The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan, I present a petition with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. And the prayer reads:

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

And the majority of the names on this petition are from Regina, throughout the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

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

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

And the names of the people are from . . . mostly from Pilot Butte and Regina.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of the names of concerned citizens about the closure of 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 the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are all from Maple Creek. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from communities within my constituency regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Pelly and Norquay.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of 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.

The people that have signed this petition are from all over southern Saskatchewan and of course from Regina as well.

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

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

The people who have signed the petition are from Regina. They're from Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, all over southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition of names of people from throughout southern Saskatchewan in regards to 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, this petition is signed by many people from my constituency in the areas of Brownlee and Central Butte and in through that area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names of people from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre in Regina. 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 centres such as Balgonie, Fort Qu'Appelle, Edenwold, Davin, McLean.

There's also in here a number from White City, Wolseley, and Regina.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

Clerk: — Mr. Johnson, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills, presents the second report of the said committee which is as follows:

> Your committee has considered the following Bills and has agreed to report the same without amendment:
>
> Bill No. 01 - An Act Respecting St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon
>
> Bill No. 02 - An Act Respecting Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan
>
> Bill No. 03 - An Act to Amend The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Act
>
> Bill No. 04 - An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina.
>
> Your committee recommends, under the provision of rule 66, that fees be remitted less the cost of printing with respect to Bill No. 01, 02, 03, and 04.
>
> Your committee also recommends to the Legislative Assembly that rule 64 respecting time limits for the filing of petitions of private Bills be suspended in order that petitioners for a private Bill respecting the TD Trust Company may proceed with their petition and Bill during the current session.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Cypress Hills:

> That the second report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce a friend to the Assembly. I'd like to introduce Avis Gray who is sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, next to our chief of staff.

Avis was the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Cresentwood in Manitoba and was also deputy leader of the Liberal opposition. She's visiting in Regina for the weekend and I know that all my colleagues in the Assembly will extend a very warm welcome to Avis.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly an exceptional group of people seated in your . . . actually the west gallery today.

Louis Sebastian — maybe if I can get you to rise as I call your name — Louis Sebastian, Denis Sewap, James Pewean, Cherish Merasty, Philip Caza, Jesse Quitte, and Bradley McLeod are all young hockey players in the Regina Outdoor Hockey League.

National Geographic World magazine recently featured Louis, Denis, and James and their contribution to the league.

And I'd also like to introduce, if they would stand, Bill McLaren, Russ Matthews, Helen Finucane, and John Reid, all of whom are active volunteers from Ranch Ehrlo and the community who are instrumental in the success of the outdoor hockey league. They're part of the Dress a Champion program.

So please join me in welcoming this group of volunteers. I see there's couple of people I didn't introduce as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the great pleasure this morning to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature a group of 12 grade 11 students seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exceptional group and I would like to introduce them individually to the Assembly, but before I do that let me say that they are engaged in an Interchange on Canadian Studies. They're in Regina today for an orientation session and then they're going to Charlottetown tomorrow to participate in the program.

This program is a national program which provides opportunities, through student conferences and travel exchange, for grade 11 students from all the provinces and territories to meet with each other. And they hear ideas from prominent speakers and will have the opportunity to discuss those ideas with each other.

Next year the conference is to be held in Prince Albert. So with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I'll introduce the 12 and ask them to stand as I introduce them.

Krista Ivey from Ituna; Jacquelyn Strandlund from Balcarres; Sheila Miller from Glen Bain; Holly Legros from Cadillac; Regan Van Luven from Dysart; Marit Chorney from Grasswood; Dominic Morgan from Saskatoon; Jamie Rempel from Carrot River; Christina Rosowsky from Kamsack; Sabrina Blocka from Leoville; Angie Strate from Shell Lake; and Abby Deschambeault from Cumberland House.

My colleague, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, will be meeting with these students after question period, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like my colleagues in the Assembly to welcome them here today and wish them good luck at the conference in Charlottetown.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce some very special people to the Assembly. Sitting in the east gallery is my husband Martin; my youngest son Jeremy who has just completed his final exams in second year engineering; and a more frequent but equally

welcome visitor to the Assembly, Hewitt Helmsing.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce 21 grade 7 students from St. George accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Bev Barth. This is from Wilkie, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I will be joining them and their seven chaperons, Mrs. Marylou Friske, Mr. Dennis Keller, Mr. Rob Barth, Mr. Rob Fenrich, Mrs. Laura Keller, and Mrs. Janice Guigon later. And they will be joining us for question period, so I ask that you be on your best behaviour and make them welcome, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to welcome and introduce to you a number of students from grade 4 and 5 from Balcarres, Saskatchewan, in my riding, and they are accompanied by Karla Esplin and Maryanne Renwick, and along with some parents who are here to view what goes on in the Assembly during question period. I'm looking forward to meeting them a little later on this morning.

Please welcome them to our Assembly, my colleagues.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Lottery Winner

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to extend my congratulations to one of my very, very, very lucky constituents. Not only is Delmer Struss fortunate to be living in my constituency but yesterday he claimed his multimillion dollar lottery prize. In fact Mr. Struss of Sheho, Saskatchewan added about $16.7 million to his bank account after winning the Lotto Super 7 draw.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, he has won the second largest lottery prize ever awarded in Canada.

In a press conference yesterday, Mr. Struss says he plans to spend the first part of the prize on a new truck, tickets to the Stanley Cup play-offs and a trip to Australia. Then he plans to return home to share the rest with his hard-working family. Because he is also an eligible bachelor, I'm sure Mr. Struss will also be very busy receiving telephone calls.

I wish him all the best and ask all the members to extend our congratulations to Saskatchewan's latest millionaire. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Project Promotes Healthy Lifestyle

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People in my constituency are doing an excellent job of promoting healthy and active lifestyles. Today marks the culmination of a project promoting active lifestyle and partnered with O.M. Irwin Middle School and the Swift Current Health District.

The objective of the program was to foster a better attitude to an active lifestyle.

The grade 6 students kept a journal of their activities for two weeks, participated in various physical activities such as biking, round dancing, and skateboarding — something active every day.

Business places were informed by letters and poster . . . of the posters and of the activities. Interviews were held with senior citizens with regard to their physical activities during their youth and comparisons were made.

Two thousand students were invited to take part in the active living challenge by walking to a park near their school today where each participant will receive a healthy snack, a drink, and an active living pencil. In addition, all of the citizens were challenged to walk or bike to work today.

Congratulations to Janet Chabot, Gwen Uher, Carol Moen, Dick Dunlop, and Bev Switzer on a job well done. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sisters of Providence

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Moose Jaw and area are fortunate to enjoy the selfless commitment of the Sisters of Providence. Since coming to Moose Jaw in 1913, the Sisters of Providence served and cared for people of all faiths through Providence Place and the now closed Providence Hospital and St. Anthony's Home facilities.

During those 83 years, the Sisters worked without material reward, facing many trials. Some members of the order gave their lives while providing care to those struck by the influenza epidemic which hit Moose Jaw in 1918. During the Depression, they walked out into the country daily to beg for food for patients too poor to feed themselves.

Mr. Speaker, this commitment is unmatched. It's the commitment of caring which they intend to offer as part of the geriatric unit at Providence Place.

I would like to give the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow and his colleagues a chance to show that they are committed to seeing this valuable work continue. I would like to send to the member an envelope, and in it he will find ribbons of support for the geriatric unit for all his colleagues to wear when they return to their constituencies this weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Arbor Day

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, next week is National Forest Week and Monday is Arbor Day, a day we set aside to recognize the tremendous importance of trees and forests to our way of life.

This year's theme for National Forest Week is "Forest Regions, Varied Treasures". And, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that Weyburn, in the heart of the prairie, was chosen to host this year's provincial ceremony where trees are truly considered a treasure.

This honour is a fine acknowledgement of Weyburn's work in planning of Tatagwa Park development, an ambitious, long-range green plan designed to protect, preserve, and enhance the integrity of the Souris River corridor and adjacent habitats. Thousands of trees have been planted and established in this park.

I will be taking part in the ceremonies, along with the Lieutenant Governor, the Minister of Environment and Resource Management, Mayor Jim Brown, and other civic officials, members of the Saskatchewan Forestry Association, and National Forest Week Committee.

Elementary schools throughout the city will be attending the ceremonies as well as the junior high school band. There will be a ceremonial tree planting and each class will plant one tree. Seedlings will be given to students to take home as well.

Mr. Speaker, our forest resources are indeed national treasures. They beautify the landscape and enrich our lives. I am pleased and honoured to take part in the ceremony in Weyburn to celebrate the trees of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lanigan Gators Tier 1 Bantam Women's Provincial Champions

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Lanigan Gators volleyball team who finished their season by winning the gold medal. They captured the title for the tier 1 bantam women's provincial championship.

Throughout the season, the Gators won gold in a number of tournaments. Their dedication and hard work culminated in the provincial gold, and for this they deserve high commendation on behalf of the official opposition.

Congratulations to their coaches, Garth Shoemaker and Rueben Bushman, and congratulations to the Lanigan Gators.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the hon. member for Regina Northeast. Oh excuse me, for Regina Elphinstone.

Saskatoon Diocese Names New Bishop

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I was going to say how soon they forget when they put on the hat. But, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now the hon. member seems to have forgotten that he should ought not to involve the Speaker in his comments and debate in the House. And I'll ask him to simply withdraw that remark and proceed with his member's statement.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the comment. And I do want to say to you today, Mr. Speaker, that I have an important announcement today about a special friend who has accepted an important position within the Catholic church.

Vernon James Weisgerber, originally from Vibank, Saskatchewan, was named bishop of the Diocese of Saskatoon on March 7. Today is also a special day for Bishop Weisgerber because today he receives his episcopal ordination. And Bishop Weisgerber succeeds the late James Mahoney who served as bishop of Saskatoon from 1967 to 1995.

Having received his early education and strongly influenced by the Ursuline nuns of Prelate, Mr. Weisgerber went on for four years to study at St. Peter's College in Muenster and was taught by the Benedictine fathers. From 1959 to 1963, he attended St. Paul's University Seminary in Ottawa and returned to the Archdiocese of Regina where he was ordained a priest in June 1963.

After his ordination, Father Weisgerber served in a variety of parishes and reserves throughout the Archdiocese of Regina. And in June 1990, he was named general secretary of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. And while in Ottawa, Pope John Paul II gave him the title of Monsignor. Bishop Weisgerber will be responsible for approximately 75,000 Latin rite Catholics who live in the Saskatoon diocese.

I extend, and on behalf of all of the members of the legislature, a special congratulations to Bishop Weisgerber and his family as he assumes his duties as bishop in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dress a Champion Program

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take another moment now to acknowledge a truly worthwhile project in the city of Regina.

The youth and staff who I introduced earlier of Ranch Ehrlo Society have established two projects that allow all kids in Regina a chance to attain equipment and participate in organized hockey.

The Dress a Champion program coordinates the collection of donated, used hockey equipment from indoor rinks and sporting goods stores. Volunteers gather the equipment, repair it, clean it, sort it. And each December for the past four years, this donated equipment has been given away to boys and girls. Having distributed over 1,300 pairs of skates, 500 sets of equipment over the last four years, this worthwhile project now constitutes the largest annual hockey equipment give-away in

the world.

The equipment give-away also allows boys and girls to participate in Ranch Ehrlo's subsequent project, the Regina Outdoor Hockey League. From mid-December to early-March, this non-contact league allows inner-city boys and girls, aged seven to fourteen, to play Canada's most popular sport.

And perhaps the most exciting role is played by the young people themselves in organizing and operating the program. Hard-working and dedicated young people like those I introduced have put an enormous amount of work into making these projects a success. And for their efforts Ranch Ehrlo kids have been awarded the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze medal award for youth achievement.

I asked a young woman at the rink last year how it went. And she said you learn the rules, and you get out there and kick some butt. So I'd like you to join me in thanking them for all their hard work on behalf of the community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Poland's Constitution Day

Mr. Kasperski: — (The hon. member spoke for a time in Polish).

So began, Mr. Speaker, the constitution proclaimed by the Polish Sejm or parliament on the May 3, 1791, which attempted to reform and organize the old Polish state. At the time, it was only the second written constitution, after that of the United States of America in 1778. Joined from the British, French, and American experience, the Polish authors of the constitution nevertheless created an original Act, endeavouring to address the specific social and political needs of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The death of the commonwealth and the partition of Poland in 1795 added a new, symbolic dimension to the ill-fated constitution of 1791.

Next generations living under foreign domination kept alive the memory of the constitution of May 3 as a powerful symbol of hope for liberation. The constitution was cited as proof that Poles were quite capable and willing to properly manage the affairs of their own state.

Constitution Day is a national holiday in Poland and is celebrated by Polish communities throughout the world. I would like to extend, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the legislature, recognition to local Polish cultural organizations in Saskatoon, Regina, North Battleford, and Prince Albert, who celebrate this event annually.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Rural Health Care

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this has been a bad-news week for the sick, the elderly, and anyone truly concerned about health care in this province. Let me recap, Mr. Speaker: cuts to Lestock and Balcarres hospitals; further deep cuts and staff reductions in Weyburn; slashing funding in Fort Qu'Appelle; and the closure, Mr. Speaker, of the Pangman Hospital.

Now after closing 53 rural hospitals, the government appears to have its sight set on another 30 facilities in other rural communities. The residents of Central Butte and area are concerned that their hospital will be next on the chopping block. Their health district CEO (chief executive officer) told a recent public meeting, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "You will have something, but I can't guarantee what it will look like." Mr. Speaker, can you imagine.

Will the minister stand in this House today and guarantee to the people of Central Butte and their community that their hospital is not and will not be targeted for closure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as that member well knows, and all members know, that decisions about services being provided in the district will in fact be made at the district level where people are more capable and in tune to the needs of the district. The member hollers from his seat. The member hollers from his seat; he says it's a matter of lack of funding. An interesting observation to come from the Liberal caucus, when that caucus through its federal friends in Ottawa have taken from health care funding in our province over $50 million. And this government, Mr. Speaker, in its most recent budget has been able to back-fill, to replace those dollars, dollar for dollar.

Mr. Speaker, the issue . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Arm River indicates that this has been an interesting week in health care. It certainly has, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps he'd like to get up now in the House and explain his comment in public yesterday, in which he said, and I quote:

> If people want to, and are prepared to pay for the services, why won't you allow it?

Now I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, that's a quote from the Leader of the Conservative Party.

Here's the quote from the member from Arm River:

> If there are people that are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay.

Is it the position, Mr. Speaker, of the Liberal Party, that they support two-tiered medicare?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, Central Butte and the area surrounding the community are served by one doctor. He is scheduled to retire in a matter of days and there is no immediate replacement in sight and they're having problem finding a doctor and no support from the provincial government. The best the district CEO can suggest is that, and I quote again:

> You will have a doctor, even if we have to send them out

from the city part time.

Now what a suggestion. Mr. Speaker, this isn't good enough for the people of rural Saskatchewan. The people of Central Butte deserve better. The fact is this government has demonstrated a careless disregard for the people of rural Saskatchewan during it's so-called health reform process. Because of this lack of commitment to health care in our rural communities, doctors are questioning even why they should go to rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Health ultimately has responsibility for health care in this province. What commitment, if any, what plan, if any, Mr. Speaker, will he commit to in this House today to ensure that doctors are provided to meet the needs of Central Butte and all the other rural communities in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Health and on behalf of this government, I am prepared to commit in this House, that this government stands 100 per cent, full stop, period, behind medicare and a single-payer system, universal medicare, Mr. Speaker, and I challenge that member and his caucus to make it very clear to the people of Saskatchewan, where do they stand. Where do they stand, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, when the member in public now, in public, joins with the Leader of the Conservative Party promoting privatized health care, two-tiered health care, I say that caucus, perhaps through its leader or through its Health critic or perhaps through its alternate Health critic, ought to stand up in this House and declare that position, that they're in favour of two-tiered medicine.

And, Mr. Speaker, as you will know and other members will know, this government has taken a situation of health care delivery in our province and has changed that delivery mechanism and has changed the funding formulas, Mr. Speaker. A funding formula which now allocates those precious health care dollars to the needs of the population, and dollars which follow the individual, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Providence Place

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, outrage at this NDP (New Democratic Party) government for breaking a promise to fund the geriatric unit at Providence Place in Moose Jaw is gaining momentum. Even church parishes are questioning this government's action. A Sunday bulletin from St. Joseph's parish in Moose states, and I quote:

> It would seem that money, not common need, is dictating the direction of this and many other aspects of our health care. The challenge is before you; it is time to speak out.

And I'd just like to send some copies of that across to the members opposite.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Moose Jaw area residents are starting to speak out and they've only just begun. In the week since a clipping appeared to allow local residents a chance to express their concerns, I am told that as many as 1,000 people have already taken the opportunity to express their feelings.

Will the Acting Minister of Health explain why he is refusing to honour this funding promise when this decision has created so much concern?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, for the information of the members, I am well apprised that the district board and its administration are continuing to work with the board of Providence Place and its administration, and the two are continuing to work with the Department of Health to ensure the best possible provision of services for the people of Moose Jaw and the Thunder Creek Health District, and indeed beyond the district.

Mr. Speaker, that work is going on in spite of the political efforts of the member for Thunder Creek. I'm also informed by members of my community, many of them who are getting somewhat tired of the member of Thunder Creek, who resides in Regina, advising the citizens of Moose Jaw on how to conduct their affairs, Mr. Speaker.

I am more than confident, knowing those who are involved with Providence Place, knowing those who are involved at the district level, and knowing the Department of Health, that a satisfactory solution will be worked out to this concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, people are concerned because of the NDP government's decision to willingly break a written contract. However they are also confused because they continually hear this government speak of the wellness concept in which early detection and treatments of ailments is the key.

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely what the geriatric assessment unit does, and it can save untold millions by keeping patients out of institutions if it's funded and funded separately, as was promised.

An editorial in the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* sums it up best by stating, and I quote:

> If the geriatric assessment unit is closed or scaled back, it destroys the credibility of any health officials who yammer about Saskatchewan's new wellness philosophy of health care.

As the NDP prepares to put a nail into the coffin of the geriatric unit, we have yet to hear a peep out of the government member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

And I would just ask the Acting Minister of Health to tell the House what action is he taking to ensure that that unit does not close?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, to the member's question, as I have for many years, I have continued, and continue to this day, to work with the board of Providence Place, the administration of Providence Place, the district board and its administration, and officials within the Department of Health. Because I'm convinced, Mr. Speaker, that within this group of individuals working together there are solutions to be found. Now the solutions are not to be found in the politicization of the issues by the member from Thunder Creek.

And again I repeat, Mr. Speaker, two things: the entire delivery of health care services across our province would be assisted if that group of individuals that sit in the Liberal caucus would once — just once, just once — speak up on behalf of Saskatchewan people to their federal counterparts; and two, Mr. Speaker, I think today, given the events of this week, that Liberal caucus owes it to the people of Saskatchewan to stand up and declare very clearly what is their position on medicare and two-tiered health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I regret that the Minister of Health is not here to hear the wrath of the people of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order! Order. The Speaker does not need the advice of the hon. members and is not asking for it. I'll simply remind the Leader of the Opposition that it is contrary to the rules of the Assembly to refer to either the presence or the absence of hon. members of the House. And I'll ask the Leader of the Opposition to put his question.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that remark. But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to continue on what my colleagues here have indicated to this House — the devastation that's occurring in rural Saskatchewan with our health care system, the sick and the elderly that need it and rely on it.

Last year the people of Fort Qu'Appelle were greeted with the good news that they would be one of the few communities in Saskatchewan that would be getting a new hospital, thanks to an agreement between the federal government, the province, and Touchwood Qu'Appelle tribal council. Now, Mr. Speaker, those plans have been put in jeopardy. The hospital board recently received word their operating funding was being cut by 20 per cent. And in the word of the chairman, Noel Starblanket: what's the point of building a new hospital if there's no money to run it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he will stand in this House today and honour his commitment to the people of Fort Qu'Appelle and the Touchwood File Hills tribal council and restore adequate funding to the hospital. Yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I again will endeavour to explain to the members of the Liberal caucus that health care funding in Saskatchewan now is now based on a needs-based funding formula which is the fairest process for the distribution of those precious health care dollars which are fewer in number, Mr. Speaker. It is to provide the fairest distribution of those health care dollars. That's what's happening across the province, Mr. Speaker. In some districts the funding has rose; in other districts the funding has fallen, on the needs-based funding formula.

Now I do appreciate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the leader of the Liberal caucus has now come to his feet, and perhaps next time he comes to his feet he will explain what is the position of the Liberal Party in terms of medicare. Do you support universal medicare, or do you support the position of the member from Arm River when he talks about two-tiered privatized medicine?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, this government here is just a little . . . seems to be just in a little bit of short supply of really telling it actually how it is. Mr. Speaker, for goodness' sake, the time has passed for political answers. And excuses have long passed blaming the federal government on all the woes and choices that that government has made.

I'll try once again, Mr. Acting Minister, to take some responsibilities for your actions. Mr. Speaker, the health district has stated the province has been at the table for all discussions over funding this facility. The province knew the hospital's budget, and the province knew full well it was under-funding the health district.

Will the acting minister finally do the honourable thing and step in and ensure that this hospital is adequately funded? And no more political answers, no more blaming the federal government — yes or no, Mr. Minister, will you make the commitment to the people of Fort Qu'Appelle and the tribal council? Yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I will most certainly commit on behalf of this government and its Department of Health that we will in this circumstance, as we do in every circumstance, work closely both with the tribal . . . and in this case with the tribal council, with the district health board, and with officials in the Department of Health around the issues that the member raises. That is the responsibility of our departments and the districts and the board locally.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that member, as a leader of a caucus in this House, I believe, also has a responsibility. And that is to declare today in the House, does he, does his party support the single-payer universal concept of medicare that was born in this province? Or does he support the position that was taken by then premier Thatcher and now the member from Arm River of a two-tier privatized health system? What is your position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kerrobert Court-house Closure

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, I was very pleased that you took the time to come last weekend to my riding and attend the rally at the Kerrobert court-house.

However the minister heard a lot of questions at that rally and provided very few answers, and as I understand it, those answers still have not been forthcoming.

The minister said the closure would save the government money, but he couldn't say how much. The minister said Kerrobert is one of the least used court-houses in the province, but he didn't have any figures to back that up.

Mr. Minister, if this case were being heard in the Kerrobert court-house, it would be thrown out of court for lack of evidence. Mr. Minister, the local bar association produced figures showing Kerrobert is not anywhere near the bottom when it comes to court-house usage in the province of Saskatchewan. It's actually around the middle of the pack.

Mr. Minister, given this information, how can you justify the closure of the Kerrobert court-house? Will you leave this court-house open until you review your decision?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Conservative Party for that question.

The information that was provided by the local bar association should be explained. What they provided was the number of cases that were heard by the Kerrobert district, and that included Kindersley, Unity, Rosetown, and Biggar, as well as Kerrobert.

And I think it would be well advised that you would listen to what the figures are last year in provincial court. The town of Kindersley, there were 2,509 cases. The town of Unity, there was 1,568; the town of Rosetown — 1,209; the town of Biggar — 994; the town of Kerrobert — 510.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Firearms Regulations

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, this morning Allan Rock released the regulations on the new Liberal's firearms Act, and we just received our copy from Ottawa this morning. You've had your hands on these regulations for several weeks now, and can you tell us what impact the new regulation and laws will have on law-abiding firearms owners in Saskatchewan? And most importantly, are you going to stand up for and protect the rights of Saskatchewan's firearms owners and challenge the Liberals gun control laws in court?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. The regulations were tabled in the House of Commons yesterday, and unfortunately they were different than the regulations that we received a week ago. And in fact there's been great confusion in Ottawa around this. And it seems to me that it maybe reflects the kind of confusion that we see among the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan.

In fact, what happened yesterday in question period in the House of Commons . . . a fairly rare occurrence. One of the Liberal members got up and asked the Minister of Justice, Mr. Rock, what consultations were now going to take place within the caucus about these regulations. So it's a very interesting situation where the members in Ottawa have quite a bit of confusion.

We now have a copy of the regulations which will be available in limited number in my office, and practically we're continuing to keep our battle where our position hasn't changed. It's just that we now are dealing with a lot of confusion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Planned Parenthood

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, my questions, Mr. Speaker, are to the Minister of Health or his designate. Mr. Minister, your government provides about $77,000 a year to Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood uses this money to run something called The Facts of Life Line, a 1-800 sex counselling line for teenagers. Recently your Minister's Advisory Committee on Family Planning began actively promoting this line through the printing and distribution of information advertising the 1-800 number.

Mr. Minister, your department is very involved in funding and promoting The Facts of Life Line. What are you doing to control the kind of information that is given to young people over this taxpayer funded line?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the efforts of various groups in our province, including Planned Parenthood in conjunction with the Department of Health, to address the issues that have to do with sexual health, particularly the sexual health of our young people, Mr. Speaker, this government sees that as an extremely important initiative, one that we feel is very responsible, given some of the concerns we know exist in our community. I simply am not prepared at all to apologize for efforts in that regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, an article in this week's *Western Report* magazine described how a 12-year old boy who called The Facts of Life Line was counselled on participating in oral and anal sex with other boys. Despite his age, he was not discouraged in participating in this activity. He was told it is an individual choice; it's whatever you're comfortable in doing.

In fact the executive director of The Facts of Life Line freely admits that when kids ask about homosexuality, she tries to link them up with a gay person or with the gay and lesbian services in Regina and Saskatoon. She also says that counsellors are free

to recommend abortion to pregnant teenage girls.

Mr. Minister, do you think this is the kind of information that should be given out to children and teenagers over the phone? Do you think parents want their children receiving this kind of counselling on abortion and sexual activity behind their backs?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I think I know where the member question is coming from, and I certainly respect that member. I would recommend that the member not use the *Western Report* as the basis for his research.

Mr. Speaker, listen. As a parent, as a citizen of the province, as a member of government, I think we all share concern about the sexual health, particularly of our young people. We want our young people to be advised well. We want our young people to be given strong values in their home community settings. But, Mr. Speaker, I tell you, no government, no government of any political stripe, should back down from the challenge of addressing these issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A final question to the acting minister. Mr. Minister, I realize you're not a lawyer, but your colleague is. Mr. Minister, you should know that section 152 of the Criminal Code says that it is a criminal offence to counsel a person under the age of 14 of participating and touching for a sexual purpose. This in an indictable offence punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

In the example I just gave, the boy identified himself as being 12 years old. The bigger problem is, since this is an anonymous phone line, the counsellors have no real way of knowing how old any of the callers are. Mr. Minister, the only proper counselling for children under the age of 14 is abstinence.

Where are the safeguards in this system? Your department is actively promoting this 1-800 number. Some children under the age of 14 are bound to call. Mr. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that counsellors at your government-funded sex line aren't breaking the law by counselling children to take part in sexual activity?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure, particularly as a result of the member raising the issue in the House this morning, that officials in the Department of Health will be following up, one, to ensure accuracy of what the member brings to the House. We have had experience in task in this House on a fair number of occasions where members have raised issues in this House, made accusations and so on, and then we find that the accuracy is not entirely there.

Mr. Speaker, but to go to what I believe is the fundamental issue here, the fundamental issue is the health of Saskatchewan people, and in this case particularly the health of Saskatchewan young people. Mr. Speaker, we have a high rate of teen pregnancies in our province. That is unacceptable. We have a high rate of . . . as the member from Humboldt has pointed out in this House, we have a problem with child prostitution. We have a problem with the sexually transmitted diseases in our province as we do across the world and across the nation. These are significant health issues that I believe we all must be concerned about, and all must take appropriate steps.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agreement with Intercontinental Packers

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Yesterday we questioned again the $5 million agreement with Intercontinental Packers. In this House, the minister indicated that the forgivable loan was needed to accommodate increased hog production in rural Saskatchewan. However the March 11 edition of *AGRIWEEK* indicates that Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces in which hog production is actually declining.

Will the minister justify this agreement, if in fact there is no reason to suggest hog production is on the rise?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, if she has been following hog production in this province since 1991 or 1992 when we started to work on Ag 2000, hog numbers are up about 10 per cent. Although last year there was a downturn because of the drastic increase in the cost of feed, which she will understand being from rural Saskatchewan.

The point of the issue here is, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of subsidies. And I'm pleased to engage in the debate about whether or not too much subsidy went into the meat packing industry or not because that really is what the debate should be about.

The issue here is that is we're competing with two provinces, one in the east and one in the west, who are putting huge subsidies into the meat packing industry. The question is and the fair debate is, should the taxpayers of Saskatchewan be involved in subsidizing in order to keeping a meat packing industry in the province of Saskatchewan. Or should we move out of that area with the risk of the meat packing industry shutting down and producers in Saskatchewan having to haul their product 500 miles to Edmonton or Winnipeg with the extra cost to the farmers and the reduction in the quality of the meat?

Now the idea that you shouldn't do that is an interesting concept but . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question. Last question.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have another solution that maybe we could use toward solving this problem if we want to increase the hog numbers. I'd like to take the minister back to April 10 when in this House he indicated there was a number of selected tax cuts being considered by this government. He stated, and I quote:

> . . . the list would include such things as (the) potential of E&H tax remission on expanded agriculture production such as hog barns . . . that . . . is needed in order to move our hog production from where it is . . . today. . .

The minister claims that his government is committed to doing everything within its power to allow the hog industry to flourish in this province and to meet the goals set out in the seventh objective of the *Partnership for Growth*. Will the minister explain when this sector can expect the tax relief he's talked about?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Interesting that the member would raise that issue because yesterday I was at the Sunnyland Poultry at Wadena . . . Wynyard. And the member will know that there again the production of chickens and turkeys in the province is very important to the economy of Saskatchewan. And that was one of the very issues we talked about, that is, the E&H (education and health) tax on new facilities.

I also had the opportunity to talk to hog producers yesterday, and this is an issue that they have raised. And when we will make that change is as soon as we get the deficit and the spending extremes of the Tory government under control and the interest rate under control to where we can cut that tax. And as soon as the federal government quits offloading to the tune of a hundred million a year, we will be able to continue in those selective tax changes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Toth: — Before orders of the day, to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment this morning just to welcome a former member, Mr. Larry Birkbeck, who represented the constituency of Moosomin, to welcome him to the Assembly, but as well to extend our condolences on the passing of his father recently. Mr. Speaker, let's welcome the member.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In keeping with our now well-established reputation of being an open, accessible government, I table the answer.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 83 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 58

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 58 — An Act to amend The Land Titles Act and to make a consequential amendment** be now read a second time.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to take a few moments today to discuss the amendments that have been tabled through The Land Titles Amendment Act, 1996. I feel that this is an important piece of legislation that deserves careful consideration before it is passed into law.

A number of the Bills that have already been tabled in this House during this session are simply for housekeeping, and there was limited reason to debate them in detail. This Bill is a little more complex and deals with a number of very important issues. It is for this reason that I feel that more needs to be said on this matter before it moves on in this House.

There are many small and simple amendments put forward to the Act through this Bill. The areas that we are most interested in are the ones that make two important and basic changes to this Act. The first deals with the Land Titles Office and the process by which caveats are lapsed. The second change is with regard to Indian bands and the purchase of land. This Bill allows for the purchase of land by bands without them being required to form a corporation.

Some of the smaller changes that have been proposed through this Bill deal with the destruction of duplicate certificates and increased flexibility when it comes to providing personal information to the Land Titles Office. This Bill will allow for certified copies of documents to be given to Land Titles instead of originals. This will definitely cut down on costs for the people involved, as they will no longer have to apply for original copies of personal documents. Through these smaller changes, it is clear that the intent is to simplify the administrative process of dealing with the Land Titles Office, and that is a welcome change. We see this as a move towards cost reduction and time savings, and we certainly do agree with this motive.

There have been a number of amendments put forward in this Bill that are for the sole purpose of reflecting current legislation. In many cases the names of federal Acts that are cited in the Bill have changed, and this Bill will now subsequently change the names of the federal Acts that are referred to in this provincial legislation.

Due to the changes made to this Act, further amendments to other provincial Acts have also been required. It is the larger amendment and issues related to these amendments that causes a little bit of concern.

The first major change is being implemented to deal with the confusion and complications that arise out of the current system of dealing with the Land Titles Office and the problems associated with caveat lapses. These amendments to this Act are a welcome change for those people who deal with the Land Titles Office.

The changes to the land titles system proposed by this piece of legislation makes the caveat lapsing system and the process by which it is run and driven, the responsibility of the Land Titles itself. The people involved in the lapsing of a caveat will no longer have to do the paperwork by themselves. Under the present legislation, it is up to the person who is seeking to lapse a caveat to provide notification to the caveator of the intent and desire to have the said caveat lapsed. There have been some significant changes to the provision of notice of the lapsing of a caveat. As this notification process is now the responsibility of the Land Titles Office, the people directly involved need no longer worry.

Yet these people involved should be aware that there are exceptions to the process of lapsing caveats under certain pieces of other legislation such as The Homesteads Act, the community planning Act, and The Planning and Development Act.

At the present time, persons who have claims against property register these caveats with the Land Titles Office. In order to remove the caveat, the person who wants it removed must get involved in this complex process. Further, evidence of proper procedure had to be provided to the Land Titles Office before the lapsing of a caveat could proceed through the proper channels.

Due to the fact that these types of procedures, unfamiliar and complex for the general population, the process often became inefficient and bogged down with excessive paperwork. This does nothing but cause grief for everyone involved. And with the changes that this Bill proposes, the caveat lapsing process will be conducted by the Land Titles Office unilaterally. Allowing this procedure to be handled by the Land Titles Office in its entirety is a positive step to eliminate some of the red tape that is involved in the processing of the lapsing of a caveat.

This is, as I mentioned, a welcome end to the confusion that arises out of the process, both for the people involved in the caveat and the people working at the Land Titles Office. The intent to reduce errors in this process is a very welcome change, in our humble opinion. I think these changes to the system of lapsing the caveats are progressive and will simplify an otherwise confusing and complex system for everybody involved in this type of a situation.

The area of this Bill which causes the most concern is in regards to the Indian bands and the purchase of off-reserve lands. This Bill will allow Indian bands to purchase and consequently own off-reserve land in their own name. Currently they must form a corporation before they can purchase land. This is due to the fact that the definition of owner does not include Indian bands who want to purchase land. Amendments to this Act will allow direct ownership of land by bands, but the registration of these lands still does not give it reserve status.

(1100)

Further, a new section has been added that will set out the requirements for the acceptance of instruments filed by Indian bands in relation to the purchase of lands. Further amendments to existing sections that deal with the liability of assurance funds are made to reflect the participation of Indian bands in the land titles system. It is my understanding that there will be regulations to this Act that will set out the names that bands will be using when dealing with the land titles system for the purpose of purchasing off-reserve land.

There are questions and concerns that arise when we begin to discuss the issue of taxation on these newly acquired lands. Are they taxable, or are they tax exempt? Are purchases made on these lands taxable, or are they tax exempt? These questions need to be addressed before this Bill is passed into law.

The potential outcomes and consequences of this part of The Land Titles Act are numerous and very important. I don't think that any of us would like to see piece of legislation move through this House until all the consequences of the implementation of an Act have been given careful thought and consideration.

On top of this, consultation of the parties involved must be done on an in-depth basis. I am a firm believer that consultation must come before implementation, and it is for that reason that I believe that more stakeholders and legal opinions need to be gained with regards to gaining insight into the possible outcomes of some aspects of this legislation.

The tabling of this Bill comes at a time when Indian bands are working very hard towards self-determination and self-sufficiency. Through treaty land entitlements and job creation policies, bands are hoping to become more financially and socially independent. Allowing bands to skip the step of forming a corporation before they can purchase land is just one more step towards economic improvements for these bands.

Despite this, we still cannot ignore the question of taxation. I am somewhat surprised that a Bill that deals quite heavily with the purchase of land by Indian bands makes absolutely no mention of the system of taxation that will be used on those lands once the transfer of ownership has been made.

Mr. Speaker, it is for these reasons and some others that I feel that perhaps more research and analysis, particularly of the consequences of this Bill, needs to be done. I therefore move that debate on this Bill be adjourned. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 45

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 45 — An Act to amend The Tax Enforcement Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Provincial Mediation Board Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to address this House on the subject of The Tax Enforcement Act. At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I support the principle of tightening up the legislation dealing with the collection of municipal property taxes.

The present legislation is too cumbersome and time-consuming.

There are instances that we hear about from time to time where some private individuals and companies actually use the lengthy and cumbersome municipal tax recovery process as a substitute for part or all of their line of credit. They deliberately choose not to pay their municipal property taxes for a year or two, knowing full well that the penalties for late payment are small or insignificant compared to the interest they will pay on a line of credit from their credit union or bank.

Mr. Speaker, this is a disgraceful situation and it must be remedied. The municipal taxpayers who do not pay . . . who do pay their taxes faithfully should be supplying free or subsidized lines of credit to those who choose not to pay their taxes. That's not fair, Mr. Speaker, and furthermore it's wasteful.

It's wasteful whenever municipalities have to borrow money, even temporarily, in order to finance their operations simply because some of their taxpayers choose not to pay their taxes on time. As anyone who's been in the business knows, credit unions and banks charge interest on loans, and the interest on loans made to municipalities made necessary by late payment of taxes becomes another burden on the coffers of the municipalities.

What is the result, Mr. Speaker? Well the result is an ongoing interest burden for the municipality and resulting in higher mill rates for the ratepayers. In other words, ratepayers who do pay their taxes on time actually have to pay more than they should because of the bad habits of a few ratepayers who deliberately decide to pay their taxes on a late basis year after year.

The other point that needs to be made at the very outset, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to do something to restore the integrity of taxpayers who deliberately choose to pay their taxes late on a reoccurring basis. Mr. Speaker, I ask you, why would a ratepayer deliberately decide not to pay his taxes promptly year after year? Why would he not do the honourable thing and pay his taxes promptly as they come due?

I do believe by the drafting of this legislation the government intends to crack down on those that abuse the current laws relating to municipal taxes. Unfortunately I think that some of these sections proposed need further revisions.

Section no. 3 of Bill 45 amends the waiting time for the period of tax enforcement proceeding by six months. While I agree that the length of the waiting time needed to be shortened, I do wonder if six months might be a little too short. This means that the list of those who have not paid their taxes, their municipal tax bill, will be published in January. This brief waiting period before publication of the names and land descriptions, could be too short. It could cause unnecessary embarrassment for those who are just a little late in paying their taxes. I would feel more comfortable if notices were published possibly three months later, say in March.

This legislation proposes some major changes within section 19. This section would amend the Act so that people who are late paying their tax bill would also be charged for repairs, maintenance, and cleaning that must be done to the property or the buildings on that property while the bill is unpaid. I am pleased to see that the landowners will be held accountable for maintenance, but I am extremely worried about the fees that could be levied for these maintenance services. I see nothing in this Act that would protect the landowner from being overcharged for this service.

This legislation would also allow municipalities to request land titles six months after the registration of a tax lien. Here again, while I do want landowners to be accountable for their taxes, I am concerned that the shortening of the waiting period before requesting the land title, to six months, is too drastic.

Another amendment proposed in Bill 45 would also permit municipalities to lease out land that they have taken possession of, while the taxes are in arrears. I feel that this is a positive change because at least municipalities will get some type of revenue from the land while they are waiting for the taxes to be paid. Also, leasing the property to another tenant may reduce the amount of maintenance required on that property. I see these as positive changes.

However, another section of Bill 45 says, notice of provision for lands with unpaid taxes will be outlined in the regulations. This legislation proposes some major changes to municipal tax enforcement and will have a significant impact on all Saskatchewan landowners. Why is something so important as this notification left to be defined in regulations? Why doesn't the government show us what it intends in these notices and outline the changes in this Bill?

Section 26 is amended to super-streamline the tax notification process for people who own more than one property worth more than $2,000. Under the old Act, the owner was sent a notice for each piece of property. These changes should reduce the paperwork significantly, and hopefully reduce some of the confusion on the part of landowners. Perhaps the $2,000 value should be even higher as to make the legislation more up to date.

Section 31 of the legislation outlines the changes regarding the sale of land taken over by the municipalities. The old laws are extremely complicated and outdated. Even though the amendments in section 31 will bring the laws up to date, the changes regarding the rejection of insufficient bids is still extremely complicated. So while this part of the law is being reformed, it is still too complex. This makes me question if the government carried out enough consultation before drafting this Bill. The government would do well to listen to the advice of the municipalities and the landowners who have had to work with the old Act.

If the government had truly listened, it would have tried to simplify the process, not complicate it even more. Overall I do see the government making some positive changes to the municipal tax enforcement with Bill 45. And I am definitely not satisfied with Bill 45 as it is presented here, but hopefully the government can address some of the concerns I have just described in Committee of the Whole. 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. 74

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 74 — An Act to amend The Government Organization Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I welcome the chance to briefly touch on this Bill before it passes to Committee of the Whole. Mr. Speaker, we all know that through improved technology, transportation, and telecommunications, the world is continuously shrinking. It wasn't that long ago in Saskatchewan history that our agreements, particularly in trade and economics, were somewhat limited. Contracts with other provinces, the federal government, and particularly with foreign countries were stifled by the huge distances.

But things have changed, Mr. Speaker. We have the capability to take Saskatchewan products, people, and ideas anywhere in the world. For a province rich in all of these, the opening up of world markets is infinitely exciting.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan companies have a chance to make their mark on the world, and the opportunities will continue to grow. But, Mr. Speaker, companies will only be able to seize on these opportunities if this government starts to create a positive economic climate.

I'm sure the members of this Assembly would all agree that Saskatchewan people do have the ideas. Every member in this Assembly can probably come up with a list of their constituents who are innovative, determined, and capable of expanding their business. I can certainly attest to these qualities, this ability, and this energy in my constituents. And whether the members opposite will admit it or not, they could probably also come up with a list of companies who have been smothered by oppressive government policies.

Mr. Speaker, this government will sit there and point out sometimes how much they are doing for Saskatchewan. The Minister of Agriculture will talk about his three-week trip to Asia and how much the NDP government accomplished. He so graciously calls himself a door opener bringing producer groups to government and business officials. To hear him speak you would almost think that he was the answer to expanding Saskatchewan business.

But what he doesn't talk about are the restrictions his government places on our businesses and especially on our small businesses. He doesn't talk about the high taxes companies are forced to pay. He doesn't talk about oppressive labour legislation. And he does not talk about propped up government companies that force independent businesses to fold. And he doesn't talk about how his government has failed to create an atmosphere of positive economic growth.

(1115)

When the members opposite do talk about economic growth, it is through empty promises. The Minister of Economic Development will insist that the government is creating jobs and helping businesses grow. Bankruptcy stats and slow business start-ups show that he is playing a bit loose with the truth.

Still, despite the government's lack of real commitment to growth, we believe that there are excellent opportunities for Saskatchewan businesses within Saskatchewan, within Canada, and throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that this Bill doesn't deal strictly with trade agreements on behalf of Saskatchewan businesses. I understand that this Bill deals with intergovernmental or interorganizational agreements with persons, agencies, organizations, associations, enterprises, institutions, or other bodies.

But, Mr. Speaker, as an elected representative, I have to look at the implications for my constituents and for all Saskatchewan people. I have to take these laws and these amendments and extend them to situations affecting real people. That is why I am so concerned about trade agreements.

Our society has to rely on a stable and expansive economy. So I want to be sure that any amendments to this Act do not harm business opportunities in any way whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that Saskatchewan must enter into local, national, and international agreements. By expanding our base of cooperation, we can act as a catalyst to businesses within our province; and though we often doubt the priorities of this government, we do recognize that the minister may have to enter into these agreements.

We do have some concerns about the increase in monetary limits outlined in this Bill. Currently there is a $10,000 limit imposed on a minister who enters an agreement without getting the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. With the proposed amendments, this limit would be raised to $50,000. Mr. Speaker, we are always worried when this government requests more power over Saskatchewan taxpayers' money.

Not only do they reach deep into taxpayers' pockets to pad the government coffers, they spend it carelessly on misplaced priorities. Although I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that careless spending is not unique to the members opposite. After having watched the Tories squander away money on the whims of their cabinet ministers, fiscal irresponsibility is not new to the Saskatchewan government.

I suppose that this is why the NDP government has been able to hide its misplaced priorities for so long. But, Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan are smart and they are wise. They will not be fooled by words for long. They see how the actions of this government are destroying their province and they are going to fight back. And we will fight back on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, there is another curiosity in this Bill which I would like to touch on. In the amendments outlined in the Bill, there is a new requirement of notice placed on a minister who wants to enter into an agreement with the feds, other provinces or territories, other countries or non-governmental parties. In other words, ministers number 1 through 17 have to go to the

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for permission. I'll assume that the Premier can do whatever he wants.

Mr. Speaker, I can only guess about the internal politics of the party opposite. I don't know if the rumours we hear are true, so I refuse to repeat them in this House. But, Mr. Speaker, I seriously wonder if the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has the power to turn down his colleagues. As a matter of fact, this amendment seems to recognize that he might now have that power.

There is a provision that states that even if a minister fails to give the required notice to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, it does not affect the validity of the agreement. This all seems a bit redundant.

So if I understand this right, let's say the Minister of Highways wants to enter into an agreement worth more than $50,000. He then goes to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to ask permission. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs says no. The Minister of Highways does it anyway and the taxpayers end up footing the bill.

Now what is the point of this notice requirement? I look forward to the government's explanation of this in the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I have brought forward some of our concerns on this Bill which I see as mainly a housekeeping piece of legislation. But as I said earlier, the implication could affect the government's ability to misuse taxpayers' money. So that in itself means we should carefully examine these changes.

This amendment is not unique. As I understand it, these amendments are repeated in corresponding sections of Bills ranging from The Correctional Services Act to The Energy and Mines Act to The Department of Social Services Act.

Therefore we see no reason to hold this Bill up further in adjourned debates, but we look forward to having some meaningful discussion on this Bill when it is passed to the Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No 24 — An Act respecting the Prescription of Pharmaceutical Agents and Contact Lenses

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I have with me today Drew Johnston who is senior health professions analyst.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Mr. Johnston. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about this Bill because I understand there is a number of concerns. I guess the first question I'll ask you is: who actually has asked for these changes?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Both professions did in a way. The optometrists wanted an expanded ability to prescribe certain drugs. The ophthalmologists wanted the power to prescribe . . . the power to take prescriptions for lenses and dispense them directly. They more or less agreed among themselves that each would get this expanded power.

So this was a bit of good work actually, done by the Department of Health and by the minister but more by the department, in reaching a consensus among these two professions which are joined under one Act. And each got something out of it and each were able to support the advancement of the other.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can you estimate for me how many professionals you feel will be affected by this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There's a hundred optometrists and ophthalmologists in the province, approximately. There's no way of knowing I think, at this point in time how many will actually make use of the expanded powers.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Do the optometrists practising here in Saskatchewan currently receive the proper clinical training needed to treat infectious eye diseases or glaucoma?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They will have to have done so before they will be permitted to dispense these drugs.

Ms. Draude: — Does that mean there will be a requirement for additional training for some of them?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, in some cases that's right.

Ms. Draude: — What are the anticipated cost savings associated with changes proposed by this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That's very hard to know. One gives the consumers a broader choice of whom they go to, and in smaller communities, that may be important. How much that will actually wind up reducing costs is anybody's guess. We're just following the general principle. The broader array of choice is available to the consumers, the more competitive the price is likely to be. It's almost impossible to quantify it in advance.

Ms. Draude: — Has there been any evidence of public demand to be able to have eye diseases treated by an optometrist as opposed to an ophthalmologist?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, there has been a demand for this, and it was the public demand which led to the opening of discussions with the two professions.

Ms. Draude: — Do you feel there will be an increased cost to the provincial health plan as a result of these changes?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, there shouldn't be. The broader array of choices should not result in the additional costs.

Ms. Draude: — How do you address the fears of those ophthalmologists that optometrists with inadequate training will be given the authority to treat eye diseases?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well that of course is the responsibility of the profession working in cooperation with the department to ensure that doesn't happen. And it's the very reason why these professions exist and are given the powers they have.

Ms. Draude: — If problems start occurring, how do you feel that people are going to be able to . . . who will they get back to? Who will have the responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well they would have a variety of avenues to complain. Their elected member would be one. The Department of Health would be another. But the most likely avenue of complaining would be directly to the professional association; that's the very reason they exist.

Ms. Draude: — I understand that this Bill promotes free enterprise and will encourage competition among the optometrists and opticians, but the safety of the consumer is really the main concern. And I'm just wondering how this was considered when you were doing your analysis.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That was given some careful consideration before the Bill was proceeded with. The department, together with the two professions, spent a long time analysing the situation to satisfy themselves beyond any shadow of a doubt that the two professions could and would be competent to accept the expanded powers before they were given to them. So the department, together with the profession, spent a long time assuring themselves of that.

Ms. Draude: — Section 16(1) says a contact lens technician may provide other services to a person as authorized by the by-laws. Could you explain what other services may be and where the qualifications of an optician are no longer sufficient to treat eye ailments?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm told currently there is nothing specified in the by-laws. So the answer to your question is, nothing. It may happen at a later date, and if it were, the regulations would be promulgated. But at the moment there's no such thing specified.

(1130)

Ms. Draude: — This legislation will allow some optometrists to prescribe drugs and to treat infectious eye diseases if they have proper training. One of my questions is, what safeguard is in place to ensure that the consumer's aware of which optometrists have the training to prescribe drugs and which do not?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Two. One, they'll be issued a certificate which they're required to display in their clinic.

But I think the more direct protection is the very serious penalties which would follow from any optometrist who exercised these powers without being licensed to do so. Very serious consequences would follow. Probably the real protection to the public is that the penalty for dispensing these services when you're not qualified to do so are so serious as to deter anyone from doing it.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can you tell me what you mean by serious penalties?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The most serious consequence is the suspension of a licence to practice. You are without any means of earning a living if that happens. Penal; fines; and the fines are severe. The current practice is not only to fine the offending professional, but also to ask them to pay the costs of the investigation, which are sometimes very serious.

I've not seen these, but I get the information from the law society, of which I'm still a non-practising member, and the situation will be the same. A fine may be a couple thousand dollars and the costs of the investigation several times that — $10,000. So the financial penalties can be very severe. It's possible . . . Although it's very unusual, penal sanctions are also possible; but they're very unusual.

But those are the consequences and they're quite harsh for — and correctly so — they're quite harsh for professionals who offend them.

Ms. Draude: — I guess my concern is, regardless of the severity of the penalties, the actual body that is a person that's in place for somebody to complain to is rather inobscure at this moment. I think that if I have somebody that has a problem, they would . . . to come to their MLA really probably isn't the right person to go to. I'm just wondering is there any thoughts to another way, another way a person can have some coverage?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well if they believe that the whole system isn't operating properly, then it might be appropriate to complain to an elected member. If they have a specific complaint against a specific professional, there is a disciplinary body and not hard to find.

Ms. Draude: — My next question is, who will actually pay for the expanded services. Under the current section, ophthalmic eye care is covered under the provincial health plan, whereas optometry services are not. This Bill combines services provided by the two professions, and who will pay what?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The responsibility of the Medical Care Insurance Commission won't change. They only cover . . . they cover physicians. A visit to an optometrist continues to be covered . . . it continues to be a personal expense. We're told that's about $16 and that's thought to be an affordable expense by people.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, what is the plan to implement these changes? Are there classes to train optometrists to dispense topical eye treatment going to be available?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, the training for this is already in, virtually, in place. The curriculum has been expanded, I gather, at Waterloo, where this training takes place. There is a national exam, and thereafter when the training is completed, the exam is passed, the licence would then be endorsed with this additional right.

Ms. Draude: — So where will they be able to take the training?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The University of Waterloo is where the training is provided in Canada. I gather they have also . . . there is also schools and universities in the U.S. (United States) which give the training which the Canadian authorities recognize.

Ms. Draude: — And whose expense will this training be at?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The professionals.

Ms. Draude: — When do you feel that these . . . with the extra training, when do you feel that they'll be able to implement the changes?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm told the regulations must be completed. They must discuss it with the profession; they must be passed and the Acts proclaimed; and they can go take the training.

I'm told they expect that whole process of consulting, regulation making, and so on, to take a couple of months after the end of the session. So I guess one might look for early fall, perhaps at the earliest.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. Is the range of topical drugs that are to be distributed by the optometrists going to be made available to the public?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, that's specified in the by-laws, which are of course available to the public.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, could you just summarize for me the consultation process that your department has had with different groups, naming those groups, and the areas that have been studied to ensure safety and cost and all those things are going to be met.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The consultations with the . . . the primary consultations were with the two professions — the optometrists and the ophthalmologists. There is consultation as well with the senior medical professions, the college and so on, on all of these matters. And that, plus the resources of the Department of Health, which have their own policy and planning capacity, all of that was pooled and out of it came a general agreement by everyone that these Acts would make sense in the circumstances.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When you talked about the professions involved, was that limited to the province of Saskatchewan or did you go outside the borders of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No. Now they're part of national organizations and the advice and the — I was going to say consent; that's not quite accurate — but the advice and the . . . a consensus was sought not only among the provincial organizations but also from the national organizations.

Mr. McLane: — And the professions involved in Saskatchewan were in full agreement with all parts of this legislation, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm not sure the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) are entirely in agreement. The ophthalmologists and optometrists are. I'm not sure the SMA is, and that's not a new problem. Without delving into a delicate area, some of the professions — one might mention chiropractors being one — have sometimes had a difficult relationship with the SMA which has been protective of its turf. I don't think that's being critical, that's . . . So the SMA is not signed on, but the other two are.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you elaborate a little bit more then what the problems might be with the SMA in relationship to this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — You can read into it what you want. Their reasons they put forth are that the services could be better provided by their members, which are the physicians, and that their members are better trained and better able to provide these services.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. And the college of physicians and surgeons, where do they stand on this?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They support this.

Mr. McLane: — You mentioned that the groups in the province were fully on board with this, and yet there's a headline here from the *Leader-Post* saying that the "Ophthalmologists seeing red over proposed legislation." Could you indicate to us what those concerns might have been?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — To some extent that view comes from the same source — indeed it's part of the same phenomenon — that their members are better trained and therefore better able to provide the service. This is not a new problem within this profession. The college again agrees that the people that would be licensed under this Act are quite competent to perform the service.

Mr. McLane: — Do you not think, Mr. Minister, that it would be better before proceeding with this to have agreement from these groups, sitting down with them and trying to come to a consensus on the issue, as opposed to having articles in the paper and individuals writing letters . . . creates some sort of confusion, I would think.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Those talks will continue to some extent. No resolution of these problem except to . . . To some extent there's an awful lot of turf protection here which we don't want to encourage and which is very, very expensive for

the taxpayer if you give it full and free rein.

So to some extent the problems probably aren't capable of resolution. And when you consider that our first responsibility is to the taxpayer, it's probable that we shouldn't be slaves to these kind of approaches.

Mr. McLane: — I certainly agree that our attention should be put toward the taxpayers of the province, and that's exactly my point. To ensure that they are being protected, I would think you'd want these groups to be more onside and come to some sort of a consensus.

You mentioned that you hadn't or the department hadn't discussed this issue outside the boundaries of the province.

An Hon. Member: — No, I said the opposite, Harvey.

Mr. McLane: — I'm sorry, Mr. Minister. I misunderstood you. Maybe you could clarify that then.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The official, in addition to what I said, we had contacts, somewhat informal perhaps, who had contacts with the national organizations. We also had contacts with Alberta and New Brunswick. And New Brunswick has actually exactly the same Bill going through the legislature at this same time with exactly the same play of forces in the professional community.

Mr. McLane: — Since you raised New Brunswick, Mr. Minister, then are they experiencing encountering the same sorts of opposition from certain groups within the province?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, by and large. The New Brunswick Liberal Party doesn't have the historical relationship with the medical profession which the NDP does in Saskatchewan, and that may . . . I think that probably accounts for the difference.

But at the end of the day the positions are the same, perhaps a little less vociferously put forward in New Brunswick, but the positions of the professions, I'm told, are the same.

Mr. McLane: — I think, Mr. Minister, when you refer to your relationship, your government's relationship with the medical professions, that some of your recent decisions in health reform, I think that relationship could be getting just a wee bit frayed. It will probably move farther from there.

However, the question I guess in response to a letter from the ophthalmology society of Alberta where they raise some issues about wanting to ensure that there's proper training, a cost savings, of course demonstrating the need which will be for the benefit of the taxpayer to the province, public demand and public safety. What's been done to ensure that all those things have been met, Mr. Minister?

(1145)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well the primary authority in Saskatchewan is the college of physicians and surgeons. I will make a copy of this letter when I am finished and I'll give you a copy — I won't table it — I'll give you a copy. I'll just quote the second last paragraph:

> Primary health care professionals provide first contact health care. In respect to eye care citizens may consult either an optometrist or primary care physician. Both professions are well qualified to evaluate eye health status and detect eye disease.

So in Saskatchewan our primary reliance is upon the college. The college has said they're competent to do it.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess maybe I'd ask the question then, why would you think that there's such opposition to this legislation from this group in Alberta, and having noted it to Dr. Kendel with the college, to the Bill? They cite many reasons — that they don't have the proper evidence that proper clinical training to treat the infectious eye diseases or glaucoma . . . they haven't documented any cost savings, or the public need or the public demand. What would their concerns be, and why has somebody not talked to them and tried to get an understanding of what they're saying?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm not entirely sure I understood the member's question. Was the member's question about why the opposition was ongoing in Alberta? Is that your question?

Perhaps you better restate your question. I'm afraid . . . I'm not sure which province we're talking about. Are we talking about the opposition in Alberta? Are we talking about the opposition in Saskatchewan?

Mr. McLane: — We're talking about opposition that's coming from the ophthalmological society of Alberta, Mr. Minister. And the question would be: why would this group have such opposition to this legislation and bother to meet the college of physicians and surgeons and then respond to Dr. Kendel of the college?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well I think their concerns are no different than the concerns here. They claim they are better able to provide the service. The college does not agree, and it's very difficult to escape the conclusion that they're, at least in part, motivated by an element of turf protectionism. They'd be less than human if they didn't.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, did the department have contact with this group?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, they had extensive contact.

I received an indication, Mr. Chair, from the opposition that we should report progress on this and go on to the next item.

Bill No. 49 — An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act

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

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me my deputy minister, Stuart Kramer, to my left; to my right, Dennis

Sherratt, the director of the wildlife branch; and behind me, Doug Kosloski, legislative analyst of the policy public and public involvement branch.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome your officials today, Mr. Minister, and just have a few questions in this respect. What guidelines are in place, Mr. Minister, to refer to when you're changing the permit fees to reflect municipal taxes? Do you understand what I'm getting at here?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The tax fees are set by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) in the RM (rural municipality) and what this amendment proposes is that we will be collecting the lease fees and taxes, and forward them to the RM according to whatever the rates are, usually 2 to $3 an acre, in the form of a grant in lieu of taxes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. These increases, are they supposed to take place . . . is this going to happen all at once or you going to put this in over a period of time or are you going to do it just bang, and there we are?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I wish to inform the hon. member that there's no increases involved here. The rates are staying the same. What has happened in the past . . . let's use a hypothetical case, that there's a quarter section of land and say $100 owing to the RM in the grant in lieu of taxes. And an individual is perhaps cutting hay on five acres of that quarter section, and for the value of $50. And what has happened in the past, that SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) would get $50 from us and they'd have to go after the person that cut the hay to get the other $50. What this amendment does is that we collect the $50 from the person that cuts the hay and we forward $100 to the RM, and SARM has asked for this amendment. So it makes a lot less work for SARM; they don't have to go out and collect bits and pieces of money here to make up for grants in lieu. We will do all of that and simply forward a cheque directly to the RM affected.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. So, Mr. Minister, so this actually would even off. If there was no change and the RM was charging taxes on that land, the amount of taxes received by the RM would be identical to what . . . if they were doing it themselves?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That's correct. There's no more or no less money. It's just getting it to the RM in a much easier formula for the RMs. And we look forward to working with the RMs in this process.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. I'd like to go back and I had in my mind that the grazing fees and the haying permit fees and that, would be increasing in cost. And are you saying that this is not the case? There will be no increase in costs for the farmers that are leasing this land?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The answer to that is that the RM has in the past had to try to collect the taxes say on the five acres that the hay was cut and the haying fees. And we will look after all of that, and then send the RM one cheque and they will get the same amount of money. In fact in some cases they'll get more, because if there was only $20 or something in haying fees the RM wouldn't bother with it.

So we have to deal with the lessees cutting the hay anyways, and we're going to help the RMs out by collecting any money due and then forward a cheque in the full amount to the RMs.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, does the minister have the . . . Can the minister increase the fees if a landowner is in arrears in his taxes to the RM?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I believe I understand the question, hon. member. If a farmer was in arrears on taxes on some deeded land, there would be no connection between us collecting arrears or lease fees or additional taxes, money through the wildlife development fund lands, and forwarding it to the RM. Have I got that straight? Yes, there will be no connection there.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In the amendments to this Bill, it talks about the minister may recover payments, in whole or in part, by increasing fees or charging additional fees for haying and grazing permits during the year in which the payment is made. How are those additional fees set?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We use the same formula as established by the Department of Agriculture. And it varies, from area of the province, to the price of the cattle, and a number of other factors. So we use the same formula as the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are these fees something that are set in the regulations? I'm not sure I'm understanding you there. It's set by a formula, but is that formula . . . is it able to be changed, I guess, by the Minister of Agriculture then, through the regulations, which would affect what you're doing?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, again I just wish to state that we use the Department of Agriculture formulas, and we believe that they're the most accurate that we can get. And they're market driven, depending on area of the province and the price of cattle. So the fees may vary a little from one year to the next. Some years they may go down, some years they may go up. But we use the standard formula as set out with the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just to confirm then, I'm not sure where that formula sits in the Act, in the agriculture Act. Is it in the regulations or is it in the Act itself, and where does it come into under this Act?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I believe, hon. member, that the formula is in policy, because it does change probably every year. So it's within the Department of Agriculture policy, and that is looked at and arrived at based on a number of factors.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If that's the case, then maybe you should explain a little more detail and the process of how that formula was arrived at, who has the ability to change an element of the formula, which would certainly

increase the costs for grazing leases.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Because this question does entail some information from the Department of Agriculture, we would be very pleased to provide you a written response as to how the policy is derived at, and that would tie in with these lease policies, if that would be acceptable to the hon. member.

(1200)

Mr. McLane: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess the response could have led to a couple of more questions, depending on what the answer was. So that would be good if you would do that.

I guess one of the questions I might ask — and more generic — would be, how do we ensure that the ranchers or the farmers are protected from the leases going too high? What is there is in there to prevent that?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Although this Bill deals specifically with the collection of grants in lieu to go to the RM, in response to your specific question, I think government or any other individual who was way out of line with their fees for grazing or haying would soon be brought into line simply through public pressure.

Again, when we respond to you in writing, we'll try to . . . we'll get the details as to how the policy is set.

But this is simply assisting SARM and RMs in collecting taxes or grants in lieu in this legislation.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, my question is around wildlife land that has been purchased or donated to the wildlife resource fund. Is your department responsible for having the fences removed, because in many times this land that has been turned back into natural resource land has been pasture land. And as a result, in my area I've noticed that there seems to be projects that occur in different locales where fences are removed as soon as this land has been sold or donated. Is this through responsibility of your department under this Act?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I thank the member for the question. Of course every particular parcel of land has different circumstances. In some cases when we purchase a quarter of land, we sign a leaseback for five years to the current owner. So in that case the fences would be maintained.

In other cases, fences have been removed for road construction. Perhaps the landowner himself — maybe the posts are fairly new and the wire is good — has gone out, and with permission from us after we've purchased the land, to remove the fence to use it elsewhere.

Our general policy is that there is not grazing allowed on wildlife development fund lands but there are exceptions through purchase agreements. And we're also moving towards looking at limited grazing as a management tool on these lands.

So there's various circumstances. Certainly in some areas the fences have been removed or at least on partial . . . or on one or two sides of the parcel of land.

Mr. Krawetz: — Two questions then, Mr. Minister. Who determines whether or not that land should stay as possible grazing land? That's the first question.

The second question, is the local wildlife federation involved in deciding that that parcel of land is no longer going to be grazed by anyone, and therefore there is a determination that — you know, half mile by four sides, there's usually two miles of fence involved — is it decided upon by the local group that that fence be removed, and then who pays for removing of that fence?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — As the member may know, the wildlife development fund was first started back in 1970, and up until very recently, grazing has not been considered an option, but we are looking at possible grazing contracts as a management tool on some of these lands.

We certainly do work closely with the local wildlife federation branches, and more importantly, with our regional biologist who goes out and examines the area to determine if some controls are needed, whether it's cutting hay or perhaps some limited grazing.

So there's a number of factors to determine what management and what activities will occur on these lands.

Basically if the department sees fit for the fence to be removed, we would pay it or use our own manpower. If the farmer wanted the fence and posts, I'm sure, for his own labour, we would just give it to him. Sometimes a local branch of the wildlife federation may want to also use the material for something. And so there isn't much cost involved.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, when land is donated or purchased by wildlife, is there consideration taken into where this land is before it's passed into that . . . designated as wildlife land?

Why I'm asking this is we have that situation beside a main highway, and the problem caused, and I think part of the problem is . . . actually the problem is increased because of this wildlife land, that there's a great amount of deer that are hit along that highway. And the cost, as we know, comes back to us, the public.

And is that a consideration when looking at this land, to turning it into the major thoroughfares? Could even be a rural road even, that's very heavily travelled.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The purchase of wildlife lands is generally a willing buyer, willing seller. And because the dollars available are very limited, we are confined to buying the best remaining habitat. Like some RMs, we don't have any habitat — for an example, just south of Regina where there's virtually no habitat left.

So we do look at the best remaining habitat. And granted, some of these are along roads. We have so many roads, of course, in

Saskatchewan that it's hard to get away from road . . . at least rural road allowances within the south part of the province here.

So that is certainly a consideration, and I recognize what you're raising here. And what we are finding, because of fragmented habitat you will find dead deer along the road upwards of a mile or more away from the nearest trees. But certainly, if there is deer collision problems along wildlife development fund lands, we would work with the Department of Highways to put up deer crossing signs.

So again, it's a willing buyer; willing seller. And there's so few good pieces of habitat left that, if it's along a main road we probably would buy it if it was available for sale and we could arrive at a price on it.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think . . . like in this case I know it has created a much bigger problem along this highway. They have to cross the railroad tracks — the train has been hitting a large number of them — but along that stretch of highway, probably for 10 miles, it's nothing every day to go up there, and you can go every day of the week, and see two or three new carcasses up there.

Another question, and to do with the same thing, when land is also turned in . . . I have a case in mind where there's a large feed lot — but I know there's other problems where farmers are situated and all of a sudden we have a wildlife quarter near there and it affects their yard — is this another consideration that's taken in before it's granted to go under the wildlife? What it will do to the farmers . . . like their feed, the disruption with the extra amount of wildlife that are brought into that area, the problem it causes for farmers — and in my case about a 2,000 head feed lot — and it's causing them all kinds of problems this last two years.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Again to the hon. member, our policy is: willing buyer; willing seller.

And being we want to remain good neighbours with people who we do purchase land next to, we will do what we can to maintain weeds and what have you. And I guess we would view that buying a parcel of land in an area where most of the remaining land has been cleared as perhaps helping the neighbours out and at least providing some cover and food supply for wildlife, which goes far and beyond white-tailed deer.

But certainly with the increased deer population in the last few years and also the different farming practices — farmers growing crops which deer really like — we are having some management problems. And we are looking forward to working with landowners and RMs and wildlife federation branches to resolve these conflicts. So we try to be good neighbours when we do purchase land and like we'd ask anybody else to be.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I understand what you're saying, but as RMs out there I know from our end of it we're trying to be environmentally friendly and go along with a lot of the things you're doing, but we have a hard time with this when it's creating problems for us out there.

And Ducks Unlimited is probably another example of land that's being set aside for stuff like that, and then the wildlife land. And the more of this that comes on stream, our problem is bigger and bigger and bigger. Do you have any control over land to . . . or do you have to okay it were Ducks Unlimited are setting aside land?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — With response to that, whether its the wildlife federation, Ducks Unlimited, or the wildlife development fund, what we are trying to do is secure and preserve sort of remnants of the wildlife habitat. And as the habitat disappears, wildlife will concentrate in some of the areas where there is habitat. And I guess the alternative is to sort of clear it all and we wouldn't have wildlife, which none of us want to see.

Ducks Unlimited, for an example, has to go through the Farm Ownership Board to acquire lands. And although in a particular area it may seem as though there's a lot of wildlife lands, in southern Saskatchewan less than 1 per cent of the land base is set aside either to Ducks Unlimited, wildlife federation, or the department. So when you see a section of land set aside for wildlife it may seem like a lot, but on the provincial scale it's a very small amount.

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

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 24 and Bill No. 49.

(1215)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Labour
Vote 20

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

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Beside me I have Brian King, who is the deputy minister of the Department of Labour. To my right is Noela Bamford; she is the executive director of the labour services branch. And behind me is Jeff Parr, who is the executive director of occupational health and safety.

Item 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we left off some time ago, we were talking about the reorganization and the changes, downsizing in your department. And I believe there were something like 13 full-time equivalents that had been reduced in your department. And I think we were talking about how this organizational change was affecting your department in terms of a general sense and, you know, how you were managing this downsizing and what impact that was having on your staff, the morale, the anxiety, and how it was being handled. Would you bring us up to date on that?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well we're still short 13 people from what we had before, mainly budget driven, or totally budget driven. Organizational review will be ongoing within the department, I would think, over a period of the next few months. And we expect that the department will be working with other agencies that they come in contact with, other departments, in finding the best ways in which to deliver the programs that we're responsible for.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. In regard to this organizational review that you're conducting, are you conducting it in terms of re-jigging your department structure to recognize there's 13 people missing, or are you looking at an overall analysis of the efficiencies of your department that could indeed lead to further full-time equivalent positions being cut into the future? Is your review broader than just the 13 positions?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The review is much broader than the 13 positions. The review though is not finding any further efficiencies, so to speak, within the department.

We have a relatively small staff compared to most departments within executive government. And the review that we'll be doing is looking at how we can best deliver the program that we're expected to deliver to people within the province. It may mean some changes in responsibilities. It may mean a new-looking organizational chart. It may mean that we find ways in which we can deliver a program better.

But it's certainly not any view of further positions being lost within the department. We already have a bare minimum of staff, and we have to find ways of focusing on the programs that we're responsible for, so we can deliver good quality service into the future.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Would you also have available, or could you make available, how many managerial positions you would have, as compared to how many in-scope positions?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We can make that available to you now. We won't be able to project what that will look like into the future. But at such time as we've had a look at various things that we can do within the department, we can provide you with an updated organizational chart at that time. And it would set out the management . . . or in-scope and out-of-scope employees in the department.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Of the 13 full-time-equivalent positions that have been lost, have you decided or has it been decided how many of those positions would be in scope and how many out of scope?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Six were in scope . . . it was 12.5 positions actually. I'm informed there were six in scope, six out of scope.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Point five just went missing.

Minister, your department, I believe, is also responsible for the provincial mediators?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Would you mind outlining how many you have; how they're chosen; and what their mandate would be?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We have four people that are in-house that perform that role. One is on sick leave at the moment. The other three people would be Terry Stevens, Michaela Keet, and Peter Suderman. They have mediation skills and that's the type of skill we're looking for to work within the department in a mediation role. Their backgrounds . . . I know Mr. Stevens quite well and have for a number of years; I'm not as familiar with the backgrounds of Mr. Suderman and Ms. Keet.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Is there a requirement, a professional requirement, in terms of background, university education, or things of that nature that are sort of prerequisite in terms of these type of people?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — There's no designation at any post-secondary educational institution as far as I'm aware anywhere in Canada, that designates somebody is there, a trained mediator or conciliator. There are various classes and workshops that the employees within that branch would take from time to time to improve their skills and look at new methods that have been used in mediation.

Michaela Keet I believe has a Bachelor of Laws degree and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Saskatchewan. I don't know that I have Mr. Suderman's qualifications but I'm quite certain he has a university degree as well. Mr. Stevens, although I don't believe he has a university degree, he was involved for many, many years as a representative of the steelworkers and has worked in that role very effectively. And we feel that all three of those people who are currently in the field for us have very effective mediation skills.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, you mentioned one of the mediators has a background from the steelworkers and experience through labour negotiations and things from that perspective.

Is that the kind of person . . . It just strikes me is, that this is the kind of person perhaps that would be more biased or perceived to be more biased towards one of the parties perhaps that might be in need of mediation rather than an independent, impartial, sort of non-biased person.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Our conciliation mediation is voluntary and the parties ask for these people to come in. And I'm not accustomed, as the Minister of Labour, of having someone go in in a mediation, in a conciliation role, that would be unacceptable to either party. So although there could be some perceived bias from time to time, it's the parties who are in a dispute that actually ask for the people to come into the situation.

So I can see where there might be a perception there, but in reality it does not have a negative effect on the work because they are requested to come into the dispute.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, if they're requesting mediation, do

the two parties agree and request a specific mediator or do they just request from your department mediation services?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Both. There'll be some times where they would request mediation, not knowing who they're looking for, and other times the parties may ask for a specific individual.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, I want to switch a bit now into the area of administration. And I see in the descriptive paragraph that indicates some of the services that are provided, that part of the services are to the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat. Would you mind outlining for us, please, what services your department provide to that Secretariat?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Administrative services. It would be in the area of doing their accounting and their human resources.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Can you indicate approximately how much those services . . . or how much of your department's budget those services would entail?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We provide that service. There's not a dollar figure attached to it but it would take about 10 per cent of the time. I should also say, in addition to human resources and accounting functions, they also do payroll for that organization.

Mr. Gantefoer: — It also indicates in that descriptive paragraph that you provide services to the Women's Secretariat. Would they be similar services?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Pretty well exactly the same services, yes.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I also see in the back of the *Estimates* book that there is a Women's Secretariat with 13 full-time equivalent positions. How is it that you provide some of the services and they're not all rolled into the Women's Secretariat?

(1230)

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well it's a matter of efficiencies. Both the Women's Secretariat and the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat, I think those are the only two we perform the administrative, human resource, and payroll functions for. They're small entities and they wouldn't, I think, be well served with full-time people performing those roles both within the Women's Secretariat and with the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat. So we have the pleasure and responsibility to do those three functions for the two agencies.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Under accommodation and central services, I notice approximately 125,000 decrease in that budget category. What's the reason? Are you . . . and that, as it says, payments to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) for office space, etc. Are you using less office space or how do you explain the decrease?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No, we're not using less office space. We negotiated a rent reduction.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I would like to move briefly to another area — and I'm pleased to see your official is here this morning, so I think it's quite effective — and that is occupational health and safety. There was a number of changes to the regulations and things of that nature awhile back, I understand. Would you mind outlining the nature of those changes and regulations and how you led to the KPMG report that evaluated the impact of these.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We don't have time today to get into all the changes. The regulations are quite comprehensive. You would have inches of paper that outline all the regulation changes.

But basically the intent is to make sure that workplaces are as safe as they can possibly be. You'll find provisions within the occupational health and safety regulations that deal with having occupational health and safety committees, having training for those committees in the workplace.

And hopefully in the final analysis when all is working as we envisage it working, we'll have safer workplaces whereby there'll be some view of self-regulation within the workplace because you'll have management and workers working together, because I think we all want to, regardless of our walk in life, to have safer working places for the men and women of this province.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, you had a report on these changes done by KPMG that . . . I have a copy that you were kind enough to provide some time ago, dated November 23. In it, it outlined that if all the changes were implemented, there would be an industry cost impact of some $18.3 million. And I believe that the clippings or the press reports, when you received that report, was that you were going to review it or study it or take it under advisement. Could you please advise as to where the response to this report is in your department.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, I'm sorry; I should have responded to that when I on my feet for the last answer. But the KPMG report, we must remember, was on draft regulations. They weren't finalized. And also it was a draft report from KPMG that was given some degree of press coverage when it was first released.

And you're accurate. They took the extreme situation and determined that it could cost as much as about eighteen and half million dollars to implement the occupational health and safety regulations.

This has been part of the hold-up in the regulations not having been brought through the process yet. We've tried to find ways and I think we have been effective. We're getting into the final stages of keeping the costs of the implementation of the regulations down while at the same time not compromising the intent to make sure that workplaces are safer by having the regulations come into place.

One of the items for example, would be training. Training can be a very costly item. We think we've found some effective ways to enhance the training program, have it consistent, have it certified, and a delivery mechanism that we think will serve us

well and keep the cost down.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, there are some . . . in reading the report, there's a great many of the changes to regulations that are very welcomed. That seemed, although they may have common impacts to business and employers, they're very supportive of them and they're just very common-sensical kinds of things that indeed are going to go a long way to improving the workplace safety.

There are also some though that have some concerns raised that I would like to address briefly, and I certainly don't want to get into all the regulations and details. One of the areas that was outlined as questioned in terms of it's appropriateness is the harassment policy. There was a cost of approximately . . . or almost $1.5 million, and the question is really, where is that section of the proposed regulations at?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The item that you refer to, in terms of harassment in the workplace and the cost attached to it, that's a very soft kind of cost action. What I mean by that is that there's a duty of employers to consult and communicate with their employees.

Harassment in the workplace has become a very large issue and a very large problem for all of society, and something that needs to be dealt with. Over time we need to, first off, make sure we have enough resources to do investigations and to do the training to make sure that people are not harassed in the workplace either sexually or physical harassment.

And so the dollar item you're referring to has to do with an obligation of employers to consult and discuss and try and put into place a harassment policy within each workplace.

Many workplaces currently have harassment policies, both sexual and personal harassment. And it's unfortunate that, although the basics would be the same in each place, there are likely situations that differ from workplace to workplace, and the employers have to be obligated to figure that out with their employees.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, is there not a duplication or an overlap between your department working with these harassment policies in the workplace and things like the human rights guidelines maybe, working out of Justice. I wonder how you reconcile those two things, and are they being coordinated?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well our focus, our focus has an element to it that the Human Rights Commission and others would not have. We're into prevention; we don't want to be reacting to areas where there's been a crisis situation already.

Part of what we want to do through the occupational health and safety regulations is to make sure that people are knowledgeable, people are trained, people have all the tools they need to work in a harmonious workplace or develop a harmonious workplace if it doesn't exist at the current time. So we're more into the prevention side than we are in the complaint driven, or we certainly want to move in that direction.

On the other hand, if there's a harassment issue, we are sometimes called in to try and remedy the situation. I think the best example of that is a situation at the Prince Albert laundry, where there were allegations of personal harassment of the employees by a management person and eventually . . . it took several months and several thousands of dollars but there was a resolve to that situation. So we do go in and act, but we want our focus in the long term to be one on training and prevention.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, another area of concern that was expressed was the whole area of record keeping and the paper trail on all this area. And I believe it said that it could cost companies up to two and a half million dollars for this increased record keeping. Could you tell me what you anticipate is going to happen with this area and is it going to be changed and moderated?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I'm informed by the officials that there are many changes in that area. We've had a very strong focus on reducing the paper burden. Some of the items, for example equipment that could possibly fall from a location, it was initially required to be removed and tagged every year. Instead of doing that, there's more of an inspection of it so that both the management and the employees know that it's a safe workplace. And I think you'll find when the regulations are finally proclaimed, that there's a great reduction in the paper burden to employers but at the same time, not compromising the integrity of safe workplaces.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Another area that seems to have caused some concern is this shifting of the requirements in terms of sound levels from 85 decibels, I believe, to 80 decibels in the workplace. The cost is again quite high. Could you tell me on what scientific or subjective type of . . . objective type of information that you move from 85 to 80 decibels?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — What we basically looked at was what's happening in other jurisdictions, and I think moving to the 80 decibels is not out of line with other jurisdictions.

The other thing to remember in the development of the occupational health and safety regulations, there was extensive consultation with employers and employees. They got together and there's a fairly wide acceptance. In fact I would think that most of the occupational health and safety regulations come from a consensus position. And it's my understanding, or at least I think it is, that this was something that there was consensus on between employers and employees that were represented on the committee.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Another area that seems to be of great concern is that this whole process is going to require a great deal of discussion and consultation, and it indicated that in year one it could be something as high as $6.2 million. Has the process of this consultation about these regulations been thought out, and has that been streamlined so that that cost can be minimized?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — The answer to that is yes. This is one example where I think I mentioned earlier, KPMG in some cases took an extreme example. You'd have to be consulting, I

think, more than what anyone had in mind to actually run up that kind of a bill on the consultation and meeting expenses. So there's been some work done on that, and we don't think that it's going to be as onerous a cost as what was initially put out. We think we've come to grips with that.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, I certainly don't want to necessarily be defending KPMG, although my son-in-law works for them in Calgary. But it says in the report, if consultations with all workers were accounted for, the cost would likely be 50 per cent higher. That doesn't seem to me that they were overstating it if they allowed that extra 50 per cent.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well what they're saying is that if you had to consult with every single worker in the workplace, that may be so.

But I believe, at least in my mind, the way that this will work out is that in the workplace, you'll have an occupational health and safety committee. The occupational health and safety committee will then be responsible for disseminating information and doing consultation with the rest of the people in the workplace. So the time consumption, as far as management would be concerned, would be more with the actual occupational health and safety committee itself in the workplace which would be co-chaired by a management and a non-management person.

(1245)

Mr. Gantefoer: — And when you speak of the chairs of the occupation health and safety committees, one of the comments that were made in the report as well is that these new regulations are going to make that workload very large. The quote here is "becoming overwhelming." And companies anticipate the new regulations will require half- to full-time commitment by co-chairs.

Have you again looked at that, and would you define or tell me the role of these co-chairs — who pays for each of them, where they come from, and give us a little background on these co-chairs of these committees.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — In your larger workplaces in Saskatchewan, they would already have occupational health and safety committees. So they're working there effectively now, but there are many workplaces in Saskatchewan that do not have an occupational health and safety committee in the workplace.

The payment would be the responsibility of the employer, of management, and it depends on the size of the workplace, to be quite frank about it. If you had the largest employer in Saskatchewan, that might be true — the statement you made about it requiring that amount of time to perform the duty. On the other hand, if it's a workplace where you have 25 employees, it would take nowhere near that amount of time for the committee to perform their role.

How are the committees chosen? The committees are chosen . . . the management co-chair would be chosen by management by some process and the employee co-chair would be chosen by the other employees by some process that they would put in place within their own workplace. And anywhere where you have a good deal of harmony within a company, between management and the employees, you'll find that these committees will work very, very effectively.

In some cases where there's strained relationships between management and the employees of a company, we're willing to help in that regard. That's where you can have some proactivity in terms of mediation, conciliation; also drawing on the resources of the occupational health and safety branch to come out and put together a system that would be hopefully acceptable.

But in the vast majority of cases, occupational health and safety committees work quite well and it's not a cumbersome cost on them.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, you indicated that you're reviewing these regulations and finding ways to make them less costly and things of that nature. Would you indicate who's involved with that process. Is that entirely internal to the department, and if it is, would you consider opening that up so that the employers and perhaps the more public discussion could happen in terms of the actual implementation.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Discussion has already happened. And The Occupational Health and Safety Act came in; in 1993 it was passed. That's getting on to three years ago.

I'm not taking the regulations again out for public consultation. There's been, in my opinion, adequate consultation. The review that's being done now is internal. There's work being done by Mr. Parr, who is here today, amongst his other duties that he has.

Workers' Compensation Board would have a special interest in this. And as you know, the Workers' Compensation Board is an organization that is funded by employers' premiums so they have an interest in this as well.

And I think the process has been open in the past and it gets more confined as you get to the finalization of the regulations.

And I think that opening up to another round of public consultations would delay the regulations to the point where I would feel very uncomfortable that I wouldn't have got the regulations proclaimed.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, I guess the point I'm leading to is we have in the public mind, now that the implementation of these regulations are going to be something in the order of $18.3 million as per the KPMG report, as part of this review, are you going to then sort of re-establish or re-identify and answer the issues that were raised in the KPMG report; and secondly, put actual costs . . . or updated estimates as to what this is actually going to cost employers?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, we'll be providing that.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Can you indicate to us what the time line is on this? Are we looking for this very quickly or very soon, or

are we looking forward to it two or three months down the line? Or what's your time line?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I rise with some deal of embarrassment to answer that question. I've been telling people ever since I was appointed as Minister of Labour that they're just around the corner. It's obviously gotten to be a very, very big corner, and I haven't gone around it yet.

I expect that very soon is the best I can say, and I ask Mr. Parr and I ask Mr. King, get these regulations forward. And I say that again today, and you can tell me and I'll tell them again, but we're working together as expeditiously as possible. Is that right, Mr. Parr? Mr. King? Yes we are. So it'll be soon.

And you understand the process is that once we're done with the regulations, looking at them internally, they'll go to the Regulations Committee; from Regulations Committee from cabinet; and then they'll be proclaimed.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I've come to be very suspicious of definitions of soon or around the corner in politics, because even a week can seem like a lifetime in this profession. Are we looking like . . . potentially midsummer or mid-fall, or months, weeks, what?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Soon equals July.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. And I assume that we'll have copies of all those regulations, or could we have them sooner to look at where they're at?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — They're actually gazetted. The regulations are always gazetted in the *Saskatchewan Gazette*, so I mean anyone who subscribes to the *Saskatchewan Gazette* would see what the regulations are. And I suppose that if there was some particular concern you had, if you could express that to us, we could try and provide you with some information during the process as to what's there.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Well I guess, Minister, what I'm thinking of are the ones that are particularly being reviewed in terms of maybe adjusting them, changing them, modifying them to get this more cost-effective and more efficient as you've indicated this review process was intending to do.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, people have 60 days during which they're gazetted to offer comment and things that they think should be corrected or changed. The items in the process where we're going to keep the cost down, I think, you'll have to rely on KPMG when they do their final report.

And I think that the validity of their numbers, you would have some degree more trust for, than me telling you in the House what the figure would be. And I think that's likely the best way to establish how much we've able to keep the cost down, is by the KPMG final report.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Will the KPMG final report then sort of be as a result of the modifications and changes that you've made within your department and will then really be a report that updates the final cost impact of these changes?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Gantefoer: — And that, as well, anticipated in July, or soon, or sooner or later?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I would anticipate that sooner, because there's no use in having the proclamation and then have the report come out after and say that these are even more expensive than they were before. I'd find that to be bad politics, even for the judgement that I show sometimes. So definitely the final report would be prior to the proclamation of the regulations.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. I want to move to another area and just start it briefly, because I know that we won't have time to get into any detail. But I would like to ask you, in terms of the Workers' Advocate that's part of your department's responsibilities, would you also . . . would you please outline what the responsibilities and the role of that department or that individual is?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the normal role that's set out for a Workers' Advocate, if someone has made application to the Workers' Compensation Board, the Workers' Advocate would help them through the steps to people who understand the Workers' Compensation system quite well.

Some injured workers, unfortunately, feel a bit intimidated by the process. In other cases, they may be turned down and need to appeal. The Workers' Advocates are very good at helping people through the process with Workers' Compensation.

Mr. Gantefoer: — What percentage of your department's funding is involved with that department or that program?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I don't have a quick percentage, but the total for the Workers' Advocate is $267,000. And that would be out of a budget of $9.1 million. So $267,000 is the total for Workers' Advocate out of the $9.1 dollar budget that we work with.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:58 p.m.