsible for SaskTel. I'm not avoiding you. I'm not the person responsible to answer those questions. I could maybe give you some opinions, but I don't know if it's productive to the good functioning of the House in estimates. The position I laid out in terms of the department, that is what in fact the role of this department would be.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay, I guess the only counteract I would have . . . that you said your department reacts to situations, and I would call a strike a situation, and it's a labour situation. But I guess with that, Mr. Chairman, then I have no questions.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well, Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. member, is that both parties in this case know of the services of the Department of Labour. We, in a case where a situation has got to this stage, using the example that you bring up, we do not impose what it is that we have at our disposal to use. We have to be asked to come into it.

The collective bargaining process can become very complicated on its own without having other parties imposing actions or other remedies upon them. So they're aware of our role. Our department has not neglected its role in the specific situation you bring up, and we'll continue to be as proactive as we can to trying to prevent situations like that from happening in

Saskatchewan.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Chairman, then, for the minister, just one more question then. Is there a point at which your department may be asked to come in and try and get these people back to the table? I think that's all our biggest concerns right now is to get these people back to the table. Would this be something that your department would get involved with?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, at some point the department could be asked for . . . and I list them in orders of the less severe, so to speak. It's not a term I like very much, but it's one that comes to mind. First off, the parties could ask us for conciliation. They could ask us for mediation. They could ask us for arbitration. And any of those three could be requested from either side or both sides.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, last spring I told members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees that pay equity was a woman's issue and not a labour issue. I'm asking you if your department . . . if you're telling me and every other woman in this province that women's concerns should be dealt with differently and separately from men?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No. Your interpretation of what I said to CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) last year is a interpretation that has plagued me for some time by articles in the paper and letters by people who have written to me to inform me of my lack of knowledge on the particular subject that you mention.

What I was saying to the CUPE convention was that the pay equity agenda does not fall within the Department of Labour. The responsibility for pay equity in Saskatchewan rests within the Women's Secretariat which is an agency of the Government of Saskatchewan. I wasn't trying to elevate or to lower the issue. I was only stating a fact that I'm not the minister responsible. The minister responsible is the minister in charge of the Women's Secretariat.

Ms. Draude: — I guess my main concern with that is the Women's Secretariat is, I think, the second-lowest funded department or area of government. And it seems to me that this concern, along with many other women's concerns, should be dealt with a budget that's much larger than the few thousand dollars that they have available to them.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well all across departments, through the Crowns and through the executive government, there are movements towards pay equity, and really what you're talking about is equal pay for work of equal value. Where the Women's Secretariat would be responsible is that if there was actual legislation, legislation to be brought in to require everyone to do at a certain date, to do equal pay for work of equal value.

So just to clarify that a bit further, there's a job classification system taking place right now. It's been completed in some of the Crowns. It's at various stages in other Crowns. The first step to having equal pay for work of equal value is to do a job classification system.

And you have to be careful as to whether or not you do it through collective bargaining or whether you do it through legislation. In Saskatchewan, what we've chosen to do is do it through collective bargaining. So all of the responsibilities for seeing something that people want to have happen doesn't fall within the Women's Secretariat, but the legislative responsibility would fall within the Women's Secretariat. So I assure you it's an issue that's on the top of all of our minds. It's an issue that we've been pushed to move forward in different ways on it.

But I would point out to you that I think we've successful in terms of equal pay for work of equal value. If you look at the gap in Saskatchewan between what women earn and what men earn, in most years . . . well in all years we're in the upper half of the other jurisdictions in Canada of being closer in the gap. In fact in 1994, I believe that the only province in Canada that had a better ratio of pay equity, equal pay for work of equal value, was the province of Prince Edward Island.

And within Prince Edward Island, of course, you have industries that are traditional to no gender. There are industries there that are pretty well gender neutral. Whereas if you look at traditional industries in Saskatchewan, some of the very traditional industries such as mining, hard rock mining, you don't see many women working in that industry. So that throws our figures out of balance a little bit.

But I assure you that in terms of equal pay for work of equal value, Saskatchewan has a very good record. We should have nothing to be ashamed about in Saskatchewan other than continuing to work to make sure that people, regardless of their gender, get paid for the value of the work they do, not who it is who's performing the work.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, when we look at the average salaries here in Saskatchewan then, are the average salaries of women substantially lower than that of men?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I think that where you should ask these questions actually is when the Woman's Secretariat comes before estimates, and the minister would have those statistical types of things readily available to her. We can get them through the department. We have them within the department, but it's not something that we would be traditionally prepared with to bring the information here today. So I would suggest, unless you want to keep pursuing it, that you wait until the minister in charge of Women's Secretariat comes before estimates, and that's the place to ask the statistical information.

Ms. Draude: — Okay, that's when I'll ask it. But I just want to let you know that I don't feel that having questions like this transferred to a different department . . . I think we're all one group of people, and this really does concern me.

Could you tell me what the ratio of female to male employees are, particularly in non-clerical positions?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I'll repeat again. I thought that I told you we do have all the responsibility for equal pay for work of equal value, for pay equity, for ratios, for gender parities. But those statistical types of things — I tell you again — we

wouldn't normally be prepared to bring those forward in estimates even though we have them within the department.

The agency that would come forward before this very floor of the legislature that would have the statistical types of things that they would normally bring with them without any forewarning would be the Woman's Secretariat. For example — I'm trying to be helpful to you — is that if you would have told us in advance that you were going to ask those questions of a statistical nature that we wouldn't normally bring here, we would have made sure we had the information here. We just don't have that information here with us today.

(1245)

Ms. Draude: — Okay, I do have a question about the Minister of Education. Pat Atkinson said that she'd support the government setting aside a pool of . . .

The Chair: — Order. I remind the member it is not acceptable to use other members' names. Refer to the minister appropriately.

Ms. Draude: — I'm sorry. The Minister of Education stated that she would support the government setting aside a pool of funding for pay equity. Is there a pool like this included in the figures for Labour for this year?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No. The Department of Labour wouldn't have that pool of money. The money would be bargained separately within the different collective agreements within government.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin to go into some of the questions about your senior management personnel of the departments and things of that nature, if I could.

And what I'd like to first of all talk about or ask you . . . the question is, would you please describe the senior management structure of your department.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Currently there's a deputy minister. There's an executive director of occupational health and safety who is with us here today. There's an executive director of labour services who is not with us today. And there's an executive director of labour support who is with us here today. Beyond that, there is the labour relations, mediation, and conciliation which is a branch or a function of the department as well.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Can you explain to me the senior managers of these different areas within your department? Could you outline how many of these people would come with union backgrounds, either by belonging to unions or having positions on union executives?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The only one of the . . . there's four key people in the department, in my mind, besides the deputy minister even though everybody's key to the functioning of the service we provide.

There's Jeff Parr, who has no labour background that I know of . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Have you ever worked for a labour union? Ten years ago Jeff Parr worked for a union for a short period of time — four months. Graham Mitchell, I don't believe has ever worked for a union.

Noela Bamford has been with the public service in Saskatchewan for 21 years. She is a public employee, not a union activist. Brian King has been a public employee. How long have you been a public employee . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . since 1973. He's never worked for a union.

There's Terry Stevens, who would be the only person at that kind of a director level who has actually worked for any substantive amount of time. For many years Terry Stevens was a director — would it be? — of the steelworkers, which was an elected position within the steelworkers' organization.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Minister. Since taking responsibility for the department, by your government in '91-92, what organizational changes if any have you implemented within the department?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well that's difficult to answer because organizational changes are ongoing, and they will be.

I think it was in answer to your questions earlier this day . . . is that we're taking a focused review of the organization of the department, how it relates to our client group, and how it relates also to other government departments and agencies to make sure there's no duplication or whether or not there can be better ways of delivery of the program.

So if you want to know something more specific, I wish you'd just ask the question because it would be a cumbersome task to explain organizational changes from 1991 until 1996 over a five-year period or so.

Mr. Gantfoer: — I guess if we're looking at specifics . . . and I note in the budget that there's 13 full-time equivalents that have been removed from your estimates for this year compared to last year. Can you tell me what areas specifically then that those full-time equivalents are being removed from?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — In answer to your question, I believe that there were 12 people. My officials inform me, 12 positions. Six of those were in-scope positions. Six were out-of-scope positions. And I think that pretty well all of them were within either communications or administration. In terms of the reduction in the number of positions, no front line service delivery people were affected by this.

Mr. Gantfoer: — What kind of cost saving was resulted in terms of the . . . Your budget decreased. How much of the decrease in expenditures of your budget would be represented by these full-time equivalent reductions?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The approximate breakdown in terms of percentages . . . our budget in the department was reduced by about 8 per cent. We were obligated, I guess, to reduce our budget because we wanted to focus on health care, education, and social services where there were fairly large retreats in

terms of the federal funding that was put into place. We wanted to protect those programs in health, education, and social services, so all other departments got decreases.

Our decrease was about 8 per cent. Of that, 5 per cent of the decrease would be an employee component as the positions you described. The other 3 per cent to make up the 8 per cent would be other items that we had to form efficiencies in to find the total 8 per cent reduction.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — I want to wish all members a good weekend and particularly those of you are celebrating Easter with your families. Happy Easter to you. Have a good weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

