

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The prayer reads:

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

And the names on the petition are from Fort Qu'Appelle, Weyburn, Lampman, Regina, and various other small communities in southern Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to present petitions of names throughout 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 people that have signed the petition are from numerous southern Saskatchewan communities and the city of Regina.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to present names of petitioners 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.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Rouleau but they also are from Whitewood, Kipling, and Regina.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the Plains Health Centre. The petition 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 petition is signed by people throughout rural Saskatchewan, in the South particularly, and as far north as Archerwill.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, 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 the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina, from White City, from Yorkton, Corning, and Lumsden.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by many concerned citizens from the city of Regina.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. And 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 the people who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Carlyle, Melville, and Regina.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues and the people all throughout Saskatchewan on day no. 30 to present petitions on behalf of saving 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 people that have signed this petition are mainly from the Estevan area, some from Regina, of course from Regina Albert South constituency and Regina Elphinstone in particular.

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 cause the government to undertake measures to remedy the problem of big game crop damage; and

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give

notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Justice regarding public notification process for released sex offenders: (1) how many meetings has the minister held and/or attended regarding implementing public notification process in the province of Saskatchewan; (2) who was in attendance at those meetings; (3) how many other notification processes from other jurisdictions have been studied to date; and (4) how many provinces have a public notification process in place presently?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Before we proceed to the introduction of guests, I would like to welcome on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly some special guests who are seated in our Chamber. We are honoured to have members from the Canadian Forces and the Canadian Forces Liaison Council present for Reserve Force Day.

Now I will outline today's Reserve Force Day program which is being held to honour the Saskatchewan men and women of the reserve force component of the Canadian Forces. In a moment I shall invite the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party, to pay tribute to the reserves. I shall then ask the Minister of Intergovernment Affairs to say a few words and introduce some special guests on the floor.

Following these introductions, 20 members of the Assembly will introduce the reserves by units and then we'll proceed to other introductions.

I will now call on the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, I wish to join you in my words of welcome to the many distinguished visitors who have joined us in the Assembly today. We are indeed fortunate to have with us General Baril, the commander of the Army, and many senior officers in the Canadian Forces at this very special event.

Also, I'd like to welcome two very distinguished Canadians, Mr. John Craig Eaton, national Chair of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council — perhaps Mr. Eaton could just stand to be identified; and the provincial Chair, Mr. Paul Hill, and his wife, Mrs. Carol Hill; and delegates from across Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And why not have one of the most important, General Baril, stand up and be recognized too, sir.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to say again, just a few brief words in tribute to the Saskatchewan members of the Canadian Reserve Forces, who have served with such distinction and dedication.

A few moments ago, I had the privilege of joining His Honour and General Baril for the inspection of the troops. I said then and I repeat in the House today, that it is but the voluntary, part-time nature of this service which sets reservists apart from their full-time career counterparts in the Canadian Forces.

Mr. Speaker, this distinction is not one of quality, for the efforts put forth by everyone is, as we can all agree, of the highest calibre. Rather this is a distinction of quantity, because as I see it, the duties performed by the reserve forces are in addition to the day-to-day demands of home and work. And the quantity is the distinction. The fact that a relatively small province like ours can boast over a thousand members of the naval, air, communication reserves, the militia, the cadet instructors cadre, speaks very, very highly to our population's well-known spirit of volunteerism. It is a tribute to our caring, compassionate, and cooperative society that we have so many citizens dedicated to extending the warm embrace of freedom to people throughout the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the entire aspects of our history, even before we became a province, Saskatchewan people have served their fellow human beings and our country in this commendable way. They have rallied to the colours in large numbers in both world wars and in Korea. They have served on many United Nations' peacekeeping operations, including the recent missions in the former Yugoslavia.

And over the course of history, several volunteers have won the Victoria Cross for valour in battle. This is indeed an outstanding record, one of which we can all be very, very proud.

But in closing, Mr. Speaker, I point out that the Greek philosopher Aristotle taught us the following:

Dignity does not consist in possessing honours, but in deserving honours.

Not in possessing them but in deserving them. So wise. Those we honour today are more than deserving of our respect and deep gratitude.

On behalf of all Saskatchewan people, let me express our sincere thanks to our reserve forces for their courage, their determination, and their willingness to sacrifice personal comforts for the pursuit and maintenance of freedom and justice and democracy everywhere. We are all very, very proud of them. God bless each and every one of them.

Thank you, sir.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly a pleasure to rise today to say a few words in tribute to the dedicated men and women who are part of Canada's reserve forces. Without wanting to echo too much of what the Premier has already said, I would just like to add my voice to those recognizing the effort and dedication put forth by these great citizens of Canada.

As we've already heard, the reserve forces in Saskatchewan

have a proud tradition predating even the province itself. I don't think we can ever underestimate the commitment of these people who volunteer a good deal of their spare time to ensuring Canada's Armed Forces remain strong and proud.

These so-called citizen soldiers are an important part of that tradition. Reservists have served overseas on a number of peacekeeping operations. As we see on the news every night, such assignments can be onerous and dangerous. These people are at times putting their own safety on the line to try and bring some civility to other parts of the world where the people are not as fortunate as we are in Canada to live in peace and security. For that, a day such as this is but a small token of our gratitude.

I also want to take this time to pay a small tribute to those men and women who lead cadet squadrons in our province. There are 67 such squadrons in Saskatchewan, and in fact I am lucky enough to have the H.M.C.S. (Her Majesty's Canadian Ship) Qu'Appelle Sea Cadet training facility located in my own constituency at Fort San.

I was a cadet in my youth and I know firsthand how fortunate those youths are who decide to take part in the cadet program. It builds character and leadership abilities, attributes these young people will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

So once again, welcome to all those reservists we honour today. And on behalf of all of my colleagues in the official opposition, I want to say you all have our deepest thanks and respect for all your hard work and dedication. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, Leader of the Opposition, distinguished guests, I am pleased to have the opportunity to add my remarks today honouring the many brave Saskatchewan men and women who have worked with our province's and our country's reserve forces.

Today is Saskatchewan Reserve Force Day, a day to pay respects to those who have lost their lives in the past and to thank those who continue to diligently work toward keeping peace in our country and those abroad.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's reservists have been an integral part of Canada's defence force for the past number of years, dating back to when Saskatchewan was first a province in the North-West Territories. Through two world wars, the Korean War, and more recently in peacekeeping missions throughout the world, Canadian reservists have participated in peacekeeping missions in Korea, Pakistan, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Cambodia, El Salvador, the former Yugoslavia, Mozambique, Somalia, and a number of other countries — the list goes on and on — working diligently to protect democracy and do whatever possible to avoid war. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, reservists do not return home to their friends and family, which is one of the horrible tragedies of conflict in war.

I would like to say thank you, Mr. Speaker, to those who fought

so valiantly and gave up their lives to preserve the freedoms that we all enjoy today and sometimes take too much for granted.

Mr. Speaker, I would also today like to commend the many employers in our province and throughout Canada who recognize the significance of our reservists and provide time for militia military training and tours of duty for their reservist employees.

Today, as we remember those who died in conflicts of the past in order to make the world safe for democracy, we might give some thought as to how we continue to make democracy safe for the world because, Mr. Speaker, as Harry Truman said in 1966 and I quote:

For it is all too obvious that if we do not abolish war on this earth then surely one day war will abolish us all from this earth.

Thanks to all the reservists, whether naval, militia, air reserve, communications reserve, cadet instructors cadre. Thank you for all your work and dedication toward this goal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I join with yourself, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party, in welcoming our visitors to the Assembly this afternoon.

M. le président, je joins avec vous, le premier ministre, la chef de l'opposition, la chef de le parti troisième, pour dire bienvenue a nos invités distingués.

Canada's Armed Forces have greatly contributed to protecting the ideals of peace and freedom around the world. The generosity and high principles of our citizens were shown by the promptness with which we responded in both world wars and the Korean War. Canada could have said — as others did — this is not our fight. But we didn't, and many paid the price, whether at Somme, Ypres, Dieppe, Juno Beach, or Kamyong

The same willingness to defend others characterizes Canada's peacekeeping record. Last year I had the privilege of hearing Major General Lewis MacKenzie speak after his return from Bosnia. He related that whenever a UN (United Nations) peacekeeping force is needed, the country in need receives a list of those countries willing to contribute, and they tick off which countries they prefer. He stated, Canada is always the first choice. And it isn't until the countries find out how many troops Canada can contribute, that the rest of the list is checked off.

Peacekeeping forces would not have been possible without the reserves who have stepped forward to play an important role in these dangerous but vital missions of peace, including many reservists from Saskatchewan.

Canada has a proud history of doing its duty. Today provides another opportunity to remind people, and the people of Saskatchewan, of that little-known record and especially the

role of the Armed Forces Reserves. Members of the naval, army, air, and communication reserves in Saskatchewan, together with the cadet instructors, are not only a vital part of Canada's Armed Forces, they are, at the same time, valued members of their provincial and local communities.

It was my privilege earlier today to host a luncheon for senior military officers and for the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, which is holding its annual conference here in Regina. This organization promotes good relations between reservists and their civilian employers. It demonstrates that citizen soldiers are not only valuable for the Armed Forces, they're also better employees who bring special skills and experience to their civilian jobs.

For many years, the Government of Saskatchewan has had a policy of leave for military training for its employees, and we're proud to make this contribution to Canada's defence forces.

Mr. Speaker, it's now my privilege and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House, some distinguished guests from the Canadian Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, seated behind the bar of the House. I'd ask them to rise and be acknowledged when I call their names:

M. le président, c'est mon plaisir de vous présenter et par vous aux députés au l'assemblée, quelques invités distingués des Forces Canadiennes, de les Gendarmes Royaux Canadiens, et le Conseil de Liaison des Forces Canadiennes qui sont assis en arrière de la barrière de l'Assemblée. Quand je les appelle, je leurs demanderai de se lever:

The Commander of Canada's Army, Lieutenant General Maurice Baril, commander of the Land Force Command in Saint-Hubert, Quebec.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Major General Rick Linden, chief of reserves and cadets for the Canadian Forces.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Major General Clive Addy, commander of the Canadian Army in the West, land force western area, based in Edmonton.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Brigadier General Robie MacDonald, reserve adviser for the army.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Representing the senior air reserve adviser, Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Chevrier.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Brigadier General Ken Quinn, deputy commander of land force, western area.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Colonel Sandy Fairbanks, the senior legal reserve adviser.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Captain John Dalzell from Saskatoon, the senior naval officer in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Colonel Robert Chisholm, commander of Saskatchewan district for the army.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Representing the wing commander of the 15th Wing, Moose Jaw, Lieutenant Colonel Sandy Milne.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Chief Superintendent Andre Gauthier, commanding officer of the Depot Division, Canadian Royal Mounted Police.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Chief Superintendent Rob Leatherdale, representing the commanding officer of the F Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — From the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, it's my pleasure to introduce, as has been already introduced but I'll ask him to stand again, Mr. John Craig Eaton of Toronto, national Chair of the council.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Paul Hill of Regina, provincial Chair of the council for Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Colonel Luc Bujold, national liaison officer for the council.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And the provincial Chairs, liaison officers, and national staff of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council from across Canada. I'd ask you if you'd all please rise.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And finally, His Worship, Mayor Boughen, mayor of Moose Jaw, home of Saskatchewan's military base, 15 Wing, and the world-famous Snowbirds.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with your permission members of the Assembly will now introduce reservists from across the province who are seated in the galleries this afternoon.

The Speaker: — I now call on some members of the Legislative Assembly to introduce our reserves according to their units.

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, members of Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Queen* in Regina are seated in the east gallery. The naval reserve in Regina was established in 1923. In 1942 it was commissioned as H.M.C.S. *Queen* by permission of King George VI in 1942 and named after Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother. H.M.C.S. *Queen* is one of the top naval reserve divisions in Canada and is tasked to provide a crew for a maritime coastal defence vessel.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce the members of H.M.C.S. *Queen*.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Unicorn* in Saskatoon are seated in the Speaker's gallery. Established in 1923, H.M.C.S. *Unicorn* is named after one of the first vessels to enter Hudson Bay in search of the Northwest Passage and it was commissioned as a ship in 1941. During the Second World War, *Unicorn* served as a Royal Canadian Navy recruiting centre. Several times in recent decades H.M.C.S. *Unicorn* has been recognized as the top naval reserve division in Canada. Many of its members have served with the Canadian Forces around the world.

It is my privilege to introduce members of the H.M.C.S. *Unicorn*. Would you stand, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Saskatchewan Dragoons from Moose Jaw are seated in the Speaker's gallery. This unit traces its history back to the 1880s as a mounted rifle patrol. It fought as infantry in the First and Second World Wars. In 1950 it became an armoured unit and in 1968 an independent reconnaissance squadron. The Saskatchewan Dragoons are now a wheeled reconnaissance unit skilled in cross-country driving and field craft. It is my privilege to introduce members of the Saskatchewan Dragoons.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, members of the 10th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, from Regina, are seated in the west gallery. Militia artillery began in Saskatchewan in 1910. Volunteers from Saskatchewan field batteries served with distinction in both the First and Second World Wars. In the Second War, 18th Field Battery from Regina became an

anti-tank unit. After the war, the regiment again became a field regiment. Members of the Assembly appreciate the efficiency of the 18th Field Battery in firing gun salutes at the opening of the legislature and on other special occasions.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege, and I would add, Mr. Speaker, that it is my distinct pleasure as a former gunner, to introduce members of the 10th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, members of the 64 Battery of the 10th Field Regiment from Yorkton are also seated in the west gallery. Like their colleagues in Regina, the gunners from Yorkton share in the proud traditions of the Royal Canadian Artillery and have served the United Nations peacekeeping missions abroad.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce members of the 64 Battery, 10th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery from Yorkton. I ask them to please rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the North Saskatchewan Regiment from Saskatoon are seated in the Speaker's gallery.

This infantry regiment was formed in 1970 but it traces its origins to a rifle regiment formed in Saskatoon way back in 1907. Renamed the Saskatoon Light Infantry, this regiment took part in the invasion of Sicily and Italy in 1943 and the north-west Europe campaign in 1945.

Soldiers of the North Saskatchewan Regiment have served in Germany and on several United Nations missions. The North Saskatchewan Pipes and Drums played at our ceremony this afternoon.

It is my privilege to introduce members of the North Saskatchewan Regiment from Saskatoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of "B" Company of the North Saskatchewan Regiment from Prince Albert are also seated in the Speaker's gallery. This company has a long history in our province as it perpetuates the Prince Albert and Battleford Volunteers formed in the 1880s. With their counterparts in Saskatoon, members of "B" Company train all year to maintain their infantry skills.

It is my privilege now to introduce members of "B" Company, North Saskatchewan Regiment from Prince Albert.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of Royal Regina Rifles are seated in the west gallery.

The predecessor battalion of the regiment was formed in 1905,

the year Saskatchewan became a province. During the First World War the unit received many battle honours. In the Second World War the Regina Rifle Regiment landed on the Normandy beaches on D-Day in 1944 and it reached further inland than any other unit.

The regiment was honoured in 1982 when the Queen granted the title "Royal" and appointed Princess Anne as the colonel-in-chief.

Members of the regiment have served with distinction in United Nations peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia. It is my privilege to introduce members of the Royal Regina Rifles.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce members of the 16 Service Battalion from Regina, seated in the west gallery.

Formed in 1965, 16 Service Battalion provides combat service support to all units in the Saskatchewan district — transport, supply, maintenance, administration, finance, cooks, and military police. Without the drivers, technicians, and other support personnel of 16 Service Battalion, the Army Reserve could not function.

It's my privilege to introduce members of the 16 Service Battalion from Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce a group today as well. It's the members of the Saskatoon Detachment of 16 Service Battalion in Saskatoon, who are also seated in the west gallery today.

The men and women of this detachment maintain the vehicles and ensure the supplies of the militia in Saskatoon. The unit's motto, "Flexible and Enduring", is appropriate for their task.

It is my privilege again to introduce members of the Saskatoon Detachment of 16 Service Battalion.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the 16 Regina Medical Company are seated in the east gallery. The unit started with a field ambulance which served in France in the First World War and in north-west Europe during the Second World War. 16 Medical Company provides first aid, medical examinations, and field ambulance services to all reserve units. Its members also take training in hospitals, ambulance, and basic trauma life support.

It is my privilege to introduce members of the 16 Medical Company from Regina. Would you please stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of Saskatoon Detachment 16 Medical Company are also seated in

the east gallery. They provide first aid and medical support to the units in Saskatoon, and were granted official detachment status in 1993.

It is my privilege to introduce members of the Saskatoon Detachment of 16 Medical Company.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Saskatchewan District Headquarters are seated in the east gallery. Located at the Regina Armoury, Saskatchewan District Headquarters is responsible on behalf of the Land Force Western Area for all army reserve units in our province.

Members of the headquarters coordinate administration, personnel, training, operations, chaplains, legal services, and public affairs. There are also headquarters staff in Saskatoon and Dundurn.

It is my privilege to introduce members of the Saskatchewan District Headquarters.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Militia Training Detachment, Dundurn, are seated in the east gallery. Camp Dundurn, south of Saskatoon, was established in the 1930s as a depression relief project and work camp. During the Second World War it became a major training centre for the Canadian Army and Air Force. It is now an ammunition depot and the militia training centre for Saskatchewan. Exercises and individual training for all Saskatchewan soldiers take place year-round in Dundurn. In 1995, training for United Nations peacekeeping operations brought soldiers from all over western Canada to Dundurn.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce members of the Militia Training Detachment, Dundurn.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, members of the 15 Wing Detachment, Dundurn are also seated in the east gallery. They operate the firing range at the camp, a vital part of the year-round training for our reserve soldiers, and they maintain an enviable safety record in doing so.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce members of the 15 Wing Detachment, Dundurn.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, seated in the west gallery are members of 15 Wing, Air Augmentation Flight from Moose Jaw. This unit, Mr. Speaker, was formed in 1975 as the first trial unit of its kind. The purpose of the Air Augmentation Flight is to provide trained personnel for the air force in a variety of occupations. These members work side by side with their regular force counterparts at 15 Wing, Moose Jaw, which, of course, is Saskatchewan's major base.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you too would want to join me in welcoming members of the 15 Air Reserve Augmentation Flight.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of 734 Communications Squadron from Regina are seated in the Speaker's gallery. Communications squadrons are the successors of signals regiments. They provide radio, field telephone, teletype, computer, and information processing services to the Canadian Forces. In 1990, 734 Squadron became the first total force unit in Canada when it combined reserve and regular force personnel into one organization.

It is my privilege, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly, members of 734 Communications Squadron. I ask them to rise.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of 737 Communications Squadron from Saskatoon are seated in your gallery. Like its sister unit in Regina, 737 Communications Squadron provides a variety of technical services and skilled personnel for the Canadian Forces in the Saskatoon area.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce members of 737 Communications Squadron.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Cadet Instructors Cadre are seated in your gallery. These reserve officers instruct and train young people in our cadet corps. Nearly 3,000 Saskatchewan boys and girls belong to 67 cadet corps in 49 communities across our province. The cadet movement is one of Canada's largest and most effective youth organizations. In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it includes six sea cadet corps, 20 army cadet corps, and 41 air cadet squadrons.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce members of the Cadet Instructors Cadre.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in the east gallery and on the floor of the House are former reservists of the Canadian Forces.

Many citizens of our province have served in the navy, army, air force, or communication reserve. They have given generously of their time and talents outside their regular employment and often at a considerable cost to their leisure and family time. Employers will testify that reservists, present or former, bring extra skill and commitment to their full-time jobs. Saskatchewan has been well served by its reservists in the Canadian Forces.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce former Saskatchewan reservists present today in the Chamber. Please stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I thank all hon. members for your introductions of the reserves. And to continue now with introduction of guests, I will recognize the hon. member for Redberry Lake.

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask all members to welcome students from Blaine Lake composite school, Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan. We have 19 students, grade 11 and 12, sitting in the west gallery. They are accompanied by teachers, Mr. Ron Jeppesen and Mr. Gerry Tkachuk.

I ask all members to join in welcoming these teachers and students from my constituency of Redberry Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Melfort Mustangs Hockey Champions

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For those that were not predisposed to watch golf over the weekend, you probably know why I rise today, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise and congratulate my own home town team, the Melfort Mustangs, on their recent provincial victory on Friday played in the Regina AgriDome.

In a most dramatic finish, the Melfort Mustangs have captured their second Junior A SJHL (Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League) championship title in five years. In a 5 to 3 victory over the Yorkton Terriers, the Mustangs ended the series four games to one.

Coach Kevin Dickey can be very proud of the team that will represent all of Saskatchewan against likely Neepawa or possibly St. James, Manitoba for the Anavet Cup championship slated to begin April 20 at the Northern Lights Palace in Melfort.

Please join me in congratulating the Melfort Mustangs on their provincial victory and to join in welcoming you to the Royal Bank Cup scheduled for Melfort the beginning of May.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Maidstone Trade Fair

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, it may be hard for some members of the Assembly to believe that I attended a function during the weekend where I had to be quiet. Well for part of the time, anyway. I am talking about the 12th annual Maidstone Trade Fair and silent auction which was held at the Maidstone arena.

There were 75 exhibitors at this event which is sponsored by the Maidstone Chamber of Commerce and the Maidstone and District Historical Society. This shows that the entrepreneurship spirit is just up and going in businesses in the north-west, and business is alive and thriving.

Items and services included agricultural, commercial, arts, crafts, financial, and recreational. Other activities included Paul Runalls family entertainment, the Maidstone band, and the magic of Jamie Swettenham.

Approximately 1,500 people attended the trade fair, which is excellent considering the population of Maidstone is 1,000.

I would also like to recognize the corporate sponsors which included Wilhelm Gibbons & Greenwood, solicitors; Maidstone Pharmacy; Kelly's Auction Service; town of Maidstone; Alm chartered accountants; Waseca Credit Union; CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce); and Step by Step home hardware.

Congratulations to all organizers and participants for putting on a successful event. Thank you.

National Soil Conservation Week

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of Saskatchewan's most precious resources is our soil. I would like to recognize this week's designation as National Soil Conservation Week. It is extremely timely, because right now many farmers are preparing to head out into the fields for spring seeding while others are surveying the damage from spring flooding.

The success of Saskatchewan's agriculture industry is directly tied to the soil conditions in the province. For this reason researchers and farmers are continually looking for innovative ways to make our land sustainable while trying to balance the costs.

The need to protect our soil has drastically changed farming practices in Saskatchewan in recent years. Now we see more stubble left over in the winter. More and more farmers are using the direct seeding method along with minimal or zero till.

Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association recently recognized the efforts of some who are leading the way in conservation practices. Ken Allport from the Kyle area and the Seager Wheeler farm in Rosthern were honoured for their farming methods. We can all take notes from them.

I encourage all farmers across Saskatchewan and Canada to take some time this week to think about how we can improve our farming methods to ensure our land and soil is preserved for future generations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Youth Orchestra

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, earlier in this Assembly I praised the performance of the South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra at the first Banff International Festival of Youth Orchestras held during the Easter week. The Saskatoon Youth Orchestra was also present at this prestigious festival, Mr. Speaker, and it performed with the same exuberance and professional excellence as did the other orchestra from Saskatchewan.

The young players, under the direction of Wayne Toews, played

a very spirited, mostly modern, and incredibly difficult program of works by Mahler, Dvorak, Bartok, and Lyadov. I was happy to hear as well a work by the Canadian composer, Godfrey Ridout, an appropriate selection for a Canadian orchestra.

The Saskatoon Youth Orchestra was established in 1958 by Murray Adaskin and reorganized in 1983 by Mr. Toews and George Charpentier, the associate music director. Since then it has maintained a prominent profile on the Canadian music scene. I know many of the musicians in this orchestra, and I can attest to their musicianship and their dedication to their art.

Two points very quickly, Mr. Speaker. One, the two Saskatchewan orchestras were the only representatives from Canada at this festival, a fact of which we can all be very proud. And two, the orchestra's ability and their director's guidance deserve our applause and our support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Conference

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation wrapped up an extremely busy conference in Regina with a special ceremony. First I would like to congratulate the newly elected president and vice-president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

Carol Moen takes over as STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) president on July 1. Carol is a Swift Current teacher who has served the past two years as STF vice-president. Doug Willard takes over as STF vice-president. Doug is presently teaching in Rosthern. Of course Dwain Drew now becomes past president of the STF, and I would like to thank him for his dedication and hard work.

Finally I would also like to congratulate four distinguished Saskatchewan educators on their honorary life membership with the STF. Dr. Terry McKague of Regina spent 23 years with the teachers' federation and has taught at the University of Alberta and the University of Regina. He also served on the U of R senate and spent two terms there as chancellor.

Harold Schultz of Saskatoon has been involved in education for than 40 years. He taught in Kinistino, Rosthern, and Melfort and was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Middle Years Association.

Gary Genge of Saskatoon dedicated himself to the STF in various administrative positions for 20 years. He helped set up the Saskatchewan School Based Administrators Association.

Walter Wenaas, now of Calgary, taught in Shaunavon, Biggar, and Estevan. Walter also was a very active member of the STF.

I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating these four individuals for their lifetime work in developing Saskatchewan education. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spiritwood Area Doctor Retiring

Mr. Johnson: — Last Saturday evening I attended a retirement function for Dr. Ray Michaud. He has practised medicine in the community of Spiritwood for the past 35 years.

Mr. Speaker, the 150 guests in attendance roasted and toasted the doctor with stories of those 35 years. My father was the hospital board chairman in 1961 when Dr. Michaud was granted his hospital privileges. I know that they had a good working relationship although they were not always in agreement.

Mr. Speaker, although Dr. Michaud spent many of those years as a one-man practice, he was active in the community as a member of the Lions, the Knights of Columbus, the curling rink executive. He chaired or was the president of the extendicare association, the separate school board, the arena board, and the district parks and recreation.

Mr. Speaker, I wish there was time to tell the stories about the equipment failure, family support, and other interesting activities that went on during those 35 years, but there isn't. So, Mr. Speaker, the people in Spiritwood on Saturday evening, along with his family, paid tribute to Dr. Michaud. I ask today that the members of the Assembly do the same. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

South-east Volunteer Recognition Awards

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we speak well of volunteerism in this province. Yesterday I had the privilege of attending a volunteer recognition awards ceremony held in my home community of Kipling; actually it was the south-east part of this province. People from the areas of Weyburn and Estevan, and Carievale, Redvers, Moosomin, Kipling and all the way to Odessa, Vibank, gathered in Kipling to recognize a number of people who had contributed so greatly to their communities, whether in sport, recreation, or culture.

I think it speaks well of this organization that a number of years ago as governments looked at cutting back grants, decided that they might find another alternate means whereby they may keep this recognition awards ceremony going. And so I want to extend congratulations to the south-east volunteer recognition awards group for their hard work and efforts in recognizing the work of volunteers across the area. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Allan Cup Championship

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, this past week the town of Unity in my riding hosted the 1996 Allan Cup championship for senior amateur hockey in Canada. Since 1914, the Allan Cup has been accepted as a championship trophy for senior amateur hockey in all of Canada. It is an honour for any community to host this prestigious event.

I would like to congratulate the four teams that competed in Unity. The Stony Plain Eagles from Stony Plain, Alberta; the Truro TSN Bearcats from Truro, Nova Scotia; the Unity Miners from Unity, Saskatchewan; and the winners of the competition

— the Warroad Lakers from Warroad, Minnesota.

The Warroad Lakers have now won the Allan Cup three consecutive years in a row. They represented Manitoba/Saskatchewan, and as far as we know, they are the only American team ever to compete for the Allan Cup. This week was one of exciting competition, good sportsmanship, and fun.

I would also like to congratulate the many volunteers who made the Allan Cup such a successful community event — the 12 members of the committee who did the organizing; the chamber of commerce who sponsored a special luncheon; the Royal Purple for the dance lunch; Unity students who made posters and put them up in many businesses; the Twenties and Thirties Clubs for looking after the dance; the Kinsmen for a pancake breakfast; the local legion for helping at the opening ceremonies; and all the others who made the week's event such a great success. This is a wonderful example of rural residents working together to promote and achieve a momentous accomplishment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskTel Strike

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of SaskTel told reporters last week that the union is threatening to bring home unionized employees who are overseas on international projects if the strike is not settled within two weeks. She added such actions could jeopardize SaskTel's chances of getting contracts with other countries. The minister also indicated that she hopes the union will reconsider.

Will the minister explain what steps she will be taking to get the two sides in this dispute back to the bargaining table, other than hoping?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, this government believes in the collective bargaining process. We believe in the integrity of that process. We respect the rights of the union members to take job action if they feel that's necessary.

I did make those comments relating to the reputation of SaskTel International in the international field if they had to abandon projects. The union members are well aware, the union executive, of the implications that kind of action would have.

We expect this temporary lapse to be . . . talks to resume at the bargaining table in the near future. And we believe in allowing those events to take their course, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, given the comments of the minister, it is evident that SaskTel International's reputation may be at stake if overseas workers are forced to abandon projects and return home. This could have serious consequences on future projects, and hoping the union reconsider such a move is simply not good enough. The only way this strike will

be settled is at the bargaining table, as the Labour minister stated.

Will the minister explain what plans this government has to ensure the international reputation of SaskTel is not jeopardized because of the current labour dispute?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we know the employees of SaskTel, unionized and otherwise, to be productive, intelligent, and reasonable people. And we are sure and confident that this dispute, and any of the ramifications arising from it, will be solved in a reasonable and intelligent manner in due course. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Districts Funding

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saturday's Regina *Leader-Post* contained an article which focused on the plight of the South Central Health District.

This district recently received word that it will receive almost \$1 million less in funding this year over last. And when you add inflation, increased costs for medical supplies, the district actually faces about a \$1.4 million shortfall.

This district CEO (chief executive officer), Lee Spencer, says he is surprised because his district, and I quote "... was considered underfunded for the services it provided ..."

Will the minister explain how a health district which has already been underfunded can be expected to provide further proper health care services with such a dramatic cut to its funding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well speaking of the South Central Health District, Mr. Speaker, last week we had this member up in this House saying that some of the employees wouldn't get their pay cheques today. And I said to the House that you have to be very careful listening to information from this member, because that member was suggesting that that centre, the Radville Marian Centre, was not receiving funding from the health district, which is not true. And that member was suggesting that that health district was not receiving funding from this government, Mr. Speaker, which was not true.

Now I want to say to that member, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to health care funding, this government is replacing every dollar that the Liberals have taken out of health care, to the tune of about \$50 million in this province this year. Our recent budget back-fills 100 per cent what the Liberals have taken out of health care. And we don't need any lectures from this member about how to fund health care, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, I might want to point out to the Minister of Health that it's himself and the minister in

charge of SaskTel who are continuously standing up in this House and having to apologize for not being correct with their facts and figures.

Mr. Speaker, the South Central Health District is one of 19 which will receive less funding this year. Their situation merely echoes that of other districts, such as the Prairie West Health District, which faces a \$391,000 reduction in funding according to a news release. And I'll send a copy of that news release over to the Minister of Health and the Premier so that they could follow along.

To use another example, the Pipestone Health District will receive a decrease of some \$291,000. Mr. Speaker, rural districts must receive a proper level of funding, as the Pipestone board chairman, Dave McCall, states in a news release. And I quote: "The future of the hospitals in the Pipestone District will be threatened."

Mr. Speaker, this government has been warned countless times that what they're developing is a two-tiered health system.

Will the minister explain why, Mr. Speaker, when he and all of his government are elected to represent the needs of all of Saskatchewan residents, they are abdicating their responsibility to rural families? And I'd like to send across the Pipestone Health District news release, so there again they can follow along.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Wood River likes to point out that when I got something wrong I apologized in the House the next day because my information was wrong. Now he says that the minister in charge of SaskTel continuously apologizes for making errors because she made one error, like I did, and also apologized.

But the member gets up in this House, and he says one day that people aren't going to be paid, and they get paid. And I don't think the member will apologize. The member gets up another day, and he says that somebody got a \$17,500 raise, and it turns out the next day that the person wasn't working for three months the previous year, and that's why their income went up.

And I have a whole list of errors that this member and the Liberal Party have made in this session, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for an apology from them. And nor are they going to apologize for the fact that the federal Liberals have taken \$50 million out of the health care system. No, they won't apologize, Mr. Speaker, but they will be apologists for the Liberal Party in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, because of the cut-backs to the rural districts, more people are travelling to our major centres for treatment. This will undoubtedly put more pressure on the health care facilities that exist in Regina and Saskatoon. Now with this in mind and the

fact that our senior population is growing rapidly and will require greater medical attention — about one in three people are treated for cancer — will the minister explain how he can justify closing a facility such as the Plains Health Centre, given the cut-backs to the rural, but also into the large urbans now?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well of course the problem with the member is, Mr. Speaker, for a long time he complained about conversion of rural facilities and said, but nothing was ever converted in the cities. But then when the Plains Health Centre was being consolidated with the two other hospitals in Regina, he complains about that.

That member knows full well that the services of the Plains Health Centre are going to be continued in the other two hospitals in Regina, Mr. Speaker. And when he gets up and suggests to the people that the services are going to be taken away, like the member from Humboldt was saying a few weeks ago that you wouldn't be able to get a CT (computerized axial tomography) scan in the city of Regina, which is incorrect, I say to the member that the member is harming his own credibility more than anything else, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess what I'd like to say to the member is, if he believes that people in his riding in rural Saskatchewan do not have the right to choose to get health care services where they want to get health services, and if he believes that those services shouldn't be paid for, that member should get up and say so, Mr. Speaker, because he knows that the seven largest districts have 61 per cent of the population, but provide 94 per cent of the surgeries.

Those include his constituents, and if he's saying they don't have the right to get surgery, he should say so, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Possible SaskTel Privatization

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my question this afternoon is for the minister responsible for SaskTel. Madam Minister, the SaskTel strike appears to have reached a stalemate. However, there is no mood right now among taxpayers for giving government employees a wage increase when so many other Saskatchewan families are having to get by with less.

With long-distance competition on the way, maybe it's time to give strong consideration to privatizing SaskTel.

Madam Minister, is SaskTel being considered for privatization under the current Crown review process? And also, can you assure us that the appointment of your new boss, Don Ching, will not stand in the way of a possible privatization of SaskTel?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to answer that question, wherein the review of the Crown sector in this province, which will be taking place, has been announced, and the parameters for that review have been publicly announced. There will be . . . part of the process will be public input into the review. Of course the objective of this

review is to look at the Crowns and their future role in the kind of business economy that we find ourselves in, and the objective being to strengthen the Crowns and the role of the Crowns.

And I think that the member opposite should be proud of the fact that, as a Crown, SaskTel has provided the very best service in telecommunications in any jurisdiction in North America, Mr. Speaker — individual line service from border to border. While there's 370,000 party lines still in existence in other parts of Canada, the Crown, SaskTel as a Crown, has played an exemplary role in developing communications in northern Saskatchewan, rural Saskatchewan, and all kinds of areas where a bottom-line-driven, private company would not have been so motivated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Workers' Compensation Consultant Costs

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, is to the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board. Mr. Minister, many employees . . . or employers, rather, are still very concerned about the increases in Worker' Compensation rates, increases that are caused by rapidly rising administration costs.

For example, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 the Workers' Compensation Board spent \$164,000 on consultants' fees. Now that's 1991, Mr. Speaker. According to new figures we have received from the minister's office, the Workers' Compensation Board paid consultants over \$868,000 last year. Now that's five times as much as in 1991, Mr. Minister.

Now, Mr. Minister, why have the consultant fees in Workers' Compensation Board risen so much under your government's administration? Isn't this one reason why the Workers' Compensation rates in Saskatchewan are forced to go up so much for our employers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have thought that this process would have appealed to members of the Conservative Party and the third party.

What in fact they're doing is economizing and saving money by out-sourcing. The alternative to this is for the Workers' Compensation Board to have these highly specialized skills — actuarial skills are one of them — these highly specialized skills on staff all the time. This system, which is out-sourcing these services or hiring these services where you need them, is much cheaper. I would have thought that out-sourcing would have appealed to members of the third party who are so gung-ho on privatization.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a supplemental question for the minister in charge of the Workers' Compensation Board today. Mr. Minister, one of the companies that got a lot of this consulting action is a numbered

corporation, 603315 Saskatchewan.

In 1994, this numbered company got \$26,000 in consulting fees from the Workers' Compensation Board. However in 1995, they were paid over \$224,000 in consulting fees by the Workers' Compensation Board. Now that's more money paid to this one numbered company in 1995 than all of the consulting fees combined back in 1991.

Mr. Minister, what type of work did this numbered company do last year to return — in return, rather — for nearly a quarter of a million dollars in consulting fees just for one season?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The Minister of Labour's estimates will be before the House relatively shortly if we stick to the schedule we have. That'll give the members opposite the opportunity to ask questions of this sort. It really is unrealistic to expect — even if the minister were here — it is really unrealistic to expect anyone to have in the top-of-mind stuff, information about numbered companies.

The Minister of Labour's estimates will be here within a few days if I remember the schedule correctly. That is the proper time and place to ask questions about that, and having been forewarned, I'm sure he'll have the information present when he comes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — I have a further supplemental for the minister in charge of the Workers' Compensation Board. Minister, for your information, the minister in charge of the board sent us a letter which he answered in response to our letter to him. He knows exactly what's going on here and he should have transported that information over to you.

Now, Mr. Minister, one of the other consultants hired by the Workers' Compensation Board last year was none other than Mr. Donald Ching. It's nice of course that Mr. Ching was able to find a way to keep food on his table during that period of time when everybody else thought he was unemployed.

Now, Mr. Minister, what kind of consulting work did Don Ching do for the Workers' Compensation Board? And what other government agencies and departments hired the windfall, Mr. Don Ching, as a consultant while he was between jobs supposedly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Again I repeat my advice to the members opposite: these questions are better asked during estimates when the minister will have the information and will have his officials here to assist them in providing accurate information on what sorts of service are provided.

So I advise the members opposite to keep a hold of the questions. The minister will now be sort of forewarned and I'm sure he'll have the information ready for you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Social Services Office Transfer

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as many members of this House will recall, five years ago the Devine administration undertook a plan called Fair Share Saskatchewan. This was a plan that was soundly criticized, and deservedly so, because of the fact that it was based solely on politics.

What we have today is a government trying to enact its own version of such a plan, except that instead of moving government positions into rural Saskatchewan, positions are being centralized in our two main centres.

One example is the central office of the community living division of the Social Services department and its eight employees, which are being forced to move from Moose Jaw to Regina. Will the Minister of Social Services explain why this move is being made?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to respond to the member's question if her colleagues would care to listen to the answer. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the work that's performed by the community living division and the change of administrative structure, what is happening, Mr. Speaker, is that the administrative structure — not the program structure but the administrative structure — is being integrated here in Regina. Those employees who now live in Moose Jaw and work in Moose Jaw will continue to live in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. Some of those employees who have been commuting to Moose Jaw will continue now to commute . . . or stay in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, it is though, passing strange that that party who, before the election, who before the election members will recall, said to the people of Saskatchewan what we would do is bring in a whole crowd of Texas auditors and go through every department of government and audit them down and shrink them down, now when integration is occurring in the organization of government, what does this member do? Gets up and complains.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services is quoted in the April 6 edition of the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* as stating, and I quote: "It happens in this case that there aren't any large savings."

While in another *Herald* article, Social Services spokeswoman, Virginia Wilkinson indicates she doesn't know if there is a cost saving by the transfer.

If in fact the minister and his department officials have no idea if there will be a savings, will the minister please explain why he authorized this same move in the name of efficiency?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to note my words. What is happening here — and if the member from Wood Mountain would be interested to be quiet in his seat that he might listen, Mr. Speaker; note my words, member — the move of the administration of community living is to better foster the integration of services within the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, the community living division is charged with delivering services province-wide, particularly to the handicapped, particularly to the mentally handicapped. They are being integrated. The administration portion is being integrated to provide a better integration of the kind of work that should be done and can be done by this division.

Mr. Speaker, again we have a Liberal caucus who tells us on one hand that we should be taxing much less and yet on the other hand that we should be spending much more, and on the other hand we should be changing nothing in government. Mr. Speaker, they're going to have to get with the program, that we need to be building towards the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the transfer of the central office of community living from Moose Jaw to Regina is of great concern to community leaders in Moose Jaw. Chamber of commerce president Lynn Starkey says, and I quote:

What concerns the chamber is, if we are going to lose something then we should be told why it's moving and what the net benefit is.

Will the minister explain if in fact there is a plan? And if so, why is it that rural communities are the losers and our two urban centres appear to be the winners time after time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, there is a plan and this government has outlined that plan — it is to position ourselves, Mr. Speaker, to take on the 21st century; not to be acting like the dinosaurs, who want to take on the 19th century, from the Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of this administrative move, this will provide — I repeat again — a better integration of services, therefore better services to the people of all of Saskatchewan, to community living division, to the group homes that are scattered throughout our province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Possible Flood Conditions

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone in this House is well aware, spring flooding is causing a great deal of concern about rising water levels in Eastend, Weyburn, and many other areas in southern Saskatchewan.

Will the minister in charge of Sask Water explain what measures the province has in place to deal with the areas

already flooded, and areas where flooding may take place? And have these measures been reviewed to ensure they are still adequate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1445)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the concerns expressed by the member opposite about the flooding situation, which varies throughout Saskatchewan.

Sask Water is, as has been their practice, issuing regular bulletins as thaw occurs and river levels rise, to alert communities. I have one such advisory here that is dated April 12 which warns of potential flooding in Crooked Lake and Round Lake five to six days hence in order to give municipalities and communities time to respond.

The provincial emergency operations centre at 1855 Victoria Avenue is on 24-hour alert to assist Emergency Measure Organizations and municipalities in responding. There are provincial resources available at the request of local EMOs (Emergency Measures Organization) or municipalities, and municipalities have all been communicated with individually and given the telephone numbers that they can call for immediate response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A great deal of the concern that exists in rural Saskatchewan surrounds the fact that flood damage could have a devastating effect on our rural road system, which is already seen as less than adequate. Will the minister explain if she is preparing any form of assistance in the event that water bodies crest this week, as some are predicting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as always, the Department of Municipal Government and this government administration stands ready to assist in all sorts of disasters, including repair and clean-up after flood. Last year we did have such a program; so far this year there have been no requests from municipalities to date for compensation for damage. If and when there is, we will respond.

However, as the member knows, particularly on the east side of the province, because of the lateness of the thaw and the amount of snowfall, we don't expect as serious problems as we did last year. But we stand ready to respond. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Computer Expenses

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have an order in council here dated April 2 and it indicates an authorized purchase of computer equipment for SaskPower totalling \$3.9 million. Given all the recent downsizing at SaskPower and the elimination of valuable rural programs, would the associate minister in charge of SaskPower be able to explain just how they can justify that expense?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Once again, those are detailed questions which one cannot expect the minister to have, if the minister were able to be present. I would advise the members opposite to raise these sort of questions in Crown Corporations; the officials are there, they can provide you with complete questions.

This is not necessarily the best place, Mr. Speaker, to give the lesson, to give the opposition some advice on the question period, but they should be more topical questions and questions of more general import.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the Government House Leader could answer this, and it's not quite as detailed.

But the order in council indicated that that three point million dollar computer purchase was from an Ontario firm. Would the minister explain why this government went out of province for just such a purchase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Again, let me say in general terms, there are now interprovincial protocols about government procurement and there is something called a NAFTA, an international North American Free Trade Agreement.

Following from that, based on the theory that we ought to give Canadian firms the same rights as you give North Dakota firms, there is something called an Agreement on Internal Trade which requires us and all provinces with respect to procurement to treat Canadian firms equally.

So there is a protocol in place, and I think it's generally followed by the provinces. Again, more detailed discussion of this particular contract might be better placed in Crown Corporations Committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 69 — An Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act.

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

MOTIONS

House Recess

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move,

seconded by the Premier:

That this Assembly do now recess for 45 minutes to honour the members of the Armed Forces Reserves and that this Assembly do reconvene at the call of the Speaker, ringing the bells 5 minutes in advance of reconvening.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — Just before we recess, if I can take just a moment to invite all members and guests to the Speaker's tea in honour of our reserves. This will take place in room 218, which will be just to your left as you leave the chambers.

And as for the rules of the House, I would ask all members and guests to remain seated until the Speaker has departed.

This House now stands recessed until ... I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the warning bells to call members back at 25 minutes to 4, and at 3:40 that the House will reconvene.

The House stands recessed.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 15 — An Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act

Clause 1

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are going to be assisted this afternoon by Mr. Neil Yeates, who is the associate deputy of the Department of Social Services; and Ms. Bonnie Durnford, who is the associate executive director of family and youth services, Department of Social Services.

Clause 1 agreed to

Clause 2

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Chairman, as I indicated in my remarks yesterday concerning the general intent of the Bill, I wish to move an amendment to sub-clause (3.3) of this Bill.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to explain briefly why I am moving this amendment. Mr. Chairman, the Bill as a whole creates a completely new legal procedure, a new legal hurdle which a person must jump over if he or she is to have the right to take legal action against someone who has alleged that child abuse or child neglect has occurred.

Mr. Chairman, I accept the need that there must be some legal protection for persons whose obligation it is to report instances of child abuse, but I also recognize the need to protect the civil rights of persons who are not guilty of child abuse but who are the victims of false or malicious reports, or reports with no reasonable basis in truth.

The minister's Bill says that a person who has been the subject of such allegations cannot even begin legal proceedings against his accuser without first obtaining leave of the Court of Queen's Bench.

The Bill goes on to say that an application is to be commenced by notice of motion served on the respondent, meaning the person who made the allegation. In practice, this means hiring a lawyer and filing documents at the Court of Queen's Bench. This will usually entail a legal bill of several hundred dollars.

The Bill goes on to say that the applicant must establish, either by affidavit evidence or otherwise, that the person — meaning the respondent, the person who made the allegation of child abuse — made the report maliciously and without reasonable grounds for his or her belief. This in effect means further legal expenses for the man or woman who is alleged to have committed the child abuse.

In my opinion, if we as the government are going to step in and create a new legal hurdle, a new legal roadblock, then we must make sure that the rules regarding the awarding of the court costs associated with that legal proceeding are fair. The minister's Bill provides for costs to be awarded against the applicant for leave if his application fails. I think it's only fair that the subsection should also provide for costs to be awarded for the applicant for leave if his application succeeds.

In my view, if the applicant meets the test found in sub-clause (3.2) and the judge rules that the respondent, meaning the person who made the allegation of child abuse, made the report maliciously and without reasonable grounds for his or her belief, then it's only fair that the applicant should get his or her costs, his or her legal and court costs, for that application. We have to be even-handed in our treatment of this issue.

Mr. Chairman, I will be moving this amendment very earnestly. It in no way weakens the protection provided for people who report child abuse with sincere and earnest intentions. They have, and they deserve, protection. But I want to make sure that we also protect the civil and human rights of the person who is wrongly accused of child abuse. We can do this by passing my amendment. I realize that the Saskatchewan rules of court already provide that court costs may be awarded in a manner that the court sees fit, and the minister thinks this is sufficient. I disagree.

In my opinion, if we are expressly going to say what happens in terms of costs if one side wins, why not expressly say what happens in terms of costs if the other side wins.

I therefore move as follows to:

Amend clause 2 of the printed Bill by adding, immediately after the words "any portion of the costs of the

application" where they occur in subsection 12(3.3) being enacted therein, the following words:

"; if leave is granted, the court may order the respondent to pay all or any portion of the costs of the application, either at the conclusion of the application or the action".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have another 20 copies in case the Clerk needs them, of my amendment. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I'll make just a very few comments. The member from Humboldt and I had an opportunity to discuss the issues here. I think there is no disagreement on what we intend to achieve, and it is the manner of how we achieve it and how we build in those protections that she addressed in her comments.

Mr. Chair, it is our view, and after having some legal advice and the advice of people working very closely in the field, that in fact while the member's amendment would be in harmony with the direction we want to take, that we in fact believe those protections already exist. And that in fact at this point, to ask the court that has heard from this applicant to rule against . . . or rule costs to a responder who has not been in that court situation to defend him or herself would not be appropriate.

Let us understand that in this piece of legislation what we are saying is that if someone feels that they have been falsely accused, falsely accused of a child-abuse circumstance, then they would need first, before launching their own legal counter-suit or a suit against, they would first need to go to the court to receive leave from that court to proceed with the suit.

In that circumstance, the person who feels him or herself to be falsely accused is in the presence of that court. The person who launched the initial complaint is not there. This is a matter of seeking leave then to move to a further legal action.

Now if that court gives leave, the person is granted permission to launch a legal action. When that action is heard, that court, that hearing, will have all present and all sides will be heard and a judge will rule. At that time, under the rules of court in Saskatchewan, the provision that the member wishes to put in this piece of legislation already exists and that court will award costs as that judge sees fit.

It seems to me unreasonable then that the initial leave application could be a point at which that judge could award costs to someone who is not in fact a part of that application. What this amendment would do would give the judge the power to award costs to that person. We do that as, in some ways, a fence, a protection, a discouragement from frivolous applications to leave.

And I'm also told, Mr. Chair, by the officials that are with us and others, that this provision is entirely consistent with leave applications in many other circumstances. It is entirely consistent. I would want to reassure the member and the members opposite that the provision to award costs to, in this case, the respondent does exist, but it would happen at what we believe is the appropriate time, not at the time of asking for leave to launch action.

And so therefore, Mr. Chair, we'll not be supporting the amendment.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess the amendment that I have put forward is for . . . more than anything else, is to give a clarity to all parties concerned about what and where the costs would be presented to them. And if in fact this amendment is put in, that clarity would be there at the onset of any kind of actions being taken. And so I don't see why the clarity cannot be put in with this Bill, in fact, when it does nothing more than promote fairness.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let us understand that if someone in our province makes an accusation through the proper channels to the proper authorities, I think we all understand that we need to make that accusation only after we're firmly convinced and convicted that something is going on here that we need to raise as an issue.

However, any one of us making that kind of an accusation against a fellow citizen understands that at the end of the day we have to be accountable for that action. If I make a complaint against another citizen and that citizen feels that I'm doing that for some malicious purpose, that citizen has the ability to address me through the courts.

What we're doing here is putting that one other step in place. Before that person can come to me through a lawsuit, that person would need to go to a court. Now all that's being discussed here, therefore, is the ability to gain leave to launch the suit — just leave. We're not in this action determining guilt or innocence, whether the action was malevolent or bona fide. It's simply a matter of leave to proceed. Now at that end of the day, if that leave is granted, the lawsuit would be heard, and the court that hears that lawsuit has entirely within its power to award all the costs.

Now I accept the point that individuals in our province should be made well aware of the consequences of taking action. And one of the consequences potentially, if one launches a malicious action, is that you in fact may be found to have acted maliciously by the court, and there may be attendant penalties and there in fact may be costs assumed. But I think any of us who would enter a legal proceeding will be aware of that.

Our contention is that — at this point, in seeking leave to proceed — this is not the point in time that a court should award damages to, in this case, the respondent, because that person's guilt or innocence has not been tried, not been tested, not been found.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, leave is only granted to someone in this case if there is sufficient evidence to convince the court that — like at the onset of the court case — that suit is in fact valid.

Now I think that it's very hard to bring forth evidence always of whether or not a suit is valid depending on the kind of abuse that has taken place. If it was physical abuse and there was some evidence of that, I can see where in fact that evidence may be easier to present than whether its psychological or emotional

or neglect sort of abuse would be there.

So this, the way it is, I see as a problem, in it may deter people from reporting that actually end up knowing of abuse maybe other than physical abuse, because they don't have evidence. And if they don't have evidence, they're going to have to pay court costs, more than likely. So it really deters people from reporting, and it will become a major dilemma for people as to whether to report or not.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, it would be my conviction though that . . . well first of all, in terms of a court granting leave to proceed, the threshold level for evidence and so on, I think, is much, much lower than it would be in the circumstance where someone is actually being tried for accusations of child abuse and so on.

We're here simply talking about leave to proceed. But I also want to say to the member that I have a fair confidence in our court system and in our judges, who in most cases, I believe, can sort very quickly the bona fide from the malicious.

I do not see this in fact as a deterrent to people who want to report child abuse. In fact I see it as just the opposite. I see it as another protection for those who would launch a concern or a complaint. In the current circumstance, you see, if you launch a complaint, you immediately open yourself to the possibility — to the potential and the possibility — of being sued. And there is at least one, there has been at least one, public example where that in fact has happened.

A counsellor who made what they felt was a very bona fide accusation or concern was then in turn immediately sued. This just gives one more protection to those who, bona fide, want to express their concern, to raise a complaint. Now if someone's raising a complaint that isn't bona fide, that is totally malicious, they will in due course, I think, pay the penalty for that.

We want though, not to deter people from making that initial complaint because their fear of being frivolously sued in return.

(1600)

Ms. Julé: — But we also want to make sure that if a person who has been maligned by making that malicious report needs to protect themselves, that they don't have to be afraid, especially if they don't have the funding for court costs, that they don't have to be afraid to go to sue because it can really ruin their life.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just let me respond one more time. I would just re-emphasize the point that I've tried to make — that yes, at the end of the day, costs will be assigned, and they will be assigned by the courts. That power is entirely within the ability of the courts today, and it should be there.

But it is premature to suggest that costs should be awarded at this stage. We think that's premature. This is only the provision where one asks for leave to pursue the action.

Ms. Julé: — Right, I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I'd just like to ask you one more question. With the presentation of my

amendment, to me this really does spell out clarity for everyone beforehand. What would be the major problem you see on your part for allowing this kind of an amendment to come in when in fact it would provide only a great help for people?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just again to focus what's happening here. This Bill that we're working on makes the provision that if someone has been accused of child abuse or abuse of some other nature, that the accused person cannot simply in response launch a legal action against the accuser without first moving to the courts.

All this does is to ensure that court grants leave to proceed. If the court grants leave and the suit proceeds, then guilt or innocence will be determined. It is at the point of guilt or innocence that we believe costs should be assigned, and not before, not before the case has been heard. And in this case the respondent or the person who initially launched the concern complaint has an opportunity to defend and explain his or her position. That's the point where we believe the costs should be assigned.

On this, I'm sure you and I, we do not differ in our goal. We do not want either malicious complaints nor do we want malicious suits. But the court will decide that, and the court has within its provisions the ability to assign costs today. We believe that those are sufficient.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, a few minutes ago you made the statement that the respondent is not a party to the leave of application. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I apologize to the House. My officials have reminded me, since I made that statement, that is not true — that the individual would be part of that hearing. But the judge in this case is not ruling on the guilt or the innocence of that circumstance. The judge would only be ruling on the ability to move forward with a suit. Only . . . (inaudible) . . . So I apologize for the member. That was my inexperience with the law.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just one final comment. I would earnestly ask you to accept this for the sake of clarity, and I will leave it be, I guess, at that.

The division bells rang from 4:05 p.m. until 4:15 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

Osika	McLane	Draude
Bjornerud	Julé	Krawetz
Gantefoer		

Nays — 20

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Tchorzewski
Goulet	Kowalsky	Crofford
Calvert	Koenker	Trew
Lorje	Teichrob	Cline
Serby	Stanger	Murray

Kasperski	Sonntag	Jess
Murrell	Thomson	

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a few more questions, and they refer to 3.1 of clause 2. It reads:

An application for leave shall be commenced by notice of motion served on the respondent and the minister in any manner set out in Part Three of the Queen's Bench Rules.

Mr. Minister, how much do you expect one of these applications to cost?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we do not have with us the precise costs. I'm sure we could get them. I understand it's all set out by the Court of Queen's Bench, that there is a schedule. Our estimation is it may be in the order of \$30.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. How long will it take for an application to be processed, approximately?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The information I have, Mr. Chair, is it could be in three working days.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. How long will . . . or how, rather, will the minister be served with a notice? How will you be served with a notice as minister? What address would a person serve the notice to?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Essentially, Mr. Chair, through the minister's office, Legislative Assembly Building, Regina.

Or apparently it can be done through representatives of the department throughout the province, through the Department of Justice officials throughout the province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What are the estimated costs to the department of these applications?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, there may be some costs. I guess it's hard to put a number on it. There would be some staff time costs within the Department of Social Services, perhaps within the Department of Justice, but it would be staff time of staff that are serving us now.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The reason I asked that question is because if in fact a person is under the care of the Department of Social Services one may presume that in fact you, the Department of Social Services or the Government of Saskatchewan, would in fact incur these costs. Is that correctly said?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, perhaps I could ask the member. . . we're a little confused in her question. When she talks about people under the care of the department, could you define who it is that you're referring to there?

Ms. Julé: — Well if the application is submitted by a person, for instance a person who wants to sue that's under the department's care, then it seems to me as though that person would not have the financial ability to pay for the application

and so it would be under the Department of Social Services's responsibility to pay it.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, in that circumstance I think maybe what the member is talking about is someone who may be in receipt of social assistance, welfare. In that case, that individual would have to find a lawyer who would work on their behalf.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The lawyer's fees then for that person, because one would need a lawyer of course as you've just said, would that expense be incurred by the taxpayer or the Department of Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, not particularly, Mr. Chair. We would not have a special funding for that purpose.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I see then that those people may be excluded from proper representation. And it would be really not very fair to those people, and very difficult for them to present their case. I think we may run into a problem with Human Rights with this, if that was the case.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think the member is sensitive to concern, but the fact of the matter is, under social assistance we don't fund any civil actions. And that would be true of all potential civil actions for those who are on social welfare.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, as it is right now, anyone under the department's care is entitled to legal aid services whereby somebody has to pay for those services. And so I would see very much so that you would be responsible, or the department would be responsible, as would the taxpayers, for taking care of those costs.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes. Mr. Chair, just to be clear. I want the member to be clear that we're not here talking about people in our care; we're talking about people who would be receiving social assistance benefits, and in fact that legal aid now is available, but only in the circumstance of criminal or family law.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, if you look in Saskatoon, will this be taken care of in Court of Queen's Bench, or will it be looked at in Unified Family Court?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the Court of Queen's Bench.

Ms. Julé: — No further questions, thank you.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to on division.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 15 — An Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Education Vote 5

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To my immediate right is Craig Dotson, deputy minister of Education; to my immediate left, Ken Horsman, assistant deputy minister; immediately behind Mr. Dotson is Mae Boa, executive director of finance and operations; and behind me is Michael Littlewood, director of third-party funding and legislative services. In addition, we're joined by Gerry Sing Chin, manager of school grants; Margaret Ball, assistant director of facilities planning; and John McLaughlin, executive director of the Teacher Superannuation Commission.

(1630)

Item 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to all people who have been introduced. I think I know everyone except for Ms. Boa. I don't know if I've had the pleasure of meeting you. Welcome.

Madam Minister, a lot has happened in terms of restructuring the Department of Education into two departments, and my first question will deal with a general sense and say, what has changed as far as the vision now for your department?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The answer is nothing has changed in terms of the vision for the Department of Education. There's been no change in terms of goals, objectives, or vision.

Mr. Krawetz: — Your department has always looked at, as far as following public policy objectives, the development of the *Directions* in education report and the other reports that we have — currently are using — have developed over a process of time. When we look at specific public policy directions now, are you seeing anything in terms of the public wanting you to change policy at the moment?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As you know, the history of education in the province of Saskatchewan has always been one of cooperation, collaboration, and partnership. We went through a partnership process that came about as a result of a former minister of Education by the name of Doug McArthur who in the late 1970s underwent a review of social studies curriculum in the province, and out of that came *Directions* in core. In addition I think it's fair to say that the public is not in any sense of the word overtly critical of the policy direction of the

department at this time.

I think it's fair to say that as a result of the public consultation process that was undertaken by the government prior to the introduction of our budget in March of this year, that there was input from the public indicating that they wanted the department, they wanted government, to look at questions of governance for education, and municipalities as well.

And as you know, I have spent some time in the province, around the province, speaking to school boards. As well as I've met with other interest groups to talk about a public policy option paper that the government will be releasing some time this month that looks at several options for reshaping the education system in the province.

And that has come about as a result of some of the feedback we got in January and February; and also feedback that I have received from various partners in education that are interested in the government providing some leadership in the whole notion of reshaping education in the province, particularly school divisions.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, over the years there have been settings of goals and changes in objectives, and there have been things like the High School Review Committee. As these goals and objectives are looked at, how does the department measure whether or not the department and the education system in general has met the goals, has met the objectives, and whether or not there's a need for change?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well each year, as you're probably aware, the government publishes Saskatchewan education indicators report, which takes a look at how education is doing in the province of Saskatchewan.

As well we have a program evaluation process within the department. We have a planning evaluation. There's a whole unit of people that are set up to deal with the notion of looking at goals and objectives, looking at indicators, to determine whether in fact the work that has been done in the past is meeting those original goals and objectives.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. And I think that that is why in terms of public surveys, I think you see a satisfaction in the public with our education system today. One of the critical points though, and your own survey has shown this, is that of course education funding is not at the level that people would wish. And I think that is a situation that I've had discussions with you before and will continue to have those discussions.

When you indicated that the policy and the direction of K to 12 has not changed, I would just like to back up to the creation of the two departments — the post-secondary and the K to 12. In terms of employees and how that process occurred, could you just bring us up to date in terms of how were employees involved? Were there discussions that took place in terms of developing this new plan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as you know, the government made the decision that there would be two departments — one

for post-secondary education and one for education. This is not unlike many other jurisdictions in the country that have two ministries.

Once that decision was made, the deputy minister of K to 12, the deputy minister of post-secondary, along with their executive staff, sat down and talked about how things would operate. I'm pleased to report that the two departments jointly share facilities; a planning branch. They jointly share human resources. They jointly share funding and legislative services and communications. So there is a joint . . . there is a capacity for the sharing of human resources for both departments.

Mr. Krawetz: — At the time that the department, the new department, was created, did you feel that the staffing level within the department, that things had been handled smoothly and that stress, anxiety, had not been created within the department itself in terms of that unsureness as to where people we're going to be and whether there would be transfers; whether there would be cuts?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I'm sure that whenever a department undergoes change, when any of us experience change and uncertainty, there is stress associated with that. So I'm sure that there were people in the department that were tentative about, where am I going? What's going to happen to me? But we tried to work as quickly as we could to give people the information as to what was in the works for the two departments.

And as I said earlier, there is a sharing by the two departments of the human resource capacity, communications, the funding capacity, capital, as well as one other which I've just forgotten but I'll remember once I sit down.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Last fall, if I recall, you stated that an approach that you would be willing to look at for delivery of education in Saskatchewan was something I think you referred to as K to 14. And I understand that even other people in the education circles have referred to it as "education, birth to death."

In my opinion, I think that is a philosophical change from the K to 12 system that we have now. And I saw that as encouraging for some of the other things we'll talk about in terms of the community colleges, regional college system, and the like that occurred at a time, you know, in late 1995, early 1996. Yet now we have created two departments with, I think, more roadblocks thrown up in the face of K to 12, the boards of education in this province who are responsible for K to 12.

If we're moving in the direction of K to 14, or something broader than that — regional educational authorities is something I think you're proposing in your paper — are you not seeing this as more difficult to move in that direction with the fact that we now have two departments?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well no, as a matter of fact I'm not. And the reason I'm not is that I used to be the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. I knew both sides of the department.

There was a K to 12 side and there was a post-secondary side. The person that's now the deputy minister for Post-Secondary and Skills Training used to be the deputy minister for the whole department when I was the minister.

As well, I know the people that work inside the department. I know people at the university; I know people at the regional colleges. I don't think that because you have two departments, that that creates barriers to change.

Barriers to change, in my view, comes from individuals. Structures don't necessarily create barriers to change. I've come to believe that it's our own concern, our own unwillingness to look at change, that can be the real structural barrier.

Mr. Krawetz: — I would concur with you as far as your description of how we move in the direction of change. And I understand that your contacts in the education sphere are great, and I commend you for that. Maybe my contacts aren't quite as great, but we believe we know people in both circles.

My concern though is that if we have a division regional board of education responsible for K to 14, birth to 14, whatever systems we ask that new board to do, they're now going to have to deal with two departments of Education. Yes, I think they'll learn how to do that and they'll do it efficiently and they'll establish their contacts, but I think we're still going to incur increased costs.

So while your department, your officials, yourself and other people involved in education in the broad sense are going to work through this, I'm not sure that that's going to make it easier for the real people out there in the province who are going to administer this system, to carry this out. And I still see that as a problem.

(1630)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You're assuming that we're going to go to regional education authorities. You're assuming that we're looking at a K to 14 system. I want to say with certainty here that there will be four options presented to the public. The public will have an ability to create another option.

I'm not at all certain that at the end of the day, when people have had an opportunity to undergo a discussion of the options, that that's what the public is going to recommend. We're going to have to wait and see.

I guess the other point I would like to make in response to your comment is that even with post-secondary and K to 12 under one deputy minister, my observation was that if you were the College of Education you dealt with the K to 12 side, and you dealt with the post-secondary side. I think it's fair to say that when it was Education, Training and Employment, there were two divisions to the department. There was an ADM (assistant deputy minister) for K to 12, ADM for post-secondary education.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Education, I would like to just pose a question and a thought to you.

It is my understanding that you just had mentioned that regional authorities don't propose any barriers, or wouldn't propose any barriers. I was notified some time ago that in the Humboldt division schools would in fact work with the regional Carlton Trail Community College in order to have an integrated system in delivering and sharing services. And it is now my understanding, from some information I just received a few days ago, that that whole concept will be put on hold. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What we're talking about is the joint use of facility at Humboldt. And there was only so much money in the budget for capital in this fiscal year, 1996-97, and we do not . . . we have funds to complete some projects that were begun last year, and we have funds for emergencies like roof; quality of air kinds of issues; portables, if you have a growing population.

But we do not have new capital in this budget for new projects. So when you say it's been put on hold, there's no money available in this fiscal year. But obviously I would still encourage the people in Humboldt to continue to work in collaboration with each other because there's always a possibility of enhanced funding next year.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So I can go to the people in Humboldt and tell them that in fact they cannot count on any funding for this at this point. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You can tell the people in Humboldt — the Humboldt School Division, the Carlton Trail — that for the fiscal year 1996-97, there is no capital funding available to do the project that they wanted to do in the town of Humboldt, and that's the joint-use project between the high school and the community college.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, you mention around . . . when we were discussing the creation of the two departments you mentioned the fact that there were two deputy ministers and that each was responsible. If you were to choose or to identify one main reason why you think there was a need to create two departments, what would that be?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Oh, it's very clear to me why we needed to create two departments or to have two ministers. As you may know, there are some fairly large — I would say huge — changes that are coming from Ottawa in terms of how we fund apprenticeship, adult basic education, and training in the province of Saskatchewan. There is a massive amount of work that has to be done in the next three years in order to address the funding reductions that are coming from Ottawa.

And those funding reductions . . . what I want to make clear here is that we're not talking about CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer) money; we're talking about money that used to come from unemployment insurance. It's now called employment insurance.

And unemployment insurance used to pay for seat purchases in regional colleges and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology). As well, they paid for the

apprenticeship program. And because of the dramatic cuts or reductions from UI (unemployment insurance) or getting out of training by UI, the post-secondary and skills training department is going to have to undergo a whole new training strategy for the province because there's simply no federal money.

So the two portfolios are dealing with some very complex issues, and I think it's fair to say that one minister could not deal with the K to 12 side and the post-secondary side and do an appropriate job.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. While I would take exception to some of your comments around no federal monies, I think some of my comments are best directed to the post-secondary side when we start to talk about the purchasing of seats because we think that there are some advantages to creating new partnerships and the kinds of things that you have talked about in the past.

When you talk about creating the new department — and I guess my other question then would lead to your own department — are there things that you're looking at as having other agencies, other departments do that you presently are doing? Has there been any discussion with other departments to say they can do something that presently the Department of Education is doing?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think it's fair to say that we are not talking to any other departments about devolving functions of the Department of Education to them. What we have been doing is talking to Health, Social Services, Justice about integrated school link services, how we can better integrate services to children.

So that discussion has been ongoing. We have our integrated school link services program or full service schools, and that takes a lot of work in terms of dealing with Social Services which is the primary deliverer of child services as well as health boards which delivers health services to children, as well as the Department of Justice which also, through third parties, delivers justice services to young people.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Where I was heading with this . . . in the past from my own personal experience, I know of instances where health services were necessary within a school setting, okay. Delivery of education is not just education. And the discussion and the reports that we've had around integration of school-based services . . . we've been talking for many, many years in this province that the roof that covers the building that we call the school now is probably going to have many, many different things occurring underneath that roof, whether they're justice, whether they're social services, whether they're health services.

What I'm trying to find out is whether or not you would have in place an agreement with the health care system so that schools and especially teachers and other support staff that have been asked to administer medication have been asked to deal with things like IVs (intravenous) in students that require this to live. These are people that are within our school system. And years ago and, as I understand, still to today health officials would not come into the school setting to administer this.

Is there in place an agreement that would allow . . . now health officials if it can be worked out through home care . . . that nurses that are in the employee of home care would be able to alleviate the pressure?

And if I could just add one more thing to that. Urban settings are tremendously different than the rural settings. And those problems are there in rural Saskatchewan. I'm just wondering how the department is looking at arranging partnerships with the other providers of care?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You raise an interesting observation that the school has become the setting for a number of services to children. And I think one of the frustrations that I certainly had when I was involved working with street kids some 10 years ago, one of the frustrations was that you had all of these agencies that were involved in providing services to those young people, but there was never an integrated coordinated approach.

One of the things that we've tried to develop in the last four years is more integration between health, social services, and education; I'll use those three services in particular. I know of many examples where school divisions and health boards have sat down, and the health board is delivering a variety of services to young people in various school divisions. Now this has not taken place across the province. It is not, I would say, it's not province wide. But certainly school divisions and health boards are working in collaboration with each other to deliver services to young people.

I'm thinking of several examples of wellness centres within a school. In the town of Biggar, for example, the health board has provided a wellness centre in that particular school. There are examples of mental health workers working in schools with young people. And I understand that there are some examples — and I'll try and get them for you — of where home care and the school are working in collaboration with high-needs students.

But certainly it's not across the province because we're dealing with school divisions and their autonomous bodies. And we're dealing with health boards and their autonomous bodies, and we're relying on these boards getting together to collaborate with each other. And I think that there is much more of a willingness now to partner than there has been in the past.

Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, I agree with you in that sense, that there is willingness. If the directive is to boards of education to deal with these high-cost students in a manner of saying, it's your responsibility to deal with the health district board and try to set up that, that's something that should be made clear to everyone because there has been tremendous discussion. You, I'm sure, have had the lobby from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation regarding administering of medications within the school setting.

We know that boards are in a dilemma because they have to provide additional courses for non-professional, non-teaching staff to say, you are the people that will be in charge of actually providing health care to someone who is in our school setting.

So to hear you say that there is that type of encouragement, that there is that type of a system that may work, and I know I'm hearing from our side where we are representing rural Saskatchewan, that that's not happening yet to any great degree.

Yes, it is happening in some cases, but we know of instances where nurses have been asked to come into the school to administer needles, and they won't because there hasn't been, I guess, that collaboration between the health board and the school board. And if that's where the problem is . . . I guess my question is, is that where the problem is? Is it the fact that there has been a breakdown in communication between a health board and a division board?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I guess what I would say to you, all of the examples that I'm thinking of in terms of collaboration between health boards and school boards is in rural Saskatchewan. It is in rural Saskatchewan; it's not in the larger centres.

So I think because people in rural Saskatchewan tend to know each other, tend to know each other as neighbours and so on, that there is more collaboration. So I guess I would disagree with your observation that rural Saskatchewan, that there isn't that collaboration. I think there is. And there are new services being developed as a result of some new partnerships between school boards and district health boards.

Mr. Krawetz: — There has always been a collaboration between . . . whether it be the hospital or the current health centre in terms of providing information to students. That has been there in the past, and I think it's still there. So I agree with you in that sense.

But what I'm talking about . . . And I hear you say that in a particular school there's the establishment of a wellness centre. But a wellness centre isn't dealing with administering an IV or administering a needle or those kinds of things that we still need to see happen. And you know, that's my concern.

And I'll just leave it at that point. And I understand you're going to give me some examples of where this is occurring, or your officials will, and I appreciate that.

I think one of my final comments here would be is, who do you see as the chief stakeholders in the area of the education system right now? Who are the chief stakeholders?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There's a long list, and I meet with them regularly. In fact I just ended a meeting before I came here, meeting with a school division and teachers.

Who do I think the chief stakeholders are? Historically the chief stakeholders have been school trustees, teachers, directors of education, parents, the colleges of education, the Department of Education. Those have been historically the partners. When we talk about partners in education, that's who we refer to.

I think that there are others that are interested in being partners in the educational process, and we've made some accommodation. And I'll give you an example. When we did

the high school review, we had people from the business community represented in that process as well as the labour community; and we had people from the Francophone community, if I'm recalling this correctly.

So I would say that you know who the historical partners are, but there are other people that are asking to come in.

As well, I think it's fair to say first nations people and Metis people are now asking to be partners because first nations people, as you know, have band-controlled schools, but they are subject to the Saskatchewan curriculum, the teacher certification process, and so on. And I think it's fair to say that first nations and Metis people are asking for some systemic barriers, our historical partnership to be opened up a bit, so they can partner with us as well.

The Chair: — It now being 5 o'clock, this committee will stand recessed until 7 p.m. later this same day.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

