

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan with respect to closure of 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.

And the names on this petition appears from Regina; Meota, Saskatchewan; from Lestock; primarily from many small communities throughout Saskatchewan as well as the city of Regina. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also presenting petitions of names from 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 places of Indian Head, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, and numerous ones from the city of Regina.

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

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

The people that have signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Carnduff, Manor, Carlyle, Estevan, and from other communities throughout Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

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

People that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Weyburn, Midale, Carlyle, Radville, Pangman, Yellow Grass, and Regina.

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

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from, primarily, from Rocanville, but also some from Regina and other small communities in southern Saskatchewan.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina; they're from White City, Yellow Grass, Brownlee, Moose Jaw, and Carievale. Thank you.

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

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

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Manor, Arcola, Kisbey, and the vast majority of the remaining signatures are from the city of Regina.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues today to also present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan regarding 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 almost solely from the Weyburn area. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to pass legislation to protect the rights of firearms owners.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, with regards to the department of human resources: (1) could you provide for us a copy of PSC's (Public Service Commission) internal organizational chart; (2) how many people does the Public Service Commission have employed in their human relations department; (3) which government agencies, departments or other groups responsible to the government have human resources departments; (4) what is the relationship between the Public Service Commission and the human resources offices for other government departments; and (5) what are the different functions and roles of each human resources department throughout government?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to inform you that two groups of special guests are seated in your gallery. And in a moment I will ask the members of the Assembly to introduce them individually.

The first group are some of the members of the 90th Anniversary Council. These people are acting in a volunteer capacity, and provided advice for the observance of Saskatchewan 90th anniversary last year. The success of the anniversary is due in large part to their guidance.

The co-chairs of the council were two well-known Saskatchewan citizens, Dr. John Archer and Sandra Peterson.

I will now ask my colleagues in the Assembly to introduce them individually by name.

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to welcome Dr. John Archer to the Assembly, both in this role and his role throughout the many years in dedicated service to this province. And I ask the Assembly to join with me in welcoming him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the member for the constituency of Watrous, I'd like to introduce a member of the 90th anniversary council from Forum 95, "a vision for Saskatchewan", which was held in October of 1995 in Prince Albert. The person I want to introduce is from Allan, Saskatchewan — and if you'd stand up, please — Noreen Johns. Please welcome her to the Assembly. And I see, Noreen, that your son is also in the gallery today and a fine young individual who works in this building and you should be very proud of him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you, one of the members of this committee, a gentleman who has worked very hard in the cooperative movement through the years, and probably needs no introduction to anyone who has been involved in the

cooperative movement, but I would like to introduce Mr. Vern Pusch from Kipling.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. As part of this first group, I want to introduce someone whom I don't know well, I know more by reputation than personally; it's George Watson. Mr. Watson is a past president of Sask Sport. He is, I am told, a teacher who has worked in sport and with youth and done so very effectively over a long period of time, and I'd ask the members of the Assembly to welcome Mr. Watson.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce in the second group, some youth delegates from Forum 95, "looking towards 2005." This gathering of 90 representatives of young people from across the province met in Prince Albert last October to discuss the future of Saskatchewan. They proposed a vision for Saskatchewan which will help us prepare for our centennial of the province in the year 2005.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask my colleagues in the Assembly to introduce these youth delegates by name.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, April Dahnke of Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — And also to introduce to you, Christine Hildebrand, also of Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — When I looked at the name Hildebrand, I know as my life as a member of city council I ran across that name as a very active woman who serves in our community association, and also met a member of the Hildebrand family who's very active in international development and cooperation. So I'm sure that Christine is carrying on this fine family tradition and the values of community in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure as well to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly, Michael Perras from Glenavon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like the opportunity to introduce to you and through you to everybody here in the Assembly today, one Ryan Wood from Caronport in my constituency.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, thank you again. I take great pleasure in introducing Amanda Strohan who is a constituent of mine. And I want to congratulate her and all other delegates who participated in this forum for their excellent work. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to quickly bump back to the 90th Anniversary Advisory Council, and I have no way of confirming whether in fact my guest is in the gallery here, so I'll ask merely, if he is, to stand, if not, to be recognized — Mr. John Huschi from the Saskatchewan Association of Broadcasters who was also part. And I don't see him standing so he's not here today, but I'll acknowledge him anyway. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine today who's seated in the west gallery. He's a member of the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) provincial executive, and he's attending in Regina for a meeting of the Canadian Association of Principals national conference. He's a well-respected educator within our own area and certainly within the province. I'd like Joe Meehan to please stand, and please welcome Joe to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce 18 grade 6's seated in the east gallery. These are from the Redvers School and their teacher is Diane Dubé, and their two chaperons are Debbie Rekken and Wendy Frecon. I would ask everyone to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the whole Assembly, 22 grade 7 and 8 students from Davin School, and their teacher Mrs. Wynn Edwards. They're in the west gallery. They are here to watch the proceedings and then learn a little bit more about how the legislature works.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a popular day for our folks from Regina South to be joining us in the gallery, and I want to take this opportunity to introduce two young women who I believe are seated in your gallery, although I don't see them offhand, Sarah Goddard and Stacey Hamer.

Sarah's father is chief of staff to the Minister of Labour, and as you would know, today is international bring-your-daughter-to-work day. And so I want to recognize Sarah and Stacey if you just stand and be recognized. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If other members have completed introductions, the Speaker would like to introduce to you 52 grade 7 and 8 students from Sunningdale School in my constituency who are visiting us and are seated in the Speaker's gallery.

These students are accompanied by their teachers, Shayne Hogeboom and Brent Bachiu, as well chaperons Mrs. Barry, Mr. Schwabe, Mr. Suprowich, and Mrs. Anderson.

They'll be with us until about 2 o'clock, at which time they'll take a tour of the Assembly, of the building. And I look forward to, with the help of the Deputy Speaker, being able to meet with them for refreshments and photos later on.

And I would ask all members of the Assembly to extend a warm welcome to these students from Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a couple of guests I would like to introduce to you. In your gallery is my aunt and uncle from Wadena, Ken and Vi Braaten.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — And in the east gallery is my son and a couple of the people I work with, in my business, from Watson.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Melfort Mustangs Win Anavet Cup

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And today instead of the sports report from Humboldt, it's the sports report from Melfort.

What can I say? The Melfort Mustangs have done it again. Last night at the civic arena in St. James, Manitoba, the Melfort Mustangs defeated the St. James Canadians 5 to 1 to wrap up the series four games straight, bringing the Anavet Cup home to Melfort and to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — This secures the Mustangs a berth right through the front door to the Royal Bank Cup. And there's even an opportunity now for the Yorkton Terriers who gives them also a shot at the cup.

Game one begins in Melfort May 4 with the Mustangs facing none other than the Yorkton Terriers. We are 80 per cent sold out so get your tickets now.

Please join me in congratulating the Melfort Mustangs once again and wish them a safe trip home today from Winnipeg.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rural Municipalities Share Services

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I once again have good news reflecting solid local leadership for Saskatchewan from my constituency. Three rural municipalities and a town are setting an excellent example of how to save money by sharing services.

In the first case of cooperation, the RMs (rural municipalities) of Marriott and Pleasant Valley, the one I live in, will now operate out of the same building, and administrator Jim Reiter will act as administrator for both RMs. The RMs have agreed to try this out for a year to test its success. The RMs will remain separate while both being under one roof.

One advantage of sharing services is that there are now two staff members in the building, allowing the office to be staffed all day. As a result of sharing the office this year, the RM of Pleasant Valley expects to save \$15,000. With approximately 300 municipalities in Saskatchewan, simple math tells you that if every RM found a similar economy through local creativity, this alone would save Saskatchewan taxpayers about \$5 million.

In the second instance, the RM of St. Andrews and the town of Rosetown are in joint discussions over the possibility of sharing administrative services. According to the *Rosetown Eagle*, they are negotiating an agreement that will see them under one roof.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all of these municipalities. They have taken another initiative at reducing their costs at the local level and demonstrated for others that the sharing of services will benefit local communities and taxpayers. They deserve high marks for leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Let the Sun Shine

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a matter of utmost importance to myself, my caucus, and to all residents in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, since my good friend the member from Indian Head-Milestone was appointed Environment minister, I've noticed a constant deterioration in the weather. Soon after the minister's appointment the temperature took an almost immediate dip to the point where I'm sure it was comparable to the surface of Pluto. And it really hasn't improved since.

I was willing to let this pass at first since the minister is new to his portfolio. But, Mr. Speaker, today was the last straw as our latest April showers again turned to April flurries. Mr. Speaker, we can't let this go on.

As one of my colleagues pointed out, we've only got eight more weeks until the days start getting shorter again. It's time to park the ski-doo and pull out the golf clubs, if only the minister would let us.

I beg and I implore the minister on behalf of all the sun worshippers out there in Saskatchewan and on behalf of all

those who simply want to put their winter parkas in storage for a couple of weeks to begin to do his job and make the sun shine on our beautiful province again. And, Mr. Speaker, I have checked with the federal Minister of the Environment. This is indeed a provincial issue and cannot, I repeat cannot, be blamed on federal transfer payment cut-backs. Please, Mr. Minister, let the sun shine again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prince Albert Business Awards

Mr. Kowalsky: — Prince Albert is a great place to do business, Mr. Speaker. And that's not just my opinion but also the opinion of Bob Casey, the Prince Albert businessperson who last night was given the special legacy award at the Samuel McLeod Business Awards ceremony.

I was happy to attend this ceremony which presented a number of awards to local business people in a variety of categories. Seven patron businesses sponsored the awards, a coordinating committee of 11 business representatives planned it, and Craig Mitchell was an excellent chairperson. There were nine separate awards given with several notable nominees in each category—more evidence that Prince Albert business is thriving indeed.

Among the winners were Industrial Automated Systems, Inc., with its 53 employees, which won the new business award and the new products award. The Prince Albert Credit Union was recognized for its community involvement, AODBT Architects Ltd. for exceptional performance in providing services, and Econo Lumber for capital investment in the community. The award for exceptional performance in marketing went to Mann Pontiac Buick.

Ashley Cabinets and Windows won the job creation award and Leon's Furniture was named Prince Albert Business of the Year. I want to congratulate each winner, the finalists, and each nominee, for the contribution they make to Prince Albert and to Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Iconography Exhibition

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform members of this House of a unique art exhibit in my constituency. Starting on April 30 to the end of May, the Morris Art Gallery will be holding an exhibit on iconography. Despite its unusual name, the exhibit is about a subject quite familiar to many people in this province.

It concerns the use of icons in religious art. For centuries, people in many cultures and religions have used symbols to convey spiritual beliefs. This exhibition will try to bring some further understanding to this topic. The constituency of Thunder Creek encompasses communities that act as centres for many different faiths. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Morris Art Gallery, and curator Marla Gerein, for their hard work and wish them success with this unique exhibit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Cooperation

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that government members are finally acknowledging that cooperation can work at the municipal and local level. And as we've informed government members before, even my communities of Glenavon and the RM (rural municipality) of Chester have worked together, and other communities are beginning to work together.

So I trust that the Minister of Municipal Government and the Premier were listening to the member for Biggar-Rosetown and that they will allow the process of local people . . . as I noted last night at the Scenic Valley School Division, where they are putting forth a proposal to try and address the cut-backs that have been forced on them by the province. And I think, Mr. Speaker, what this shows is that people in rural Saskatchewan can find means and ways of addressing problems that are placed upon them. We trust, though, Mr. Speaker, that they don't have to do all the work, that they will indeed receive their fair share of the tax dollar of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada Book Day

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, today is Canada Book Day, a day during which the Canadian book industry, the writers' development trust, and Canadian authors promote their product. There is no government involvement of any kind in this promotion, but I think we in this Assembly can give a small boost to an industry that is economically important and intellectually crucial to our nation. That books are fundamental to a civilized society is self-evident. That Canadian books are vital to our national identity is undeniable.

That books are an important part of our economy is not so well-known perhaps. In 1993-94, for instance, Canadian publishers reported total revenues of \$1.7 billion, provided 6,862 full-time jobs, and paid salaries, benefits, and fees of \$278 million. The government spent a further \$1.9 billion on libraries.

Let me backtrack just a bit, Mr. Speaker. I said there is no government involvement in Canada Book Day. In Saskatchewan there is certainly no involvement because, unlike the federal Liberal government, we collect no provincial sales tax on books as they collect the GST (goods and services tax).

I remember with pleasure removing the Tory tax on books in December of 1991. Goodbye, harmonization. We removed the tax on all books, Mr. Speaker — fiction, non-fiction, Canadian, non-Canadian. We even removed the tax on those pop-up colouring books the opposition is so fond of.

On this day, do yourself a favour — buy a tax-free Saskatchewan book.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Edition of Saskatchewan Food Industry Directory

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many livelihoods depend on access and availability of information. This is especially true for our farmers and people involved in the agriculture and food industry. The information age is no stranger to the Saskatchewan food industry.

In March the 1996 Saskatchewan food industry directory was released after being published by the Saskatchewan Food Processors Association. This directory includes cross-referencing by company and products, and the summary of each company includes address, contact name, telephone and fax number, products, number of employees, and export status.

It includes all food processors in the province and you don't have to worry about the demand for this publication. Two editions of last year's directory were sold out and copies were taken around the world. It is useful in promoting these companies in the market-place.

Mr. Speaker, the 1996 Saskatchewan food industry directory sells for \$10 including the GST, unless the federal Liberals change their mind about taxing this kind of useful information.

Congratulations to the Saskatchewan Food Processors Association for keeping us up to date on this important industry. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Providence Place Funding

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Acting Minister of Health. Yesterday I visited the geriatric unit at Providence Place in Moose Jaw. The occasion, however, was not a happy one. Thanks to cuts from this government, patients and care-givers now fear that they will lose this unit. In a November '92 agreement signed by the Minister of Health, it states and I quote:

It is intended that Providence Place will offer a range of programing to include geriatric assessment and rehabilitation.

It goes on to say that any intention to withdraw from this agreement requires a minimum three years' written notice. Last fall this government gave the district just one month's notice before ending funding for the geriatric unit, far short of the required three years.

Will the minister honour this agreement or is a contract signed by this government worth nothing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as a resident of the city of Regina, the member from Thunder Creek may be forgiven if he's not understood the history of a project in Moose Jaw. I

would remind him then of the actual history of this project.

Mr. Speaker, this project was promised by the Tory government. Promised — we had news releases in Moose Jaw — but of course there wasn't a thin dime, not one thin dime in any budget, to back that promise up. When we came to office, Mr. Speaker, in the most desperate of circumstances financially in this province, we began to move to complete that project in the city of Moose Jaw.

Today, Mr. Speaker, as I stand in this House, over \$20 million of taxpayers' money has been provided to provide the facility in Moose Jaw, the largest health capital project in the province over the last number of years. Mr. Speaker, this government and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan have provided ongoing funding, transitional funding, to establish the geriatric assessment unit.

It was made very clear, Mr. Speaker, as early as 1994, that the ongoing funding would be coming through the needs-based support of the funding pool.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to make members of the Assembly aware of a resolution from Moose Jaw City Council. Seeing as the Minister of Social Services does not support the will of his community, I will raise this concern for the city council.

And the resolution says that with regard to the people of Providence Place, and I quote:

We at city council support their position.

They also say:

We must all rally behind Providence Place to ensure that the geriatric assessment and rehabilitation unit continues as part of the health care facilities of southern Saskatchewan and the city of Moose Jaw.

Given this, will the acting minister admit that this government erred in breaking a contract with the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek district, or will he continue following the lead of the member from Regina South, who is failing to stand up for health care in his community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member from Thunder Creek that no amount of rhetoric from that member or that caucus, no amount of harassment, no amount of political pressure or motions being passed, will re-create the \$50 million in health care funding that your Liberal Party has taken from this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, when that member stands up and other members from their seats holler about the need to stand up for one's constituents, I ask, Mr. Speaker, where has that caucus been — where has that caucus been when this government has stood up in the interests of all Saskatchewan people in pointing out to their federal counterparts what they're doing to the social

programming across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, this government promised to reform the health system by giving us wellness. They said they would save money by keeping people well and keeping them out of acute care hospital beds. According to this government's own reports, it costs over \$13,000 a month to keep a patient in a hospital bed. In contrast, the geriatric unit costs just over \$5,000 a month.

So far the geriatric unit served 409 seniors, and it's helped 67 per cent of them return to the dignity of independent living in their own homes. Thanks to your decision to break a contract and a promise of separate funding, hundreds of seniors in southern Saskatchewan will now be forced into those more expensive hospital beds. Will the minister admit that wellness isn't about saving money, it's about destroying quality health care in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, point number one, in response to the member, the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek District Board has within its ability, and has indicated to the board of Providence Place, a funding option for this year which is over \$5 million. Now with that \$5 million of tax dollars, Mr. Speaker, the Providence Place board will have to provide the programming. Will they be able to continue providing geriatric assessment with that budget? They are working on that issue as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, if they are not able to, or not able to complete the full geriatric assessment program, Mr. Speaker, they will be able to use each and every one of those beds to add 28 more long-term care beds for the citizens and people of Moose Jaw and district, Mr. Speaker.

Now we've had some discussion today about commitments made, commitments made. Well let's think about some commitments made by the Liberal Party. Was it not that party, Mr. Speaker, in their red book in the last federal election, that told Canadians coast to coast, in my constituency and everywhere, they were going to scrap the GST? Was that a commitment, Mr. Speaker? And the member from Thunder Creek talks about standing . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

District Health Board Funding

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Assinboine District Health Board, which includes much of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, recently received word that it is one of 19 districts which will receive less funding this year than last year. In fact this district has discovered that funds for acute care services alone have decreased by 6.5 per cent, or \$436,000. While monies for acute care can be used in other health-related services, funds in other areas may not be used for acute care services.

Given the horror stories we are hearing about people being

turned away at hospital doors due to bed shortages, how can the Acting Minister of Health justify such a substantial cut in funding for front-line acute care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member who, I think, knows this, but I would remind him again that we have moved in this province to a needs-based funding formula that takes the pool of taxpayers' dollars that we have available to us to provide health services and allocates those funds on the basis of population and need.

The member will talk about some districts who, on the basis of that formula, have lost funding this year. There are other districts of course, Mr. Speaker, who have in fact gained funding. And that's to provide a fair and equitable distribution of the health care dollars in Saskatchewan.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, again I repeat: we would have more dollars to allocate if it were not for decisions made in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the biggest single concern that Saskatchewan residents have about their health care system is the fact that it is no longer reliable in meeting the acute care needs of the sick and elderly. Clearly, if district boards are to be autonomous and to meet the needs of their local communities, they should have the freedom to determine how the total pool of health district care funding is to be divided.

Will the Acting Minister of Health make a commitment in this House today to make the appropriate changes and provide boards with a greater say in the spending of district health care dollars so they can provide safe, reliable health care for our sick and elderly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, to the member's question, it has always been, and I assume it always will be, a responsibility of a provincial government to establish standards for health care provision. Obviously, obviously, no provincial government will stand by and let all of the funding go into one particular area of health care provision or another.

Again, the distribution of funding must be equitable and according to the needs of our people as best as we are able to meet those needs.

Now he talks about the district health boards, the member from Thunder Creek has talked about the Moose Jaw board today; well here's a quote, here's a quote, from a letter sent by the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District Board to the Hon. Paul Martin, Minister of Finance, and I quote:

Dear Mr. Martin: As representatives for the residents of the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District, the district health board is writing to express its concerns regarding the impact of impending cuts in federal transfer payments on health care funding in Saskatchewan.

If the district boards have done that, I ask the members, have you done that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Court-house Closures

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP (New Democratic Party) government recently announced the closure of the Kerrobert court-house. Just last year the province spent \$58,000 to renovate this beautiful old building, and now it's being closed. Just doesn't seem to make any sense. A couple years ago, the former minister of Justice promised not to close any more court-houses — just one more in a long list of broken NDP promises.

Mr. Speaker, this Sunday the people of Kerrobert and the area will hold a public rally to protest the closure of the Kerrobert court-house. I've been invited, and I will be there. I know the Premier and the Minister of Justice have been invited as well, but the town has heard no reply as of yet. So I've been asked to extend the invitation again here today.

Mr. Premier, will you be attending this rally, you or your Minister of Justice, or will both of you make time to be at this important event?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Conservative Party for that question, and I'm pleased to receive a personal invitation to this event.

Now practically, what's happening in Kerrobert is that we have been very carefully reviewing all of the justice services in Saskatchewan. I have looked at many recommendations, and we are recognizing that there are changes that need to be made. And the changes that have been made here in Kerrobert will not mean any diminishment in the services provided to the people of that area, but they will mean that we can look at some positive changes in the whole system because we do not have enough money to keep court-houses throughout the province.

I think in many ways the member from Kindersley should be pleased that he lives in an area where they don't require as many court services as some other places.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Crow Rate Compensation Revenues

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SaskPower. SaskPower purchases land for future projects and usually doesn't use this land for a number of years. And in the meantime they rent the land out to local farmers.

Mr. Minister, I have spoken to farmers who rent land owned by SaskPower in the Estevan area, and they have informed me that SaskPower is not passing along any of the one-time Crow pay-out to producers.

Mr. Minister, how can you justify keeping the entire Crow benefit when you are gouging those same producers with huge

power rate increases, when SaskPower has a net income of \$80 million this year?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say, beginning my comments, that discussions between the tenant and the landlord, SaskPower, a matter for them to discuss in terms of developing the rates. What I want to say though, Mr. Speaker, I find this interesting coming from an opposition member who represents a political party who for years has been trying to destroy orderly marketing in this province, taking money out of the farmers' pockets.

Destroying the Crow rate subsidy for years has been not defending farmers. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that SaskPower continues and will continue to treat their tenants fairly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I gather the minister's a little concerned about this issue . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the Speaker's having an increasingly difficult time hearing the answer being put and also the question being put. Order. And I'll ask all members to cooperate and allow the member for Cannington to put his question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister is sensitive about this issue because he quickly tried to divert the question. Well the NDP have always been condemning the big bad banks and the private corporations and tell us how we need government to protect the little guy.

Well, Mr. Minister, SaskPower should follow the example of one of those big bad private corporations that you and your colleagues are so quick to condemn. Prairie Coal, a private company which rents land to producers in the same area, under the same circumstances, is returning every penny of the Crow pay-out to farmers.

Meanwhile it's Jack Messer and your money-grubbing corporation that posted a net income of \$80 million and is still taking the Crow pay-out right out of farmers' hands. Will you do the right thing and change your policy, or will you at least share a portion of the Crow pay-out with the farmers and give some to the producers?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me begin answering this by saying to the member that things have changed in Saskatchewan since the 1980s when the Conservative Party that he represents, represents this province.

And I want to say to the member opposite, that we will maintain the fiscal integrity of these corporations. One day he stands in here and he doesn't support a rate restructure. The next day he comes in here and says the corporation's making too much money.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that SaskPower has been and will continue to be a good corporate citizen. This government will continue to support farmers and the agriculture community

rather than standing up and supporting federal initiatives to destroy the backbone of orderly marketing and the support for freight subsidies in this province, as that minister refused to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teachers' Collective Agreement

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, the details of the new teachers' agreement are now public, and school boards, local ratepayers, and parents with children in school, have reason to be concerned. While you've apparently covered the cost of the pay increase to the end of 1996, but not the increments, there is no additional money in your budget to cover additional benefits. Besides, this agreement only lasts until the end of the current year when a new contract will have to be negotiated. And school boards are staring at a \$7 million funding cut in '98 and '99.

Madam Minister, how are the school boards going to afford this contract in the long run? Won't it simply result in fewer teachers, larger classrooms, and higher education taxes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has announced the ratification of the new collective agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I understand that over 81 per cent of the teachers that voted in favour of this collective agreement which indicates a zero per cent increase in 1995, zero for half of 1996, with a 1 per cent increase coming in July of 1996, and a 1 per cent increase coming at the end of 1996.

Mr. Speaker, teachers in this province work extremely hard on behalf of our young people in Saskatchewan, on behalf of our ratepayers. And we know that teachers have sacrificed, Mr. Speaker. They have sacrificed because of the incompetence that we experienced in this province in the 1980s because of those members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, the teachers may have got an increase, and that's not the question. The question is what are the boards going to get to cover that increase from you; that was what the question was.

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. I'm going to ask all members . . . I'm having a great deal of difficulty being able to hear the hon. member for Rosthern put his question. Order, order. And I recognize that the enthusiasm is coming from both sides of the House. I'll ask for the cooperation of all members of the House and allow the hon. member from Rosthern to put his question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order. Order!

Mr. Heppner: — You know the NDP is always complaining about the federal Liberals making decisions that you have to

pay for; this is exactly the same thing. You made a spending decision that school boards and local taxpayers are going to have to pay for at the same that you are cutting funding.

And worst of all, all the people that have to pay for it weren't included in the decision making. That's a goofy way to do things, Madam Minister. If you don't accept it from others, you shouldn't be doing it.

Madam Minister, why did you agree to this contract without the signatures of all the participants? How are they supposed to pay for this contract with your \$7 million funding cut?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well as I said earlier, I'm extremely pleased on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and all of the people of Saskatchewan that teachers have ratified this minimal collective agreement with over 81 per cent ratification.

Mr. Speaker, this collective agreement is consistent with other public sector agreements that have been bargained between the government and our unions, Mr. Speaker. The costs of this salary increase are covered by a \$2 million increase in the operating grants to school boards, Mr. Speaker. We have indicated that we will cover the incremental costs of salary increases in 1997.

Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously we are going to experience challenges in the years ahead. And, Mr. Speaker, we will be working with our partners in education, we will be working with our partners in education — trustees, teachers, directors of education, and parents — as we always have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Minimum Wage Board

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Labour. We have recently told the minister that small business is our greatest employer in this province. These businesses have been awaiting a decision determining what Saskatchewan's minimum wage should be. The chairman of the board, in a *Leader-Post* article from April 3, acknowledges that he is unable to bring the board to a consensus decision about a fair and equitable minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, the minister personally appointed the members of the board.

Will the minister confirm that his appointed board is hopelessly deadlocked, and does he realize this uncertainty is having a detrimental effect on business decisions to hire new employees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that business people in this province, as well as the working men and women that make the businesses operate within the province, are optimistic about the future, contrary to what the doom and gloom that's preached from across the Assembly. I would say that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I do have some thoughts on the question actually, and I'd like an

opportunity to respond to that.

In my opinion, the Minimum Wage Board is not hopelessly deadlocked. They did come to a bit of an impasse. They will be holding a further meeting.

There's been some discussions between the various organizations that are represented on the Minimum Wage Board. And I believe that they will be making a recommendation when they've done their due diligence in the work of the Minimum Wage Board.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has taken political patronage to record levels. They have appointed their political friends to very pivotable positions over and over and over again.

The chairman of this board, Murray Cheyne, has been completely ineffective in having the Minimum Wage Board come to a decision about a fair and equitable wage. This comes as no surprise because sources in North Battleford have told us that the same Murray Cheyne was the Minister of Labour's campaign manager in the last election.

Will the minister confirm that this appointment has been made on the basis of patronage rather than competence, and will he get rid of his political cronies and appoint people to this board who are actually up to the task?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The member opposite should be absolutely ashamed of himself. His information is inaccurate and untruthful, and you should withdraw your comment. You should be ashamed of yourself.

The person who chairs the Minimum Wage Board was not my campaign manager. He is not a political crony. He was put forward, his name, by nomination through the hotels association. He's a respected businessman in the Battlefords area. He chairs that board. The two other people on the business side were nominated by various business organizations. The two people on the labour side were nominated by labour organizations.

And the member making accusations like that in this legislature shows the dismal state of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan. You can't keep your own organization together. You cut the throat of your leader. You can't get your own act together in this legislature, and you make false accusations about people who should be well respected in the Saskatchewan business community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order! Order.

Sales Tax Harmonization

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is

for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the minister proved without a doubt that she is in no way capable of handling the finances of our province. Once again the minister's figures were completely inaccurate. When asked about the offer to harmonize the PST (provincial sales tax) and GST, she rejected the offer. Basic . . .

The Speaker: — Order! Order. Now I'm hearing hollering coming from the government side of the Assembly . . .

An Hon. Member: — He's hollering the loudest.

The Speaker: — Order. And I'm going to ask for the cooperation of all members on both sides of the House to allow the Leader of the Opposition to put his question.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When asked about the offer to harmonize the PST and the GST, she rejected the offer, basing her argument on a harmonized tax rate of 15 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the offer from Ottawa is a tax rate of 14 per cent. Her department officials knew it is 14 per cent, yet the minister can't stop playing games with the people of Saskatchewan. I sympathize with them when they don't know when to believe her.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand up, admit she made a mistake, correct herself, and apologize to the taxpayers of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. First of all, the 14 per cent story was a very well-kept secret. It was the headline story in *The Globe and Mail* about five or six days ago. So I mean I know the members opposite may not read *The Globe and Mail*. There have been a variety of proposals — that one was from Ontario — and there are a variety of numbers.

But the reality is a simple one. We are opposing harmonization because it means more taxes for the average family in this province. And we made a commitment that we will not agree to a new tax regime that means more taxes for the average family.

But the gall of the members opposite to stand up and raise this issue, supporting the federal Liberals that have done more to damage the political credibility of politicians in this country by taking a promise — a clear promise to get rid of the tax — and to now say that they're breaking their promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Flavel: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if anyone has toured north of Regina to the town of Wynyard, you'll find one of the most progressive little towns in the middle of Saskatchewan or southern Saskatchewan. And I'm delighted today to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order! The Assembly has just granted leave to an hon. member to introduce guests and I'm unable to hear him make that introduction. And I ask for the cooperation of all members of the Assembly to allow the hon. member from Last Mountain-Touchwood to introduce his guest.

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce someone that's sitting in the west gallery today, the mayor of the town of Wynyard, which is one of the most progressive little towns in Saskatchewan — or not a little town anymore. But she has been at the helm of it for many years and developed it into a very progressive, a very large town, and a very beautiful town to visit. And so I want to introduce the mayor, Sharon Armstrong, that's sitting in the west gallery and ask all members to make her welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In keeping with an open, accessible government, I table the answer.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 76 is provided.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In keeping with our policy of being open and accessible, I table the answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The answer to question 77 is provided. Order, order.
(1430)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

The Chair: — I will ask the Minister of Finance to introduce her officials, please.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would move:

That a sum not exceeding \$678,091,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 1997.

The Chair: — Would the minister also introduce her officials, please.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, I will do that, Mr. Chair.

On my left is Bill Jones, the deputy minister of Finance. Behind Bill is Kirk McGregor, executive director, taxation and intergovernmental affairs branch. To my right is Brian Smith, executive director of public employees benefit agency. Behind Brian is Joanne Brockman, director, economic and fiscal policy branch. And behind me is Larry Spanner, executive director, treasury board branch.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I'd like to welcome the minister's officials here today to answer a few questions regarding the interim supply.

My first question to the minister is with regard to the monies here requested. Earlier in the year the minister and her government had special warrants issued by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and those warrants helped to cover the unforeseen expenses of cuts to the public service. And in particular, they made up for a bridging program as well as early retirement.

In recent weeks, Madam Minister, I've heard from others in a number of communities that your cuts to the public service were merely the beginning, and that more could be expected next year. In fact we know that Ag Credit in Saskatchewan will be phased out over a four-year period.

As a result, there will be more severance over the coming years. And given this, can the minister assure us that these monies will be used for cutting more people, or are you asking for more special warrants in January or February of this year? Of next year, sorry.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I would remind the member opposite what we're doing here. The purpose of interim supply is that, although we have the budget before the legislature, the opposition has not yet agreed to pass the budget. There are agencies out there, such as social agencies, health care agencies, education agencies, that require money in order to continue to operate until the budget's passed. And the purpose of interim supply is to just get the money into their hands so that they can continue to operate.

There's another process whereby departments will appear before the legislature. The estimates of the departments will be available, and this is the time at which we can scrutinize in a very minute, in minute detail the expenditures of the different departments. That's the appropriate time to ask your question.

If you want to ask those questions of the Department of Finance, I'd be more than willing to provide the answers. And if you would like to pass interim supply right now, we would call in the Department of Finance and go through our estimates and give you all the detail that you would like.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, we do have some time here that we can afford to take the opportunity to ask a few questions here, so I would beg your tolerance here in this matter.

And I noticed, you know, one of the cuts made in the budget that seems to be of a concern to a number of people is the cut that was made for fighting the Dutch elm disease here in the province. And this, as we know, is a fairly deadly virus, and it's transmitted by the Dutch elm bark beetles. And by making that cut, it's just another example of offloading responsibilities onto the municipalities in the province. If you want to protect the urban elms and those in wooded areas of these RMs, they're going to have to carry more of this load.

And I'm sure the minister will recall that we had one tree quickly cut down near Estevan, at Cowessess, and at Sherwood forest. And the forests that we do have in the southern part of this province are rather rare ones and elms being a major species. In Regina alone, they account for at least a third of all of the 175,000 trees in the city. And trees are valuable for wildlife habitat as well. They improve the value of our properties. They provide shelter. They provide some of the aesthetic features we need to attract tourism in the province.

And as well, Madam Minister, the elm beetles, I don't need to point out to you — I'm sure you're aware — they are active now, and at a time that they could cause a major outbreak, and it would require government assistance in removing affected trees and controlling this disease. And I wonder if any of the monies that the minister is calculating here today might be used in the event of some major outbreak.

And secondly, the cuts announced in the budget not meets . . . why didn't you allow for such an unforeseen possibility?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. As I said before, the funding that is here is funding to allow the departments to carry on their normal activities for the period of time until the budget's passed. But as I said to the member opposite when we were doing interim supply the first time around, in politics you really have one thing that you have to guard preciously, and that's credibility.

And I'm saying to the member opposite, what they have to consider is the role they're taking as Her Majesty's Official Opposition in this House. To stand up and say, why would you ever think of cutting X, how could you possibly cut Y. To say as the member opposite has said consistently in this House, we wouldn't have cut X; we'd keep the funding for X. We would lower taxes by the way, and balance the budget, and pay down the debt.

And probably most important of all, to believe that the members opposite can get away with being silent or even lending approval to the federal government when it cuts a quarter of billion dollars over four years to the province's funding for health, education, social programs, forcing the province to find 240 million new provincial dollars to back-fill the federal cuts meaning there has to be reductions elsewhere; to be absolutely silent on that point or even to support that point, this isn't credible. The picture doesn't fit together.

And, Mr. Member, the problem is the voters are beginning to understand this picture can't fit together. Now the members of the third party don't take positions that I support or even respect, but at least there is a basic consistency to what they're

saying.

So I'm saying to the member opposite, first of all we're here to address not the details — the big picture. And saying to the member opposite, it is your obligation as the official opposition to present a credible alternative. Saying we're going to lower taxes, we're going to spend more, we're going to balance the books, we're going to pay down the debt, and we're going to let the federal government offload whatever they want onto us because we're Liberals and we just sing the Liberal song, can't work in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps, Mr. Minister, then the next question that I'll have will address a concern that you may share with the rest of the people. Obviously the Dutch elm disease isn't one that we would consider significant in the province but, you know, in the House even, we've heard several members from the north-west and the north-central areas of the province alert us to the dry conditions, and these are affecting farms in those areas. You know, in fact for the last seven years there's been a severe drought in some of these areas and agrologists have been informing the public that some hay stands in those areas are under so much stress that unless rains fall soon to replenish them, they will be unproductive.

I wonder if the minister could tell us that, within the monies you're requesting here, is there any contemplation for the possible need to provide, like, emergency feed assistance for the cattle producers in the areas who might discover there's an insufficient hay crop available from their fields for another year?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, again I want to return to the issue of credibility because the member opposite is playing, in his last comment, a game that the member from Wood River plays all the time and the old Tories used to play. That is, because I say to you, address the issue of Dutch elm disease when you have the Department of Environment here, because they're the ones who can tell you in detail what's happening there, he twists my comments and said really what the minister said is she doesn't care about Dutch elm disease at all. And you know that I didn't say that.

Please, Mr. Member, don't follow the member from Wood River into that kind of low-level politics. The people of the province understand that because that's what the Tories used to do. Please don't do that.

Now again when you talk about the dry conditions in the province, when you have the appropriate department here, ask them the details of what their funding is.

Again what I return to is this is merely interim supply allowing funding to proceed so that agencies can continue to operate. We are quite prepared to give you as much detail as possible. All you have to do is allow us to call the appropriate department that can give you all the detailed answers to your question. And we'd be more than pleased to do that as soon as you pass interim supply.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, if

we might switch to the bond rating agencies here for a moment. The bond rating agencies are likely to come out with their new ratings in the near future for the province. A month has passed since the budget and it's usually the amount of time that's taken for the new ratings to be out. And I wonder if the minister could tell us what sort of reading she is expecting, and from which agency?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well I would say, Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite we will wait to see what they say. Certainly our budget was very well received in both Toronto and New York.

And some of the financial agencies have already made comment on the budget. For example Nesbitt Burns' commentary was to the effect, on balance, the budget gets a thumbs up. They talked about the fact that there are no tax increases in the budget; the debt service costs in the province are on the way down, that is our interest costs are on the way down; the provincial debt will be sliced by 12 per cent over the next four years to twelve and a half billion dollars. The economic growth for the province for 1996 is 2.6 per cent, well above the Canadian average. And they said the province has cut spending by a whopping 4.4 per cent in our budget. So what they've said is that the budget gets a clear thumbs up, and we expect similar responses from other agencies as they come in.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Chair, I recall in the press when the minister and the Premier arrived back, I do recall some mention of another credit rating agency — I believe it was Standard and Poor's — and they had had something also to say. I know you've just expressed that they will be coming out with something soon. But could you just make an additional comment about what they may have had to have said with respect to the budget.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — You're going to have to wait for their report, member opposite, but I will say this. They say to us that the financial record of this province under this Premier, in terms of its consistency, its goal orientation, and its success, is unparalleled in any other part of Canada.

(1445)

An Hon. Member: — Promises made, promises kept.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — They said, as the Premier has added — promises made, promises kept. Which may not be something the Liberals would like to get into today — promises made, promises kept. But the reaction by all of the financial agencies has been extremely positive and they see us as setting an example for other provinces in Canada. And behind closed doors will say, they only wish the federal government would follow the example of Saskatchewan in terms of getting its deficit under control and balancing its books.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Madam Minister. At the present time we, as everyone's well aware, have the SaskTel strike that's gone on for about two weeks now. And it means that there's some 3,600 employees in the province who are off work. And the strike obviously means that there's a

significant part of our provincial workforce that is not working. And there have been some projects that may be delayed because phones cannot be installed, and I've heard the corporation suggest it may result in a loss of revenue to the company.

And given these things, I wonder if the minister could tell us whether she would expect a significant loss of revenue that is needed to support the interim supply that she's asking for here today?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — To the member opposite, Mr. Chairman, I would remind the member opposite of the process. This is funding for government departments. This is not funding for Crown agencies. There is a separate place where one can go, members can go, to talk about Crown corporation issues — that's the Crown Corporations Committee. And I know that the Chair and the other government members of the Crown Corporations Committee would like to see the appearance of the opposition at these committees because we're having difficulties with the functioning of the committees because we're not getting the level of participation.

So the member opposite may want to talk to some of your colleagues who are on the Crown Corporations Committee about participating there and doing the job that is required to ask those sorts of questions.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I might just digress, just for a moment here, with respect to the minister's comments just now. I believe if she would elaborate . . . is she referring to attendance at the Crown Corporations Committee meeting this morning?

The Chair: — Order, order. I have to caution both the minister and the member that the purpose of interim supply is to grant money for the operation of government departments on an interim basis and complete, detailed reviews will be available at another time.

I think we're getting off the subject here, so let's stick with interim supply if we can.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chair, thank you very much. Mr. Chair, what I'm trying to say to the member opposite is that you're asking questions in this process that there is another process to deal with.

And there is a Crown Corporations Committee which has government and opposition members on it. It's also open to the public and to the press — that's the appropriate place to ask questions about Crown corporations and it's not during interim supply.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Madam Minister. I really do feel, though, that it is necessary just to explain the lateness of the members of our caucus this morning to the committee meeting, but as the Chair of the committee was well aware, it had been made known to them that they would possibly be late at some time. But I'll get off of the topic now and I'd like to get on to something that is pertinent to my Thunder Creek constituency.

In my constituency and in the neighbouring constituencies of

Moose Jaw, there's an event taking place on May 1 and it's of great concern to all of Saskatchewan people. We all know that the Canadian Armed Forces has been scaling down. Part of that scaling down has involved mothballing of fighter aircraft to lengthen the fleet life of our CF-18 fighters. And the 15 Wing Moose Jaw has long been a major employer in this province, and we all hope that the centre continues as a training centre for pilots. But we realize however that, unless Moose Jaw trains pilots for other countries, the expense of operating the base and the program may be too great for the taxpayers to bear.

And on May 1, these officials from NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) will be visiting the city of Moose Jaw to view the facilities at the base, and they'll also be viewing other amenities offered in the city. And the visit will play a large role in their decision of whether to use the 15 Wing Moose Jaw as a training centre.

And I wonder if the minister could just tell us whether the government is providing any special funds for this very important occasion from this interim supply. And secondly, does the minister intend to participate in promoting Saskatchewan at such an important event?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, what I would say to the member once again — and I hope I can say it clearly enough so that he understands — what this is, is interim supply. This is merely providing enough money to finance the operations of key parts of the government and third parties who need money to continue to provide programs for the people of the province until the budget is passed.

The member opposite keeps on asking very detailed, complicated questions which this government is more than prepared to answer. But in order to answer your questions, we have to have the appropriate department here. I'm quite willing to call the appropriate department and give you all of the information we can. But you've got to understand that this is not part of interim supply. So if he wants to have those questions answered, we would welcome an opportunity to answer them, but allow the departments to come who can give you the answers.

An Hon. Member: — Call my estimates on, Gerard; I'm ready to get at you right now. Come on; let's have some fun.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do hear the Premier asking us to have some questions for him later on with respect to Executive Council, and he will have that opportunity.

In relation to the supply being asked for, Madam Minister, I wonder if you could tell us how much of it is directed towards payments to individuals. Does the minister have a figure of how much is used for such transfers versus how much on a percentage basis is distributed to third parties or departments and the like.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, the money being allocated here is just two-twelfths of the spending that occurs in any department. So I would refer the member opposite to page 26 of the budget because on page 26

of the budget, they breakdown where the money is going: how much goes to third parties, how much goes to individuals, etc.

So it would be exactly the same proportion because this is just two-twelfths of all the spending of government departments. So I would refer the member opposite to that page because it has that breakdown available.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, in the 1950s and the 1960s when the federal government began making significant transfers to the provinces, it also began insisting upon the provinces modernizing their administrative structures. And part of those improvements involved creating a proper public service, creating professionals who could do policy analysis.

Most importantly, however, there's a number of improvements insisted upon when it came to accountability and to bookkeeping. And I'm sure the minister is well aware of such events, being that she is a history professor by another life.

Given that many of the funds here are being distributed to third parties, I wonder if the minister could tell us what sort of controls are in place to ensure that third parties, individuals, and the like, spend these funds as they were intended. And then secondly, what sort of bookkeeping standards and reporting standards are generally in place across the system?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Again what I would say, Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite is that there is a high level of accountability. Any government funds that are being spent, the agencies have to ensure that the money is being spent as it is designed to be. You would be better off to ask each department in detail how they do this, because it varies from agency to agency.

But I would say this. In terms of accountability and openness in terms of how the government spends its money, Canada West Foundation, an independent agency, recently evaluated all governments in Canada, including the federal government and including all the provincial governments, on their finances and how open and how accountable they are to the public in terms of how they spend public dollars. And I would point out to the members opposite that clearly the highest mark went to the province of Saskatchewan.

The grade Saskatchewan got from Canada West Foundation in terms of open, accountable financial management was 85 per cent.

To give you some idea of what that means relative to other provinces, the federal government got a 73 per cent, the province of Quebec got a 20 per cent, the province of P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island) got a 43 per cent.

So I think the record of the government, in terms of ensuring that tax dollars are spent wisely and there is accountability, is a good one. And I'm sure that you will want, as you get each and every department in here, to go into a great amount of detail as to how they ensure that in each of their areas.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and, Madam

Minister. I just have one more question here for you this afternoon. I know a number of my colleagues also have further questions that they would like to ask at a future time.

But I know the members opposite are always especially concerned when my colleagues raise concerns and problems with respect to the amount of spending in Health and especially with respect to the government's decision to force the Regina Health District to close the Plains or closure of the geriatric unit in Moose Jaw.

And, Madam Minister, we're not asking for massive amounts of additional money for health care in many of these instances. What we're asking is for this government to show a little bit more responsibility, more fairness, and more accountability as to how it spends our money. And we were all shocked to discover the government spent something like \$54,000 on out-of-province health care consultants when it has a branch where there's a budget for \$1.2 million allocated to consultants within the department.

And I don't know if the minister perhaps thinks this is a good way to spend our money, but I would say she's not been talking perhaps to the average person or people in this province. I would just simply ask, how does the minister think that she can consult and then spend her way to prosperity in this province?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, that question is almost incoherent. It's almost incoherent. How do you begin to correct the inaccuracies of what you just said there? Mr. Chairman, first of all, the Regina Health Board decided to close the Plains hospital, not the government.

In terms of spending our way to prosperity, I just read the member opposite Nesbitt Burns analysis of the budget of this province which said we have cut spending a whopping 4.4 per cent — unparalleled. You stand in this legislature and read the budgets from the Liberal provinces and the Maritimes. After doing cutting to essential services, they're spending more. They're actually increasing their spending.

So for the member opposite to stand here and say we're spending our way to prosperity when I've just read a report from an independent agency saying cutting spending by 4.4 per cent — how can I answer that question? That's incoherent. I mean how can we be spending less and yet be spending our way to prosperity?

And again the member opposite is not trying to make the process work. He says tell me about this \$54,000 in the Department of Health. And I've told him again and again, give us an opportunity to address your detailed questions. We welcome the opportunity, but please understand you've got to call forward the Department of Health. They will go through the spending, and tell you precisely where the money was spent and why it was spent there. So the level... the frustration I feel is that there is an incoherence to what is coming from across, from that side of the House.

The committee reported progress.

(1500)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 49

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Scott that **Bill No. 49 — An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand before the Assembly today to address Bill 49 which contains amendments to The Natural Resources Act.

As we all know, natural resources play an extremely important role in the economy of Saskatchewan. The livelihood of a great many people who live in this province, especially those in the North and rural areas, depend on natural resources . . . on their way of life. Any Bill that may affect the well-being of the people in the rural and northern Saskatchewan causes a great deal of concern and deserves time and research into the effects it will have on rural municipalities across the province.

As has been stated before in this House, the main purpose of the Bill before us today is to alter the way in which the Minister of the Environment and Resource Management is able to use assets from the fish and wildlife fund for payments to municipalities in lieu of taxes. The amendments put forward in this piece of legislation will give express authority to the Minister of the Environment and Resource Management to make payments to the rural municipalities for provincial lands that were acquired by the province using the assets of the fish and wildlife fund in lieu of taxes. We support that objective. It's only fair that if the province takes lands out of the local tax base, it should make a grant to the municipalities in lieu of taxes. Those of us in this House from rural areas, and including, I might add, many of the government caucus, know only too well how difficult it has been for rural municipalities to finance their operations in recent years. The financial situation of rural municipalities is tough under this government, to say the least. Anything that can ease this situation, even a small amount, is to be welcomed.

But the other part of the Bill concerns me. Under this Bill, the Minister of Environment will be able to increase the fees or charge additional fees for haying and grazing permits in order to raise the funds that will be required to make the payments to the rural municipalities.

This may sound reasonable at first glance, but I wish that this minister and this government would take a second glance. There are no rules or even guidelines as to how great these increases can be or when they are supposed to take place. Are the increases supposed to take place all at once or over several years to ease the burden of transition?

And once again, we have the prospect of the government breaking existing arrangements or contracts. This time it's not with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) participants; it's not with the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek District Health Board. This time it's with the livestock producers that are holding

grazing or haying permits.

Many livestock producers will have constructed careful budgets in cooperation with their bankers that will have been based on certain assumptions, including the fees charged by the government for grazing and haying permits. This Bill will shatter those assumptions. It will make all that careful planning, that careful budgeting, meaningless.

Under this Bill a livestock producer could see his grazing or haying permits suddenly be subject to either additional fees . . . increased fees, as the Bill so charmingly calls them. How high will these additional fees be? When will they kick in? When will they apply to existing permits, or just new ones? The Bill tells us that they can be high enough so that the entire amount paid to the rural municipality in lieu of taxes may be recovered in whole or in part, to use the words of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this is far too vague. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, to charge the local livestock producer the entire cost of the grant to rural municipalities would be wrong. We should remember that the purpose of acquiring land for the fish and wildlife fund is to preserve lands that are suitable for fish and wildlife enhancement projects and fish and wildlife related purposes.

One of the costs of acquiring and keeping lands in the fund is the annual grant to the rural municipalities in lieu of taxes. It is unfair to charge this entire annual cost to the local livestock producer who may possess a simple haying or grazing permit on the land.

That's putting the burden of conservation totally on the local rural economy. But it's the entire province, including the urban dwellers, who benefit from the protection of our fish and wildlife species by the acquisition and retention of such lands in the fund. The lowly cattle producers should not have to bear the whole burden. The burden should be spread around a bit. That's the way things are usually done in Saskatchewan.

Furthermore, the timing of these fee increases and additional fees could not have come at a worse time. As the minister probably knows, and some government back-benchers certainly know, that cattle prices are extremely depressed. The livestock industry is suffering.

Mr. Speaker, I have to sadly conclude that while the government gives a little to the rural economy with one hand — I am referring to the grants in lieu of taxes — it takes away from the rural economy with the other, and I am referring to the fees and increased fees that are going to be imposed on the people with hay and grazing permits.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my remarks on the second reading of this Bill. If the Bill is debated in the Committee of the Whole, I would like to discuss with the minister the timing and the volume of the increases in hay and grazing permits that he has in mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 54

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Scott that **Bill No. 54 — An Act respecting Conservation Easements and to make consequential amendments to other Acts** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 54 will introduce some significant changes to the way conservation easements are set up and managed throughout Saskatchewan. I do recognize the Minister of Environment is trying to encourage the voluntary development of more conservation easements throughout Saskatchewan's 11 ecoregions. But I am concerned that the amendments contained in Bill 54 will cause more problems than good in some cases.

The amendments outlined in Bill 54 will also be applied to some sections of The Planning and Development Act, 1983; The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act; and the Saskatchewan enforcement Act. So we cannot overlook the far-reaching implications this Bill may have.

I do believe that our land, our air, and water are precious resources. These resources, along with Saskatchewan's wildlife, help make Saskatchewan's wide-open spaces unique. I also agree with the endangered species report released earlier this year — that Saskatchewan must do more to establish conservation areas. As that report stated, only one new ecological reserve has been established in Saskatchewan in recent years.

I believe the government is trying to rectify this problem by offering landowners more incentives to donate or sell parcels of land to recognized conservation agencies. Unfortunately, although some of these goals are honourable, the methods by which they are achieved could create many headaches for Saskatchewan farmers.

As the minister proudly emphasized while addressing this legislation, one of the major changes proposed would enable landowners to donate or to sell easements for a designated term or for perpetuity. That means the sale of the land that contains the easement will not necessarily end the easement.

Section 10 in Bill 54 outlines the conditions which must exist to terminate a conservation easement. One of the ways an easement may be lifted is if the holder or the owner of the land can convince the courts that continuation of the easement will produce severe hardship for those parties.

I have had many concerns brought to me by people involved in the conservation and development area authorities about this section of the Act. They want to know if the courts can easily be convinced that easements must be withdrawn for special interest groups who will take the responsibility for negative impact to that particular piece of land and the potential negative impact to the land surrounding the conservation easement.

Some of the conservation authorities are particularly concerned about what impact this section of the Act could have on the surrounding landowners' access to drainage systems, which in

turn could lead to possible flooding of their land.

Bill 54 does make changes to the notification process for conservation easements. While section 8 does outline a period of notification for the landowner and the municipality involved, there is little in this Bill that provides input for landowners in the surrounding area.

Section 8 was also highlighted as a potential problem section by several of the conservation and development area authorities I contacted. Surely the minister must realize that creating a new conservation easement or terminating an old easement could have a far-reaching implication for surrounding landowners.

As I mentioned, access to drainage systems is a concern. We cannot ignore the potential impact of possible higher wildlife populations on the conservation easements. Yesterday one of the minister's colleagues told me in question period that the government is committed to working with municipalities and landowners on this issue. But, Mr. Speaker, once again we see the government proposing legislation that requires more input. We have seen the government making the same mistake on other Bills, and here we're seeing it again. Let me offer the minister a simple reminder: consult first and then draft the legislation.

This spring the government clearly showed a lack of concern for damage done to Saskatchewan crops by the deer, the elk, and the geese. Even though the Environment minister has admitted that these animals are under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, he has also said there is no money for compensation. Landowners in the vicinity of a new conservation easement might be subject to more crop damage by the wildlife attracted to this new easement area. These financial concerns and the concerns about future access problems should not be ignored by the minister. I would like Bill 54 to include a mechanism to allow for more input from owners of the land neighbouring future conservation easements.

The minister has stated that this Act will assist the province in achieving its goal to protect representative areas in each of Saskatchewan's ecoregions. I don't see anything in this Act that will ensure there is a balance of conservation easements among the 11 ecoregions in the province.

I am also uncomfortable with the term, qualified conservation agency. Of course the requirements a non-profit agency must meet to qualify as a conservation agency in Saskatchewan is described in the regulations. Of course, again, the regulations are left to the discretion of the government. It's too bad the government doesn't feel the confidence to put forward that information along with this legislation, so it can be openly debated in the House.

Overall, there are many concerns and many more questions on Bill 54 and I would like to move adjournment of debate on this Bill, please.

Debate adjourned.

(1515)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 27 — An Act respecting Architects

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My officials with me today are Ms. Susan Amrud, who is with the Crown counsel from legislative services, and seated behind her, Mr. John Stacyk, who is the employee with SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) in charge of procurement and projects.

Clause 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome your officials, Mr. Minister. Just to preface some of my questions, just to underline the fact that not being an engineer, or anything that may even closely qualify as one, such as a welder or whatever, please bear with me with some of the questions that I may have regarding this particular Bill.

The first question I have is the interpretation on 2(d) under “building”. I understand the definition for the term building is a change in definition from the former Act and I just wonder if the minister can just explain to me why this change was made.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you for the question. The change was to make the terminology consistent and uniform with The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act. So we’re just making it consistent with that piece of legislation.

Mr. Osika: — I’m just a little unclear. Perhaps you could clarify — architects work on structures that are not meant to live in, is that something that I can consider?

I’m thinking about something like a bridge, for example. You know, we might have people living under them but I don’t believe their main purpose is for occupancy. And can I just have a little clarification perhaps on how structures, for example, like this, fit into this particular Bill and into the practice of architecture, please?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chairman, the definition of building as we have it described under the Act, as I’ve indicated earlier, is really to make it consistent, as I’ve outlined, with The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act. And when you ask the question as it relates to the practice of architecture, and really what the definition within the Act is, is that it’s preparing for the “hire, gain or hope of reward, a design” governing the structure of a building.

And that is the . . . sort of the principle purpose of it is, as you’ve indicated, for the human habitation and occupancy, which is a bit different of course than as you’ve described that might be included if we’re talking about highways or bridges or roadways.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you for that answer. Again, my next question is a matter more for a term of clarification about definition. This time for the term “architect” and “practice of

architecture.” It seems like the new Act really stressed the term “building”, meaning “for human occupancy.” Again, can the minister clarify why this particular change has been made.

I just want to also say that I realize there is an engineering Act coming right up as well. So is the purpose of these changes to better clarify the role of the two professions that they play in the construction and/or design field? And if may add, if its appropriate at this time, the Bill probably shouldn’t come up for a final vote until that to the engineers Act is up for discussion. They appear to be tied in somewhat.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question, that’s correct. The purpose that the Act is coming back — the Architects Act is coming back — as you probably are aware, that this piece of legislation is one of the first pieces of legislation that was ever drafted or crafted in terms of legislation for professional occupations. And I believe the date of that was back in 1912. And here we have . . . and I can appreciate that it’s before both your time and mine.

There were some amendments made to the legislation back in 1968. And today when you asked the question as it relates to redefinition of the term “building”, really the architects have requested that we bring this piece of legislation back, and there’s consistency and support from them in respect to the definition that is in the Act.

The Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Koenker: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It’s a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members in the Assembly, some 47 students from Sutherland School in Saskatoon. Accompanying them are teachers Grace Skrudland and D. Miller, and chaperons Mr. Nyborg, Ms. Olson, Mr. Dumais, Ms. Savitski, and Mr. Luciuk.

I’d like to welcome these young people and their chaperons and teachers to the legislature and to watching the proceedings of making the laws of the province. And I’ll be pleased to meet with them shortly, in room 218. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would like to add on behalf of the official opposition and members on this side of the House, a very warm welcome to you young people, our future leaders of our communities, our province, and our great country. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 27
(continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, my question again. This one, Mr. Minister, will deal with membership. This definition — once again, just a clarification — definition of membership is much shorter than in the current Act. Can the minister just explain how this new definition of membership will affect the professional association?

And perhaps as well, the section of the old Act providing for the issuance of temporary licence has been removed from the new Act. And may we please be apprised of what the reasoning was for that?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chairman, the first part of your question as it relates to . . . simply a drafting instructions to better appropriately define the registration and membership.

When you asked the question regarding registration of members, the council . . . And I might just read this off. My . . . registration of member is under section 19. And that relates to: the councils may register members as persons who have graduated from an approved school of architecture, who have worked for the past three years under the direction of a member, and who have passed the examination of admissions as a member.

And the proposed Act, I believe, really increases the . . . from a current two-year period to a three-year period. And the increase is in accordance with what is now the Canadian and both the American standards and is required under the current reciprocity agreements.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you please, for me, define how professional engineers and architects differ here in Saskatchewan. I'm wondering if in fact the same definitions may be used in other provinces. And how much similar . . . and how much overlap are there in the duties of architects and engineers? What is the similarity overlap?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The definition of both the architect and the term "engineer" in all of the provinces across the country would really be somewhat consistent. If you were describing or defining an architect in Saskatchewan and describing and defining an architect in British Columbia, that description would be the same, as it would be for engineers.

I think when you ask the question as to whether or not there is overlap in duties and functions, I would suggest that in many cases there are. Obviously the training programs that one would take in receiving an architect's degree or that of an engineer's degree, there would be some courses and some studies that would be very similar or the same in some instances. The definitions, of course, would change in terms of work practice, as to whether somebody would be designated as an architect or would be designated as an engineer.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. Under the council, some changes have been made to the association's council. And could the minister please explain the reasons behind the change in the make-up of the council. And again,

was this change sought by the association?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you for the question. Mr. Chairman, the current legislation, as we're presenting it, really permits for there to be two public representatives. Under the current legislation, we're now talking about having a representative from the university community, which in fact has been the request of the architects. And we're certainly accommodating by ensuring that one of the representatives on the council would be then a representative from one of the two universities.

The other individual would then be a public representative of which would represent the views of the general community of Saskatchewan and would need to be a resident of Saskatchewan and would be an appointee by order in council. And certainly this is a request that has come to us from the architects and is included in the Act.

(1530)

Mr. Osika: — Could you tell me if there are similar councils in place in other provinces, similar ones to what is proposed here?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you for the question. This is a standard practice across the country and certainly the provision that we're making within this Act is consistent with the professional legislation for professional Acts in Saskatchewan as well.

Mr. Osika: — Just for clarification, or perhaps I missed what you had indicated earlier about one of the members being from a university — two members from the public, one has to be from a university — can you just clarify what the reason is for that? Perhaps you had before but I might have missed it; just to clarify it, please.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's correct. There will continue to be a representative from the university and the request to have somebody from the university comes from the architects themselves. And I expect it's to do with ensuring that there is a consistency. Some consistency is continued, to provide it in the practice in the field as applied to the institutional institution from which the training occurs and to provide some continuity with the educational institution and that of the practice in field. And so that's the . . . I expect that's the reason for why we have somebody from the university community that has been requested and is going to be sitting on the council.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You had indicated that the appointments would be made by order in council. What criteria will the minister use?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chairman, what we would do with that process is that we would really sit with the council and have the council provide for us recommendations of who they felt would be the representative that would best speak on behalf of the Saskatchewan community as it relates to this particular piece of legislation. So it would be a consultation process with the architects and that of the council before an appointment would be made.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can we move on to by-laws? And I notice that in the new Act there is quite a bit more to be said about by-laws. Why have these sections been so thoroughly beefed up? Is that as a result of some concerns of not having enough teeth in that particular Act?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well part of what I'd said earlier is that this legislation has been around for a long time, having said that it was introduced first in 1912, having been one of the first pieces of legislation that has come into being. And secondly it was updated again in 1968.

And what you're seeing here with the significant upgrade to the by-laws is in fact making them consistent with the standard professional legislation that's in place right now.

So it's really an upgrade of housekeeping requirements to the by-laws.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you for that answer. I'd just like to make a comment. When looking over these by-laws, I can't help but be reminded a little bit about the discussion of the debate our member from Arm River had with the Minister of Highways regarding regulations. So much that leaves this House, on occasion, is somewhat ambiguous.

However by-laws that are passed by this association must come before the legislature under this particular Act. And let's face it. What by-laws are to this Bill is the same that regulations are to every other Bill, so it's really kind of too bad that the cabinet, which has the power to pass any of these regulations if it sees fit, without the approval of this Assembly, doesn't have to be as accountable as these professional associations. I make that only as a comment before moving on to the area of discipline, under your Bill.

The new Act spells out the process for discipline and investigating alleged misconduct by members of the association. Are these changes in line with other professional bodies regulated by government, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, and to the member. They are consistent. They are exactly written in the same fashion as the standard is currently, Mr. Member.

Mr. Osika: — Again, were the changes requested by the architects' association or by the professional engineers or perhaps by both?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The architects themselves had asked us to update the disciplinary regulations as they're here, so it's come from the architects.

Mr. Osika: — A question that I'm sure will be asked many, many times on any Bills or any processes or procedures that we undertake is, will this new process be a cost to the association, its members, or the government itself in any way, shape, or form?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — There won't be any cost to the government and certainly won't be any . . . But there will be a cost, I expect, to the association of some type or another, particularly if there's

a requirement to convene the disciplinary committee for some particular reason or another. So that cost, as is consistent with most professional organizations who have discipline committees and have members who serve on them, have an internal budget and an internal mechanism that they can use to provide for some sort of sustenance for people to arrive at a location where they need to deal with this particular issue. So the costs would be, by and large, borne by the association based on the kinds of formula they would establish for themselves to make that kind of remuneration.

Mr. Osika: — Is this a little more stringent that what's going on, than what's going on in other provinces? And perhaps you might be able to just enlighten us a little bit about what's going on in other areas across the country as opposed to what's happening in Saskatchewan when it comes to discipline under this Act?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — This would be most consistent with what's happening across the country. As I said earlier, the changes that we're making to this legislation is . . . parallels what is in place across the country, and because the request is coming from the architects and as we drafted the legislation that's before us today, it is very much succinct with what we're seeing in other provinces. So there isn't any more stringency here than there is in other provinces.

Mr. Osika: — Are these discipline committees made up of members of the association or are they, and excuse me for lack of a better word, lay people that would sit on this committee?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The way in which the legislation is written, there would be five members here that would be sitting on the committee, on the discipline committee, and they could be both. They could be lay people or they could be, in fact, individuals who are professional folks from the architects themselves, from the association.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, and I will just make an assumption that that decision would be made by the association itself as to who would constitute that committee. I appreciate that.

These complaints, if there are any, can be appealed to our court system I understand, from what I've seen. Is the government in any way responsible then for the costs associated with these hearings? And if so, are these costs the same as they are under the existing Act?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The member is correct that the decisions of the discipline committee certainly can be appealed, and they can be appealed to the Court of Queen's Bench, and there aren't any costs that would be associated here to the government at all.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you for that. And it's always reassuring, and it makes us feel good, when there are no costs attached to government that's coming under constant scrutiny for spending lots of money for things that they don't have to.

It seems that — I don't mean to digress — but it seems the definitions for professional incompetence and professional misconduct in the Act are fairly loose definitions. Are they similar to those in other jurisdictions once again? Are they similar to other professional associations?

It seems to me that just such a loose definition leaves room for, perhaps, too much interpretation on the part of committees.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well the wording that you're reading from is standard with what we're using in all of the professional Acts, not only in Saskatchewan. But that would be standard with the wording that would be used in the drafting and crafting of professional legislation across the province . . . across country, so there wouldn't be any deviation there.

Certainly there's an occasion here where discipline committees would be setting up their own framework in terms of what they would be measuring, dependent on the type of action that somebody might have contravened. And the interpretation of looseness of course as to the degree of which somebody has violated a segment of the practice would be defined differently in various different professions and would be dealt with differently.

But of course we always know that you have the ultimate opportunity — if you're not satisfied, you can appeal that to the higher level, as you've indicated.

Mr. Osika: — Again I'm going to make an assumption then based on what you have told me with respect to the Act; the contents, the make-up of committees are in fact similar to that of other provinces across the country. So I would take it that any penalties imposed by the association would be similar and consistent, that there would not be anything more severe, say, in Saskatchewan than Manitoba or Ontario or British Columbia?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's right. There is consistency across the country in terms of the fines. There have been some increases of course that you're seeing in this legislation in terms of the fines, and the types of penalties for which individuals might find themselves having to pay for have also increased.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, sir. There seems to be a real need for some legal knowledge for the investigation and disciplinary committee, particularly when it comes to informing the Department of Justice for possible violations of the Criminal Code. Will this legal guidance be in place, or will these committees be acting as a police force without the proper knowledge? Or will there be someone that's educated in that type of a process to carry out the fair investigational and reporting process?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's a good point that the member makes. And certainly part of the reason, of course, that we have people who sit on the disciplining committee are individuals who are extremely knowledgeable in that, of the operations and the workings of the architectural community . . . would be sitting on the discipline committee. So they would be able to provide the kinds of information that would be necessary to assist in making a finding, or at least a recommendation on whatever it is that would be the disciplinary action.

Certainly as well, the committee itself, the disciplinary committee itself, would have access to legal counsel for the disposition.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. I guess what I was concerned about was that if there was in fact a proper investigation that had to be carried out, the people carrying that out would know some of the rules of evidence. If it was in fact appealed to a court, that they would know the role, their rights, and limits, with respect to statements of people involved. That can become fairly onerous and it's quite a serious fact-finding and information-gathering process for presentation ultimately to a court of law.

Will those people have either access to . . . will they be able to hire consultants, or perhaps retired police officers — who knows? — to assist them in these kind of investigations?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you for the question. In my travels, I'm finding that we have retired police officers that are doing investigations in all sorts of venues these days. And certainly in the portfolios that I have responsibility for, I have nearly as many retired police officers working for me as there are working, I'm sure, for the Ontario police department.

But your question certainly can be answered from the point of view that the committee will always have access to legal counsel, and they can solicit the services of legal counsel to assist them with making the recommendation that would take it the next step if that were necessary or to help them in making a final decision at the committee level.

If there are broader, investigative requirements that the committee believes that they would need in order to reach some sort of a consensus prior to making a decision or a finding on the behaviour of a particular individual who is being disciplined, they could also solicit those services as well. So that, within the legislation, permits for them to do that, but they would act on their own volition in all of those instances.

(1545)

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Just a couple more brief questions, Mr. Minister, and I appreciate your time and your responses. Again if in fact you required some legal support, guidance, you would then ask the Department of Justice, I would assume, for some input if necessary from the minister's part of the exercise, whatever it might be.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well if the discipline committee was requiring some legal advice or legal assistance, they would go to the private sector and get that information and advice from the private community, from the private legal community. It wouldn't come from the Department of Justice. It would be from the private sector legal community.

Mr. Osika: — I guess maybe my question wasn't clear enough. If in fact there was some need for yourself to make a decision or render an observation which you required some legal support or background on, I would make the assumption that the Department of Justice would be your adviser?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — In response to the question, the government or the ministry or the department, in this case Saskatchewan Property Management, wouldn't be involved at all in that process. The professional community really is

responsible, and the Act permits for that, for them to discipline themselves within their own environment.

So if there was a need or a dispute around an issue that required a legal interpretation or direction or some assistance in order to reach a consensus or to move a process ahead, then what the discipline committee would do and the council would do is they would, in my opinion, then solicit the services of a legal individual — a lawyer — to advise them. And it wouldn't in any way, shape, or form include or involve either the ministry and/or the government.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. I'm sorry if my earlier question was kind of fuzzy on that, and I thank you for explaining that.

Just one final question, Mr. Chairman, of the minister and the officials.

The immunity clause in section no. 39 just raises a little bit of concern. It seems that at any point any council or any committee can go awry a little bit. If someone is subject to a malicious, unwarranted investigation by the committees, they do not appear to have any recourse. And I'm wondering why this is included. It seems to me that it does leave in fact this council and its committees completely unfettered, if you wish.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Under the current Act what of course the expectations would be, as you suggest, is that really the discipline committee is, I believe, who you're asking the question around and/or the council. The expectation here would be is that these people would be acting really in good faith. And so when we redrafted the legislation and updated it, what we're seeing here is that we're seeing a consistency from what the request was previously . . . or in the legislation previously to what the request is today. And really the expectation here is that the practice would be that of a good faith practice.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just my concern was just so that people who may be put in jeopardy had some kind of recourse.

I appreciate your comments. I want to thank your officials for assisting with this process. I thank you sincerely, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 52 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 61 — An Act respecting the Practices of Professional Engineering and Professional Geoscience and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I'm pleased to introduce on my extreme left, Mr. Bob Cocks; on my immediate left, Dave Abbey; and on my immediate right, Susan Amrud.

Clause 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to once again welcome the officials that are here helping our Government House Leader on this matter. And I'll be brief in my questions, but I'd like to ask them directly.

First of all, can the minister please give us just a brief summary of this particular Bill and the objectives that the government wishes to achieve through the implementation of this particular piece of legislation.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, I would be pleased to do so. This Bill provides the following, in main, although this isn't an exhaustive description.

By-laws hereafter of the profession will be approved by the minister. That's becoming a standard within government, and as we update these Acts, we tend to include these things in them. And this is sort of part of what we do when we update them.

And this is the real thrust of the amendments; the geoscientists are included in the Act. We include public representatives on the council. Again this is something we do whenever these Acts are updated.

The disciplinary process is improved to comply with the rules of natural justice. And again, this is something we do. Ms. Amrud actually . . . I don't want to embarrass her, but some years ago, in 1992 actually, she produced a . . . she and the department, I guess, but she brought it to legislative review — a guideline for professional Bills. And it has become a kind of a standard. And we refined it. It's become kind of a standard.

Whenever these Bills are updated — in this case to include the geoscientists — we put them through this system, and thus we include public reps. And if they're not there, we include approval by-laws by the minister, again to provide a degree of public accountability. And the disciplinary process almost always, almost always has to be improved to comply with modern concepts of natural justice.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And it is, I know, a commendable task to come up with recommendations and to include in legislation regulations to improve on what's already in existence. So whoever was responsible and your assistant, that's great.

I just . . . Could you answer me then, Mr. Minister: what is the reasoning behind regulating professional engineers and geoscientists with the same piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I think the primary answer to your question is they regard themselves as part of the same profession. I think in an intellectual sense there's an overlap in the disciplines. And I think there's an overlap in terms of the organization of these two professions.

So I think basically it's the intellectual disciplines . . . there's quite an overlap. And they kind of regard themselves as a subset of the engineers. In addition, I'm told this is the way it's organized in every other province for whatever . . . if there's a

value that has.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. So then there's some consistency then from province to province, and I had that assurance in dealing with the last Bill.

Were any of these, of the sections and reasons for the Act respecting architects, an influence on this Bill with respect to engineers and geoscientists?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, they are consistent because they're being made consistent with the standard.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And were they, in fact, formulated in conjunction with one another?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The answer to your question is probably not really. They were going forward at the same time. But the work was really being done separately. I mean, they were talking to each other, but the work was being done separately really.

Mr. Osika: — That leads me to my next question, Mr. Minister. Due to the uncanny similarities between these two Bills, I just want to ask, were there simultaneous consultations done with all the groups involved?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Not only was there simultaneous consultation; there was also intermingling in the sense that the two groups were talking with other. So the consultations were going on simultaneously, but there was also conversations going on between the two groups, a three-way process in a way.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, would it be correct to say that both the Saskatchewan Association of Architects and the association of engineers and geoscientists of Saskatchewan are run and governed in a very similar fashion by very similar pieces of legislation?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This goes back to the comment which I made earlier that we established a set of rules back in '92, a set of rules with respect to how professional organizations ought to be governed. The work which was done by Ms. Amrud — again I don't want to embarrass her, but the work was done by her and her department — was an attempt to provide a code. And it was really . . . I think she took work from across the country, sort of took the best of the professional Acts, what's current thinking among professions in terms of how we govern ourselves, our accountability to the public, and so on. And that became a kind of a model to which everyone else has followed.

So the Acts look very similar, but that's because we really do have a common model which we ask the professions to very carefully consider so that they each meet the leading edge concepts of accountability and to the public and to their membership.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I hope you'll

appreciate if I ask you to reiterate on some of these. It gives us an opportunity to underline again the important work that has been done leading to this.

Could I ask now what is the reason, concerning architects, that at least one of the appointed councillors must be a member of faculty of one of the province's universities while this is not the case for the legislation concerning engineers and geoscientists?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This is not one of the things that we established a norm or standard on. Who they had on the council is really their business. Their accountability to the public, to their members, dissimilar proceedings, compliance with natural justice — we kind of regard that as the kind of thing we ought to do. Who actually sits on the council is really their affair. I gather that the background to this is that historically they've always had an academic on the council, the architects historically. The engineers never had. They just carry on with traditions, so I think the answer is probably historical.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The main purpose of Bill C-61, The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act, is to bring geoscientists under the same legislation as engineers due to the similarity of work performed. The Architects Act is almost identical in content to The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act. Why are all these professions not legislated by the same piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We actually gave that some consideration. In fact we gave it a lot of consideration some years ago, and we actually had a project of one big Act, kind of thing. It just proved to be a super difficult task. The department I think gave up on it after investing an enormous amount of time on it.

To summarize the problem and to perhaps oversimplify it . . . at the risk of over-simplifying it, very difficult to get the professions to abandon their own peculiar piece of legislation and accept the one-model Act.

And I think the department invested a lot of time in it without getting much agreement and finally decided that there were other ways to provide a degree of accountability to the public and to their members and to provide assurance that the Acts complied with the rules of natural justice as they were understood in this day and age.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Human nature being what it is, there is the natural turf protection process that we encounter.

The Architects Act deals with the admission of members to the association where there is no such section in the engineering Act. Could you perhaps enlighten us on why that is so?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The Acts, I'm told, are very similar. There's just a difference in nomenclature. In the engineering Act it's called registration, and in The Architects Act it's called . . . yes, it's actually called registration as well. If you look on page 11 — I say to the member from Melville — look on page 11, and it's actually called registration. So the answer, now that I've been a couple of minutes on my feet is there isn't any difference. It's called registration in both Acts.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's stated in the engineering Act that no partnership, association, or corporation is eligible to be a member of the association. Is this the case for the association of architects as well?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They're both identical, I'm told. And this is a subtle distinction; it's fairly subtle, but important. They can't be members. A partnership, association of persons or corporations, cannot be a member. Only individuals can be members. However they can be licensed to practice. So I'm told, identical in both Acts. And I think for those professions which allow incorporation, of which The Legal Profession Act is not one, and neither is the medical profession, but for those which allow incorporations, I think that's standard throughout them all. They can't be members — only individuals can be members — but they can be licensed to practise as such.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. The council of the association of architects may, if it wishes, delegate to the executive director the power to admit persons as members, admit persons as students, and issue licences. This power can be delegated to the registrar of the association of professional engineers and geoscientists. Why the difference?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm told, if you refer to section 24 of the engineering and geoscience Act, in fact it is the same.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you again, Mr. Minister, for pointing that out. Is it correct then to state that the professional misconduct committee of the architect association has the same duties as the investigation committee for the engineering and geoscience association?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That's correct.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. The professional misconduct committee of the association of architects consists of at least three appointed members. How many members make up the engineers and geoscientists investigation committee?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In section 31, there is no minimum or maximum number.

Mr. Osika: — The discipline committee for the engineering and geoscience association will consist of how many members then? Can you tell me that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It's the same. There is no maximum or minimum. It's up to the profession to determine the committee make-up.

Mr. Osika: — Are then the disciplinary hearing requirements and functions the same for both associations?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Criminal convictions and suspensions are the same for both associations then. Is that correct as well?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That's correct.

Mr. Osika: — With all other aspects of these two Bills being almost exact thus far — and I'm obviously asking the right questions and getting the right answers, the short ones — what is the reason for the enforcement section for the engineers and geoscientists and not for the architects?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They requested it. They were having difficulties with enforcement. The architects reported no such difficulties. And they are again, very different professions. Engineering firms can be very, very large. You know, they're just organized quite differently.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. The immunity clause then in this piece of legislation causes the same concern as it does in the Bill regarding architects. Why is it included in both pieces of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They are protected in both cases against any actions, and I think this is not the only Act. I'm not sure this is common, but immunity given to disciplinary committees is relatively common. Perhaps I might go so far as to say it's standard. Again you just need to protect your disciplinary committee against frivolous, vexatious, and harassing court actions. And this area of discipline often produces just that — vexatious and harassing actions. And this protects the disciplinary committees against that kind of thing.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have just one final question. And once again the question is, why the two Bills? They are almost identical. Could the same goals and objectives not have been accomplished through just the one Bill instead of the two?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, I think the answer is yes. Again we worked with the professions in this regard, and these don't proceed until we have the . . . the profession signs on and says, this Bill meets our objectives. If it doesn't, we don't proceed with the Bill; we leave things as they are. The question therefore, it'd actually have to be directed to the professions.

But each profession sees itself as distinctive. Belonging to a profession, I understand that. Each one sees itself distinctive, and each one wants its own piece of legislation which recognizes and protects not just the public but also protects its distinctiveness.

And so it just had proved to be impossible. We didn't spend a lot of time on one common Act. It just proved to be impossible to get the professions to agree. They wanted their own distinctiveness, and at the end of the day, perhaps it's important to preserve that.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to at this time thank the minister and very definitely thank the officials for being present here this afternoon to answer my questions. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, there is . . . does the Clerk not have it? There's a House amendment. Oh, they don't. Can I have the assistance of the page?

We have an amendment to subclause (b) of clause 2. And this is a bit of a . . . Yes, can we give the page one then to give to the opposition leader.

I'll hand you the one you should have had. It's addressed to Mr. Cosman. It should have arrived at the desk.

Perhaps while the Table is sorting out the paper, I could just explain to the opposition. This corrects a typo. There's a typo, in that you'll see in the line 2, there's a figure . . . is at section 68. It was 69 in the printed Bill which you're being asked to pass. It should have been 68, and this changes at the 68. So let's roll, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — We have a House amendment moved by the Government House Leader to clause 2 of the printed Bill to:

Amend subsection (1) of clause 2 of the printed Bill by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

“(b) ‘**appointed councillor**’ means a councillor who is appointed pursuant to section 10 or subsection 68(3) or who is continued in office pursuant to subsection 68(2)”.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Chair, just one question again for clarification. As the minister has indicated, it's merely to change in that current 2(b) from 69(2) to 68(2), and 69(3) to 68(3), as a matter of a typographical error. Is that . . .?

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2 as amended agreed to.

(1615)

Clauses 3 to 56 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 57

The Chair: — Clause 57, we have a House amendment proposed by the Government House Leader to clause 57 of the printed Bill:

Amend Clause 57 of the printed Bill by striking out “clause 2(d.1)” and substituting “clause 2(1)(d.1)”.

Is the committee ready for the amendment?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It's the same problem, just a typo with the numbers.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 57 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 58 to 71 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Before the officials scatter, I would like to thank them. They not only have this Bill . . . what we deal with here in a few minutes represents an enormous investment of work on their part. They've done, in my view, a very credible job of these professional Acts and all of this is very important.

They also sat in the hallway in a spot which I don't think they find terribly entertaining actually, the spot in the hallway for, I think it was a good hour, waiting for this to occur. So I want to thank them for their patience and endurance, but particularly on behalf of the public of Saskatchewan I want to thank them for some very dedicated, able work which we, the representatives of the public, are the beneficiaries of.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I also recognize the hard work and dedication of our public service sector and the people who do work on behalf of the public of Saskatchewan. Having been one myself once, I know how difficult it is, so I too commend you and thank you very much.

**Bill No. 51 — An Act to amend
The Film and Video Classification Act**

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to introduce Linda Ens, who is the policy analyst in legislative services, and Keith Laxdal, who's the associate deputy minister. They'll be assisting me this afternoon.

Clause 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair . . . Mr. Chair. I would like to welcome your officials, Mr. Minister, and we're pleased to have them here with us today.

I think, for the benefit of some of my colleagues, I would really be very pleased if you could just give me an overview on the need for the amendment. I don't expect that you should have to go into length over it, but I would appreciate a summary, please.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate the last time that I was given an open-ended question like that I stretched the limits of your patience.

But today I guess I would like to say that the amendments today are to allow for some other possibilities of dealing with film and video classification in Saskatchewan. They will allow us more flexibility in seeing whether we will cooperate on a prairie basis or on a western Canadian basis or on a national basis to deal with some of the film and video classification issues.

As we step into the 21st century where it's very difficult for us to control the images that come into our community from satellite or cable or radio waves, this issue needs to be re-addressed, and we are looking at many possibilities. And the way the present Act is drafted, there are a number of restrictions

that don't allow us to discuss these issues with our neighbours in other provinces.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I would like to refer you to section 3(a.1), please. This section states that . . . where it says, gives the board the right to charge a fee for registration. How much will the average registration fee be?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this time, no fee has been set. It's just allowing for the possibility of a fee, if that is the appropriate way to deal with this, though. Since we're going into a little bit of a different system, then we needed to set out this possibility of a registration fee.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, do other provinces charge a fee?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, most other provinces do charge a fee.

Ms. Julé: — Do you have any idea, Mr. Minister, how much their fees are?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I do have some of the other fees. In Ontario, the charge is \$100. In Manitoba, it's \$92. In B.C. (British Columbia), the fee varies between 58 and \$185 depending on whether the retail outlets carries a product. And also the New Brunswick fees are variable, so there's a range.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, do you think that charging a fee, if we charged a fee, that would have a negative effect on the flow of film material into Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There is a possibility that it could affect some of the smaller operators. And that's one of the reasons why we haven't a fixed registration fee now, because we need to look at those operations that are in some of our smaller communities over and against the large operations that are sort of North America-wide and where the fee like this wouldn't affect their business at all. So we're wanting to keep some flexibility that way.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Am I correct then, and from what I'm hearing from you, in saying that the operators of the outlets are the ones responsible for the fees?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, if we introduce a fee, it would be the distributor or the operator of an outlet that would be responsible for the fee.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In other jurisdictions, is this also the case or do the provinces in fact help with the fees?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No, I think all of the other jurisdictions, that is the case — that they charge the distributor.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like to now refer you to section 4. The Film Classification Board could refuse to classify or edit a film based on the decision of a classification body in another jurisdiction. The board will not need to actually screen the film to classify it or to ask for editing.

My question is, do other provinces accept film classifications that are arrived at in other jurisdictions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, there is that capacity in, I think, all other provinces except Saskatchewan. For example, the Nova Scotia board does the classification for all of the Maritimes, and it's agreed by the other boards in the other Maritime provinces that they will use the Nova Scotia classification.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. To your knowledge, do they have then a regional authority there with those provinces being the region?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's in Nova Scotia. It's called the Maritime board so it is essentially a joint board. But it has . . . like, I'm not totally certain of how it's administered, but the other provinces do have some say, I think, in the board.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What assurances do we have that classifications that Saskatchewan may accept from another jurisdiction will reflect the same level of community standards as we have here?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Nationally there's very little difference in the classifications. That's the history of the film and video classification business. They have some different names for some of the classifications, but nationally there has been very little difference. So that's one thing we can rely on.

The other thing is that we will have an appeal process in Saskatchewan which will be Saskatchewan people. And so if somebody wishes to appeal the classification that we might accept from another jurisdiction, that is still possible and will be dealt with by people from Saskatchewan who constitute the appeal board.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, are there sort of types of checks and balances in place that we may measure the standards that we have against other standards?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If your question is if there's some body that sets standards, I don't think that's the case. But what we do have is a long experience of the film and video classification boards operating in Canada where we have noted that most often the classifications are similar or the same right across the country. And so that would . . . But to have another group or body set some kind of national standard, I don't think there is anything like that.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, do you think that it's right to charge a registration fee for a film that our board may not even screen before accepting the classification?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think your question relates to . . . there's two types of fees. One is a fee for classification which would be paid by the movie distributor. For example if it's a big chain, that fee would be paid.

The other one that you asked about previously, which is a

registration fee which would be paid by the local distributor of a video, that's the one that we haven't decided yet whether we are going to do that.

But that type of fee wouldn't be a fee on each film. It would be on basically the distribution business of video. It would be more of a, I suppose, licensing registration kind of thing as opposed to paying for the classification.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I apologize, but I need some clarification on the first point you mentioned. You said one is a fee for the distributor. Could you just elaborate on that again, please?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — For example if it's Cineplex Odeon, or a big company that they would have a film that they wanted to show in their theatres across Saskatchewan, they would pay a fee for a classification of that. So that's one fee. That's clearly a fee that would be paid.

But the other, the second fee that we're talking about is the person who has the corner grocery store and has some videos to rent. That's a registration fee to have that kind of an operation. We're not sure that we're even going to have that fee, but we wanted to have the power in the legislation to do that if it was deemed appropriate at some later date.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Who receives the fee? Where does the money from the fee end up going to? Does it go to the provincial government? Where does it go? Does it go to the Canadian classification board, or what does it go to?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At the present time there's an annual amount collected of about \$85,000 and that goes into the General Revenue Fund.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Although the amendments to this Act do not specify what the future of the Saskatchewan Film Classification Board may be, can the minister tell me if the government is considering dismantling the board and joining a regional authority?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's a possibility. It could be a regional one or it could be a national board; we don't know. Or it could be that we'll just stay with what we have.

But there are many discussions going on about how we organize our country, and this is actually one of the areas where the provinces and the federal government are talking about some sharing of responsibility.

Ms. Julé: — If that was the case, what guarantees would we have that strong representation would take place for our region, if it ended up being a national board?

Like I want to have some . . . I guess I need to have some assurance that we have got strong representation to protect our values here. And so I want to know if you've thought ahead to what guarantees that we might be able to put in place that would ensure that we have strong representation here that would protect our values.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The way I will answer that is that there is no model of exactly how an interprovincial or a regional or a national classification board would work.

Our present arrangement would be, in the way this legislation is set up, is that we would always retain the appeal board, which would be Saskatchewan people. So that if a classification was accepted from another province by this process and a person in Saskatchewan objected to it, whether it was a distributor who didn't like the fact that a film was prevented from being distributed or somebody in Saskatchewan who had an interest who objected to a film being shown, that would still be dealt with by an appeal board of Saskatchewan people.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I think as we all well realize that by the time you go through appeal boards and there's enough public outcry to in fact confront what we may believe is certainly putting our values down, sometimes there's a lot of damage done by that time, I would say. And so how would the public be assured here that we would not have to wait until it's too late — let's put it that way.

I feel that we need to have some sort of standards, at least regional authority for our standards, and I just want to know what your comments would be in that regard.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — You can be assured that anything that we would do, if we entered into an agreement with another province or group of provinces or on a national basis, that this would be one of our concerns that we would want the rights of Saskatchewan people protected.

The other thing is that the appeal board process for film and video classification is a very quick process. I mean it could happen in a number of days as opposed to appeals in other matters. It's something that the industry and the people who are involved with this realize that you have to act quite quickly, and they do.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. But what would the degree of . . . I guess I'm using the word outrage, which is probably a little strong, but what would the degree of — yes, let's use outrage — be from the public before in fact enough appeals were put in that there would be something done to determine that maybe the standards that we have allowed have been lowered quite a bit and we may want to change this.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't think the appeal would be based on community outrage, if that's the term you want to use. It would be based on a distributor or a person who has an interest, making the appeal. So it could be dealt with with one person raising the question and the appeal board dealing with that right away.

So it doesn't take, sort of, a whole array of people concerned to get the matter to the appeal board. It could take only one person.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. I guess that's my concern that we should have a set of standards that we certainly submit and put forth very strongly before anything else takes place. Because if one person appeals and another person appeals tomorrow, I

mean you could have a whole barrage of appeals, but whether or not these appeals would be significantly looked at would be in question.

And I think that you would have to have people on an appeal board dealing with this stuff every day. And so it seems to me that if we have a set of standards set out it would assure that we don't have to deal with a lot of problems.

I would just like you to go to section 6 . . . I'm sorry, section 7. This change will allow the board, it says, or a representative of the board to enter a premise that is not a private home without a warrant to enforce its Act or regulations. This may be done only during a routine inspection or under the authority of a warrant.

I understand, Mr. Minister, that this power is needed to seize material that would otherwise go unregulated. But what guarantees are in place to ensure that this new power will not be interpreted to freely infringe upon another's rights?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer to your question is at the bottom of the page, on page 3, which is that a warrant would be issued by a justice of the peace or a Provincial Court judge. So practically, that's how and why we use warrants, is because there is a judicial review of the issuance of the warrant before you would even start into this procedure.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I was wondering if there had been some consideration given to the fact that, with Internet in place as it is, we have all sorts of access to what I term as garbage through Internet coming through.

Is there anything or any mechanism put in place to in fact screen what we want here in Saskatchewan and ensure that our already, sort of, society that is ending up to be in trouble, I guess, as far as our young people — and certainly not all young people, but we do have, as you well know, a problem with violence, etc.

So I want to know if in fact your government has looked into this matter and has decided to do something to ensure that we are not promoting more violence and that kind of thing.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think we agree with you that there are some issues around the use of the Internet that are quite difficult to deal with. This particular legislation is not the place where we would try to deal with that. And practically, some of the companies are looking at some kind of self-regulation. And I know that, for example, Microsoft and some of the things that they have been doing on the Internet has been to see if they can't get anybody that uses it to self-regulate.

There have been some discussions with some of our officials with the arcade people about regulating the kinds of games that they would have in arcades. But this particular legislation doesn't deal with that.

I think hate messages and things like that that might come over the Internet are a matter for the Criminal Code. But then again it's how do you have access if it comes into your country or your jurisdiction from a place somewhere else. There's some

very difficult questions here. We don't have the answers yet, but it's definitely a concern. And whatever we can do to prevent the use of the Internet in that very terrible way is . . . I think we all agree that we should do something about it.

(1645)

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I would like to now thank you and your officials for the input that you've had into this and for your work, and I think the hon. member to my left has some questions for you.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Minister, when this Bill was first introduced, Justice official, Al Dwyer, was quoted as saying in the Leader Post on March 23, that the province was considering changing the film and video classification long before that *Exit to Eden* controversy that took place about two years ago.

My question is, why did it take so long? Why did it take more than two years to formulate a policy on this particular issue?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate that question because what has been happening in this particular area is that there have been discussions, ongoing discussions between the provinces about whether this could be a matter of shared jurisdiction. And those discussions have been going on for quite a number of years.

And part of the difficulty, obviously, is that many times films and videos are classified in one place and then shown in the neighbouring province, and so there was an agreement quite a number of years ago that this was an area where people could cooperate.

And I think Mr. Dwyer's comments relate to the fact that there have been these discussions. Now we also have some discussions in light of looking at how we've organized Canada and whether there aren't some things that we can do on a national basis as opposed to on a provincial basis that make more sense in how you govern the country.

And this is actually one of the areas that is up for discussion in the same way as the Securities Commission issues.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. In reflecting, as you mentioned that move toward national standards, Mr. Dwyer went on to say that in 95 per cent of the cases different provincial boards made the same rulings. Most of the remaining cases, he said, did not involve banning films but rather involved whether or not the films should be used by children under the age of 14.

Isn't this really the most important category of enforcement of community standards when we're talking about that age under 14? We've heard repeatedly in the House about the dangers of exposing children to excessive violence. Is there not a danger that we're abrogating our responsibility in this province by backing away from this area of classification?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No, I don't think there's any danger about that. And as I was explaining previously, we will retain an appeal board which is Saskatchewan people. And so that if we accept a classification from another province — if that's how

the eventual arrangement is set up — and there's some concern by an individual or a distributor that the Saskatchewan standard is different as it relates to that particular matter, that can be dealt with, with the appeal board which will still be in place.

Mr. Heppner: — I appreciate the answer that was given to a question that was asked earlier about whether it would take some kind of community outrage to get something to happen. And I think the answer involved that an individual could go ahead and present something. And my question deals with that part. If an individual expresses a concern, will that concern then be acted on, or is there a judgement call to be made as whether it's valid or not?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer lies in the description of the board. It's an appeal board. They are given some ability to use their discretion in dealing with the matter, and we would expect that whoever is on that appeal board, that would be their job.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. The main rationale for going to a joint classification system I think is probably to save money. This Bill seems to leave the door wide open to keep the existing board in place, but simply reducing their workload by farming out the classification.

Mr. Minister, if and when the province goes into a joint classification situation, will the size of the board be reduced? And will its budget, office space, and other resources also be reduced?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's a bit difficult to answer your question directly because there is no other plan. So right now we need to maintain what we have, and it may be that we'll maintain that for a while.

If in fact there was an agreement, for example, to do a western Canadian classification system or share it in some way, well then I think clearly there would be a reduction in the nature of the board in Saskatchewan. And then the appeal committee is something different than the board. So it could involve a reduction in the numbers of people involved, and in the office space and everything else. The whole . . . one of the questions here is how do we use our dollars, and I think that's acknowledged by everybody.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, if we're dealing with the financial situation, the board . . . what is the cost of the board now and the administration that's been involved with it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The present cost of the board is about \$80,000. It's included in the consumer protection branch so that it's roughly equivalent to the fees that we collect now. So it's not something where we're generating, you know, hundreds of thousands dollars . . . only an \$80,000 cost. But it's fairly equivalent to what the fees are.

Mr. Heppner: — The one classification system that I think has been discussed is the British Columbia one . . . and to adopt possibly that system. My question is, why are we looking at that particular province? Have some other ones been looked at? And if they have, why does the B.C. one seem to come out ahead?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer to your question is that we've been looking at a number of different possibilities, both with Alberta, Manitoba, and British Columbia. One of the things about the British Columbia system is that it's quite a comprehensive system and has a good reputation across Canada so that there are some positive aspects that way. But I think practically there's still quite hope and discussion, and that's why the legislation is drafted the way it is, because there are still quite a number of possibilities.

Mr. Heppner: — I definitely have some concern about adopting a system from outside of Saskatchewan just because it may not fit with our Saskatchewan values and mores. What other jurisdictions have been approached or looked at besides the British Columbia one?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to your question is that there have been national discussions which would involve all of the provinces working together. As a subset of that, there's also been regional discussions which would include Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and I assume the Territories. And then there have been discussions on an individual basis with Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia.

So there have been discussions on all of these things. And it's the various combinations that are being looked at. As I said before, one of the things was the whole matter with using the British Columbia one . . . is their good reputation.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move we rise, report considerable progress and ask for leave to sit again.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 27 — An Act respecting Architects

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 61 — An Act respecting the Practices of Professional Engineering and Professional Geoscience and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker. Oh pardon me, Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Leave granted.

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

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 51.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:01 p.m.