The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan 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 from Regina, Neudorf, Lemberg, Melville, and a number of other small communities in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Wawota, Indian Head, Craven. There's a couple from Langley, B. C. (British Columbia) and from Calgary, and there's one signed, deprived rural Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Regina. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of people concerned about the intended closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

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

The signatures on this petition are primarily from the city of Regina.

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

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

Everyone that has signed this petition is from Regina.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition 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 the decision to close the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, once again this petition is signed by concerned citizens from the city of Regina.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions of names with respect to Saskatchewan people in the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of them are from the community of Radville.

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

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

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, they're from Regina here, they're from Whitewood, they're from Esterhazy, they're from Imperial, they're from Stalwart, and they're from all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And 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 urge the Department of Social Services to reconsider the decision to reduce the parent education and support programs.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Gantefoer: —Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

> To the minister responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated regarding order in council no. 283/96: (1) why did order in council 797/94 have to be amended to read $775,000 instead of $718,700; and (2) what is the reason for the additional funding of $56,300?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and to all the members in the House, a group of 39 people seated in your gallery. The students and teachers are from the community of Canora, specifically the Canora School within the Canora School Division.

I would also indicate that some of these students . . . I had the pleasure of acting as a substitute teacher last spring and I recognize a few from class. I see they're as well-behaved now as they were during my class.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce grade 12 students from Canora; their teachers, Mr. Larry Neufeld and Mr. Merv Tomski; and bus drivers, Kathy Thompson and Lawrence Stefanowich. Welcome, and I wish you well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues in the Assembly, 27 grade 4 students from Pilot Butte School in the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Marjorie Gross — and they're standing to have an opportunity to be recognized — and chaperons, Mrs. Bernhardt and Kim Magnuson.

I'll be meeting with them in room 218 later on to share a refreshment and to talk about their tour and the happenings in the Assembly and a photograph later. I ask all members to join me in giving them a warm welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce today to you one of the grade 8 classes from the Rosetown Central High School; happens to be the class of my daughter Teresa. I don't want to embarrass her, but she's with them. And the class is led here today by Mr. Cline — who happens to be a cousin of the Minister of Health — Mr. Berezowski, and Mr. Gawletz. I'm delighted that you're here to visit us today, and I ask all members to join me in welcoming this class here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to join with the member from Rosetown-Biggar in welcoming the students from Rosetown, and in particular my cousin, Norman. I'm not going to use the same line that the member from Rosetown-Biggar said about . . . I don't want to embarrass Norman. I hope the opposition will bear with me today so that Norman doesn't get unduly upset about anything you might ask me. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to you and through you to the members, a group of 12 students who are seated in the east gallery. They're from the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) English as a second language program, and they're accompanied here today by their teacher Ann Saleski.

Now previously I've had visits from this group, and they're from various countries and Quebec, which is still a part of this country. I'm not sure what stage they're at in acquiring English at this time, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure they'll get the message if we give them a big smile and put our hands together enthusiastically. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Scotty the Tyrannosaurus rex

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, the potential spin-offs from a dinosaur find at Eastend, Saskatchewan continues to grow with great promise.

Through Future Skills, Eastend Community Tourism Authority have hired a trainee who manages a community organization that coordinates, organizes, and markets tourism activities to increase the town's viability as a tourist destination point. This will help maximize the tourism potential created by local dinosaur finds.

Mr. Speaker, what makes this project unique is that the relevant tourism training did not previously exist in Saskatchewan. In addition to business courses at the SIAST Palliser Institute, arrangements were made with Capilano College in Vancouver to develop a tourism course which addresses the specific skills needed to fulfil the mandate of the Eastend Community Tourism Authority.

The trainee will receive credit from both Palliser and Capilano. As a result of this Future Skills project, SIAST will now have access to the cultural tourism training development in Capilano College.

While all of this is coming together, Scotty — whether it's an ancestor of mine or not, I'm not sure — the Tyrannosaurus rex is also coming together. Scotty's jaw was found a few weeks ago with one of the largest dinosaur teeth found so far at the site. It is still being put together piece by piece at the field research station.

Since the research station opened, thousands of visitors have stopped to see one of Eastend's most famous creatures.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Positive changes to Wascana Energy

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to express support for the government's recent decision regarding Wascana Energy. Mr. Speaker, the announced changes to legislation governing the structure of Wascana Energy are positive changes and deserving of both our support and recognition.

Under proposed reforms, Wascana Energy will be better positioned to acquire capital while the people of Regina acquire greater assurances that key management jobs, support staff, and spin-offs will remain in Regina. While we regret these changes did not occur before 55 jobs were relocated to Calgary, it's always better late than never.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to Wascana Energy continuing to play a role employing Saskatchewan people right here in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spring Break '96 Direct Seeding Demonstration

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to congratulate the Zealandia Elks and Sovereign Lions clubs on their second annual direct seeding demonstration coming up on June 7.

Spring Break '96 is a fund-raiser for the organizations, but it is much more. It is an important event for anyone who wants to learn about direct seeding. Saskatchewan is one of the leading places in the world for both the manufacture of implements related to direct seeding and for farmers to convert to that practice. But there are still many of us who are trying to learn from each other about how to do it better.

We know there's a lot of interest out there because Spring Break '95 was such a huge success. Fifteen hundred people came from across the province to check out the latest in direct seeding equipment and to see how it works in the heavy gumbo soil around Zealandia.

The manufacturers are very enthusiastic about the event. This year there will be eight manufacturers demonstrating their equipment on 60 acres of land.

But much more than that, there will be acres of static displays of everything from seeders and harrow bars to motor homes for the odd farmer that gets a break once in awhile.

Farmers always want to see the latest equipment in action, and this year the manufacturers will have plenty to show them.

It's shaping up to be a terrific annual event for the community of Zealandia, and I invite everybody from across Saskatchewan to come and enjoy the day with them. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

AIDS Awareness Campaign

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Saskatchewan AIDS Network is launching its new awareness campaign. The campaign will feature billboards and other advertising across the province to focus on the deadly impact that HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is having on Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan AIDS Network is also calling on the provincial government to show leadership in the fight against AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), starting with more funding. To date, HIV-related illnesses have claimed 100 lives in Saskatchewan. There are also about 300 people in the province who know that they are infected with HIV.

What is also extremely frightening is that the Saskatchewan AIDS Network estimates that another 3,000 Saskatchewan people are unknowingly infected with HIV.

For years, medical officials have been telling people that education and prevention are the two most important methods of stopping the spread of HIV. Saskatchewan AIDS Network is hoping that this new campaign will give people the accurate information they need to fight this deadly disease.

I would ask all the members of this Assembly to join me in commending the hundreds of professionals and volunteers across Saskatchewan who are committed to battling this deadly AIDS virus. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lumsden Lions Club Marks 35 Years

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seventy-nine years ago in Chicago the first Lions Club was formed; 76 years ago in the city of Windsor, Ontario, the first Canadian Lions Club organized itself. Today there are over 42,000 clubs in 180 countries with over 1.4 million members.

One of those clubs is in Lumsden in my constituency, and recently the Lumsden Lions celebrated their 35th anniversary; another reminder, I suppose, that we are by comparison a very young province — a young province with very mature accomplishments, I should add.

The ceremony celebrating the anniversary was attended by District Governor Harold Grace, and a good time was had by all. The evening was also a time for Mr. Grace and for the new members to be informed of the worthwhile activities over the years of the Lumsden Lions. Most significantly, from society's viewpoint, is the Lions annual Journey for Sight and its eye bank, to which the Lumsden chapter is an active contributor. As well, the Lumsden Lions are actively involved in youth programs, in Red Cross donor clinics, in disaster relief, and in a host of other community activities.

Mr. Speaker, the term, service club, is not one the Lumsden Lions take lightly. I congratulate them on their first 35 years and I am sure they will continue to contribute for 35 more and beyond. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wynyard Public Library Awarded Most Improved Branch for 1995

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've always known that people in my constituency like to read, and recently that fact has been confirmed through a special recognition.

The Wynyard Public Library, branch no. 9 of the Parkland Regional Library system, has been awarded the most improved branch award for 1995. Of the 52 branches within the region, when taking growth in circulation and other improvements into account, the Wynyard library came out on top. During 1995 the library had a circulation of 16,000 books, an increase of 66 per cent over the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, as librarian Wendy Howie can confirm, a great deal of effort has gone into library programing as well. More than 1,000 people took part in 57 events connected with the library in 1995. They include public information and entertainment events featuring authors, poets, speakers, and video presentations.

Wynyard mayor, Sharon Armstrong, and RM (rural municipality) councillor, Bill Moulton, accepted the award on behalf of the Wynyard branch earlier this month at the Parkland Regional Library annual meeting held in Yorkton.

This is another good example of people working together for the benefit of rural Saskatchewan. I would like to congratulate librarian Wendy Howie, and the staff and volunteers connected with the Wynyard Public Library, for doing an excellent job in promoting positive activities such as reading and providing information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Passing of Arthur Putz

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark a sad event affecting a member of our legislative staff. On Saturday morning Arthur Putz, the father of Greg Putz, the Deputy Clerk, passed away after a long illness.

Mr. Speaker, we all have special people in our lives on whom we rely for love, support, and guidance. When one of these very important people passes on, it touches us all.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Putz has the continuing support of many family and friends at this hour. Through their memories, their love, and their lives, Arthur Putz will live on.

On behalf of our caucus, I would like to extend to the Deputy Clerk and his family our sympathies and our regards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Museum Week

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last session I was pleased to make a statement about the railway historic museum in the RM of Corman Park in my constituency. It's a great place to spend some time reconnecting with our province's transportation roots, and it is one of many museums in Saskatchewan which are dedicated to preserving and publicizing our past.

This week has been declared Celebrate Saskatchewan Museums Week — a week that coincides with the beginning of tourism season, a week whose purpose is to stimulate public and media interest in our museums and their activities.

A few pertinent facts about Saskatchewan museums: they employ 826 people, provide more than $8 million a year in salaries; 2.4 million people visit Saskatchewan museums each year, 800,000 from out of province. Museums spend $22 million buying goods and services every year. Sixty-five hundred volunteers are involved in the museums, and over half of which are in towns of populations of fewer than 1,000. Museums hold over 5 million artefacts in public trust for future generations.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, 43 per cent of the museums' revenues come from the provincial government; 29 per cent is self-generated; 10 comes from the federal government. This money is well invested, connecting the world of our grandchildren to that of our grandparents, as our museums do. It is a good and laudable objective, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Regina Health District Funding

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the two-tiered health system that this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has developed through its so-called health reform wellness model. Well it appears that this government is trying to reduce the gap, Mr. Speaker, but not by improving rural health care but by bringing down health care funding in our more populated levels to that of our rural communities.

The Regina District Health Board is holding a press conference this hour to announce a budget strategy to deal with the funding shortfall of $13 million over the next two years. We are also aware and understand that there are about 100 front-line care-givers who are about to receive their lay-off notices.

Will the Minister of Health explain what health care facilities will be closed and what services will be lost as a result of this funding shortfall?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Regina District Health Board will be making its announcement this afternoon with respect to measures it intends to take to be fiscally viable, Mr. Speaker. If the member is suggesting that the Regina District Health Board or any other health board should not take steps to live within its budget then I can only say that I disagree with the member.

What we need to do in our health care system, Mr. Speaker, is make far-sighted, correct decisions about spending money,

allocating resources fairly on the basis of population of the districts and on the basis of need. The Regina District Health Board will be meeting the health needs of the people in the Regina district and elsewhere, but it will be doing so within its budget. That's part of its job, and I commend the Regina District Health Board for undertaking the planning that is necessary to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, a number of rural health districts have seen their funding cut because of this government's needs-based formula. The minister has explained that this is because funds should follow the patients. If this is the case and more rural people are in fact taking their health care needs to the larger urban centres, it would seem then that the Regina Health District Board should receive more funding, not substantially less.

Will the Minister of Health explain how this government can continue to under-fund the Regina District Health Board when its patient load is apparently increasing at a substantial rate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Regina District Health Board did in fact receive an increase in this year's budget because of an increase in utilization.

And I say to the member that he and his party and the rest of the opposition cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They cannot get up day after day and say on the one hand that the rural districts are getting less because some of the services are being performed in the city, Mr. Speaker, and complain that the money should be kept in the rural districts. And on the other hand get up and complain that they want the Regina district to have more money. It doesn't work that way, Mr. Speaker.

And as I've indicated to the members in the House before, the reality is that the seven largest districts have 61 per cent of the population but they perform 94 per cent of the surgeries.

And I say to the member that when a resident of his riding in Arm River comes into Regina for a surgery, if that's the appropriate thing to do, that surgery has to be paid for. And if the member is saying that that surgery shouldn't be paid for, the member should say so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Swift Current Care Centre

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a pair of meetings took place yesterday in Swift Current to decide on a course of action to fight this government's decision to close the Swift Current Care Centre. Already more than 3,000 people have signed petitions opposing the closure and a committee has been established to lobby this NDP government to make the right decision and properly fund this facility. Yesterday the Minister of Health used words like consolidation, and streamlining, to justify this decision.

Mr. Speaker, health care is not a business. Health care is a service that should be based on common sense, not just dollars and cents. Will the minister now demonstrate some common sense, intervene in this matter, and restore appropriate funding for the Swift Current Care Centre?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of the Liberal opposition becomes apparent when this member gets up and says health care is not a business. A few weeks ago, the member from Arm River, who was just up, said if there are people that are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay. That's what he said. He said they wanted a two-tiered system, and they wanted the health care system to be run like a business, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say to the member from Melfort that there is an alternative vision that some people have for health care. And I would use as an example of that alternative vision what is happening in the Prince Albert Health District where, Mr. Speaker, they have cut the number of long-term care beds, but they have seven empty long-term care beds at the moment and no waiting-list. Why? Because they are providing care in the community and allowing people to remain independent in their own homes until they need to go to a nursing home. And that's the vision that we need to embrace, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — The vision that this government has, Mr. Speaker, is to leave people alone, afraid of what's going to happen to them, and that's what you're doing with your example, Mr. Minister.

Under section 39 of the districts health Act, Mr. Minister, you have the power to step in and intervene and override decisions of a board where it is in the public interest. Mr. Speaker, the closure of the care centre threatens the quality of life for our sick and elderly in the Swift Current area. It tells our seniors that they are not a priority. Our seniors are concerned about their futures.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, a committee of concerned citizens has been formed. Will the minister make a commitment in this House today to meet at the earliest convenience with this committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the Prince Albert Health District a moment ago. I want to advise the member and the Liberal opposition, and the Conservatives for that matter, that the Saskatoon District Health Board has cut the number of long-term beds that they have. They have reduced the waiting-list for long-term care from 400 to approximately 50 because they have centralized assessment, adult day care, and home care for people who wish to stay in their homes until they actually need to be in a nursing home, Mr. Speaker. And that is the vision that we embrace; that is the vision that the health districts are trying to deliver.

I want to say to that member that if that member was concerned about health care that member would acknowledge that the federal Liberals cut the budget of the Swift Current Health District and every health district in this province, Mr. Speaker, by hundreds of thousands of dollars. And what we did, Mr. Speaker, was to put in a dollar for every dollar that the Liberals took out.

That member will get up and try to make political points on this situation, Mr. Speaker, but that party has no commitment to medicare, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Information Systems

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, responsible for information and technology. Mr. Minister, we know your government's tendering policy has caused a lot of controversy since it was introduced. This morning you announced that you will provide ISM (Information Systems Management Corporation) with the first access to analyse government information systems regarding the year 2000 requirements.

Mr. Minister, will you tell this House whether it is standard government practice to offer tenders for communication information systems?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, of course. I sent to the member opposite a ministerial statement that I'll be making in a few moments after question period regarding ISM 2000 and the MOU (memorandum of understanding) that we signed this morning. So the member is aware this proposal has the support of the broad range of information technology companies in Regina and throughout the province who were at the press conference this morning and supporting the concept of strategic procurement in information technology area.

The reason being that most information technology companies know that it should be well within their purview to come forward with new ideas and concepts unrequested by government, and that's the way we will keep on the cutting edge of information technology. It has the support of the industry. I really urge you to read the documentation, and I think you'll accept this form of MOU as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But I didn't get an answer from the minister. I'm asking, is it normal procedures for you to tender communication?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the member opposite that we didn't tender anything. This was a proposal from industry, from a company, ISM, to come forward and create a situation where they would employ 200 people in Regina to do a project that you will understand, dealing with the need to change computers as we approach the year 2000. They came to government with the proposal.

We have signed a memorandum of understanding so that they will look at the needs of government. There's nothing automatic about any tenders going to this company. This, I want to say again, is supported by the industry in general, who see this as a great opportunity, not only in this area but many other areas where the government may have information technology needs in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, in her budget address, the Finance minister said, "Saskatchewan people told us to cut 'red tape'. We . . . (are listening) and we are responding."

Yet this memorandum of understanding creates red tape. If a government department doesn't like the proposal, they have to go to a standing evaluation committee of the government. Only if that committee agrees can they then select a supplier using normal procedures.

Mr. Minister, how much will this extra step cost taxpayers, and don't you think you have the process in the wrong order?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm realizing now that the Liberals are opposed to this job creation initiative that is supported by ISM. I would urge you to phone other information technology companies like Systemhouse who were at the press conference this morning, members from CDSL (Co-operators Data Services Limited), who support the concept.

I don't know who you're asking these questions on behalf of because basically the industry and the people of the province are excited about this. The Regina Economic Development Authority was there, the mayor of Regina, the business community in general. I'm not sure who's writing your questions for you but you should check to see whether or not there's any support for your opposition to these 200 jobs that are being created.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Long-term Care

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Minister, I thought I would just take a minute to give a report on the meeting held in Swift Current last night, since neither you nor the NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) had the courage to show up. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't one NDP MLA or even a Liberal MLA at this meeting. People were wondering: where is the minister; where is our MLA? One alderman said, and I quote: "My only question is, where is Mr. Wall?" How many care that we're throwing these people into the street, literally?

Mr. Minister, since you were far too busy last night to worry about elderly people losing their home, will you make the commitment that you will go to Swift Current, go the care centre, and answer the questions people are asking? Will you go to Swift Current and take responsibility for the people you are throwing out of their homes?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat, although it shouldn't be required, that no one is going to be thrown out of their home onto the street. It is simply incorrect for the member and other members to get up and say that people are going to be thrown into the street. People are going to be provided with good and decent housing.

But the Swift Current Health District has made a decision to change the way in which they are going to deliver long-term care. And, Mr. Speaker, I support the decision of the Swift Current Health District Board. It is their right to make that decision; they've made that decision; they will provide appropriate long-term care for people who need it, and they will also provide community care for people in the community.

The member says, will I accept responsibility. I will accept responsibility for believing that the health districts and the Government of Saskatchewan should live within their budgets, something that if that member had believed when he was in government would have put us all in a slightly better position, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the minister gives us his same pat answer, and that's the question that was being asked last night. Mr. Minister, Swift Current City Council says the district board isn't getting the autonomy and flexibility it needs to make good decisions. Alderman Robinson says, and I quote:

> The health boards and their administration have the best information about what their district needs in terms of services, but are not always able to react to these needs because of the rules handed down from Regina.

Mr. Minister, the marching orders are coming from Regina. You continue to blame the district health boards. Last night I attended the meeting in Swift Current. Tonight I'm going to meet with the people in Central Butte about their hospital closure. Tomorrow night again in Canora. Mr. Minister, it's becoming a full-time job keeping up with your health care closures.

When are you going to start taking responsibility for these decisions? When will you go out and meet with the people being directly affected? Will you be at the meeting tonight or tomorrow night?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member's question, I meet with people every day across the province in terms of health care needs, and I'll be at a meeting in Yorkton tonight, as a matter of fact.

The member should understand that district boards do make decisions at the local level, and I support that. And either you believe in local decision making, or you do not. If the member says that, well their decision making is somewhat limited because they get a set budget, then I agree with the member. We can't apologize for that, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that that is a fact of life. The Government of Saskatchewan, the universities, the schools, the health districts, have to live within a certain budget. That is a reality, especially a reality these days following upon the '80s, Mr. Speaker. And that is what we must do.

But at the same time we have to have a health care system that is sustainable into the future. And I believe that a vision which says we can have community-based care and home care in addition to long-term nursing home care for people that need it is a sustainable, appropriate vision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A further question. Last night, Mr. Speaker, while I listened to the pain and the anger in people's voices and the questions that I'm raising today coming directly from people — and they weren't fed by myself or any of the other members from our caucus — I couldn't help but think, Mr. Minister, that this was your plan all along.

Your government throws 70 elderly people out of their home — this place, this care centre which they consider home, the only home some of them have known for many years — and then, as we've heard again today, you blame it on the district health board. That way you and your MLA for Swift Current don't even have to show up at the meeting to take the responsibility. That's pretty clever, Mr. Minister. It's also a pretty heartless and gutless plan. Mr. Minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I think the hon. member realizes that he's just crossed the boundary in the use of parliamentary language and I'll ask him to withdraw the remark and get on with his question.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, my apologies to the Assembly. However, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister . . .

The Speaker: — I asked the hon. member to withdraw the remarks as well. If he'll withdraw the remark and proceed with his question. I didn't hear the member withdraw the remark. Just to withdraw the unparliamentary remark and then proceed with his question.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark.

However, Mr. Speaker, people in Swift Current don't feel any compassion. They feel that they're being dealt a heartless blow by a government that is not responding to the needs that they are facing. They feel, Mr. Minister, that you have let them down, that the funding is being directed to the larger care centres and we're forgetting all about rural Saskatchewan.

People who have lived in a centre for a number of years . . . and, Mr. Minister, while you say some of the people will be taken care of, Mr. Minister, 39 patients in the Swift Current health care centre still don't know where they are going.

Mr. Minister, why will you not accept responsibility and go and listen to the concerns of people in Swift Current and all across this province?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member repeats the question, why will I not accept responsibility? But I say to the member, if the member wants me to accept responsibility for saying that there's a health care budget and we have to live within it and build a sustainable system, I accept responsibility for that.

The member has said three times now that I get up and blame the health district board. I don't blame the health district board. I support them. I say that they are headed in the right direction; they're making a good decision. I support them. The member shouldn't get up and say I blame them or that I don't accept responsibility. I do.

But I want to say to the member that I also acknowledge that change is difficult. It's difficult for everybody and it's difficult for the residents of the Swift Current care home. I acknowledge that. But what doesn't make it easier, Mr. Speaker, is really emotional appeals and scare tactics instead of reassuring people that they are going to be provided with appropriate care. Because they are going to be provided with appropriate care, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Urban Crime Rates

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Justice or his designate.

Mr. Minister, many people in our larger centres like Regina and Saskatoon are becoming increasingly concerned about urban crime rates. Back in 1994 we heard a lot of media coverage about car thefts and the Oldsmobile gang in Regina. However, auto thefts actually increased from 1,472 in 1994 to 2,215 in 1995 according to figures provided to us by the Regina city police. That's an increase of approximately 50 per cent in 1994 and over double the number of auto thefts in '93.

Mr. Minister, at the same time that urban crime rates are increasing, you are cutting funding to urban government, and that means cuts to police services. Mr. Minister, what specific steps are you taking to bring the urban crime rate down and make our streets safe for the families of people in places like Regina?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that if the Minister of Justice was answering this question, he would want me to thank the hon. member for the question, and I do that.

I want to say to the member that one of the things that the Minister of Justice is talking about and doing — which I think is a very good development because the member raises a very serious problem — is trying to inject into the Justice system the idea of restorative justice and people taking responsibility for their actions.

One example is the work that is being done in the city of Regina with respect to the so-called Oldsmobile gang. And I think in the long run that if we encourage people to take responsibility for their actions and sometimes to have to face up to the people who have been victimized by their crimes, that this would indeed be the way to go. And I commend what the Department of Justice here is doing in looking at that issue and trying to work with the police and others to move us along in that direction, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, auto thefts wasn't the only crimes that increased in Regina in 1995. Break and enters hit a four-year high of over 6,000. Assaults were also a four-year high in 1995. There are increases from 1994 to '95 in prostitution violations, weapons charges, thefts of vehicles. And this year, Mr. Minister, your casino opened, and many studies have linked casinos to an increase in urban crime rates.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, does Regina have adequate police services to deal with increasing crime rates, and what are you doing to ensure that public safety is being protected?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well yes, I believe that Regina has appropriate police services, Mr. Speaker. But I would say to the member that the answer to this problem is not just more police and spending more on police. The answer to the problem is involving families and communities and different parts of the community.

I know that there is a victims of crime program run out of the Friendship Centre in Regina. I think that's a good example. There's sentencing circles that are going on. Some of those things are good examples. We've got to involve the whole community, the families of offenders, and the victims — get people together to talk about crime. We will not solve the problem just by spending more money on police and having more police. We will solve the problem, Mr. Speaker, if we try to deal with the issues, if we have some restorative justice, if we work together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding For Street Youth Outreach Programs

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an important street youth outreach program in Saskatoon could be in jeopardy if this government does not renew its commitment to funding next month. Egadz outreach workers provide invaluable assistance to street youth.

In fact during the first three months of this year, Egadz workers made 848 contacts, providing street youth with nutrition, clothing, first aid, and counselling. The number of young people on the streets seeking the services provided by the outreach van are dramatically increasing, including child prostitutes. Will the Minister of Justice or his designate commit to continued funding for the outreach program at Egadz?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Justice, I would thank the member for the question. The Egadz program — she'll be interested to know — the outreach program which has served the city well was dependent, and began, on federal dollars. It's the federal dollars that have disappeared and put the outreach program at risk.

Now I have a suggestion for the member and her caucus. We have a problem, Mr. Speaker, as all will recognize in the House, that on a daily basis the Liberal members come in and say we should spend more here and spend more there and spend more there and spend more there, as they also say we should cut taxes, cut taxes, cut taxes, cut taxes. I have a suggestion for the member and her caucus in terms of youth programing, child programing, in the province.

In January of this year, the federal MP (Member of Parliament), Mr. Kirkby, from Prince Albert made quite an announcement. He said, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberal government recently delivered on a key red book promise, which was to provide $700 million for new child care initiatives. Mr. Speaker, we all know that money has never appeared. How would it be, Mr. Speaker, we work together, approach the federal government for some of that money, and put it into valuable programs in our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would challenge that member to go into Saskatoon and talk to the child prostitutes and tell them to refer their cases to the federal government. They're depending on this government in this province to help them.

Mr. Speaker, Regina and Saskatoon city police are warning the public about the infiltration of street gangs. It's a well-known fact that these gangs roam our streets, preying on children who are vulnerable to drugs, prostitution, and crime.

Separate committees in Regina and Saskatoon are both recommending the establishment of transitional safe houses as a way to get child prostitutes off the streets. But safe houses are not a viable proposal if funding for street outreach programs is not maintained.

Mr. Minister, as part of our commitment to the well-being of our children and society as a whole, will this government take a leadership role and propose an integrated funding arrangement for street youth outreach programs and transitional safe houses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I much appreciate the member's obvious concern about this issue. I hope she will turn that obvious concern into constructive action rather than simply criticism.

Mr. Speaker, I am inviting the member, as I stand now, to join with me in approaching the federal government who have promised Canadians over $700 million in new funding for child care and family, youth initiatives across Canada. Not one dollar of that has been designated, Mr. Speaker. Of that money, Mr. Speaker, I calculate that Saskatchewan, as a percentage of the Canadian population, should merit somewhere between 25 and $30 million.

With that kind of money, Mr. Speaker, we can do some great things in our province. I challenge the member to join with me, to join with this government, to have her caucus join with us, in approaching the federal government with proposals to meet some of these needs. Let's get serious about this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Information Systems Partnership Agreement

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform the Assembly of an initiative announced this morning by myself, ISM, and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, that will create up to 200 new information technology jobs in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — As you have heard numerous times during this session, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's *Partnership for Growth* economic strategy calls for developing strategic alliances to stimulate job growth in key sectors such as information technology.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of joining with the Hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs at the signing of a landmark partnership agreement with Canada's largest provider of information systems management, ISM, or Information Systems Management Corporation, headquartered right here in the capital city of Regina.

The memorandum of understanding puts Saskatchewan in the forefront of addressing a problem affecting computer systems all over North America and around the world. Many of the information systems implemented over the past 25 years, of course, utilize a two-digit date system. Starting in the year 2000, these systems will be unable to recognize a current date, resulting in massive disruptions in virtually all areas of date-sensitive information systems, including hardware, software, data storage mediums, and report generation.

This innovative partnership between the Government of Saskatchewan and ISM will result in the Canadian centre of competency to address the problem. It will create up to 200 jobs in Saskatchewan and will help develop leading edge industry expertise in our province.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, the agreement provides ISM with the first access to government departments and agencies to analyse their information systems regarding year 2000 requirements and to present proposals to provide solutions.

While securing the centre of competency for Saskatchewan, the

MOU does not commit departments to expenditures, nor does it commit them to award work to ISM if there are optional considerations which dictate alternate solutions would work better. This is truly an example of strategic procurement.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the 200 jobs created at the centre itself, the agreement will enhance Saskatchewan's position as a centre of information technology at no incremental cost to the taxpayers and it will lead to spin-off growth in this and other industries. Mr. Speaker, it's another example of how Saskatchewan people turn potential problems into opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members to join with me in applauding this partnership with ISM which will create the 21st century jobs now so our young people can use their world-class education and training right here at home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to receive the ministerial statement prior to this announcement.

As a business person and as a taxpayer, I'm delighted that a Saskatchewan firm will be working on international problems surrounding the actual date of the year 2000. Providing access to government departments, with their immense diversity of interests and concerns, will enable ISM to work with an array of problems on hand.

My concerns, addressed in question period, were simply this: were other companies given the opportunity to work with the government department in the same manner? Or did you pick and choose who would be given the opportunity to work on the proposal?

I congratulate the minister for working with the companies to solve problems in the future. I congratulate the government for working with companies to create jobs that the rest of the province doesn't pay for. And I'd like to point out that the people of the province only have to hear 100 more of these announcements for the minister to reach his goal of 20,000 jobs in three years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a good initiative set forward by a very good company here in the province of Saskatchewan. Information technology of a cutting edge like this is indeed a great step forward for Saskatchewan and for the company involved. The jobs will undoubtedly be an added bonus and great thing for the province of Saskatchewan.

A little history of this company might be in order, however, at this point If you recall, this is a privatization initiative of the former administration. The government computer company was WESTBRIDGE at the time. It had a net profit in 1992 of $500,000. After privatization that jumped to $12 million in 1994. It went from a little over 200 employees in 1988 to over 3,000 employees in Canada by 1994. Last year 48 per cent of ISM was sold to IBM for $142.5 million. They have contributed magnificently to the economy of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's paying millions of dollars in taxes, donations, payrolls, spin-offs, etc., to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great initiative. The foresight of this privatization should not be overlooked, and we're hopeful that other privatizations through the Crown corporation review will be forthcoming.

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

Ms. Haverstock: — With leave, to comment on the ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the members. I appreciate very much that the minister sent a copy of his ministerial statement earlier to me today. And I do want to comment, primarily because from 1991 onwards, the then third party in 1991 made reference on a regular basis to the province taking advantage of information technology through what we termed a centre of excellence.

And I'm most excited about this announcement today. It's termed a centre of competency, and it's timely for sure, given our discussions in the committee on Public Accounts when we were recently discussing information systems protection. It think strategic procurement is something that should be encouraged. We're delighted. I am delighted that 200 jobs in such an important area are going to be focused in our province, on our concerns, and I'd like to congratulate the government and the minister in this undertaking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 115 — An Act to establish Regional Telephone Districts

Mr. Gantefoer: — I move first reading of a Bill to establish Regional Telephone Districts be now introduced and read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — Question 100 is converted to motions for returns (debatable).

Written question 101 is converted to motions for returns (debatable).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 80 — An Act to amend The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After my remarks I will be moving the second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 1996.

In Saskatchewan where so much of our economy is based on our natural resources, maintaining a healthy ecosystem is possible if we stop the loss of species and their habitats by improving the way we manage our resources.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I will summarize The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act's new features. The first area of concern is the first nations' treaty land entitlement. The proposed amendments will remove land to fulfil first nations' treaty land entitlement settlements. In consultation with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat, 21,500 acres of protected lands have been identified by specific first nations as part of their land entitlement selections. Both the province and the first nations are anxious to complete the transfer of title and add to the reserve lands, in order to resolve this long-standing debt.

The Canada-Saskatchewan Treaty Land Framework Agreement will remain in effect for the next several years. This amendment adds a clause which will allow lands to be removed by regulation for Framework Agreement purposes. Removal by regulation will help the province fulfil its commitment to the Framework Agreement without having to go through the lengthy legislative amendment process.

This amendment reflects the Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to the Framework Agreement. I should also point out that all of the third-party interests in all of these lands have been dealt with before they will be turned over for treaty land settlements.

The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act Review Committee is the second area which we will be dealing with. The amendment recommends the removal of 25,600 acres of land as a result of extensive consultation with farmers and ranchers following the 1992 amendment to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, which added lands to the Act.

An appeal process was initiated after that amendment to deal with lessees' concerns which arose out of those additions. Some of the lands being removed from the Act by this amendment are to become available for purchase by farmers and ranchers who wish to acquire them for their operations.

All of the organizations involved in this process, including the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, and Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, support this amendment.

(1430)

Mr. Speaker, this Act conserves some of Saskatchewan's best remaining natural areas while protecting and managing Crown lands for agriculture and wildlife populations. The government remains committed to conserving and managing habitat lands while recognizing and respecting the role ranchers, farmers, and property owners have in conserving wildlife habitat. In total, 47,100 acres — approximately 1 per cent of the lands under the Act — will be removed for the purposes of treaty land entitlement and farmer/rancher settlements.

Another area that we are pleased to add here is, additional Crown lands adjacent to major wetlands are being added to the Act. In total, 3,600 acres will be added to the Act. These lands were identified as important for rare and endangered species, and particularly piping plovers and whooping cranes.

We also saw fit, Mr. Speaker, to increase the penalty clause. This amendment also raises the maximum penalty for corporate violations of the Act, adds a penalty for continuing offences, and allows the courts to make restoration orders requiring offenders who have disturbed wildlife habitat lands to restore and rehabilitate those lands. These changes provide the government with a much better ability to control and manage lands designated under the Act.

We also have concluded some administrative housekeeping details. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendment deals with administrative housekeeping, which includes the land descriptions. Currently there's three schedules; one, two, and three schedules will all be compiled into one schedule so that the Bill will all be under one piece of paper.

Grouping these lands under one schedule does not change the meaning or intent of a schedule but helps to simplify identification of these lands. In protecting a total of 3.4 million acres of government owned land, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is the most cost-effective habitat program this province has. It is less expensive to conserve our natural areas than it is to try to restore them later.

These natural areas are valuable to wildlife and to those who enjoy them, and they can be protected with very little cost to the taxpayer. The government recognizes the importance of wildlife to Saskatchewan people and, in turn, the importance of private and Crown lands to wildlife survival.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just at the top, the Liberal Party believes that balance should be struck between farmers and ranchers, and the balance should be struck between developers and of course conservation of land, and also to fulfil the treaty obligations in reference to treaty land entitlement process.

Once again, I'm also pleased to have an opportunity to discuss another very important piece of this legislation that is before the House today.

Mr. Speaker, this Act is current . . . is undergoing its second set of revisions. This Act was originally passed as law in 1984. In

1992 the NDP government tabled and passed a series of amendments that proved to be controversial to the Tory Party, the party that passed this Act in the first place.

Now this Act is up for another set of changes. In 1992 a fair amount of debate occurred over the proposed changes to this Act. At the time, the NDP government included the remaining 1.5 million acres of Crown land into the Act. This brought a total of 3.4 million acres of natural areas protected under the critical wildlife habitat protection Act.

This Act at the time was seen as a unique piece of legislation as it allowed and continued to allow the traditional uses of haying and grazing by agricultural lessees to continue on Crown land. In keeping with its mandate to protect Crown land, this Act prohibits the clearing, breaking, and draining of these Crown lands or the sale of these lands.

This Act is not only unique in its make-up. It is also cost effective, as the taxpayers pay nothing, and it's cheaper to maintain our natural habitat now than it would be to try and rejuvenate them in the future.

The PC (Progressive Conservative) Party, as official opposition at the time, was very much opposed to the amendments that were tabled in 1992. The view at that time was that this Act would deprive the ranchers and farmers of Saskatchewan from making their decisions as to the protection of the wildlife habitat.

I think that the reason that we need protected land spaces is for the very reason that landowners and large corporations oftentimes don't know or don't realize how important it is to properly protect the natural habitats found on their land.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that was then, and this is now. The amendments to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act that are before us today should not be as nearly as controversial as the Tory Party tried to make them four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great need to have policies in place to protect our province's natural resources and wildlife and waterfowl habitats. Due to the extent of agricultural industry in Saskatchewan, over 75 per cent of our natural landscape has disappeared due to cultivation of land and the construction of roads, towns, and cities. Over half of our prairie wetlands have been drained and filled. It is with this loss of our natural ecosystem that we see a continuing and eternal loss of flora and fauna that is native and unique to Saskatchewan.

It is important for us all as legislators to work together to foster and protect the environment of our province. The duck population in Saskatchewan continues to plummet. To add to this, over 20 per cent of our native plants are listed as rare and are disappearing at a horrific rate.

The purpose of the amendments to this Act that were tabled in 1992 were to include more Crown lands as protected by The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act . Today's amendments propose to remove 21,500 acres from protection under this Act in order to fulfil first nations' treaty land entitlement settlements and agreements. Another 25,600 acres of land will also be removed from the schedule as a result of consultation with farmers and ranchers following the controversial 1992 amendments.

I can't help but question the reasons why this consultation did not take place before the 1992 amendments instead of after. I guess that is of this same government's act first, consult later attitude and way of doing things . . . is not a new concept.

This Act therefore proposes to remove a total of 47,100 acres of land from that schedule and will subsequently add another 3,600 acres of land to this schedule. These acres that are being added have been identified as extremely important pieces of land for their populations of rare and endangered species. I will mention once again that it's very important to protect these endangered species so that they can multiply and flourish and therefore be around for many generations to enjoy.

Saskatchewan has recently been given a C from the world wildlife federation for its projects to protect our natural spaces. This is up from a D plus of last year.

Each year the world wildlife federation individually grades 13 Canadian governments on their progress towards completing an ecologically representative system of protected areas. It is good to see that Saskatchewan has taken this seriously. Every hour over 240 acres of Canada's wilderness disappears. This can never be regained. Once we lose wilderness lands, they are gone for ever. This is why it is so important to protect the wildlife habitats that we still have.

In the 1994-1995 endangered spaces progress report, it was noted that Saskatchewan needed to, by March of 1996, continue to analyse lands under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act and other privately protected lands to determine if they are a candidate for protected lands that require additional protection. We may be a couple of months off, but I am very glad to see that this government is making conscientious steps to fulfil its commitment to protect the endangered spaces and species of Saskatchewan.

I must commend this government for its improvements in preserving and protecting our natural spaces, but so much more still needs to be done.

Section 3(1) of this Act is amended so that Crown lands that are currently listed as wildlife habitat lands may be withdrawn from the schedule by regulations that'll be proposed. The purpose of this amendment is to transfer the title of the lands in question to entitlements bands that have completed sale conditions required by the treaty land entitlement agreements.

Amendments to this Act go on to increase penalties and fines for contravention of any provision of this Act or its regulations. The maximum penalty for the individuals is $2,000 while the maximum penalty for large corporations at the contravene section of the Act will increase to $50,000. This is necessary to deter those companies from harming Saskatchewan's natural spaces.

A new section has also been added that will hold an offender responsible for restoring wildlife habitat lands that have been damaged as a result of the offences committed by the individual or corporation involved. I think that this is extremely important.

It not only acts as more of a deterrent but it also makes offenders realize the extent of the damage that they have caused.

Education is the only way to ensure the preservation of our endangered species and natural land spaces. I find the amendments being tabled in this Bill as very important ones and I will enjoy the opportunity to question the minister in more details about this Bill's implications in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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

Bill No. 84 — An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 84 to amend The Wascana Centre Act .

This Bill implements the budget decision to maintain the 1996-97 statutory funding for the Wascana Centre at the same level as last year. This is the fourth year that the province has maintained funding at this level, permitting the Authority to continue an excellent level of service in developing, conserving, and enhancing the park, the lake, and the legislative grounds.

The Bill establishes the statutory funding contributions from the city of Regina, the University of Regina, and the province. For 1996-97, this funding will be $1.42 million in total, and this amendment suspends a statutory formula for another year. This formula would require the three funding parties — the Government of Saskatchewan, the city of Regina, and the University of Regina — to pay a sum equivalent to the amount receivable by the city through a levy of 1.7 mills. This formula has in fact been suspended since 1986-87.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all the members appreciate the importance of the Wascana Centre, not only to the residents of Regina but to all the people of the province. And thank you to the continued support of the partners, that we're able to enjoy a beautiful setting for the many facilities that benefit people.

Within the Wascana boundaries we find the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, the Science Centre, the Saskatchewan Centre, the Diefenbaker homestead, the University of Regina, several government offices, and of course the Legislative Building — which is a rich variety of uses that surround the park.

Furthermore, the Wascana Centre's a great attraction for naturalists and environmentalists — a focal point where thousands of citizens, young and old, meet to enjoy the park and its recreational facilities throughout the year.

Wascana is a unique setting among Canadian capitals and we should all continue to be very proud of it and to maintain its integrity for enjoyment by future generations. This has been achieved through the partnership — probably one of the original partnerships of its kind in the province — with the city and the university.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I now move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, urban parks are a key source of recreation and conservation. People from cities across the province spend hour after hour doing various activities in the park, including bicycling, walking, birdwatching, and relaxing with their children. These parks also feature various educational opportunities for our youth, featuring wildlife and heritage sites. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I feel it's necessary to speak on Bill 84 today.

As I understand it, the amendments outlined in this Bill will ensure that the same level of funding will be provided to the Wascana Centre Authority in Regina this fiscal year as was approved last year. This funding is retroactive to April 1, 1996. This funding is used to plan the maintenance, conservation, and development of this valuable green space. It also goes towards helping police activities in the park.

With increased environmental awareness in today's society, many community groups are focusing much of their efforts on increasing green space in the city. This is being achieved by creating more playgrounds, parks, and community gardens.

I believe the amendments outlined in Bill 84 will provide the funding needed to maintain the services within the jurisdiction of the Wascana Centre Authority. And I see no reason to delay this legislation.

Any questions I have on the staffing and funding arrangements can be addressed in the Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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

(1445)

Bill No. 85 — An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I move to give — will, at the end of my remarks — give second reading of a Bill to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act.

This Bill implements the budget decision to maintain the 1996-97 statutory funding for the Meewasin Valley Authority at the same level as last year. This is the third year that the province has maintained funding at this level, permitting the Authority to continue an excellent level of service in developing, conserving, and enhancing the river valley.

The Bill establishes the statutory funding contributions from the city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan, and the province. For 1996-97 this funding will be $1,870,760 in total. This amendment suspends the statutory formula for another year. Suspension of the formula will mean that some river valley developments will still have to be paced according to available funds.

The Authority plans to go ahead with further development of Gabriel Dumont, Kiwanis, and the Rotary valley parks this year. Ongoing operations at Meewasin should not be jeopardized by maintaining last year's level of statutory funding. The Authority may have to slow down some jointly planned studies with provincial and local government agencies, such as groundwater, drainage, and shore line erosion studies, and capital projects like the trail development in the north-east sector.

Last year the government amended The Meewasin Valley Authority Act to permit Meewasin to share its experience and expertise in conservation and resource management with other municipalities in the province and beyond. I am pleased to report that the process has begun. In 1996-97, Meewasin will serve as the managing partner for the Saskatchewan River basin program. This program involves over 120 partners throughout the prairie provinces in environmental education and action programs in the Saskatchewan River basin from the headwaters in the Rockies to Lake Winnipeg and beyond to Hudson Bay.

I would like to say a special thank-you to Peggy McKercher, Chair of the Authority for many years, an individual who was instrumental in establishing and guiding the Meewasin Valley Authority through many significant accomplishments. Peggy has moved on to commit her time to the University of Saskatchewan. The government thanks her for her dedication and leadership. We would like to welcome Ken Pontikes as the new Chair and look forward to success under his leadership.

I take this opportunity to commend the Authority for a worthwhile year and look forward to their continued stewardship of the river valley. I hereby move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Meewasin Valley Authority is equally important to the people of Saskatoon and surrounding area as is the Wascana Centre Authority to people in Regina. And I do commend all those who have had input and have taken the time and energy to make that a wonderful surrounding for the people of Saskatoon and the province. Bill 85 proposes legislation amendments that will also ensure funding for Meewasin Valley is maintained for this fiscal year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have the same reasons for supporting Bill 85 as I did for Bill 84. Therefore any specific questions or concerns that I have about Bill 85 can be also addressed in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 54

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you realize, we have already spoken at some length on this Bill, so today I would just like to make a few more comments. I look forward to getting to the heart of the conservation easements when we have a chance to discuss this Bill in Committee of the Whole.

Right now all I can do is make our point of view known. When the Bill reaches the committee stage, however, when I can get answers to my questions, I hope these answers will make rational, constructive changes that will benefit all the people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak on this Bill as a farmer, as a landowner, and as someone who truly appreciates and respects nature. That is why I fully support the underlying goals that I think the government has set out.

However, I think this government's legislation may be either unclear or short-sighted because they've addressed all the positive things that would come from the passage of this Bill, but they've ignored some very potential negatives.

Mr. Speaker, I know I've already touched on the issue of easements on surrounding land. And this is a very serious issue in my constituency and in other areas of the province. Mr. Speaker, the laws outlined in this Bill have important implications for both landowners and conservation agencies. So to get to the heart of this Bill, I talked to some of the special interest groups and to municipalities.

It is their concerns that I bring forward today. Mr. Speaker, they are mostly wondering if there will be an impact and what type of impact the conservation easements will have on the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement. Can the land be taken into reserve status if it has a conservation easement registered on the title?

What about land that already has a drainage easement registered by a conservation and development area authority on the land, and then the landowner gives a conservation easement? Will the two conflict? This would be in as far as access is concerned. And what about the scenario that the land with a conservation and development easement was taken over by an Indian reservation? Is there a possibility the terms of reference for easement could be misconstrued to the point that C&D (conservation and development) easements could be terminated under the definition of this Act?

If the reserve asks for termination of an easement, the authority would not have access to the drainage system. This would create flooding in surrounding areas. And who would take the responsibility? Would it be the government? I think, not likely. They seem to shirk responsibility any time something negative happens. So the problem and the expense would once again fall on the backs of the landowners.

Mr. Speaker, the government's legislation allows for easements to be easily withdrawn for special interest groups, and this is what has people worried. Is a conservation easement term defined well enough, so there can be no chance of confusion

with a regular easement, especially in as far as the termination of easements are concerned? Landowners need a system to protect and maintain their investments. And if this legislation goes through, there doesn't appear to be any legal obligation to ensure this happens.

To me this shows the government hasn't thought about all the implications or has decided that the potential problems are not serious. Well to landowners trying to make a living, the potential problems are serious, and I hope the government is prepared to give these people some sort of guarantee that it won't end up with the short end of the stick for them.

Municipalities are already struggling, and someone needs to start picking up the local governments.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is a way to promote the positive aspects of this Act and guard against the negative aspects, but it would mean that the government would have to identify potential pitfalls now before legislation goes through. Because, as the members opposite realize, if a law is incomplete or short-sighted, it may cause confusion in the courtrooms. And because our law is based on precedents, decisions made early on could have a long-term effect. Therefore, if the government ensures that measures are taken now to protect landowners and municipalities, it will benefit everyone in the future.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this means that the government will have to make some changes; and as we all know, this government hates making changes even if it is what the people want. Once again we have to look at this government's backward approach to legislation, and to all their policies for that matter. Consultation comes first. First you listen to the people — and I mean really listen. I'm not sure the government remembered that step, because if they did, why didn't they recognize some of the potential obstacles? I certainly didn't have to look that far. All I did was talk to people who could be affected and they had plenty to say. So if the government followed a process that is in the best interests of the people, why didn't they hear the same comments?

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I can appreciate the government's motives for introducing conservation easement legislation. I believe their intentions were honourable. Unfortunately I don't think they looked far enough down the line. What sounds good on paper doesn't necessarily work well when it's acted upon. Perhaps they didn't want to look beyond the positive, but in the best interests of Saskatchewan people they have to look at all sides of any piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have ample opportunity to present our concerns. As I said before, I now look forward to discussing this Bill with the government and to getting answers to the questions I have raised. Because, Mr. Speaker, if this legislation is passed, I want to be able to assure my constituents and people throughout this province that someone was looking out for their interests.

I want to be able to go back to my constituency and tell these people that their concerns were addressed. And most of all, Mr. Speaker, I would love to be able to ease their fears. I would like to be able to give them a definite answer that they will be protected. It is these things I will look forward to discussing with the government. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

(1500)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 48 — An Act to amend The Animal Identification Act

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

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me today, to my left is assistant deputy minister of Agriculture and Food, Terry Scott; and behind me is Merv Ross, manager of livestock operations.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to the minister's officials.

Mr. Minister, looking at clause 4, changes to the power of the directors as set out in section 4 of the Act. Under what circumstances do you envision the director registering a mark as a four-year mark and when will he register a mark as a lifetime mark under your proposal?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Upon the request of the client. If the client wants a four-year, he can have a four-year; if a client requests a lifetime, he can have a lifetime.

Ms. Draude: — So then it's not your . . . it's not at the minister's discretion. It's up to the animal owner to decide?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, it's up to the owner to make the request whether they want a four-year or a lifetime brand. We would like to see probably more lifetime brands. It cuts the paperwork down; it's much more simple. And also the brands can be transferred to other people if passed on in the family.

So it's much less paper flow and much less administration, and also the person can have his brand . . . assured his brand for life.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, under clause 6, has there been any consideration given to allowing lifetime marks to be passed on from father to son; or in general terms, from the parent to the child?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, there is provision for the brand to be passed on intergenerationally. I believe along with that there would be a small fee for administration of the transfer. But the brand can be kept from generation to generation.

Ms. Draude: — So will the . . . when you say there will be a

small fee, does that mean that, when the transfer is to take place, that somebody will actually have to write to your department and ask for the transfer to take place so there will be a change on the . . . of ownership?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — They will apply to the department for transfer of the brand from the person who has it to the family member who wants to receive it.

Ms. Draude: — Under clause 9, the power to cancel a registration mark is fairly drastic. The Bill reads that the director "may" give a person notice of intention to cancel registration. Why would it be left to the director's discretion and why not say the director "shall" give notice?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: —This is a permissive clause to allow the director to apply the rules and regulations of the Act. For example, when a brand is registered, there is a description of the brand plus the location where the brand will be located on the animal, and there's a few other regulations.

If the person does not adhere to those over a period of time — it's not like the first time there's an abuse — but then the brand can be revoked. But it's not anticipated that that would happen very often, nor does it happen very often. But it's a clause that's there if needed.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, can you give me an idea of how many different brands there are being used in the province?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — 25,000.

Ms. Draude: — So when we say that under section 9, the registered trademark . . .the registered mark is a duplicate of another registered mark or so similar to another registered mark as to create the possibility of confusion, I would think that this could happen quite frequently.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — This would be very, very rare that there would ever be a duplicate brand. But in the event of a mistake, what happens is when somebody applies, the registry is checked. But being human, sometimes we all do make some mistakes. And in the event that there was a duplicate brand, then we certainly wouldn't want to have two brands. You'd be defeating the purpose of the brand; so then this gives us the power to — if there is a mistake made and there's a duplicate brand — just to revoke the latter brand, and they'd just have to choose a new brand.

Ms. Draude: — So if the brand had already been . . . if the cattle had already been branded, then the cost of the re-branding would be borne again by the owner of the cattle?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Is there such a thing as an interprovincial brand so that Alberta and Saskatchewan companies . . . or people would be allowed to use the same brand?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Actually right now the department's working with other departments on a universal registry for western Canada. It's not completed yet and they don't know for sure if it can work, but there's enough interest from all the governments to attempt to do this. So that is in the process. And whether it'll come to fruition or not will depend if it can work in a way that won't cause confusion or any conflict between producers.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I welcome your assistants. I feel confident that their advice will be more than adequate on any questions.

Just on this business of human nature being what it is and the possibility of a brand being used more than one . . . or brands appearing to be similar. In the event that that does happen and two . . . there's a conflict arises between owners of two different animals with the same brand, how can you envision that being resolved as to which brand belongs to whom?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — It would go through a normal procedure. Again, this is very, very rare occurrence that this might happen. But you go through a procedure where you would have to have people sign declarations and we have to do an investigation as to what the actual brand was.

I assume that you meant two similar brands, not the same brand. Yes. Well two similar brands, then the process is there that we can work through that process to identify which brand that actually was. And so that's in place. It's very rare but we could . . . Never say always, but for 99.9 per cent of the time I'm sure, identify the right — never say never — the right brand.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. I again recall a few years back where the rustling became rather rampant throughout the Prairies. My next question is, with all these brands and the significance of them, are lists supplied to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) detachments in those areas where it may become a problem?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The department works very closely with the RCMP in these matters. In fact they do joint seminars; they do joint study sessions; they would work in any case where there's a rustling reported. The RCMP and the brand inspectors would be working together to help solve that case and to identify cattle.

Mr. Osika: — How many brand inspectors would you have currently out in the field?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — There's currently about 40 positions filled by about 70 inspectors. Therefore, some of them are part time.

Mr. Osika: — What type of training, Mr. Minister, would be supplied to these brand inspectors? How extensive? And maybe I'll ask you another question at the same time: where are they located, specifically?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The requirement for the education part is basically a good agricultural background with, you know, knowledge of farming, cattle, and a grade 12 diploma. Then we start training on the job, and that's when we do the seminars with the RCMP so that the people that are hired, they on

occasion have the training in order that they, you know, get a better knowledge of the industry. And it's a fluid process; if there's somebody fairly new, you know, then if there's a problem, they can always have somebody that's more experienced involved.

But they are located at all the auction houses whenever there's sale day. And they're located, upon request, at the order buying houses, and upon request in the rural areas.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. It's not unlike, then, crop insurance adjusters; as and when they're required. They learn on the job from the more experienced folks. Thank you.

One other question that I have is, what does it cost for a person to register a brand?

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — As it stands right now, the cost is $25 for the four-year brand.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, when a person receives notice under clause 9, he must, according to your Bill:

> . . . establish to the satisfaction of the director within 30 days of receiving the notice that . . . registration of his or her mark should not be cancelled . . .

I think this is sort of a one-sided process. The department could have been determining for awhile that they were going to cancel this, and the person at the other end only gets 30 days to rebuke it. Can you . . . doesn't this seem a little one-sided to you?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well generally the 30 days is an appeal period for the person with the brand. And it's actually for the protection of other people who . . . might be the case where there's the same brand or similar brands, for whatever reason. You don't want it too long because the longer you let it go, the more problems you could have.

However the clause says "may"; the director may. So if there's a situation where somebody needed more time, the director can extend that period of time. So it's fairly fluid. In fact the brands are such that this shouldn't happen. But I mean if it does, we have to be a little bit flexible.

Ms. Draude: — Do the people involved in this process know that its time frame is a little fluid? Do they understand that if it's on 31 days they still have a chance to appeal?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I'm not sure where you're going with this. But the other day when we started Committee of the Whole on this Bill, I tabled letters from the cattle feeders association, the stock growers, and the order buyers, and they all said that they agreed with this Bill. They were consulted with, and they understand the 30 days, and they didn't have a problem with it. So that's why it's there. They don't have a problem, so I think it will work. And the fact that it's a little flexible, if they need longer, is such that it should not be a problem.

Ms. Draude: — That's great, Mr. Minister, because I think there's been more than one time when most of us have seen the time frame of 30 days, and 31 days was too long. So I'm just hoping that there isn't a time when people will actually miss their opportunity because of this 30 days.

It's probably a good idea to give the inspectors the expanded powers set out in new sections 22 and 22.1. I want to ask why you have not protected the person who has done nothing wrong — the individual whose operations are a subject of repeated seizures and searches.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well this clause is set out because the inspectors have to have some power or some access to property. And the only reason that they would be there is on the basis of a complaint. Somebody's complaining about . . . or a suspicion comes from somewhere that there's a problem there. And if a person's done nothing wrong, then they should have nothing to fear. And the brand inspectors aren't going to harass them.

But they wouldn't just act on a whim. I mean there would be a reason for acting. And as you know, if somebody complains to a government body or to a police force or anybody . . . Same thing with the police forces, if somebody . . . they have the power to access property with warrants, same as here. You can't go in a person's house without a warrant or else without permission of the individual themselves. But if there's a complaint, then you have to act on it.

So you're right. There may be situations where somebody, for whatever reason, complains about a neighbour and his cattle or brands or whatever, and he may be dead wrong, but we have to have the power to look at that to see if the complaint is legitimate or not.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, will such a person have any rights to redress or rights to damages then?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well I would hope and anticipate that the brand inspector who was acting on a complaint to inspect cattle . . . For example, if you said your cattle were . . . or you thought your cattle were in my yard, then the brand inspector would have to go and look at that. But we don't anticipate any damages caused by that action. I don't know under what circumstance there would be damages. And the brand inspectors aren't there to harass people; they're just there to do a job.

Now the same thing applies, the same rights apply, to the police forces under this Act. I mean they have to have the right to access. They also fall under this Act. So either the brand inspector or the police officer has powers in this Act to go and search out and make documentation of any complaint in whatever the circumstances might be. But I don't anticipate that there would be any damages unless you can describe to me a case where there might be.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I was just wondering there's . . . animal identification is done also through ear tags, as you well know. I'm wondering whether or not this Act pertains to ear tags as well as branding iron brands.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — No, it does not apply to ear tags for the simple reason that the brands that we are talking about here are permanent brands into the . . . burnt into the hide. Ear tags can be easily removed.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, just a couple more questions for myself. I believe what my hon. colleague was perhaps referring to was any damage to character as far as redress is concerned, someone coming along and accusing you of a misdeed which in fact you have no recourse . . . I guess I'll ask that and while you're perhaps considering it, also would it be the procedure then in the event of a complaint that a brand inspector would call on the assistance of the police prior to going to somebody's property?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — With regard to the restitution to a client or to somebody who's been infringed upon, I guess that's possible. It would be up to him if he wanted to have compensation through the court system or whatever. But I just believe that most farmers like the brand inspectors, like them to be there. Because 99.99 per cent of them are very, quite honest people and they know the value of having the brand inspector; him having the ability to go and inspect for other people's . . . or for your cattle on somebody else's property, and if somebody checked you, you know.

It's the same thing if the police are called to a building or a house in Regina where somebody reported an arsenal of guns in the basement or something like that, or whatever; there's no restitution if you're not guilty. But like I said, I think the farmers understand the necessity here because they don't like rustling at all.

The other thing is that in most cases, where possible, the policy is that if there is a complaint in a rural area, the inspector will get a hold of the police first to go with them and to help them with the case. It's normal practice to do that, apparently.

But in the case of an auction mart where the cattle are coming in and going out, and there's a suspicion of a brand or whatever being wrong, or a reported brand and those cattle being in there, then the brand inspector has the ability to do it on his own. But we sort of like . . . we work in junction with the RCMP on these matters, if possible.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. My concern was for the brand inspector, for the individual who may go — and as we talked earlier, human nature being what it is and animosities that overflow — an individual may take offence and might take some personal civil action against an inspector. That was the purpose of my question.

As far as if in fact that did happen — someone going in all good conscience and in all good faith, but it backfires — what defence would there be for that brand inspector?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, that is why we like to have the RCMP involved and in these . . . (inaudible) . . . cases to have . . . you know, you got two people there and you also have . . . there might be more respect for an RCMP uniform then for a brand inspector's uniform. But it does help to have two people there.

And for your other question, if the brand inspector is carrying out his duties as prescribed by regulation, in the normal manner and in good faith, then he is protected under the Act. Of course if he is negligent, then he is subject to anything that the person might want to allege toward him. But if he's carrying out in the normal manner, he's okay.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I take comfort in that, because with the police forces, they may enter a premises or property with reasonable and probable grounds, and I was concerned whether or not a brand inspector might have, under the Act or those regulations, similar protection.

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, as opposed to the federal gun legislation where there's some question about accessing property, it's a little different in that if the person is carrying out his duties, as I said before, in a normal manner and is not negligent, he is protected, as all government employees are. If there was a suit, it wouldn't be against the individual; it would be against the department. So the individual is protected by law.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One question. You mentioned that the brand inspectors would be at auction marts. Could you just give me an idea what would be expected of that brand inspector if there was an animal came through and there was a question of the brand not being properly registered or not being registered in the name of the individual that has a number of those animals for sale?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The process is that the brand inspector would check the brands. He'd have a list of all the brands that are registered. He would have a list of any cattle that were reported stolen. He'd check the brands; if a brand didn't match . . . he'd check the brand, then go to the registry, see who owned the brand. If that owner wasn't the same name that was on the manifest or the sale, then he would go to that person and request proof of transfer from the original owner to himself.

If he can't do that, then the proceeds are held up, and then he goes and contacts the person whose name the brand is registered under and asks that person if there was any loss of cattle or if his cattle were actually sold to this person. And if that person says yes, that's fine; and if that person says no, then there's a dispute involved. Then the funds come to Regina to be held until the dispute is settled.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So the transaction would all go through, but the funds would be held. Is that what I . . . how I understand it?

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

Mr. Osika: — And this question may be redundant, but I expect that with our . . . all the technical skills and abilities and availability of equipment we have now, all the brands are computerized and the names and registrations. Are you to that extent at this point, where the lists of brands are all on a

computer, and lists are available?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes.

Mr. Osika: — Okay, thank you. I'll just go back to the . . . the transaction goes through at the auction mart, but the monies are then withheld. So in effect, there are no powers of seizure on the part of the brand inspector, merely . . . he is merely to alert the department and/or people that may have an interest in the transaction.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The brand inspector does have power to stop sale. That would be very, very rare. He would just report it, and like I described earlier, seize the funds or bring them to Regina until the 30-day appeal thing was over. And if there was a conflict then funds would be held until it was resolved.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just to sort of recap, I appreciate that legislation and regulations are put into place to protect all parties involved in any kind of transactions and I thank you for answering our questions. I want to thank your officials for being present in the House today to help us through this. We have no further questions. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Clause 1 agreed to.
Clauses 2 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 60 — An Act to amend The Crop Insurance Act

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

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, along with the assistant deputy minister, Terry Scott, I have a new official behind, Mr. Doug Matthies, general manager of Sask Crop Insurance Corporation in Melville.

Clause 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to once again welcome the official with the minister, Mr. Matthies. Just a couple of questions on this Bill. The section of The Crop Insurance Act which your Bill proposes to amend, section 11 — that's one which establishes the crop insurance fund — also describes the components of the fund. And forgive me, I'll just do a little preamble here.

The components of the fund as set out in subsection (3) of section 11 are, firstly:

> All moneys paid by the minister pursuant to subsection (4), all premiums received in respect of contracts of crop insurance and (thirdly) all other moneys received by the corporation for the purposes of this Act . . .

My question, Mr. Minister: since we are being asked to amend this section, section 11 of The Crop Insurance Act, what is meant by the phrase:

> . . . all other moneys received by the corporation for the purposes of this Act . . .

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — That simply means any monies handled by the crop insurance fund, including premiums, indemnities, and also interest that might be earned on those. So that's the area it covers.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. It would be appropriations as well, to the fund? Mr. Minister, I take it that would be a part of that as well — premiums and . . . Okay, thank you.

Subsection (4) as it presently reads gives you, Mr. Minister, the power to make payments to the Crop Insurance Corporation for any number of different purposes. Those purposes are fairly broadly defined and they include, and here I'll quote from the Act itself, such purposes as:

> . . . grants . . . for the payment of the administration costs of the corporation;
>
> . . . grants . . . for the payment of the financing costs of the corporation;
>
> . . . grants . . . for the purpose of making up any difference between the amount in the fund and the amount necessary to meet all indemnity payments for the year; and
>
> . . . grants . . . for any purposes that may be determined by the minister.

And the one you want to change now in this Bill:

> . . . an amount not exceeding the amount that insured persons have paid as premiums with respect to contracts or crop insurance in that fiscal year;

What is wrong with the present dollar-for-dollar formula, Mr. Minister, where you pay Crop Insurance Corporation $1 for each dollar that the corporation collects in premiums from its customers? It seems that you already have the flexibility to make the additional grants to the corporation under the Act if they run into a situation where they need that extra money to make up the difference between the amount in the fund and the indemnity payments.

I guess the bottom line question is, do you feel . . . or why do you feel you need even more flexibility?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well all this does really . . . the current Act doesn't give us the flexibility that we need. The current Act states it's a 50/50 sharing of funds between the producers and government.

What the new Act will do will allow flexibility in that ratio so that, you know, it might be 60/40 or 65/35 or whatever. I mean it allows that flexibility rather than a straight 50/50 formula.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So given that we will accept for the time being the old dollar-for-dollar formula may be in fact outdated in the event of changes, then perhaps is the new formula . . . the new formula that's in place, or proposed in

the Bill, does that make it better?

The new formula reads that the minister may:

> pay to the corporation an amount determined by the minister, having regard to the amount of premiums paid by insured persons in the fiscal year, the needs of the corporation, and the appropriate share of the costs of providing crop insurance, or any program of crop insurance, to be paid by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Sir, why do you want the power all by yourself — I guess that's the question — to determine the amount that you are going to pay to the corporation? I guess why not have that amount determined by an order in council, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that would require an order in council which would at least be published in the *Saskatchewan Gazette?*

I guess here it just leaves the total responsibility to your department, to yourself. And I guess the question is, why not leave it to the Lieutenant Governor in Council?

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I'll give you an example, maybe to explain, first of all, the necessity of having the flexibility. We went through a process this winter of consultations with farmers to try to put together a new program that will be an agreement between Saskatchewan and the federal government for a five-year period, as was the old agreement. We're doing the review as per the Act, and we will have a new agreement in place for 1997 crop year.

In order to legitimize that agreement, we must have an order in council signed by May to say yes, that we agree to the terms and conditions of this agreement. So that's why the OC (order in council) is necessary from myself, or the minister.

On the other hand, when that agreement comes into place, it will have come into place through a process of consultation with farmers over this last winter. And we don't know exactly what form the new program will take yet because there are still some options and we're trying to work those through, and then we're going to go through more consultations with farm groups because we want to make sure it's as good as possible.

Now in Manitoba, for example, they've gone to a new program this year, which has basically gone from the 50/50 formula to a program where the first 50 per cent coverage is basically 100 per cent government with the exception of an administration fee. If we wanted to go to that extreme, this legislation would give us that flexibility.

If we wanted to go to 90 per cent government and 10 per cent — like I said, any combination of percentages — we have to have the flexibility because we have to get the legislation in place this session. Because if we don't get it in place this session and wait till we have the exact program laid out, it's too late to have it for next session, for the next crop year.

Because we have to have this new program out to the farmer, in their hands, by I would say, you know, early January or January sometime, or as soon as January, February, to make sure that they have time to understand the program so they can make their decisions for their seeding intentions that year.

So that gives us the flexibility to have the Act ready for whatever the program might be.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just one brief question. The appropriate share — and I appreciate that there are many variables that you would have to be faced with, or you would be faced with — how is the appropriate share decided upon? And who makes that final decision — yourself as the minister, or would it be a cabinet decision?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well the process would be, as I laid out, that the final decision would be between the federal and provincial governments. We have to agree on what the program might be, so the federal government and the provincial government . . . and we would agree on that, based on the consultation process that we have been going through and will continue to go through until the final form of the program is ready.

And then after that agreement is signed, and of course it has to come to the cabinet for the decision to accept the agreement.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Minister, I thank you very kindly for your responses to our questions, and to your officials as well. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 5 — An Act to amend The Education Act

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. To my right is Craig Dotson, deputy minister of Education; and to my left is Michael Littlewood, director of third-party grants and legislation.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, Madam Minister, and to your officials.

On the previous day when we were in discussion for Bill No. 5, we had a chance to I think cover probably three of the topics, or three of the sections that are proposed. I would like to start with section 208, and I understand that this section is being proposed as a clarification of procedures that directors have been following right now — clause no. 11, if I might refer you to that. Could you explain, Madam Minister, how this will change current practice and how it will improve . . . if it will improve current practice.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chairperson, the court ruled in the

Saskatchewan court . . . there was a Saskatchewan court ruling that indicated that the practice of requiring teachers to give to the board of education a postdated letter of resignation was contrary to the intent and spirit of the legislation. And that's why we're bringing in this amendment to the legislation. I think it's fair that teachers, boards, and directors of education all agreed that new legislation was required in order to clarify the rules and ensure consistent, acceptable practices across the province.

Mr. Krawetz: —.Thank you, Madam Minister. In terms of the practice that is being followed, I understand your concern around being able to do something that of course is allowed within the legal framework. Will this in any way affect decisions between potential superannuates and the board in terms of . . . and I'm sure of those situations where a teacher will decide that they will retire — superannuate, I'm sorry — superannuate on the last day of the first term, in December just prior to the holidays, and yet they will continue to be a teacher for the following term, until June 30. And at that point, of course, they have ended their teaching career. Is this meant to enable this to work better, or will this cause more problems?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This was not intended to deal with this issue, but I can tell you the minister does have a view of this issue. You're talking about double-dipping, and it's not a practice that our government encourages, where people receive a public pension plan, and then they receive income from a school division when that income is derived from taxpayers' dollars. So in essence, you received a tax-supported pension plan, obviously with your own contributions, but you also received a tax-supported income, and that's something that we would discourage.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. My colleagues have just indicated that I think I used the phrase "more better," and I apologize for that. That's terrible. That's terrible. As I hear your response, Madam Minister, then I take it that this practice of introducing the amendment to section 208 will have no bearing on any of those kinds of agreements, if those agreements exist?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We know that those agreements exist. We discourage those type of agreements, but it's not intended to deal with those sorts of arrangements.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Okay, the most controversial portion of this amendment, I think, is around the area of replacement teachers and substitute teachers and defining of contracts. What role did the Wiebe decision play in arriving at the amendment as you've proposed it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think it's fair to say that the court decision led to this, to this amendment of the legislation. All of the stakeholders agreed that the legislation needed amending given the court decision. All of the stakeholders were involved in the process, but obviously we got to a point with the stakeholders that they could go no further in terms of agreement. And ultimately the department had to provide leadership, and the leadership is seen in this amendment to the legislation.

Mr. Krawetz: — In the judgement, has there been a specific time period? Your amendment is suggesting one year for a replacement contract. Is that within the recommendation of the judge who ruled on the Wiebe decision?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The courts don't rule on what you should do. They tend to rule on what you can't do. Obviously school divisions couldn't continue the practices of hiring teachers on a temporary contract requesting a postdated letter of resignation. The end of the year would come, and then the teacher would be re-hired for another one year contract, and so on it went.

And we had situations in the province where you might have a teacher in a temporary contract position for several years, and that's what the court ruled against. It said, the court said, that this violated the intent and spirit of the legislation and consequently we now have this amendment.

(1600)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Under the existing Act, there are terms that the minister has defined, or the minister uses terms to define the academic year and the school year. You've been asked questions here in the House of this matter regarding changes to the school year — the possibility of a four/five school day.

Do you have the ability within the current Act to amend the length of the school year? The terms . . . I know there are pilot projects going on right now in terms of those that are starting in mid-August. I take it, by one of the sections, that you do have that ability.

Do you also have that ability to rule on a four-day school week?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The current Act permits me to authorize or not authorize any proposals for a four-day school week.

Mr. Krawetz: — Is there a date at which you must make that decision? Because I know also in the Act it refers to the fact that the board of education must, by May 1, indicate to the ratepayers and parents and students the expected beginning date and the expected ending date of the next school year. Is that also the May 1 deadline for yourself as the minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It follows that I would need to do that. We would need to have the proposal to us sometime before that and I would be in a position to make a decision as to altering the school year.

And I think you're getting to the Scenic Valley situation. And in that case, I did not receive the proposal in my office, I believe, until May 2, and by that time, the date had passed.

Mr. Krawetz: — In light of the budget as the government delivers it and in light of how boards of education plan their budgets, do you think that the May 1 date is too restrictive to yourself as the minister? Because if a board is attempting to be creative and to come up with new ideas and innovative school years, if their budget plans are during the months of March and

April, probably right near the end of April, they have a lot of decisions to make, very critical decisions.

And if they give you that proposal on . . . Let's use Scenic Valley as the example here. That proposal was given to you on May 2; probably a proposal that needs to be looked at and tried. And I understand your comments of last week indicated that that was not on for '96-97 school year but it might be a consideration for '97-98.

If the May 1 was a restrictive date, if that was a . . . if you had greater flexibility to allow school divisions to try new things, wouldn't a date of, you know, June 30 be more applicable?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I understand that after we deal with this Bill that we're going into estimates. And if I look at the amendments contained in The Education Act, we're not dealing with variances to the school day/school year. So I would be quite prepared to enter into a dialogue with you in estimates. I would hope that we could stay focused on the amendments to the legislation.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, I was wondering whether you were going to propose an additional amendment to Bill No. 5. And by your acknowledgement, I see that you're not. So therefore, Scenic Valley is going to abide by the decision that May 1 was cut in stone and they missed it by one day.

Let's look at the replacement teacher contract. And I'm trying to understand clauses numbered . . . clause no. 9, which is section 198, specifically subsections (9) and (10). As I read these two sections — and I would ask your clarification — when you see . . . when I see that the description is for a complete academic year and that there is a decision that has to be made by May 31, if the teacher who is on leave for that complete academic year has decided . . . or has been granted another full academic year of leave, then immediately that person who was the replacement teacher becomes a permanent teacher. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — In answer to the member's question, he is correct that a teacher would have to be offered a permanent contract. But what he should understand is that a permanent contract does not mean tenure. Someone in a permanent contract situation can be terminated. Someone in a tenure situation, there's a number of steps that one has to go through to terminate a permanent . . . a tenured position or a tenured person.

So he's correct, but there is a difference between a permanent contract and a person that has tenure.

Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, I realize that, Madam Minister, and I would refer then to this person who is then non-tenured and is there for the second term and the person who was on leave for secondment, sabbatical, sick leave, whatever, that person then returns. The component for the teaching . . . the staff component is too large. One person has to be let go. And whether or not it be the new person — let's assume that due to seniority it is — will there be now an obligation on behalf of the board to pay redundancy pay for the two years that the person has taught?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — My understanding is that if for some reason this person could not take another position, that there were no retirements or sick leave or maternity leave, which would be very unusual actually, then that person . . . but if there were none of those situations available — we can't imagine that that would in fact happen — but if it couldn't happen or it didn't happen, then the person would be entitled to redundancy pay of five days for each year.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, I think you're very aware of school divisions that have made decisions just last year to cut three position or four positions or seven positions. And in rural Saskatchewan there are a number of teachers that are being let go due to redundancy. So that will be very common if indeed a person returns back to the employ, and that is a person who has been granted a leave. That's going to be very common.

So I think it's going to be very expensive for boards in terms of making decisions about the numbers of teachers that they're going to be letting go. Now that's not a question, Madam Minister.

The point that I want to make here is, I think that what you have introduced is something that of course was necessary, was necessary to prevent the seven- and eight-, nine-year temporary contracts. When I look at one year . . . And I'm going to use an example here that may help clarify this.

If a school division has released a teacher to be seconded to the department, to go on a sabbatical, whatever reason, and it's been granted for a full academic year, if they're a rural school division, they're looking at it a little different than what an urban school division does. Yes, right at the moment there are a number of teachers who are unemployed and are looking for work and there will probably be a number of people who apply for the position that a board has advertised, even though it's a one-year term position.

Now the person has been hired through a process, and he's a first-year person. He's not had any experience before and is hired by the board. At the end of the first year, prior to May 31st, the department, in this case, who has seconded the teacher on leave, decides that they want to keep the teacher for a second year. So the board has to make a decision.

Now as I understand you from your first answer, you have said that after one year the person becomes permanent. Okay. Not tenured, not tenured, but they are on continuous employ. So therefore the board has to make a decision. Is this teacher that they've had on replacement contract excellent, good, fair, poor? Because now if they keep the person for an additional year, at minimum it will cost them two years of redundancy, 10 days, or they will have to let somebody else go because they want to keep the teacher there.

So the decision might be by the board, well this teacher is fair, not good enough to cut it with us, and therefore we're going to release them. We're going to release them because they just haven't quite cut it. I think it's very damaging to that beginning teacher. That teacher who has one year of experience is now going to be let go because the board is looking at the situation, and the director of education I'm sure is going to be evaluating

the teacher. And they're going to feel that that person doesn't quite cut it so they're going to let them go. And I think it's very damaging to that beginning teacher.

Do I have all of the chronological . . . is the chronological order of how things will happen correct as I've explained them so far?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well my response to the member's question would be this, that in either scenario the teacher that was in that position, that replacement teacher position, would not be entitled to a board of reference.

I think the other point I'd like to make is that in other areas of endeavour, if you are laid off by your employer for whatever reason, you're entitled to pay for every year of service. That does happen under The Labour Standards Act. And in this case, I believe that they're entitled to seven days of pay for every year of service. So in this case, at the end of the two-year period, if there was no position for that teacher, that beginning teacher, they'd be entitled to 10 days pay for that two years of service.

In fact, they're receiving a smaller amount of pay than someone who would be in another position under The Labour Standards Act.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, let's look at a second scenario. And I think we're probably now talking about a much larger school division that may have three teachers . . . three teachers have applied for leave for the full academic year. And the board has decided to let all three teachers . . . to grant all three requests. So the three positions — and I'll just refer to them as A, B, and C — three replacement teachers are hired for positions, A, B, and C. At the end of the first year, both teachers A and B, the release teachers, are coming back; by May 31, there is a known fact that they are coming back. Teacher C, however, is the one that has requested a second year of leave. Evaluation of the three replacement teachers, all first-year teachers, has indicated that the best teacher was teacher A, the second best teacher was teacher B, and the third best was teacher C.

By your amendment, it's an automatic that teacher C gets the second replacement year. Is that correct?

(1615)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — If teacher C is just not up to standard, teacher C can be let go. Teacher C can then ask to have a hearing with the board. Teacher C is entitled to a hearing with the board but teacher C is not entitled to a board of reference. The board would then be in a position to hire either teacher A or B for the second year of a temporary or not . . . a temporary contract, I guess we'd call it.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, wouldn't you see it as an advantage to beginning teachers to have the flexibility of a second year so that the board or the director of education could make that decision about the teacher in the second year? So that there isn't an automatic situation that says, the person is permanent, the person is automatically granted a second year; that the replacement teacher would be evaluated in the second year.

And I think as a previous teacher yourself, as a first-year teacher, you're learning a whole new experience. Maybe you've made some mistakes, you've made some errors, but there is potential.

The board of education and the director of education now are put in a very critical position to say yes, we're just not quite happy and because this person is an automatic for the second year, we're going to let them go. And we'll, you know, face the music at the review.

But in a second year, teachers will either cut it or not cut it. And I think what you're asking here in the way of the amendment, I think, is going to put a burden on those first-year teachers who are fortunate to get a replacement contract. They will be under the gun from day one, hoping to get into a second-year contract. What is your comment on that?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I guess my comment would be this: that we had in this province absolutely wonderful teachers that were sitting in temporary positions for four or five or six or seven years. I'm really, really delighted that in the city of Saskatoon under the leadership of Pat Dickson, the director of education, I think, 70 people last year had their temporary contracts turned into permanent positions.

These are young people that were trying to . . . were waiting on whether or not they should buy a house, whether or not they should have children, whether or not they should get married — those kinds of things, sort of getting on with their lives. And I think if you look at what we're trying to do here . . . is we're trying to create a situation where boards of education apply consistent practices across the province so that we treat people fairly.

And I'm of the view, Member, that with this legislation I think that boards of education have some clarity in the situation, and they're now in a better position to apply the same practices to how they treat replacement teachers across the province. And I think that's what these amendments are trying to do. Let's get some consistency into the workplace for teachers who are sitting on replacement contracts.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And as I've indicated, a number of teachers who are in temporary contracts year after year need to have that stability, and I agree with you. I'm just worried about the beginning teacher here who isn't going to be given a fair shake. I just want for clarification, before we move on, so that I can understand what you're asking for in clause no. 10.

The scenario that I would describe for you in clause no. 10 is that if a replacement teacher has been teaching for a board for one year and the person on leave returns — so in other words that contract is over — and three years from now there is another situation where a full academic year of leave has been granted, if the board hires this first replacement teacher, you know, that taught for that one complete year, is he or she an automatic permanent teacher because they have now been hired for a second year?

In other words, it is a situation that is not consecutive, but it is a full year that will be now replaced by a full year a number of years down the road.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — My response to your question would be this: that if they were a replacement teacher for year one, and year three they were brought back as a replacement teacher, at the end of that third year, there'd been a skip in the middle. I'm using your scenario. They were a replacement teacher in year one. The teacher came back. They were out of the school division for a year. Then they came back the third year.

At the end of the third year, which would in fact be their second year, if the school board wanted to terminate them, they could be terminated, and they would not be entitled to a board of reference. They would be entitled to a hearing with the board.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 48 — An Act to Amend The Animal Identification Act

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

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

Bill No. 60 — An Act to amend The Crop Insurance Act

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

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

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 5.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Education
Vote 5

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To my right is Craig Dotson, deputy minister of Education. To my left is Ken Horsman, assistant deputy minister. Behind me is Mae Boa, executive director of finance and operations. Behind Mr. Dotson is Michael Littlewood, director of third-party funding and legislative services. And at the back is Gerry Sing Chin, manager of school grants; Margaret Ball, assistant director of facilities planning; and John McLaughlin, executive director of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission.

Item 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, and to your officials, welcome again. It's been awhile, a few weeks.

If I could have the assistance of a page, please. Excuse me, could I have the assistance of a page? I'd like to send across to you, Madam Minister, two photocopies of two documents. And I refer you to last session; I believe the date was April 15. And in *Hansard* you have indicated that, and I quote:

> You will remember, because I think you may have been president of the school trustees association, that the trustees did not sign the last agreement, and that this will not be the first time that the trustees may not be there to sign the collective agreement . . .

As you can see, I've sent across two documents to you that are photocopies of the signing pages of the contract for 1990-91, at which you will note that I was one of the four appointees by the trustees committee, and my signature is on that document.

You will also note that the second document is for the contracts '92, '93, and '94, the document that was signed for those three years. And you will also note that there are four trustee representatives who I, as president, appointed to sit on that committee. And their signatures are on there as well.

So your suggestion that the documents were not signed by me or by people representing the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) during my term as president are indeed false, and I would request that you clarify that.

(1630)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I am at a disadvantage in terms of responding because I don't know which day he's referring to, and I'd like to see *Hansard* to see precisely what I said.

Mr. Krawetz: — With the assistance of a page, I will send across to you a document from *Hansard* of April 15, and I will await your reply.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I will say to the member is that I made a mistake. I will not say it was a falsehood. There's a difference.

Mr. Krawetz: — You've made the mistake . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh sure, sorry, except the fact that that is a mistake and that indeed those documents were signed.

With the assistance of a page . . . There has been a situation where the stakeholders in this discussion, that you and I had regarding stakeholders and their involvement in education, is of great importance to me and I think to all people in education.

The document that I've just sent to you, Madam Minister, is the photocopy of the 1980 agreement between the government and the teachers' federation and the trustees, and you will note that the absence of the trustees, the signatures of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association does not exist on that agreement. And I would like . . . if you could clarify that is the only agreement that the trustees have not signed as part of the group

of stakeholders.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — My officials do not have the information here, but we believe that there have been other times when the trustees did not sign the collective agreement.

But being the past-president of the SSTA, I'm sure Mr. Krawetz . . . or I'm sure the member will provide us with the information.

Mr. Krawetz: — I'd be glad to, Madam Minister. The sheet that I have sent to you is the only time, since collective bargaining, bi-level bargaining has been in place whereby the trustees have not signed the collective agreement — up to this year.

And I guess, Madam Minister, my question is leading to . . . do you see . . . I'll back up. When that occurred in 1980, there was much divisiveness between government, trustees, teachers, and I think it took a while before wounds were healed and things got back on track. That was 1980. What we have again now this year is the fact that the trustees, as I understand — and you could clarify this — is that the trustees will not be signing the current agreement. And I'm not even sure what length that agreement is, whether it's a two-year or a three-year. If you could clarify that as well . . .

Do you see repercussions for the fact that the trustees will not be signing the current agreement? And how will your department be trying to work through this fact, as the minister of Education no doubt did in 1980?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chair, it's a two-year agreement. It ends as of, I believe, December, 1996. And obviously as Minister of Education, I've had many discussions with the trustees in the last two-and-a-half, three years and I know that I will continue to have discussions with the trustees.

Mr. Krawetz: — In light of the fact that the agreement expires in less than a year and that the trustees did not take part in the last part of the negotiations, what kind of plan will you be putting in place other than just discussions with them in trying to bring everybody back together?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We have had many discussions with the trustees over the past years. As recently as, I believe, last Friday, we had discussions with the trustees. And we will continue to have discussions with the trustees. In my view we have a good relationship with the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and all of the trustees across the province. I think that it's fair to say that trustees have welcomed the open-honesty position of the department and myself as minister. And I'm sure that we will continue to have that type of relationship in the months ahead.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, last time we were in estimates for Education, you indicated that you would have some information available for me regarding the school divisions or schools that had wellness centres and how they were working within the school systems. And there was, I believe, some other information that your officials had indicated that they would provide for me as we went along through estimates. If that's not available today, that would be fine. I'd appreciate that, though, at the next time.

And I would ask for one more document unless your officials have it today. I know Mr. Sing Chin might be the one that would supply this. Have all school divisions set their mill rate to this date . . . would be my first question.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We're providing written answers to all of those questions, and they have not yet been delivered to my office. But when they have been, we'll share them with the member.

Mr. Krawetz: — Have all school divisions set their mill rate, Madam Minister? I know you were talking to your officials. My question was, have the school divisions set their mill rates.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think there were two parts to the member's question, and the second part, the second answer to his question is yes, they have. They had to set it by April 30.

Mr. Krawetz: — Would your department be able to provide a list of all the school divisions in terms of the current mill rate that has been set? And I know the chart that you prepare in terms of the . . . would you be able to supply that for me?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can get that for the member.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much. I know my colleagues have a couple of questions.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you and again welcome to the minister and her officials. Just a few quick questions in reference to northern Saskatchewan within the northern administration district. What's your total budget spent for northern Saskatchewan for your K to 12 system, as well for your adult education? Like, have you got the sources of income or costs . . . and to what agencies do you grant these monies to?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm sorry that we were not able to hear your question. If you could speak up a little louder, it would be helpful.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I guess the question I have is for northern Saskatchewan. I'm talking about the northern administration district line that we're all familiar with. What's the total cost of education to the province, and whom do you make these allocations to, and what are their responsibilities?

I understand you have a separate K to 12 budget. You may have a separate adult education budget. You may have a separate training budget for the mining companies and may want some people employed in a certain field. If you could give me those breakdowns, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We do not have a separate budget other than K to 12. We have a K to 12 budget. When the minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training is here, he would be able to answer your question in the context of adult education or post-secondary education.

Mr. Belanger: — I apologize for that error. I guess the second

part of the question is, do you have a figure for the K to 12 system in northern Saskatchewan as to what you spend each year?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The school grant this year to the three northern school divisions is $27,026,432.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I'd like to take a few minutes to look at the capital portion of your Education estimates. You've indicated under capital grants . . . and we had a couple of comments made the last time. You've indicated that your budget has increased to $11 million for '96-97. Has there been a decision in terms of all of the B-1's and moving up into B-2's, etc. Have you spent the entire amount of money?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No, we've made no decisions yet. We're in the process of doing so.

Mr. Krawetz: — In terms of the numbers of B-1's, would you be able to indicate how many B-1's you have before your department, before the facilities department, and what would be an estimate of the total amount of projects, if you were able to grant everything that was requested, the wish list.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We have three major projects, and then obviously there are a number of requests from school divisions, and we have not yet made a decision regarding those requests.

Mr. Krawetz: — In the budget address, Madam Minister, there's an indication that for 1998-99 you will be achieving $7 million worth of savings. Could you describe the plan in terms of what you see as the ability to save $7 million? Is it from within administration of the department? Is it within restructuring?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No, I mean there's a couple possibilities. The school divisions receive grants from the province each year, and they also receive funding for . . . we have so much funding available for capital projects. So what we want to do is discuss the possibility of merging operating grants and capital to determine how we might be able to save an additional $7 million in the 1998-99 fiscal year.

Mr. Krawetz: — Up until this year, Madam Minister, the grant allocations to school divisions included a line item that was a salary component for the previous agreement. Does it still exist on this year's grant, and if not, has there been additional monies provided?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As part of the 1992-94 collective agreement, we indicated that in 1994 we would show the salary component in terms of the spreadsheet given to school divisions. We also advise that that would no longer be shown in this fiscal year and that the money would be rolled into operating grants to school divisions.

Mr. Krawetz: — As you've rolled that cost into school divisions, the adjustments will be handled in a different manner, I assume. Has there been a change in terms of the allocation factor for school divisions, the amount of money allocated?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There's no change in the amount of money that's allocated to teachers' salaries. It has just been rolled into operating grants to school divisions, and it's no longer shown as a line item.

Mr. Krawetz: — You've indicated that the procedure that was in place was for the years . . . collective agreement '92, '93, '94, and that's now ended, and therefore it's rolled in. You've also indicated that you are picking up the $2 million cost for the salaries for the current year, 1996. Will that amount show up as a line item in terms of additional monies for boards of education?

(1645)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No, it will not, because we advised people in writing that we were no longer going to do that.

Mr. Krawetz: — If you're not showing that as a line item, then you're suggesting that the grant as calculated for each board is automatically picking that up. When I look at the numbers that you've provided in terms of $2 million, you're not really suggesting then that the $2 million that the boards will receive is going to be all for salary because the boards then will have additional costs. So if it's not provided as a line item, it's not additional monies. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chairperson, the total grant . . . the grant to school boards went up by $2 million, an increase from 353 million to 355 million. There was a $2 million increase for school divisions that came from the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, your officials, your official . . . one of your officials and I had an interesting discussion in Saskatoon a short while ago about this simplified grant formula: A minus B equals C, where of course C is the amount of grant that's allocated, and B is the recognized revenue from school boards, and A was the recognized costs.

And I'd like you to clarify that if indeed you are changing the grant by $2 million, as you've indicated, that there has been $2 million provided more than was last year. And that is correct, if you look at your numbers from 353 to 355. And you and I have had the discussions about where the EDF (education development fund) 2 million went. But I agree with you that in terms of the actual foundation grant, it did increase by $2 million. The amount that you've asked boards to contribute though in this formula — and again we're talking about a simplified formula and it indeed has many other factors, as you're aware of — when we're saying that B, the amount that the school boards have to contribute, has been increased by $14 million because the equalization factor or the computational mill rate, as it was once known as, has changed . . .

So you have asked boards to contribute $14 million more. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chair, the way the formula works is that school divisions that have low assessment rely more so on the province for educational funding. School divisions with

high assessments, and therefore a better ability to raise tax revenue, don't rely as much on the province. This is a way to ensure that we have equity in education.

I should tell you that we don't want to do what Alberta has done where the province is collecting all of the property taxes, their school taxes, and then doing the redistribution. Our formula is such that we can look at each individual school division, their ability to generate revenue as a result of their assessment. If their revenue ability is low, then they receive more grants from the province.

I guess in response to your question, our department would say that no, school boards are not expected to pick up an extra $14 million. That is not the case. What is the case is that with the formula, we're able to redistribute funding so that those school divisions that have a lower ability to raise revenue receive more funding from the province.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, as I understand it, the assessment of this province is about $7 billion. And when the equalization factor that you use in your grant formula is adjusted upwards from 66.4 mills to 68.4 mills, that's a difference of 2 mills. With the assessment of the province, you are now saying that boards of education, in the formula, have to contribute 14 . . . almost $14 million more. Is that not fact?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think . . . and if the member would like a briefing from the department, we'd be quite prepared to explain the formula to you. I should tell you that it is not a simple formula. What it is, is it's a distribution formula. It looks at a school division's ability to pay.

And there are some school divisions that, if you didn't have this formula, there would not be equality in the level of education and programs that we have across the province.

There are some school boards in fact in this province where they receive no money from the province because they have such a high assessment, because of the oil patch or whatever. In fact if the truth be known, they in fact owe us money, but we have not gone to that level where we're requiring school boards that receive no money from the province to give us money so that we can redistribute that money.

So this really, this formula, it's complicated but it's the fairest mechanism that we have been able to arrive at in the province, in that school divisions with very low assessment and therefore a mill raises very little revenue, they receive more money out of the pool, out of the operating grant, than school divisions that have a better ability to raise a lot of money from a mill.

So I guess my point is that the formula is a distribution mechanism. It's based on ability to pay for a quality education within your school division. Those school divisions that can raise more money receive less money from the province; those school divisions that have a smaller ability to raise money receive more money from the province.

Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, I agree with you in terms of the intent of the formula and in terms of how the money is distributed. It is distributed through the equalization factor — that's what equalizes it across the province. Agreed, okay.

The question to you, Madam Minister, though is: on every printout that went through to every school division, did their equalization factor change by 2 mills? And in fact then, depending upon what 1 mill raised at that local division — Canora School Division, $38,000 per mill; Saskatoon public, I believe 800-and-some thousand dollars — did not their amount of money that had to be raised, or recognized at the local level, was it not adjusted upwards by 2 mills?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: —The member is correct, but I'd also like to point out that the recognized expenditures went up by 3.4 per cent. So we have to take that into consideration as he's framing his argument to me.

Mr. Krawetz: — And we'll move over to that side of the equation — the A part, okay. And I understand. I've listened to your officials many years ago. Maybe not these particular officials but others. When we look at A minus B equals C, the department does not start with A, it probably starts with C, which is the grant. And you've decided that this year you will have $355 million in the grant.

An Hon. Member: — What's wrong with that?

Mr. Krawetz: — The member opposite says, what's wrong with that. Well the problem is that it used to be at about $380 million, so we have a little problem there.

The other situation then is you've moved over to B and you've said, well what if the equalization factor changes by 2 mills; what will B increase by? And we've just concluded that indeed B has increased by about 14 million. So over on the A side, because now you're staying at a balanced equation based on what you had recognized as expenditures in the previous year, you now have to increase those by at least 14 million.

And as your member has indicated, or as one of your assistants has indicated, you in fact increased that by about 16 million because when you subtract the additional 16 minus the additional 14 that you've asked boards to contribute, you get an increase of $2 million — 353 million to 355 million.

My question to you, Madam Minister, is could you identify what kinds of things were increased on the A side to indeed recognize an additional $16 million worth of expenditure?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as I said to the member before, this is a distribution mechanism. As the member probably knows, there are some things that come out of the pool — the operating grant, money for kids with behavioural problems, money for special needs children, money for community schools, Indian and Metis education development programs, as well as world technology. So all of these enhancements to kids in the classroom come out of the $355 million that we have to spend on operating grants to school divisions.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.