

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of concerned citizens with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The prayer reads:

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

The names on the petition are primarily from the city of Regina and smaller communities in the area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The communities these people represent are Maple Creek, Fox Valley, Weyburn, and numerous other southern Saskatchewan communities.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of concerned citizens from throughout the province. They are concerned about the closure of the . . . the impending 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 from Balcarres, Weyburn, Viceroy, Regina, Wadena, Chamberlain, and throughout the province. I so present.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Weyburn, Kyle, Yorkton, Norquay, Canora, and many from here within the city of Regina. I so present.

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

reads as follows:

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 Oxbow, Alameda, Carnduff, Carievale, all over southern Saskatchewan.

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

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

The petition is signed, Mr. Speaker, by many concerned citizens of Lumsden, Fort Qu'Appelle, Gravelbourg, Creelman, Southey, Whitewood, and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions of names regarding the Plains Health Centre, and the prayer reads as follows:

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

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from White City, Pilot Butte, and the balance of them are from the city of Regina. I notice a number on Shannon Road, Mitchener Drive, Mayfield Road, in south Regina. Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues today to present petitions on behalf of the people all throughout Saskatchewan to try and save the Plains Health Centre here in Regina. 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, it looks like most of these people are from the Regina area and Yorkton area. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to cause the government to take action to allow an increase in security deposits on rental properties.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for SaskPower: (1) how much is SaskPower paying per month to lease the new Toyota Avalon being driven by SaskPower president Jack Messer; (2) does Mr. Messer have an option to purchase this car at the end of the lease, and if so, what are the terms of this purchase option; (3) how much is SaskPower paying a month to lease the new Toyota Camry being driven by Carole Bryant; (4) does Ms. Bryant have an option to purchase this car at the end of the lease, and if so, what are the terms of this purchase option?

I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 54 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation with regards to leased vehicles: (1) will you please supply a detailed list regarding leases of vehicles for Crown corporation presidents and vice-presidents and government agencies; (2) what is the length of the lease for each vehicle; (3) how many of these leases are paid for by Crown corporations; (4) what is the average cost of the vehicles leased; (5) how much is spent annually on the lease of vehicles for government officials?

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Enable the Recovery of Funds Stolen by Members of the Legislative Assembly; the short title, The House Internal Economy Fraud Act, or THIEF Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Members will come to order.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really am very, very pleased this morning to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature, probably one of the largest groups that it's ever been my pleasure to introduce. We have with us today 160 — 160 — school safety patrol members. These 160 students are here as part of the Canadian Automobile Association Sixth Annual Provincial School Safety Patrol Jamboree. And they are seated not only in the west gallery but also in the east gallery.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are all very familiar with these young people as they stand outside their schools at their crosswalks in all weather, ensuring that our children cross streets safely. In fact many of us likely were school patrollers when we were young; I know that I was.

So in some small way today I think we can say thank you to them for being part of the school safety patrols, and I will ask you to join me in extending to all of them a very warm welcome. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to all the members of this House, four ladies seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. These ladies are from the Saskatchewan and Regina chapters of FRIENDS Incorporated. That acronym, Mr. Speaker, stands for Fibromyalgia Research Information Education and New Directions Inc.

The ladies that I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, are Anne Herley, who is the president of the Regina fibromyalgia group — Anne, would you stand, please — Donna Gordon, vice-president of the Saskatchewan chapter; Yvonne Makie, who is the founder and Chair of FRIENDS; and Noreen Northcott, who is the co-founder and Co-Chair of FRIENDS. Please make welcome the four ladies of FRIENDS.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to other members of the House, a lady seated in the west gallery, a friend of mine from the Eston area, Mrs. Heather Piatt. Heather is a school teacher in the Eston School.

From time to time I have the pleasure of doing business with her husband, Jack Piatt, who is a representative for Investors Group. And I would ask all members to welcome her here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a long-time friend and associate of mine sitting behind the bar here, a former cabinet minister, a distinguished educator; now he has a retired life and is enjoying life to the fullest. I'd like you all to welcome John Penner.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Preeceville Fire

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like the people of Preeceville to know my thoughts are with them in the aftermath of a devastating fire that totally destroyed four downtown businesses early Thursday morning.

This is an extremely trying time for owners of Sportrends, Golden Leaf Café, Misty Moments Florals, and Downs Garage. Preeceville's mayor, Gary Sawatzky, says, and I quote:

Any time a circumstance like this hits a community it hurts very deeply. Preeceville has a strong business sector, but to lose four stores is devastating for any community.

He goes on to say:

Given the level of provincial offloading, here's a portion of the tax base that's suddenly gone, and if these owners are unable to rebuild, that's a few more jobs gone too.

I would like to commend the caring spirit demonstrated by people in Preeceville's neighbouring communities, whose fire departments also helped battle the blaze. I wish the owners of the destroyed businesses all the best as they wrestle with the option to rebuild. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Weyburn Youth Celebrate 100th Anniversary of Red Cross

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again I'm pleased to bring attention to a unique event held by dedicated people in my constituency.

May 8 was World Red Cross Day. On that day in Weyburn, I attended the only Red Cross 100th Canadian anniversary celebration to be held in Saskatchewan. This celebration was all the more significant to me because it was initiated and organized by youth at the Weyburn Junior High School. The celebration was the culmination of many months of work. The Weyburn Red Cross youth have about 25 members under the guidance of their teacher, Judy Buzowetsky. They have been working extremely hard for the benefit of others. Part of the celebration consisted of the Weyburn youth presenting \$1,000 to the provincial Red Cross, money that this amazing group of kids raised themselves.

But the money is not all. These young people have also put together 30 health care kits for overseas. They made lap robes for seniors and sent greeting cards to the elderly. They have made and contributed stuffed animals to needy children and held many cinnamon bun sales. They help at blood donor clinics, and some volunteer as candystripers. And the list goes on. Other volunteers from Weyburn and other communities in the area were also honoured for their many contributions to the many and various Red Cross programs.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly proud of the Weyburn Red Cross youth for making the effort to honour and recognize the incredible contribution that the Red Cross has made to our world, our country, and our province. They have followed the tradition of the Red Cross; where there is need, they've helped. I am proud of how dedicated these young people are in serving others. What fine examples they are for all of us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mother's Day

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday, mothers across Saskatchewan will receive some much deserved recognition. We all know what an extremely important role mothers play in today's society, especially under all the increasing pressures and demands. They provide invaluable guidance, nurturing, leadership, and love. Unfortunately many mothers are often taken for granted, but their love and support should never be forgotten.

So on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to salute all mothers and grandmothers across Saskatchewan. You deserve this special day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our colleague has noted, Sunday is Mother's Day, and although we have the pressures of business in this Assembly and a busy day ahead of us, it is only right and proper, I believe, that we take a moment to honour our mothers. After all, politicians, too, have mothers and they are quite willing to stand by us in bad times and with us in the good.

One day is not enough of course, but we do need to formally pay attention to our mothers, or where necessary, treasure their memories. The time-tested ways of recognizing our mothers, I suppose, are the best. And I know those of us who can will provide the traditional meal, card, visit, phone call, gift, or whatever combination is appropriate.

But as well, Mr. Speaker, Mother's Day, even with all its commercial pomp, gives us the opportunity to reflect somewhat beyond the merely sentimental. The term "mother" after all reminds us of selflessness, of love freely given whether it's deserved or not; of tolerance for imperfection — qualities we could all have a bit more of regardless of our gender, our age, or our parental status.

So on this day, as on all days, I thank my mother for giving me so many gifts, not the least of which is the gift of life, and I'm happy to honour her and to honour all mothers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia Awareness Day

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Sunday, May 12, is also a very special day for a large group of people across Canada. People from across the country will recognize thousands of Canadians who suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, these diseases are often misunderstood and misdiagnosed, but they can seriously debilitate people, often making it difficult to pursue normal lives. One British publication described chronic fatigue syndrome by saying:

Imagine you had a severe, constant hangover plus daily influenza, muscle pain, and exhaustion as though you had run a marathon and could not think or comprehend anything for weeks, months, or even years.

Symptoms of fibromyalgia include headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and amplified pain in the muscles and tendons.

Mr. Speaker, Beryl Gaffney, the Member of Parliament for Nepean, has collected over 15,000 signatures of petitions from every province. These petitions call on the federal government to recognize CFS (chronic fatigue syndrome) and fibromyalgia

as official diseases, to set identification guidelines; and to ensure care, treatment, comfort, and dignity.

I ask all members of the Assembly today to become active in creating awareness among the public, doctors, and educators, about these two illnesses affecting many thousands of people in Canada. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada Health Day and Registered Psychiatric Nurses' Day

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize Canada Health Day, which is on Sunday, May 12, and also Registered Psychiatric Nurses' Day, which is today. I think that good health is the greatest form of wealth. Perhaps that's why people in Saskatchewan value their health care system as much as they do, and Saskatchewan's people are the healthiest people in the world.

This year's theme, "A New Perspective On Health", highlights the view that health encompasses many factors such as where we live and how we live and the quality of health care. Our wellness approach fits into this theme well with this emphasis on illness prevention, education, and quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, psychiatric nurses play a very important role in health care. Their motto is, "Seeing People Through". And they can be found in hospitals, clinics, schools, and many other facilities, teaching people about mental illness, how to prevent it, and how to recognize it and where to go for help. The registered psychiatric nurses association is working to promote a greater awareness and better understanding of mental health issues. But they are also seeing people through when they need help.

I would like to thank the association and their members and their tremendous contribution to health and wellness in communities throughout this province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Globe Theatre Fund-raiser

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, as some clown Shakespeare once said, "The play's the thing." Well for His Hon. the Lieutenant Governor, Mrs. Wiebe, for the member for Regina-Qu'Appelle Valley, for the mayor of Regina and some city councillors and for myself and for about 25 other Regina fugitives from modesty, the play this weekend is certainly the thing.

I'm speaking of course of the Globe Theatre's third celebrity fund-raising production to be performed at the Globe tonight and tomorrow night, 8 p.m. both nights, with a reception to follow, and all proceeds going to the Globe Theatre.

I use the word celebrity, Mr. Speaker, very loosely. This happy band of Thespians will be performing a play called "The Dining Room" by A. R. Gurney, a play which uses the setting of one dining-room for a series of quick scenes which depict the unfolding breadth and depth of life during much of this century.

The play by turns is witty, sad, moving, and yes, even political at times. It presents a rich tapestry of humanity. I urge all who can, both within and without the legislature, to attend. Your support will help the Globe plan for its new season and you will, I believe, find it to be a very well . . . an evening very pleasantly spent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Head Farmer Elected President of the Soil Conservation Council of Canada

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to congratulate Gerry Willerth, an Indian Head area farmer who was recently elected president of the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, a significant event in that it marks, for the first time, a farmer has been elected to this position.

The Soil Conservation Council of Canada is the national coordinating body for soil and water conservation efforts. It functions as a liaison between farmers and government in the area of land resource policy, development, and programing. Gerry has been an active member in the SCC (Soil Conservation Council of Canada) since 1992 when he was appointed Saskatchewan's representative, and has served as vice-president.

An ardent supporter of soil conservation efforts, Gerry has practised soil conservation on his farm for 20 years. Early in his farming career he recognized where soil degradation was taking place and took measures to correct and prevent the damage. He seeded natural water runs in his fields to grass, planted many miles of maintained shelter belts, and has adopted direct seeding techniques on all his cropped acres.

Gerry has become active in the soil conservation movement and was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association, serving as a board member and as president.

It is good to see Gerry take his talents to the national level. This shows that farmers are taking a lead role in the development of soil conservation policies and programs that ultimately will protect this vital resource for the benefit of us all. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Recovery of Government Funds

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think every member of this House will agree that the most disappointing part about being elected to the Legislative Assembly is the public cynicism that greets us daily, cynicism bred by the dishonest and unethical Conservative administration of the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, the court has dealt with several of the cases involving Tory misuse of taxpayers' dollars. Unfortunately, as

we've seen, the jail sentences imposed in this matter, like too many others in our province, are not carried out, and there's still the matter of money. I want to ask the Premier once again today if his government is looking into ways of recovering at least some of the nearly \$1 million on behalf of the taxpayers, so it can be put towards the many under-funded services in our province.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to the member's question. As you will know, the Board of Internal Economy is responsible for the expenditure of caucus funds, and I think that it would be fair to say that all of us were very much disappointed with respect to the past administration and how the PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus handled public funds.

What I would say to the member is that I would urge him to put a request in writing to the Board of Internal Economy with respect to this initiative. I think that if there is an opportunity to recover public funds, that it would be best dealt with by the Board of Internal Economy. You have a member, sir, as Leader of the Opposition, on that board, as do members of government and as do members of the third party, who may, as well, be interested in recovering these funds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response and as an ex-member of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), I can only imagine the thousands of dollars that has been spent on the investigation and subsequent trials in this sorry affair. This is money that obviously could have been spent elsewhere.

I realize the major players in this conspiracy may not be in the position to pay back the hundreds of thousands of dollars stolen from the taxpayers. That's why we are introducing The THIEF Act which will hold parties responsible for their members.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a personal vendetta against any individual. It's a matter of ensuring that we uphold justice; that it is served, not only perceived to have been served. There's a cliché that says, we hate the sin but we love the sinner, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Premier if his government will support this Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, specifically with respect to the Act, I think that members of the government side would want to have a look at the content of the legislation. I would want to say to the member that it may be appropriate to put your request for action on this matter in writing to the Board of Internal Economy. And through the board we can pass on these concerns that all of us have to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. And I would want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it may be supported as well by the members of the third party who also have representatives on that board.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Economic Development

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The annual meeting of the chamber of commerce in North Battleford this week left members feeling very frustrated with the government's lack of commitment to business.

Albert Lowe, president of North Battleford's Chamber of Commerce, asked, and I quote:

When is this government going to stop playing politics with the issues we have in economic development and start dealing with the problems?

Many of the problems that have been created by the government, such as workers' compensation fiascos and the Crown tendering policies.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier said yesterday that members of the Assembly have a right to their own opinion on issues such as boycotting small-business retailers. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell me when his government will start actually listening to the concerns of business and make economic development a priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite obviously wasn't at the chamber meeting in North Battleford, as my colleague the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Environment and the minister of continuing education was, because the meeting was very positive and upbeat.

And I can guarantee you that the working relationship between the government and the business community is in fact very, very positive. Unlike, I might say, the relationship between business and the official opposition, given the fact that Crown Life has publicly commented on the negative aspect of the questions that the members opposite continually raise.

I just urge you, Madam Member, to get on the agenda; be more positive. And if you would have been at the chamber meeting in North Battleford, you would have found a very, very cooperative spirit existed at the meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Crown Life isn't the only business in Saskatchewan. The chamber of commerce represents a huge percentage of businesses in this province. The chamber association is asking the government to scrap the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement).

We are asking the government to make Workers' Compensation Board accountable to the stakeholders who actually pay the premiums. We've also asked for a review of the oppressive labour regulations that have been imposed.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Economic Development tell the people of this province when he will admit that the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement is a costly mistake and scrap this legislation, as Saskatchewan businesses have asked at the chamber of commerce meeting?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to reiterate some of what the Minister of Economic Development answered in regards to the first question, and it was a very positive meeting yesterday that we attended. In fact it was so positive, I'd inform the member opposite that in answer to one of the questions, myself, as Minister of Labour, I actually had someone clapping in the audience. That's how positive the meeting was.

The members opposite continue to preach doom and gloom. They talk about regressive legislation in the province. I would submit to the members opposite that Saskatchewan has some of the most progressive legislation in many, many areas that should be creating the positive climate for business and for people to live in their communities that we promote, and they chastise all the time.

It's not correct to do that. We want the members opposite to be as positive as the Saskatchewan business community are, as well as the positive aspect that this government puts forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Proposed Health Legislation

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister talks about progressive legislation. This government has brought forward three pieces of legislation this session which will give unilateral control of health to the Minister of Health. Your government has promised just the opposite, Mr. Speaker. The government has promised to give control to the people and to the communities.

Due to the absolute control of health care by the minister through these regulations of this legislation, will the Minister of Health today, or a designate, table all the regulations pertaining to Bills 76, 77, and 82?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the legislative process, the member is well aware that legislation in broad concept is debated, passed, or defeated in this House; that the process of regulation is a process that is worked out with affected stakeholders and groups in the community. And regulations are then brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

Now I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the appropriate question that the member from Arm River should address himself to is a more fundamental question, and that is the question of two-tiered medicine. The member has very publicly stated — and I'm quoting generally — that if we have money we should be able to or should be required to pay for our medical services. He's earned a bit of a reputation out in the country as the two-tiered member from Arm River.

Will the member from Arm River now in his next question declare to this House and to the people of his constituency, to the people of the province, is he a proponent of two-tiered medicine?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we have been informed by health officials that in fact cabinet has already approved the regulations for this legislation. What has the government got to hide from the people of Saskatchewan? You've got the regulations; they've been approved by cabinet. Will you table those regulations today in this House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Arm River, like many of his colleagues, comes into this House on a daily basis with all sorts of accusations of fact —of fact, Mr. Speaker, and then of course a day later, it's clear to all concerned that it's not fact at all but the imagination of the members. Now, Mr. Speaker, again I ask that member . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order! Order, order. Now I'll . . . order! Now the Speaker was having some difficulty hearing the question being put, and now I'm having even more difficulty hearing the answer being spoken. I am asking for the cooperation of all members on both sides of the House to allow question period to proceed, to allow the questioner to put the question, and the minister to respond.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would ask that member to clearly identify for the people of this province and the members of the House and the members of his . . . people in his constituency, what is his position on medicare.

We know the position of the Liberal Party in 1962. Mr. Speaker, we know the party . . . we know the position of that party in 1962; they opposed medicare. Now we have members of the Liberal Party saying publicly that we should be paying for our medical services. The member from Arm River said that very publicly, Mr. Speaker.

I ask him then which services, which medical services, which hospital procedures, which doctor services, does the member from Arm River suggest that we should pay for as individuals? Does he, does that party, support a single-payer, universal medicare system in this province and nation or not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Executives' Car Leases

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, you just can't seem to keep them under control, can you? It looks like Jack Messer has forgotten all about his little austerity program he went on back in 1992 when he gave up his \$35,000 Lexus. He's now driving a top of the line Toyota luxury car — a 1996 Avalon worth about \$48,000 after taxes. And SaskPower's paying for the lease. Mr. Minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order! Order! Now when the Speaker calls for order, he expects order on both sides of the House. Order. And I'm having great difficulty being able to hear the question being put by the Leader of the Third Party. I

will ask for all members to come to order and allow the member to put his question.

Mr. Boyd: — The 1996 Avalon is worth about \$48,000 after taxes, and SaskPower is paying for the lease. Mr. Minister, in 1992 when Jack Messer was forced to give up his Lexus, he said a luxury car was inappropriate during tough economic times and he vowed that his next vehicle wouldn't exceed the average cost of vehicles leased for SaskPower executives.

Mr. Minister, what happened to Jack Messer's commitment to restraint? Why is SaskPower once again leasing a luxury vehicle for Jack Messer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the question that the member has posed. And I'm pleased to because it gives me the opportunity to describe to him, and members of the general public, the policy that has been put in place by this government with respect to executive vehicles in the Crown corporation sector.

But I also want to begin by saying, Mr. Speaker, that his research assistant from the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) is of no better quality than the ones he hires within his caucus. The information was given to the reporter who questioned this yesterday, but he chose not to use it. And this member chooses not to use that information today. So let me confirm for you what the policy is.

The Crown corporations will pay for executive vehicles up to a limit, before taxes, of \$24,000. Anything over and above that is paid by the executives of the corporation out of their own pocket. I think that's a fair way to deal with executive costs. I think it's in tune with what this government has been doing since they've been elected in 1991, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, it looks like old organ-grinder Jack Messer has his newest chimp trained pretty well already.

Mr. Minister, how much is SaskPower paying for Jack Messer's Avalon? If indeed what you say is correct, will you release the lease agreement, including any provision Jack Messer has for an option to purchase this car at the end of the lease. And while you're at it, will you release the same information on Carole Bryant's Camry?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me once again confirm the policy that's been put in place by CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) with respect to executive vehicles. The limit that the corporations will pay for will not exceed the lease amount on a vehicle that costs, before taxes, \$24,000. I want to say that this is across the piece. This is pertinent to every executive in all of the Crowns. I think it is a very responsible approach that the Government of Saskatchewan has taken.

I wish that his party and he, when he was running in 1991 to be part of Grant Devine's administration, had used the same kind

of restraint that this province and this government has used since 1991, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for the Minister of Labour or for the minister that chooses to answer for him, if he will choose to duck again today.

Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan businesses are fed up with your union-preference tendering policy. Now the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce is saying that they are drawing a line in the sand, and they have unanimously passed a resolution calling on you to scrap your union-preference tendering policy, and they're calling on you to scrap this policy immediately. Doesn't sound like so much harmony to me, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, for once will you listen to what the business people of this province are saying. Will you admit that this is a union preference policy? Will you admit that it drives up the cost of Crown construction projects, and will you admit that this regressive, destructive policy is costing this province jobs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well it's interesting that the member would end off his question by referring to jobs. I think it's a very positive day that most recent statistics out show more people in the workforce and more jobs levels . . . the 5,000 for the people of Saskatchewan. So instead of preaching doom and gloom like the Liberals do, why doesn't the member ask a positive question as to what he thinks it is that's fanning the new jobs, the new optimism within Saskatchewan?

On the issue of the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, it's been answered a few times this week in the House. We were almost done the review. Mr. McLaughlan from the Saskatchewan Construction Association wanted to enter into some discussion with Crown Investments Corporation. There was a meeting earlier in the week. There's another meeting scheduled for later this month. And we expect that the review of the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement will be concluded by the end of the month. At that time, the member, as all people in Saskatchewan, will be privileged to know what the results of the review have been. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplemental question for the minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I'm glad you mentioned the job figures, because what you neglected to tell the folks here once again is the fact that there are 2,000 jobs lost in the construction industry in this same time frame from April of this year and April of last year.

Now, Mr. Minister, you also created 10,000 jobs, but it was all in the public sector of service industry which is minimum wage. I'd hardly brag about creating jobs for long-term, sustained activity in this province if they're all in the minimum wage area

of the service industry and in our casinos.

Mr. Minister, Albert Lowe, the president of the North Battleford chamber, says that there is not just one policy that's hurting business in this province. He says there's been an accumulation of policies under your NDP (New Democratic Party) government that are causing these problems. That's exactly what it is, Mr. Minister. It is an accumulation of anti-business, NDP policy.

Workers' compensation, occupational health and safety, labour standards, The Trade Union Act, and all of the regulations that goes with these — you have added one unnecessary regulation after another, one unnecessary cost after another. That's why business people are saying they have drawn a line in the sand. And . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order, order, order, order. The member — order — the member has been lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to put his question directly. Order. Order. Order. I'll ask all members to come to order, allow the hon. member for Cypress Hills to put his question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My direct question to the minister is this: Minister, a little while ago we introduced Bill 19 in this Assembly . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now I asked . . . Order. Order. All members will come to . . . all members . . . Order. Order, order. Now the . . . Order. The hon. member has the right to put his question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the minister directly, will you support Bill 19, our private members' Bill that we've introduced, that will eliminate this destructive policy of Crown tendering for the province?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Do you mind if I answer this? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, thanks.

Well you know, there is no line drawn in the sand, Mr. Speaker. Businesses are optimistic in Saskatchewan. Do you know the main reason businesses are optimistic in Saskatchewan? Because the Tory government is gone; this government has been able to balance the budget; it's been able to set a climate where business can do quite well in the province of Saskatchewan.

We've looked at our strengths through the *Partnership for Renewal* and the *Partnership for Progress*. We've built a strong resource sector in the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm telling you if we hadn't been left with the debt and the legacy of the Tory government in Saskatchewan, on which we have to pay \$850 million a year plus, we could remove the sales tax in Saskatchewan. We'd have even a more positive climate for business, and everybody in Saskatchewan would be prospering a lot more if we got rid of the Tory government years sooner than what we actually did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Infrastructure Program

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year a number of rural municipal governments received approval from this NDP government for road reconstruction projects under the national infrastructure program. In spite of the fact that many of these projects could not be completed last year, this government promised RMs (rural municipality) they would still receive funding to complete these much needed projects this year. Now these same local governments are being told that the program has been fully utilized, and these projects will no longer be approved.

Will the minister explain why her government has broken yet another promise to our local governments in rural Saskatchewan? And also, where in fact did the remainder of the federal infrastructure money go?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say that the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order! Now the Speaker is simply not going to permit members to be shouting across the floor during question period.

An Hon. Member: — I wouldn't either.

The Speaker: — I am not seeking advice from members as to how the House should be conducted — from either side. Now the question has been put, and I ask all members to allow the minister to provide the response.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me say that the contribution to the rural road construction program is exactly the same, at \$33 million, as it was last year. Everybody knew that there was a sunset on the infrastructure funds, and the federal participation was a set number of dollars in the allocation, and it's been fully subscribed to. There still is a pool to pay for projects that were applied for, approved, and not completed.

But there is no reduction in the contribution to construction for rural roads in this province, Mr. Speaker, by our government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Madam Minister, there definitely has been a reduction because if these projects were approved last year for this year and now they are reneged on, that's just another broken promise.

Mr. Speaker, two months ago the federal government made \$85 million commitment to Saskatchewan's rural road system. They indicated at that time that \$20 million would be made available this year, 10 of which was unconditional funding. Rural municipalities now know how much they will be receiving but not when. At the time of this announcement, Ottawa indicated a desire to have the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities distribute these funds to local governments.

Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that this NDP government is

standing in the way of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) distributing these funds. And, Madam Minister, local governments need this money as quickly as possible, not when your government decides it's to your political advantage.

Will the minister make a commitment in this House today to remove any roadblocks and ensure these federal funds will be passed on as quickly as possible?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the member opposite in the Liberal benches would ask our government why the federal money is not forthcoming. We knew absolutely nothing about this announcement, Mr. Speaker, until the federal minister made this announcement at the SARM convention in Regina this year in March. It was a complete surprise to us.

The arrangements were made that the federal government would work with SARM to deliver this money, so if the member opposite has questions about it, I suggest that he direct them to his Liberal friends in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highways Maintenance

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I brought to the attention of the House earlier this week a number of serious problems concerning the highways in this province. I highlighted the fact that the highways will do nothing to win over tourists who may travel through this province.

Mr. Speaker, even Tourism Saskatchewan officials are putting out warnings indicating it will have a negative impact on their industry. They're even going so far, Mr. Speaker, as to warn travellers to stay off certain highway routes.

Will the Minister of Highways, or his designate, explain why when a government agency identifies our highways as a serious concern, he and his government are doing absolutely nothing to address the problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell the member opposite . . . ask him if he might open his eyes to the reality. I mean they want all the highways fixed; they want all the hospitals opened; they want everything just like the old days. Well I'll tell you, the old days were wrecked by the old people who were in power in the old days.

It takes this government, Mr. Speaker, full-time, with all our cabinet members, keeping up to the debt that these guys ran up and the cuts that their federal cousins keep imposing on us. I mean if he wants to complain about the highways, why doesn't he go and talk to Mr. Goodale and Mr. Chrétien in Ottawa.

I mean we are doing the best we can with the money we have. If he wants us to fix the highways, Mr. Speaker, my question to the member opposite is — Mr. Two-Tier over there — is where

should we take it from? Where should we take it from?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

First Reading of a Bill Ruled Out of Order

The Speaker: — The next item on the order paper, the Speaker finds it necessary to make a statement. I would like to preface this ruling with a reminder to members that it is the duty of the Speaker to refuse to propose the question on any motion which is irregular. This is clearly established in parliamentary authorities.

The next item on the order paper is the proposed motion of the member for Saltcoats to move first reading of a Bill to repeal The Service Districts Act. The members will be aware that already on the order paper is Bill No. 33, An Act respecting Service Districts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts; short title, The Service Districts Act.

There being no existent service districts Act as part of the statutes of Saskatchewan, the Speaker must conclude that the proposed legislation of the member for . . . Order!

I will ask for the cooperation of all members. The Speaker is attempting to bring a ruling to the House, and I expect that all members will allow the Speaker to do that.

There being no existent . . . Order! All members.

There being no existent service districts Act as part of the statutes of Saskatchewan, the Speaker must conclude that the proposed legislation of the member for Saltcoats is operable only if Bill No. 33 is passed by the Legislative Assembly.

I point out that the title of a Bill is required to reflect the purposes of the Bill and should therefore cover everything in the Bill. Therefore in this case it is not necessary for the Speaker to see the actual contents of the proposed legislation in order to determine its object.

The object of the Bill proposed by the member for Saltcoats, as clearly established by the title, is to negative Bill No. 33 if it were to pass into law. In effect, first reading motion is an expanded negative, the object of which could be achieved more directly by voting against Bill No. 33.

The principle here is the same as that more commonly observed for amendments to motions. An amendment which would produce the same result as if the original motion were simply negated is out of order.

Consequently, in accordance with the practice of this Assembly, such a motion cannot be proposed from the Chair, and therefore I find the motion for first reading of a Bill to repeal The Service Districts Act to be out of order and I direct its removal from the order paper.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Goohsen: — Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, to propose a motion. By leave.

The Speaker: — By leave, to do which?

Mr. Goohsen: — To propose a motion, before orders of the day.

The Speaker: — Under rule 46? The hon. member for Cypress Hills has requested leave to propose a motion. I would provide for the hon. member for Cypress Hills just momentarily to advise the House as to what specifically he's requesting the House to consider, to be proposed.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have heard recently that the chamber of commerce has passed a resolution to scrap the government's Crown tendering agreement. In light of this and the ongoing economic damage to our province caused by the CCTA, our caucus . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I think the hon. member has given an indication of the subject that he wishes to deal with . . . has not asked for leave to introduce a motion under rule 46. Is leave granted?

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 87 — An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move second reading of The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 1996 (No. 2). Mr. Speaker, our government indicated in the throne speech its concern with finding ways to shift limited financial resources from administration and lower priority infrastructure to the delivery of vital services for people. We believe that this amendment is consistent with our goal.

Mr. Speaker, each of the four largest Crown corporations — SaskTel, SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), SaskEnergy, and SaskPower — are directed by boards of directors appointed by cabinet and are subject to numerous other controls with respect to decisions made by their respective boards of directors. Each board has a cabinet minister as chairman and one or more other cabinet ministers would sit on that board. Crown Investments Corporation, as parent of each of those Crowns, is comprised of a board of directors made up entirely of cabinet ministers.

Each of the Crowns are required to submit for approval their annual capital and operating budgets. This affords CIC an opportunity to review the plans of the individual Crowns and

consider such plans in the context of what all of the Crowns are proposing.

As parent, CIC, through the provision of The Crown Corporations Act, 1993, has considerable statutory authority to require the Crowns to seek and obtain approvals prior to implementing specific initiatives or strategies. Once the Crown capital and operating budgets are approved, all of the Crowns except one may purchase or sell personal property without having to obtain further cabinet authorization.

The exception is SaskPower, which through subsection 10(3) of The Power Corporation Act, must obtain cabinet approval for specific personal property purchases and sales where the price included in the transaction exceeds \$1 million.

This requirement is therefore, notwithstanding that CIC would have already approved the capital operating budgets for SaskPower, and notwithstanding that the purchase or sale of specific personal property would be made within such approvals . . .

This proposed amendment, Mr. Speaker, in no significant way reduces or eliminates the level of accountability required of SaskPower today. The amendment will, however, eliminate the utilization of government resources to process a specific request through the corporation to cabinet when what has been requested falls within an already approved operating plan or capital budget plan.

By eliminating this requirement, all of our major Crowns will essentially be subject to the same external approval requirements, and the people of Saskatchewan will be better served by the elimination of a process which is not necessary, given the other controls available to government.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 1996 (No. 2). Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce two very special people that are with me today, my wife and my daughter, in your gallery. I have asked them to sit in our gallery but they chose to sit in the middle, and so we'll have our discussion on that at a later time.

But I'm also pretty happy that the Minister of Education is in here today because my daughter's skipping kindergarten classes this afternoon and playing hooky. So I would ask the Assembly to welcome my wife Beckie, and my five-year-old daughter Taylor to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 87
(continued)**

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to just make a few brief comments on this particular Bill here today. Unfortunately we have not had much time to collect feedback and to evaluate whether this Bill makes positive changes for the people of Saskatchewan.

Fortunately, it's only one clause long and it's easy to see what the government is proposing to change. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why the government would not have included this in Bill No. 38, The Power Corporation Amendment Act, no. 1. We can only assume that it was an oversight. Still the government obviously thought this change was imperative, so we should be willing to look it over carefully.

As I'm sure the members opposite are aware, we had some very serious concerns about the first Power Corporation Bill. We were particularly concerned that the Bill gives SaskPower employees a ticket into any home, in any town, anywhere in Saskatchewan. The proposed Bill gives too much power to the appointees who run SaskPower and way, way too much power to the provincial cabinet, with no accountability to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

(1100)

Mr. Speaker, Bill 87 is far less complex than Bill 38 in terms of length and in terms of implications for Saskatchewan people. The original Act states:

Where the purchase price or sale price of real property included in one transaction exceeds \$150,000, or where the purchase price or sale price of personal property included in one transaction exceeds \$1,000,000, the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall be obtained.

This Bill, Bill 87, removes the phrase: "... or sale price of personal property included in one transaction exceeds \$1,000,000 ..."

Mr. Speaker, we have some serious questions for the members opposite about why they want this phrase removed. Will it give them greater freedom to spend taxpayers' money? Is it a step towards less accountability for this government? Why is this change being proposed?

It is these kinds of questions we would like to ask the government before we allow this Bill to pass through. And as is the case with all Bills brought forward by the government, we would like to consult further with outside parties to see how this will affect Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, although this change to Bill 87 is relatively straightforward, we do not necessarily accept it without some reservations. We would also like to see how this Bill melds with the changes to the same Act proposed in Bill 38. It would make sense to discuss these two Bills together. Officials would only have to be brought in once, which saves taxpayers both time and money. Unlike the government, Mr. Speaker, we truly do

care how the money is spent.

That is why we refuse to support any changes to Bills that allow for unilateral changes to legislation in this province. Mr. Speaker, for the reasons I just stated, I move that the debate on Bill 87, An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act (No. 2) be now adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 72 — An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is John Edwards, the director of the municipal policy and legislative services. Behind me is Graham McNamee, chairman of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. And on his left is Perry Erhardt, legislative officer of the Department of Municipal Government, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Just a couple of minutes to welcome you here, your officials from your department, and also to thank you for bringing this Bill forward.

The first few questions I have in reference to this Act is, have you seen or done any extensive consultation with the communities in reference to population shifts in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there were extensive consultations carried out with respect to the development of the amendments that are proposed in this Bill and would have included discussions with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), who represents a number of the northern urban municipalities.

Mr. Belanger: — The reason why we're looking at the situation of population, Madam Minister, is the fact that there has been a tremendous shift in terms of the population of different communities. And we look at the introduction of the amendment, in terms of the northern municipalities, regarding assessment and property taxes and the whole bloody bit; really the population of each community does have a significant impact on this Bill.

And I was just wondering whether there has been any stats, any figures that you have available for us today, in reference to the population growth of the 1986 census versus the 1991 stats?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have here any statistics on population in the North as it relates to the current or past census procedures.

And I'm not exactly sure what it might be that the member from Athabasca might be addressing, but if it is the issue of the

population in the revenue-sharing formula, since the revenue-sharing formula this year delivers . . . and in fact letters have been written. I've signed letters to each and every northern municipality outlining exactly what the amount of their revenue-sharing grant will be this year, and it will be exactly the same, to the penny, as last year.

In future, because of the reduction in the size of the whole municipal sharing pool, we will be reviewing the distribution formulas. And so shifts in population will not necessarily affect the revenue-sharing because we won't be using the same distribution formula that has been operative in the past.

Mr. Belanger: — Some of the questions that we have about taxation in northern Saskatchewan — and this of course has a lot to do with it — in many of the northern municipalities, as you're probably most aware, Madam Minister, is the fact that, you know, with the poor economy in northern Saskatchewan and the fact that there's no housing markets, and the fact that the tax base in many of these northern communities is virtually non-existent, so the whole question of, you know, the population stats, many northern communities feel that the stats provincially do not reflect the true numbers locally. So in fact many of these northern communities are not getting as much of the revenue-sharing grant in the province as they should be.

So that's why I think it's very important that we nail some kind of indication as to whether the population of the North is indeed increasing, as many of the studies have shown and many of the stats have shown. Yet what we see — a shrinking revenue-sharing pool from the province. And this is the reason why we're going back to the whole situation of taxation versus the population growth of the North versus the allocation to northern communities. So is there any figures at all that your department has that would suggest that the population in the North is indeed increasing?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, as the member knows, four days from now we're having Count Yourself In. There's a national census happening almost as we speak, so that data will be available to us next year for 1997.

And certainly we will be entering into discussions with the municipal organizations and directly with the municipalities as we did when we initiated the Northern Municipal Round Table where we had our first meeting in La Ronge fairly recently. It was a very well attended meeting, very productive. The northern mayors had certainly had some prior organizational meetings amongst themselves and had some very well-developed research to support the agenda items that they wanted and had been invited to place on the agenda.

So the member from Athabasca may be assured that any changing conditions in the North will, through consultation with the people who live there and the local leaders, will be adjusted to meet those realities. And the member is certainly correct in that it will cause some difficulty as we try to move to market value for assessment province-wide.

The member is absolutely correct when he says that in northern Saskatchewan there really is an absence of a complete market. Because in order to have a housing market, you not only need to

have demand, but you need to have the financial institutions. You need to have the access to the supplies. And just all of the factors that constitute a market for housing, many of those factors are absent in the North and must be compensated for in other ways.

So we recognize the unique situation of our northern people, and we will work with them to accommodate their needs to the extent that we can within the fiscal capacity that we have.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you for those comments, Madam Minister. I guess the other question, when we talk about the whole assessment and SAMA's (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) role in this whole process, there's no question in my mind that there has to be more consultation and certainly more awareness amongst the northern communities, because assessment and reassessment, market value and so on and so forth, really is confusing to me. So to the average person on the street, it's probably much, much more complicated than that.

I guess the other question, when we look at northern Saskatchewan as a whole, how would the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account be affected by any changes proposed in this legislation?

(1115)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to the future of the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account, the member is correct when he observes that there is a potential for some changes. If you looked at the raw data — which the member may have seen — which was provided by SAMA about the end of 1995, that raw data of assessment would indicate that there would be a shift from the mining industry to residential, and these are the factors we will have to be mindful of as we work through the development of the regulations that establish property classes.

And of course the variable mill rate factor and the opportunity to phase in the new regime will be available to the leaders of northern communities on exactly the same basis as it is in the South. And this Act also provides that exactly the same appeal procedures will be available to Northerners as are available to other residents of the province.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and don't mind if I bounce all over the place here because that's how I try and grasp at things here. And I guess the one point I have is, am I correct in saying today that as minister of municipal services, in reference to northern Saskatchewan, that this legislation in its rawest form is suggesting that some of the property taxes will be shifting from the mining industry onto the residential properties as a result of this change?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, no, that is not correct. I would not want you to go away with that impression. This legislation has nothing to do with that. This legislation assists the framework in which the SAMA, the Assessment Management Agency, does its work. And I just observed that the raw data coming from the assessment agency would indicate that, based on their assessment values, there is a potential for that kind of a shift. But that is why . . . And that's in the

information done by SAMA, their analysis.

What this legislation does is provide the tools to mitigate that and to not allow that to happen or to lessen the extent, because it will give municipal councils the ability, in using that assessment base, to mitigate the tax shifts either by phasing in, by using mill rate factors. And then before they do that, the next step is in the regulations pursuant to this legislation, where the province will set the number of property classes and the percentages of value to be used when establishing the mill rates; then it makes a whole package.

But, no, even looking at the raw data, it's not correct to say that there will be that kind of a shift because the proposals that we're making in this legislation provide the tools to mitigate that.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay then, can perhaps I put it in a different frame of mind then. Are you saying to me that the province will then establish the mill rates for all Crown lands outside of municipal boundaries in reference to the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account, in which the mining companies will indeed be afforded the process of appealing and all the other avenues of, you know, the variable mill rate factor and so on and so forth. So they'll have the same opportunity to appeal their taxes as an ordinary resident of the North would under this rule?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there is the ability to appeal the assessment. There is no ability for an appellant to appeal taxes. They can appeal the assessment which provides the base the taxes are calculated on.

And I guess, you know, the really good news for the North is the development, the astonishing development, of new mines and the increase, the really positive increase, in the mining activity in northern Saskatchewan in terms of the ability to raise taxes, the ability to provide jobs. It's a very exciting part of our economy.

Mr. Belanger: — I most certainly agree with your point that the northern development is a very exciting part of the economy. I couldn't agree with you less. Then again I go back to many earlier statements — the fact that northern Saskatchewan does have a lot of potential to offer the rest of the province.

I think in saying that, in looking at the mining sector and in looking at perhaps the explosion of the mining sector in northern Saskatchewan, what is the government currently receiving in terms of just the land lease fees for the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account, from all the mining activity happening in the last year or so? And what's the anticipated increase over the next couple of years that in essence is connected to this new Act?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would not have that information available now. We're just dealing with the legislation here, and those figures would be more appropriately provided during the estimates for that department.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay, I'll certainly hold my questions till

estimates of that particular issue. I guess the other thing is, when you talk about the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account — and it'll have some impact on this — several years ago the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account was at a \$10 million figure. And could you more or less give me a breakdown of where that money came from as the minister responsible for the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would not want to be inaccurate on this, and I'm not prepared outside of the estimates procedure to be precise about the numbers or the source of revenue to the trust account. And so I would ask the cooperation of the member opposite to hold the questions of that nature until he has the opportunity in estimates, at which time I'd be most pleased to provide him with the information.

Mr. Belanger: — Again we'll be bouncing around here quite a bit. When you talk about the impact of assessment in northern Saskatchewan, one of the groups and organizations that is of course dealing directly with northern communities is the North West Saskatchewan Municipalities Association which I'm sure you're familiar with, and we also of course recognize and participate with the SUMA group. And of course I was a former member of SUMA for four years as the north-west director, and I believe my replacement in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Mayor Morin, is now also the north-west director.

However, I guess he's also the chairman of the North West Saskatchewan Municipalities Association, and they submitted a proposal to one of your deputy ministers to fund full-time staff. And one of the reasons why they've asked to fund full-time staff is that they're able to assess some of the impacts of some of the rules and regulations being designed by the government in reference to effects on their properties and their taxation and the way northern municipalities work.

Since the proposal was revised and re-sent back to your government, could I get a status report on the actual proposal itself and whether your department's prepared to commit funding to this organization, so they can really have a clear and direct say and effect in consulting with you when it comes to changes of this magnitude.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I acknowledge that I'm aware of the request by the north-west mayors for funding. A decision has not been made at this time, but I would point out that in the Inter-Community Co-operation . . . the ICC Committee as it was known, the group did ask for and receive \$30,000 in the form of assistance, and I believe the last instalment of that has just been paid out recently. It was contingent upon the completion of a report which has been now filed and the last of the money has been paid out.

We also have in the department's northern office, as you will be aware as leader of that group, we do have our own personnel up there who are familiar with the conditions and the people in the area, who are always ready to provide municipal advisory services in the interim until a decision on this request is made.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I think the call of northern communities — the mayors and the councillors — for many years have asked to really be heavily consulted in any changes

that affects certainly northern Saskatchewan and their municipalities and their jurisdictions. And some of the points that they bring up is in reference to the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account. I keep coming back to that because of course this assessment will have some impact on that.

The northern municipalities and the northern leaders would like to have more say on where the funding of this Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account is allocated, plus any impacts it may have on that. Because in essence, the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account does have some bearing on their capital grants budget. So they have proposed a concept of having a board oversee the operation of the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account and this board of course would consist of municipal leaders that they are most willing to find for you if there is a problem.

How does the minister feel about giving the northern leaders an opportunity to govern NRSTA (Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account), thereby become more aware of its operations and thereby become more aware of some of the impacts of some of the changes regarding the assessment that's proposed in this particular Bill?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that this is something, this is an issue, that could be discussed at the Northern Municipal Round Table. And we did have one initial meeting — as I said it was a very constructive and positive meeting — and we're actually in the early stages of planning for another one. We want the northern round table to work and we want to give everyone as much opportunity as possible to express their views and have, you know, as thorough a consultation as we can.

But as you know, one of the constraints is financial. And what we do not want to do is . . . we'd rather have several . . . or few, very well constructed meetings that everyone has had an opportunity to prepare for. Because when you bring people together from all across the North, there is a large amount of travel that has to be done. And so whether those local municipalities pick up the cost or if we do, you know, it's a question of trying to be as efficient as possible.

So we are being mindful of the cost of travel to get people all into one location together. We're trying to do as much work as we can ahead of time on the agenda and on communications to make sure that when we're in a face-to-face situation that we have time to deal with, you know, the very most important philosophical and economic questions that we can so that we don't waste any time in housekeeping issues that can be done by letter or, you know, by phone.

So this wasn't asked at the last time. I don't know what kind of a priority it is with the northern mayors, but it's not one of the issues that they placed on the agenda last time, even though they were invited to place any agenda items that they thought were a priority. But perhaps in a future meeting, they will ask for this to be discussed, and we would be glad to have those consultations and discussions with them.

Mr. Belanger: — I think the key thing is that the municipal round table is certainly a positive idea. I think there has to be,

you know, a willingness amongst government to come together with the northern municipal leaders. And I know this thing is recorded, and I say on record that over the past years government has been more than fair to northern Saskatchewan when it comes to absorbing the brunts of some of the, you know, some of the cuts in reference to the lack of tax base. And I certainly can appreciate your efforts as well the Minister of Northern Affairs and the Minister of Indian and Metis Affairs in pushing this point.

I think that the key thing in the message from the northern communities is that we need to elevate the participation in the northern leaders a bit more. Because if you elevate the exposure of northern leaders through this type of consultation, especially when you talk about reassessment, you talk about taxation, you talk about the impacts on Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account, it all adds up to some major or significant impact on every northern municipality that exists.

So there's other serious concerns that they want raised to your attention in reference to this particular Bill, and this is in regards to the sewer and water grants. This program obviously has been cut. The funding used to be for engineering cost and expanding systems. It's all been eliminated. And northern communities are saying, well what's the next process? The taxation process. Well that gives us very limited opportunity.

What if there's a major breakdown in terms of water and sewer systems? The funding formulas are all up in the air. The taxation system is up in the air. These programs are up in the air and some of them have been eliminated.

And if you could give us some background on your feelings on the general point that we're trying to make as northern people. (1130)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, again this is really a subject that we will have the opportunity to go into in depth in the context of the department's estimates.

But I would say that at the round table, the first and most recent initial meeting of the Northern Municipal Round Table, the very highest priority that was identified was housing. And we are certainly planning and in the process of trying to devise a policy which will compensate for the withdrawal of federal participation in this area. It's a very difficult one. But I would like to answer those questions in the context of estimates.

But there's two other things I would like to say, is that on that round table, when you talk, when the member talks, about awareness of people, there was, for instance, at the . . . I just saw this morning a little summary of a newsletter that came from the last SAMA annual meeting that was held in Saskatoon in the early part of April. It had about 700 municipal representatives there.

And they did a survey about the awareness of council members themselves and the perception of council members who attended there as to how aware the public, the ratepayers, were about the issues of assessment and taxes. And it's generally conceded by that questionnaire that over 90 per cent of people in Saskatchewan do not understand this. So northern people are

certainly not alone.

And in the context of understanding, another interesting thing that did happen with the last Northern Municipal Round Table was that the whole proceedings from beginning to end, as you probably know, were carried on Missinipi radio. And you may have had some feedback from that, as the member for Athabasca. But I did have some feedback that people were very interested, that even in locations that were far remote from La Ronge, that they were able to listen in to the whole meeting and all of the speakers.

And we didn't know, actually, that we were going to be on the air until we got there and the press was there. Of course we had no objections, but it was a very interesting concept and something new in the North that I think generally people did appreciate.

Mr. Belanger: — I guess since SAMA is involved in it, I couldn't agree with you any further than that, you know, the point of confusion is all over the place, and I'm just trying to appear like I know what I'm speaking about.

When it comes to SUMA and the assessment, it really becomes a major issue in northern Saskatchewan. And this is the reason why I am calling for more consultation and more cooperation from the government when it comes to forming committees to look at the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account, funding the north-west Saskatchewan municipal associations — they could become more involved in the discussions affecting issues of their regions, and also government choices.

So going back to the assessment and the actual Bill itself, how is this going to affect the taxation of some of the properties owned by government, for example some of the commercial properties; some of the government buildings? The government owns 80 per cent of the housing in northern Saskatchewan. I'm not sure, you know, the breakdown in terms of value, whether it's 75 by the federal and 25 per cent ownership of the province. Has there been any discussion and any studies done on how that's going to impact on these particular properties?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in terms of the communications and the understanding, I'd just like to say that this is really, in terms of the assessment, the responsibility of SAMA. And for those who were at the annual meeting of SAMA, on I think it was April 11 in Saskatoon, they released a number of questionnaires, brochures, posters, and communication materials that are available to local councils and to anyone who is interested.

Another interesting result of their survey was that most people though, as your questions indicate, obviously want to look at assessment and tax policy at the same time. Because at the end of the day we know that what people are really interested in is, what is that number on the bottom line of my tax notice and how did it get there.

And so we want to, we're planning to, have some workshops and information sessions throughout the province, in smaller groups, as we get closer to that date of January 1, 1997 when this new system will come in.

And with respect to the question on Crown land or government buildings, generally speaking land, property, owned by the Crown is exempt. But that certainly doesn't . . . is not the interpretation of the houses in Sask Housing's portfolio whether they're federally, whether it's . . . There's all kinds of different programs out there. Some of them are strictly provincial. Some are strictly federal; and some, as you know, are joint in some ratio.

But it doesn't matter which part of the portfolio it is. All of Sask Housing's housing stock is assessed, and Sask Housing pays property taxes to the relevant municipality just as any other home-owner would.

I guess I'd just say this, that probably the reason that most people don't understand taxes is we don't like to think of it. I mean the only time we want to think about it is the day we have to write that cheque. And back in the olden days, property taxes were generally considered to be temporary things. Usually some lord that owned a lot of land would tax his tenants to raise money to fight some battle or whatever, with the idea that when the battle was over the taxes would go away. And that's really how property taxes started. But it was such a great idea that people just kept on doing it.

A lot of people think too, you know, that taxes are dull, and property tax is really interesting, you know, I mean if you look back to some of the reasons that some of those people in 5 or 600 and a thousand years ago raised property taxes to fight their turf wars and so on.

And then there's the one . . . you know the one about Lady Godiva. Her husband was the Earl of Coventry, and the villagers in Coventry thought that they were paying too much taxes. So they went to the earl's wife, who was Lady Godiva, and asked her for her support in reducing their taxes. So she went to her husband and said, I think the people of Coventry are paying too much tax. She said, I would like you to lower it. And he said, the day that you ride naked on a horse through the streets of Coventry is the day that I will reduce the taxes. And so she went, and with the cooperation of the people of Coventry . . . the people were so happy to have her support that, by pre-arrangement, they agreed to close all their shutters while she made the ride. So of course, with her modesty protected by her long hair, she rode her horse down the main street of Coventry. And everybody except one person . . . the tailor whose name was Tom, peeked and that's where we get the expression peeping Tom.

So you see, I mean we've got all these . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — If it wasn't for something as dull and boring and onerous and all the rest of it as property taxes, we wouldn't have all these wonderful additions to our folklore and all these interesting stories to tell.

Mr. Belanger: — Well that's not a bedtime story I can take home.

I guess the second part of the question is, when you look at the assessed value of homes, of properties in the North — you're obviously going to have to do that to have an impact on this Bill, and one of the contentious issues in northern Saskatchewan is market value of housing — how do you feel that you'll be addressing that particular problem as minister of municipal services which also involves housing? How will you determine the market value of a house in northern Saskatchewan from a government perspective in reference to this Bill?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, thanks to the devolution of the assessment policy and practice from within government where it used to be, to the independent agency, the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency which operates at arm's length from government, they are responsible for establishing the assessment. And they have . . . the people that they engaged to do this work are highly professional, and the integrity of the provincial data base in terms of assessing the value of properties is their responsibility.

But as we noted earlier in our exchanges, there certainly are factors in the North that make the market different, and I'm sure that the appraisers at SAMA are well aware of that and that they will do their work in a fair and equitable manner. Because that is the objective of all of this, of all of SAMA's work and the framework of enabling legislation that we are bringing in, is to bring the system up to date and make it more fair and equitable.

Mr. Belanger: — So I imagine the approach that the assessors and SAMA take is that one size fits all in northern Saskatchewan. And on that point, are we to say that the municipalities in northern Saskatchewan will not be adversely affected as a result of this legislation, or this amendment, when it comes to the allocation . . . or payment of property taxes that the government owns within their jurisdictions or within their municipal boundaries?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'd certainly like to correct the impression that the member from Athabasca makes when he says that one size fits all for the North. Because that's exactly the reason, for instance, that we have property classes and percentages of value.

And of course if we're moving to market value, we would have . . . And I'm not going to speak for SAMA, but the approach would generally be, that would be market value for the land, and then the dwelling, if it's a residential dwelling, would be the depreciated value from the actual cost, which would take into account the northern factors like higher costs of materials and so forth.

So the system is designed to . . . this legislation is designed to provide the tools to mitigate what happens in the raw assessment. So I'm confident at the end of the day that the system will be fair for northern people.

Mr. Belanger: — So again this is kind of, you know, a choice of interpretation here. Am I to interpret those comments as saying that this legislation is simply allowing us to modernize the assessment system in Saskatchewan? Thereby all the tools that are allowed to northern municipalities to mitigate those

changes you speak about, and all the rules that they're allowed to use to their advantage, they will see very little if any changes in the way that they tax people and the income that they expect. This is not a rule here to decrease the amount of money they get from the province on the backs of some of their residential properties.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it's premature to draw those conclusions at this point. The same tools will be provided to northern municipalities and residents as are available to residents and business people in other parts of the province. And we're bringing . . . what SAMA is doing is bringing the assessment up to date, which has not been changed since 1965. So we're catching up for over 30 years. There are bound to be some changes.

So SAMA's doing that while we are, in this framework of this legislation, providing some tools that haven't been needed before to help to mitigate and to phase in where there are changes. So there will be changes.

(1145)

If the tools provided were able to mitigate the shifts enough that everything would be exactly the same as it was before, why in the world would we do it? So there is unfairness in the system now, and property tax is the least progressive tax in the world. I mean, it's there. It doesn't go away if you get old or sick or unemployed or your circumstances change. It's an *ad valorem* tax that's based on the perceived or appraised value of the property. And because it is not a progressive tax, it is absolutely critical that it be as fair as possible.

Mr. Belanger: — I'll just jump from the municipal perspective down to the Indian band perspective as well. Has there been any sale of any Crown lands in northern Saskatchewan to Indian bands as a result of the TLE (treaty land entitlements) agreement? And if there has, how do you determine a value of that land? Do you value it on the assessment or market value? How does that work when you do look at the possibility of selling Crown land to the Indian bands?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I certainly am aware of some transactions, but I am not the minister responsible for the treaty land entitlements or personally involved in any of the negotiations or sales, so I really don't think it would be appropriate for me to answer or become engaged in that line of questioning. That would be for another minister at another time.

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and other members of the Assembly two special guests seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon, one of whom you will obviously recognize because

he is no stranger to this Assembly — Mr. Dave Abbey.

And seated with him is Ms. Jessie Caryll. She is the outreach coordinator of the Canadian Conference on Reform Judaism which is a national organization of Reform Jews in Canada. She is visiting us from Toronto for the weekend, and she is a guest of the Temple Beth Tikvah which is in Regina and of which Mr. Abbey is the president.

So if you would join with me in welcoming both of them back to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 72 (continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Going back to an earlier statement, you talked about assessment. Is a community assessed differently if they are to have services such as natural gas, in terms of the value of a community as a whole?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, my response to that would be that it wouldn't make a difference, the same as the level of services that a property receives or doesn't receive is not grounds for an assessment appeal. So my answer to that would be, generally no.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. And, Madam Minister, welcome to your officials.

Madam Minister, I understand from this Bill, that it's actually given the power to the minister to have authority to define the property classes and set percentage of values that are applied to property assessment in different classes. Is that right?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in the wording in the Act it would appear that that power is vested in the minister, but that's part of what we spoke about yesterday in the . . . It's the development of the regulations whereby the legislation has to have the authority of the whole House, the whole legislature. But the regulations that are developed pursuant to the legislation is the regulatory review process. And then the regulations are ultimately approved by cabinet.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. But it does lay out that power for you, and I'm wondering why that power wouldn't be left to SAMA or some other non-political body instead of the minister's office.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, seeing as I explained yesterday that the government always has had, except for this brief term since the establishment of SAMA and to now . . . SAMA was not comfortable with that function. Let's face it, I mean, assessment is a technical procedure that takes all these factors into account by professionally trained people whose job it is to make those assessments and analysis.

The tax policy is the responsibility of the government because it

is political. Like for example, right now the value of property is assessed. Then the percentage of the value that is used to calculate the taxes on is reduced, again by a political decision. For instance, residential properties in the province now are . . . 50 per cent of the true assessed value is the value that is used for the tax base. And that's a political decision.

If you were to use the pure assessment base to calculate the taxes on, every residence in this province would double because we're using 50 per cent. And that's an arbitrary . . . it's a political decision. It's got nothing to do with the assessment.

Same thing with farm land. Farm land currently is assessed, but by order again, only 60 per cent of the actual assessment is used to calculate the actual taxes. And don't forget that this tax, this assessment base is not just used to apply the municipal levy and raise municipal taxes. It's also used to raise education tax, and it's also used to raise, in the 2 mill levy, some monies for the health system. So the integrity and the accuracy of this base, the assessment base, is very, very important.

But you can see that if there was a decision made . . . and the decisions have not yet been made, as to what the percentages of value will be in the new regulations. That analysis still has to be done.

But just say that there was not a reduction and the tax moved up to 100 per cent of assessment. This would shift, for instance education tax, a huge burden of the cost of education onto rural lands because right now rural lands are assessed at 60 per cent of the percentage of the appraised value. And if you didn't go through this exercise of setting percentages of value to property classes, education tax on rural properties would go up from the 60 per cent now to 100. And it would be an enormous shift whereby, you know, it can really be set or certainly be set on a per capita basis. Rural people pay a hugely disproportionate share of education tax already. And if we didn't ascribe percentages of value to buildings and land, the shift would be just horrendous.

Ms. Draude: — But, Madam Minister, basically the bottom line is then the responsibility or the powers in authority are going from the local people, the ones who have hands-on input, the ones who live in the North and understand some of the difficulties, it's going from them to government.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there has to be a framework or a context in which this is set. The local parameters are too narrow to deal with such things as the tax shift, for instance, from the mining industry or to or from the mining industry to other parts, and the oil and gas industry of course. There has to be a provincial framework in which this is set so that there is equity throughout the province.

And then we are allowing, by this legislation, some tools to be used locally. But these things have got to be developed hand in hand, and the local tools have to be used within a context. So that's why it's a two-part process.

Ms. Draude: — Again, Madam Minister, by actually identifying this Northern Municipalities Act, it is recognizing the fact that the North has special and unique concerns and

problems. And I'm just wondering if this . . . by looking at the whole province, I understand the necessity of that in some parts. But I feel that the North has got some responsibilities and concerns that are not going to be addressed if we're looking at . . . if there isn't the same input from the local people.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, because for the very reason that the member has outlined, in that there are special conditions in the North, that there are unique features in the North, is the exact reason why we have a separate Act for the North. And we can set different property classes and different percentages of value for the North than are operative in the other parts of the province pursuant to the rural municipal Act and the urban municipal Act. So the existence of a separate Act is a recognition of those unique features of the North.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Are the property classes for the North identified as yet?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, no, none of the property classes that will find themselves into the regulations have been defined as yet. And there will be extensive consultations, and work is going on, and analysis is going on right now, and consultations will be held. And we should have, within a few weeks or months, decisions on what will be contained in the regulations.

Ms. Draude: — Are any of the regulations yet prepared for this Act?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, work is under way on the whole package of regulations. But no, the work is not complete.

Ms. Draude: — Are the people that are on the decision-making committee or board that are drawing up these regulations . . . are there a large number of them from the North? Do they have the local input?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the work is being done by the department in consultation with a variety of people. And I do just have a list here of participants in a consensus-building session that was held last November, and it indicates representation from Beauval, Buffalo Narrows, Air Ronge, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Missinipe — a number of northern communities — as well as the Cameco Corporation, the Cigar Lake Mining Corporation, Municipal Government, SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), SUMA.

There were certainly extensive discussions at that time. Those are just some of the participants, and these will be the people whose advice will be sought in making the decisions on the regulations.

Mr. Belanger: — I guess the final question for this session is, when you talk about all, you know, the potential for the impacts of this assessment and the reassessment and the market value versus the other values and the appeal process and the variable mill rate and the whole bloody bit, what type of consultations have you prepared especially for northern communities? And I most certainly agree that northern communities must be looked

at in an entirely different sense.

And in reference to the mining sector as well, obviously they're going to be somewhat involved. Will you share that information with this House and with myself and with the people in the North once you determine where the problem areas and where the potential for a huge shift may occur?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I can't undertake to share the information in the House. It's my hope that the House will no longer be sitting by the time this happens, although at the rate we're going my expectations are getting kind of dim. But we certainly will have extensive consultations and information sharing before any regulations are put into effect.

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

(1200)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Energy and Mines Vote 23

The Chair: — These estimates were last before the committee April 24. I'll invite the minister to reintroduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to members of the opposition and to the people of Saskatchewan the officials I have with me today.

To my right is Ray Clayton, who is the deputy minister; to my left, Dan McFadyen, who is the assistant deputy minister of resource policy and economics. Behind me is Donald Koop, assistant deputy minister of finance and administration. And Bruce Wilson is sitting there as well, the executive director of petroleum and natural gas. And in the back, Phil Reeves is the director of the mines branch; and Lynn Jacobson who is the director of personnel and administration.

I want the members of the opposition to know that we brought a full complement because I know they will have some detailed questions, some of which I may not be able to have the answers on the tip of my tongue. So I'm sure the officials will be able to assist us in this endeavour. Thank you.

Item 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just I would like to welcome your officials and yourself to this very important first round.

Of course most of the questions that I have will be northern based. And just off the top of my head, could you kind of give us a perspective of, northern and southern, as to how your department's vision has changed from this year to last year — if there's any change, if there's any optimism; is there any

increase in production and exploration and so on?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I think it's fair to say that there is a great deal of optimism with respect to northern Saskatchewan, particularly in the mining sector. We have . . . and are looking at the expansion of uranium development, which the member will be well aware of. There are some opportunities that we see with respect to other precious metals and other mineral resources in the North.

And in terms of vision I think that we want to, in a very planned way, develop these resources working with northern people, and I know that will be a concern of yours. I think that we want to see expansion of employment opportunities for northern Saskatchewan residents as well as other people in the province. We continue to work with the mining industry to ensure that we have a good complement of Northerners who are involved in the training process and in the workforce.

And I think to some degree I could report to you that the mining industry in northern Saskatchewan has been probably more successful than many other sectors with respect to employment for aboriginal people. And I think it's something that we as a province can be proud of. I think it's something that the industry should be proud of.

I don't want to make a long, protracted answer, but just to describe to you what people in other parts of the province are saying about our initiatives in terms of the North, they report to us that we are light years ahead of where they are and they only hope that they could be where we are in terms of northern employment opportunities and involving Northerners in the economy.

We had a forum some few months ago at which people from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations presented their impression to industry and to other governments. And I think it's fair to say that we have done a lot, but there is much more that we need to do. And certainly the department will continue to work with industry to assure Northerners that they will in fact be a very integral part of the development of the resources up there.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, and we most certainly share some of those comments.

I guess the mandate of your department is to achieve full and responsible development of Saskatchewan's energy and mineral resources and create jobs. I think that's the key issue in northern Saskatchewan, is jobs. And energy and especially mining in northern Saskatchewan is such a key part of the economy at this point in time.

I guess in saying that, what mines do operate in northern Saskatchewan and who owns these mines and how is the Saskatchewan government involved in terms of shares?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — To the member opposite, the only investment that we have in any operations pertaining to mining and to the mineral sector are the shares that we still hold in Cameco. We hold, I believe it's in the neighbourhood of 5 million shares, which is about a third of what we had. And I

might be inaccurate in this, but I think we had . . . I shouldn't quote the percentage because I'm not sure, but I know it's in the neighbourhood of 5 million shares. But we have no active participation in any other mining operations in the North.

We don't have a list of all of the different mines that are operating there. Some you'll be familiar with — Key Lake, those. But the department will put together a list of the ongoing mining operations in the North and we will undertake to get that to you.

Mr. Belanger: — So I guess it's fair in saying that the Saskatchewan government and no Saskatchewan company operates or owns any mines in northern Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Could I ask the member to repeat that question. I didn't hear it.

Mr. Belanger: — I guess the question I asked is, is it fair to say that the Saskatchewan government and no Saskatchewan companies own or operate a mine in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think, to the member opposite, in terms of ownership of these corporations and where they're headquartered, as you will know, Uranerz has headquartered its mining operations, its uranium mining operations, now in Saskatchewan.

Claude Resources, headquartered here in Saskatchewan, operate the Seabea Gold mine. And of course Cameco, whose head office is here in Saskatoon.

Mr. Belanger: — What are some of your primary responsibilities as minister responsible for Energy and Mines? Do you look after the environment? I see you have a section of your budget talking about exploration and accommodation and central services. Like what exactly are some of your responsibilities when it comes to monitoring or looking after the mining sector? Do you have a monitoring secretary or committee and could you explain those services?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think the main functions that the department participates in is certainly the regulatory and the tax regimes. That's one of the functions of the department.

The department is also involved in environmental assessment committees and actions that take place before mines are licensed. And other initiatives that we do is provide information, geological information, to people who are investing in the . . . and want to invest in exploration in mineral activities, as well as oil and gas, for land purchases.

And as the member will be aware, there's been an enormous amount of activity, in particular in the oil and gas sector, since we revamped the royalty regimes in 1993. That certainly has created an awful workload on the department. It's a relatively small department compared to others but they seem to be able to manage with the enhanced workload, with the enhanced activity in the resource sector

And so I guess basically, we deal with fiscal matters; we deal with licensing; we deal with environmental matters, and we

help to facilitate investment through sharing of information in terms of the resources or the potential for resources in the province.

(1215)

Mr. Belanger: — In reference to that particular statement, of your staff complement of 234.4 people that's employed by your department, what portion of that is really northern responsibility versus southern responsibility? When I think about Energy and Mines, like, how many mines are there in northern Saskatchewan? We see an increase, so obviously we see a fair allocation of staff as well?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think to describe the department, as you will know, it's a fairly small department relative to others, as I've indicated. We don't have it broken down in terms of geological area . . . or geographical area, I'm sorry.

I think the department is fairly flexible in that when there's pressures on one area, or where there's activity in one area, the department, the senior management of the department, will allocate the appropriate resources to be able to handle those pressures. We have a small office, as you will know, in La Ronge and I believe that there are about three employed there. But mainly the office is administered out of Regina, and the staff complement is put to the areas where we need the work and where the workload is.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I guess in essence, is there any possibility of making that information as to where your staff are, you know, primarily placed . . . and as well, a breakdown of your aboriginal employment rate versus your non-aboriginal employment rate. If that information could be presented to me, I would certainly appreciate it.

I guess that goes to the next question, and I'll basically put the question forth. What are your staff members' names and their positions and their job descriptions in the northern areas? Talk about La Ronge.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We will undertake to get all of the information to the member and send it across. I don't think they have that kind of detailed information here with them, but we do certainly for the senior management. But in terms of the whole staff complement, we will attempt to put all of that information together and send it across to you.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. The next question, what is the total value of . . . you're obviously in charge of the Cameco shares, as well as the minister responsible for Energy and Mines?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well the Cameco shares are administered by Crown Investments Corporation, and the minister in charge is responsible for that. I am a member of the board of Crown Investments Corporation and so am involved in some of those discussions.

The share value of the Cameco shares, as you will know, will vary from day to day based on the markets. It trades on the stock exchange. And so the value of our shares will appreciate

and/or depreciate depending on market conditions.

As the member will know, recently we sold in the neighbourhood of — and don't hold me to these figures; I'm giving you pretty rough figures — but we sold in the neighbourhood of 10 million shares which generated revenue, roughly \$700 million, that was put to debt reduction in the province.

I think that we got a very good return for those assets. It appears to be a very strong industry now and hopefully growing. And hopefully the 5 million shares that we do still hold will appreciate in value over time so that we can deal with some of the problems that we have in this province.

One of the main problems we have is the massive debt load in Saskatchewan. And if CIC deems it appropriate and the ministers on that board along with the officials deem it appropriate, we'll certainly look at what we do in the future with the remaining shares.

Mr. Belanger: — There is no question in my mind that the northern mining sector and the development of the North certainly has a lot of value to Saskatchewan. I think every northern resident is recognizing the tremendous opportunity associated with mining in the North.

Has there ever been a very comprehensive study in terms of the total value of your land leases derived from the northern mining sector, as well as your royalties and your taxes that you also derived from the mining sector in the North? And as well the . . . all the taxes that are paid by your employees, no matter where they are actually living, whether they're living in Saskatoon or Regina or Prince Albert. Has there been any kind of study done to determine the exact benefit and the exact dollar value from our perspective as provincial people?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The department certainly tracks, you know, the amount of revenue generated through royalties and through taxation from the different sectors, whether it be uranium or potash or oil and gas. That's part of our job, part of our mandate. It's part of what we do to prepare for our budgets and to help the Department of Finance prepare their budget estimates. And that certainly is a big function within the department.

I can say to the member that we, along with other government departments, provided some fairly detailed information to the uranium panel at its hearings. Part of that came from Energy and Mines, part of it came from other departments such as Economic Development, Finance, within government. But we track the revenue flows on a fairly regular basis.

In terms of the economic spin-off to the staff complement, I don't know that we have ever done that within Energy and Mines or within other government departments. But I think it's fair to assume that one could use a multiplier effect of spin-off benefits to a government department similar to what you would with other industries. And I guess the multiplier effect can certainly vary depending on the amount of remuneration that the employees receive, the wage levels, whether or not it's seasonal work, or whether it's full-time work.

So I think it's figures that we just haven't been asked to put together — we haven't had occasion to put it together — in terms of the employees within the department.

Mr. Belanger: — I think that type of study would really, you know, in essence prove the value of mining and the contributions that northern Saskatchewan makes to the economy of the province.

When you talk about the total value, what other charges have you got for the mining sector? Suppose I own a company and I want to set up shop and open up a gold mine next to Ile-a-la-Crosse or something. What process would I have to go through and what taxes would I have to expect to pay in all the leases and so on and so forth?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by the officials that it would not only be the Department of Energy and Mines that you would want to contact; you would want to contact Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, in that they are responsible for letting surface leases.

The royalty structure would be available from Energy and Mines so that you could determine, based on the, I guess, the richness of your ore body, whether or not — and whatever the markets are — whether or not you could make the mine deliver a reasonable return for you. So the royalties would come, the royalty structure would come, as information from Energy and Mines.

While your mine would be operating, you would be responsible to pay for lease rentals, which rates would be set by Energy and Mines through their rate-setting structure. And then I guess you would have to comply with the federal and provincial income tax regulations that all businesses in that field of endeavour would apply to.

Mr. Belanger: — So in essence if I want to set up a mining company basically in any location in northern Saskatchewan, as long as I meet the provincial and federal responsibilities and I'm able to do it on my own, basically a mining company can set up shop anywhere that they wish. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think it's fair to say that the department would certainly help to try and facilitate the development of mineral deposits, keeping in mind that there will be certain environmental requirements by both the federal and provincial governments that companies that would want to operate would have to adhere to.

I could say to the member that we have been working as a province with Natural Resources Canada and with Environment Canada to try and streamline the process with respect to environmental scrutiny of proposed operations. One of the difficulties we have is that the, I guess you can call it the red tape, or the process, is a very costly process for industry. And in some cases I think it creates an environment where business will look elsewhere, where mining operations will look elsewhere in the world where their cost of operations are lessened.

I can say that we work, my department works, very closely with

Natural Resources Canada, to try and have the federal Environment department understand that we don't need two sets of similar scrutiny and we don't need duplication. And what we want to do is reduce that overlap. We believe that our department — our environmental initiatives here in Saskatchewan, our administration — can aptly deal with the concerns of people in this province.

So the bottom line is that we're working where we can to reduce the duplication. There's still much more cost to industry than there needs to be. Industry is very much aware of it and continue to work and pressure the federal government to work with us to reduce the amount of bureaucracy, the amount of paperwork, and the amount of overlap.

Mr. Belanger: — I certainly wish you . . . on record that as a member of the Assembly in that particular riding, I support northern development as a whole. I think there is no question that we have to look at that opportunity and try and develop it as best we can with the full intent of maximizing the benefits to the people in the region.

And I also support your efforts of trying to streamline the environmental process that some of the companies have to go through, because you do it for one particular government and you have to do it again, and of course the cost becomes a factor. So we certainly have to do our share as governments to try and attract industry here.

So to that point, have you done anything in terms of trying to attract companies to Saskatchewan by giving them deals or programs or anything of that nature?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We do that in, I guess, a number of areas. We have within the department a lot of geological information that we try and share with interested business when they come to the province looking for developmental opportunities. And I think on the other side of that coin is that we try and have in place a reasonable royalty and taxation regime that doesn't preclude investment dollars from coming to our province.

I think that as investment dollars . . . And when investors are looking at the costs of operations, look at a number of areas. They'll look at the costs of labour. They will look at the kind of bureaucracy and kind of process that they have to deal with in terms of establishing their businesses. And certainly they will look at the costs of royalties as to whether or not they can make a fair return for their shareholders.

(1230)

And so we as a province work hard to try and facilitate those investment opportunities. I think we've been very successful as it relates to potash, to uranium, to some degree, gold. As you will know, there's a couple of new small gold mines on stream in the North and we certainly are doing what we can to attract investment.

I guess some of the trips that ministers and the Premier are criticized for taking, in terms of international trips, are another element of government initiatives that I think are very important. We need to be able to send the message to

international investors that we have an abundance of resources here in our province; that we are a government that is interested in attracting business and business opportunities.

And I think — so all of those initiatives really are quite important — and I think have borne some fruit in the past, as is evidenced by the activity in the oil and gas and in the mining sector in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Belanger: — There's no question that some of the trips that are taken to promote business in Saskatchewan are necessary. I think that to highlight the attributes of Saskatchewan, in terms of its people and the possibilities and the resources that we have, certainly warrants some of these trips.

I think the point that . . . I mean when you look at the northern perspective, besides the potash and the gold and uranium, is there any other mining activity in Saskatchewan as a whole, and where is this activity?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well as the member will be aware, we've been active in the mining of gold which we use to generate the majority of our electrical energy in the province in the southern part of the province. There are a number of mines in operation there. We have sodium sulphate, clay deposits. As the member may know, in Denare Beach, they are working at copper and zinc extraction.

There's been a lot of activity in my home area and I'm certainly hopeful that it bears some fruit in terms of diamond exploration. There's some kimberlite pipes, and there's been an awful lot of money spent on drilling and exploration in that area.

So there is some potential there. And as well, we have been over the years developing some of the other base metals and minerals.

Mr. Belanger: — Is it fair to assume that since Saskatchewan, northern Saskatchewan consists of half the land mass of the whole province, that the majority of your mining activity really is in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think in terms of value and probably the majority of the revenue generated and the activity would not be in northern Saskatchewan. Potash is certainly the largest activity in the mining sector as well as I've indicated the activity in the coal fields.

But that's certainly not to suggest that northern Saskatchewan is not an important element of the development activity because, as you well know, the uranium development is doing very well and has a lot of potential. And we're certainly hopeful for even more activity in the North.

Mr. Belanger: — Going back to the mining in northern Saskatchewan, you know you mentioned earlier the fact that the employment stats are something that you're certainly quite proud of, and certainly I support every effort to employ people in northern Saskatchewan.

The big thing is when you talk about mining in the North in

general, there's a lot of people that don't have a whole heck of a lot of information in terms of what is mined and what is hauled out and what the value is. Will your government undertake to make some of that information more available and more common to the people of the North, because there is a large group of people out there that are not totally familiar with what's happening with the mining sector and what type of resources are being developed and where and how.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We have been working with industry in terms of creating awareness throughout the province. As the member may know, we dedicate a week to the mining industry and set aside a week whereby industry works with the province to create awareness and to have people understand how positive the impact of their activities are, really, in the province. Companies have been involved in a number of initiatives.

Awareness in the schools with promotion of the some mineral activity . . . we just recently had a competition in Saskatchewan schools whereby they could participate in choosing a mineral to designate as Saskatchewan's mineral, which happened to be potash. And I was pleased to be able to attend to a ceremony in Saskatoon with industry and with the young people from a couple of schools who were successful in having their project selected and potash being selected as being Saskatchewan's mineral.

There are a number of tours that go on in the uranium sector and others with the school teachers who then bring back that awareness to their classrooms. I believe the mining week designated is coming up here end of the month and I would invite the members of the opposition to participate with us in helping to create awareness of how important this industry is for us there are a number of events. And what I will do is undertake to send information to the members of the opposition so that they may be able to join us in some of these events that are taking place throughout the province.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. Just a few more questions here. I noticed when I was talking with the minister of municipal affairs, I had my daughter, who was visiting the legislature today, fall asleep. Now I'm speaking with you and my wife and daughter have left, so I'm going to have to get a little tougher here, just to kind of stimulate the conversation here.

One of the crying problems in northern Saskatchewan is of course the high cost of doing business, and in our particular region, the Athabasca constituency, there is a tremendous cost of transporting fuel and the whole bit. In particular, one community of Green Lake, they operate a saw mill, much as similar to the saw mill in Meadow Lake but much smaller in terms of size. They had been speaking about a hook-up to natural gas and they're wondering how the government was able to give incentive to the pulp company in Meadow Lake to hook up the natural gas and not to the saw mill in Green Lake which is only another 16 miles.

You know so as the minister responsible for Energy and Mines, why can't the community like Green Lake be hooked into natural gas so that it'll in turn help the homeowners and help the businesses of the north-west? And they certainly want to see

that happen.

What's your general attitude towards servicing northern communities with natural gas?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well the question really isn't . . . I guess I shouldn't say appropriate because I'm going to answer it, but I think it's not a question that would be directed during Energy and Mines estimates. This would be, I think, something that would be more appropriate during the discussions in Crown Corporations Committee on SaskEnergy. But having said that, I'm going to try and answer it for you.

I just want to give a little history in terms of the natural gas distribution system in Saskatchewan.

In the 1980s, the former administration embarked upon a very aggressive rural gasification program. The investment was something in the neighbourhood of \$335 million which is no small amount of money. And upon reviewing that proposal, neighbouring jurisdictions were wondering how SaskEnergy was able to accomplish this.

Well they did accomplish it, but it's not without cost because the return on the amount of gas that we sell through that rural distribution system will never return an investment. Basically it's an investment that will never pay for itself.

So the government looked at this policy, looked at the fiscal health of SaskEnergy and what we might be able to do to reduce the debt-equity ratio and make it a healthy company and embark on projects that don't cost the taxpayers money through those kinds of investments, and it was decided that we would expand and continue with rural gas and with northern gas but we would do it based on a return on our investment and a return of costs.

We can and certainly will deal with communities in terms of their desire to have natural gas — it's a reasonably cheap source of energy — but it's got to be done based on a reasonable rate of return for SaskEnergy, for the corporation.

I can understand what communities like Green Lake and others in the North are saying in terms of energy costs, because I know that heating with propane and trucking propane to some of these communities certainly doesn't come without costs. We will work with you and with people in the communities in your area. We'll do a cost analysis, and based on the cost analysis, we can give them the information in terms of how much it would cost per unit to bring those kind of resources into the communities. We do it on an ongoing basis.

I'm not familiar with whether or not that's happened specifically with Green Lake, but if that community is interested in sourcing the costs of perhaps bringing it across, we're certainly more than willing to look at that with them, but bearing in mind that the corporation would need a reasonable rate of return.

Mr. Belanger: — So again just to summarize, that if every northern community and every mayor and council and petitions of 10,000 people from the north-west came to you and asked

you as minister responsible, would you consider if the options were, you know, if the option was to gasify, I guess, the entire west side, you know, provide natural gas service, that your department would certainly look into it? Because we know it is done in other regions in other communities probably with not as much focus and attention.

But certainly the west side and Green Lake is one prime example of how natural gas, a cheap source of energy, can certainly stimulate the economy. And as minister responsible, would you be in a position to instruct your department and start looking in and researching with the communities this very option?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What I will offer the member is if the community of Green Lake has approached him and if they haven't approached SaskEnergy in terms of costing out natural gas supply, I invite the member to give me a call. We're around here quite a bit now while the session is on, so maybe it's a good time.

And if there is some interest, if you want to come over to my office, we can sit down and I can put you in charge . . . in touch with officials at SaskEnergy who would be able to undertake that kind of work on your behalf and on behalf of the people of Green Lake.

Mr. Belanger: — I think I'll take the offer of putting me in charge. I notice you had changed the response halfway through.

But I guess the other question in northern Saskatchewan — as you're probably aware, there is a lot of impacts when you talk about treaty land entitlement and the Indian bands involved. Has that ever been a contentious issue with, you know, with your department and a mining company and an Indian band, where land is somewhat being involved in negotiations or land is being contested by the Indian band? Has that been a major problem with your department?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well no, it certainly . . . it hasn't been a difficulty with Energy and Mines in the past, and we would certainly want to work with first nations and with Metis groups from the North in communities in terms of having them understand as development opportunities come. We want to work with them.

And I think no one wants to see difficulties in terms of a process to get economic development initiatives going. And I think that's part of why we haven't had those kinds of difficulties with mineral and explorations in the North.

Mr. Belanger: — The other process we spoke about northern Saskatchewan, several years ago there was discussion of a peatmoss power plant, and I'm not sure whether you'd be involved with that particular problem. But the question we have is, has there been a lot of exploration and studies done on the value of peatmoss and whether there is an abundance of peatmoss in the north-west and whether there is any value in developing this particular resource?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by the officials that there was a lot of study done in the 1980s with respect to peatmoss,

but anything that they could determine would suggest to investors that the economics of development just weren't there.

So has there been work done? The answer is, certainly. And you know, there's . . . that resource is there and it may at some time become economical to develop. But at this point I'm told by the department officials that no one has been able to make the economics of development of that resource work.

(1245)

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, did you bring the answers to the global questions that have been provided to your department?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by my officials that they're in the process of working on a big bundle of information that you requested. When the appropriate documents are put together, we'll forward them to you

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, there are just a few things then that I'll list that I would like for you to bring . . . well give it to the opposition parties before in fact you come back into estimates. Or if that can't be done, then bring it the next time you're in estimates. But we would like a list.

Firstly, on the mineral compensation, I see that there are transfers to and for individuals for both '95-96, '96-97, of some substantial amounts of money. Could you provide us a list of who and what the money was for? Also bring lists for current year, past year, and in fact for a few years back, of number of wells in the province, barrels or metres that they produce, the dollars of revenue to the province, broken down by royalty, tax, lease fees. Would you be able to provide that to us?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — With respect to the compensation, there are two areas of compensation: one is to former owners of mineral rights and the other is in areas where there is partial ownership by others, other than the Crown. And those are referred to as, I'm told, trust certificates. So those are the two areas of compensation.

In terms of the activity in the oil and gas patch, we can put together the numbers of wells drilled, the dollar value that we have taken in royalties, and we can also put together the numbers in terms of lease fees. If you could give me some idea of what kind of parameters — how many years back — because I'd . . . rather than have the officials scurrying to get all of this information, if you can give me, you know, what years you would like this information for, we can undertake to provide that.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well it's up to you because of course we only have to deal with what you're obligated to here, but if you don't mind going back three or four years if that information is readily available . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, you can provide that. Well then that would be the end of our questioning till we have this information.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — Before adjourning the House, the Speaker may wish those of you who are mothers a very happy Mother's Day; and those of you who are not mothers but have some or others in your life who are, to have an enjoyable weekend with the mothers in your lives.

Have an enjoyable weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

