

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

The names on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Fort Qu'Appelle, they're from Kamsack, they're from Yorkton, Pilot Butte, Rosetown, Regina, Bangor, Swift Current, and virtually all small communities throughout Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

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

The communities, Mr. Speaker . . . are people from such places like Whitewood, Grayson, Esterhazy, Yorkton, Langenburg, Yarbo, Lemburg, Bredenbury, Welwyn, and Gerald, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The names on the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Kylemore, Torquay, Estevan, Weyburn, Wadena, and throughout the province. I so present.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon, Leross, Ituna, Regina, but the majority are all from Kelliher, Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on

behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Gray, Riceton, Balgonie, but mostly 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.

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina and from Wadena, Saskatchewan.

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

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

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from communities of Chaplin, Caronport, Riverhurst, Lafleche, Saskatoon, and a good number from the city of Moose Jaw.

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.

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina here. They're from Ituna. They're from Saskatoon. And they're also from Kayville, Oxbow, Regina Beach, Siltan, and all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order petitions regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Non-controversial Bills

Bill No. 98 — An Act respecting the Application to Saskatchewan of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction/Loi concernant l'application à la Saskatchewan de la Convention sur les aspects civils de l'enlèvement international d'enfants

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 98, An Act respecting the Application to Saskatchewan of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

**Bill No. 99 — An Act respecting Co-operatives/
Loi concernant les coopératives**

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chairman, as Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 99, An Act respecting Co-operatives, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Bill No. 100 — An Act respecting the Regulation of Drivers and Traffic on Saskatchewan Highways/Loi concernant la réglementation de la conduite automobile et de la circulation sur les routes de la Saskatchewan

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 100, An Act respecting the Regulation of Drivers and Traffic on Saskatchewan Highways, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

**Bill No. 101 — An Act respecting Wills/
Loi concernant les testaments**

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 101, An Act respecting Wills, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Bill No. 102 — An Act respecting the Distribution of Estates of Intestates/Loi concernant le partage des successions non testamentaires

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 102, An Act respecting the Distribution of Estates of Intestates, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in the Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

**Bill No. 103 — An Act respecting Powers of Attorney/
Loi concernant les procurations**

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 103, An Act respecting Powers of Attorney, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

**Bill No. 104 — An Act to facilitate the Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments and Awards/
Loi visant à faciliter l'exécution réciproque des jugements et des sentences arbitrales**

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 104, An Act to Facilitate the Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments and Awards, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

**Bill No. 105 — An Act respecting the Application in Saskatchewan of the United Nations Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards/
Loi concernant l'application en Saskatchewan de la Convention des Nations Unies pour la reconnaissance et l'exécution des sentences arbitrales étrangères**

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 105, An Act respecting the Application in Saskatchewan of the United Nations Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Bill No. 106 — An Act respecting the Maintenance of Dependants of Testators and Intestates/Loi concernant l'aide aux personnes à charge des testateurs et des intestats

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 106, An Act respecting the Maintenance of Dependants of Testators and Intestates, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Bill No. 107 — An Act respecting the Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders/Loi concernant l'exécution réciproque des ordonnances alimentaires

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 107, An Act respecting The Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Bill No. 108 — An Act to amend The Change of Name Act, 1995/Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur le changement de nom

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 108, An Act to amend The Change of Names, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Bill No. 110 — An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995/Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 110, An Act to amend The Education Act, as being non-controversial.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that second reading and consideration in Committee of the Whole on the said Bill be waived.
Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the said 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. 109 — An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act,
1995/Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services
de l'état civil**

Ms. Draude: — As Chair of the Non-controversial Bills Committee, I wish to report Bill No. 109, An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act, as being controversial.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Assembly, a group of 70 grade 5 students from Lumsden Elementary School. Now, Mr. Speaker, Lumsden Elementary School is a very progressive school, and Lumsden is a wonderful community, and they often invite me to visit their school, so it's a pleasure for me to invite them back here today.

They're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Ray Tourney, Mrs. Darcee Robb, and Mrs. Tracy Taylor. I am looking forward to meeting with them shortly for a photograph and some questions, and I hope they enjoy the procedures today. And I ask all of you to join me in giving them a warm welcome. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

British Columbia Election

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was listening to the debate yesterday in the Assembly I was reminded of some of the more interesting and incorrect predictions that have been made by politicians over the years. Who can forget Grant Devine's statement that Saskatchewan is so prosperous you can afford to mismanage it and still break even. Or who can forget the member for Thunder Creek's comments that Saskatchewan's credit rating would not be upgraded because we are only eliminating 2.5 billion in debt.

And then there was Gord Campbell's prediction that Gord Campbell would be the next premier of B.C. (British Columbia). Well, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that Mr. Campbell and his Liberal Party have taken their appropriate place in history, as yesterday Premier Glen Clark's New Democrats were re-elected in British Columbia, and the Liberals are left as an eastern-based party with no government west of the Miramichi.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the New Democratic Party of B.C. and the many people in British Columbia who rejected the right-wing cynicism of the Liberals there, as the people of Saskatchewan rejected the right-wing

cynicism of the Liberals here less than a year ago. Each of us will draw our own conclusions from the closeness of the results, but it's difficult to deny that the people of B.C., like the people of Saskatchewan, are more interested in moving forward into the new century than yearning for the previous one.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that western Canada will continue to be represented by two strong voices of national unity and social compassion, and offer a truly clear alternative to the right-wing priorities of the Liberal government in Ottawa. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to comment on last night's election result in B.C.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I'll have to go to member's statement B, since Mr. Campbell was not quite able to claim victory last night. However, Mr. Speaker, while Premier Clark should be congratulated for his victory last night, I think too he must recognize it is in many ways a hollow victory. Not only did Mr. Clark not receive a majority of votes cast in the election, he did not even receive a plurality of votes cast.

While we must all celebrate our democratic system, we must also recognize the anomalies that sometimes result from it. Sometimes the most popular party doesn't win, but that's the way our system works and we have to live with it and respect it.

So while Mr. Clark has claimed a victory in term of seats, it certainly isn't a ringing endorsement of his government. Because of that, Mr. Clark will have to govern with pragmatism, with diligence, rather than arrogance, recognizing the vast majority of British Columbians voted for a free enterprise alternative last night.

The Premier of this province may very well, and the members opposite may very well, be rejoicing, Mr. Speaker, but I'm certain they are also reflecting on the outcome in British Columbia.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disabilities

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I attended the 1996 conference of the Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disabilities in North Battleford.

The Voice of People with Disabilities has served Saskatchewan for more than 20 years now. Until recently it was known as the Voice of the Handicapped, but their new name reflects a better way of thinking about abilities and disabilities.

The name may have changed but the organization has not. It is still the Voice, and it speaks out loudly and clearly on many issues that are vitally important.

Over the years the Voice has spoken out about the abilities of disabled people, the need to introduce attendant services, the need to remove the barriers to employment, and has supported

the development of the Provincial Interagency Network on Disability, and the creation of independent living centres in Regina and Saskatoon.

The theme of this year's conference was, Security For The Future. The topic is a timely one. There are cut-backs all around us, concerns about pension plans and the social safety net, and disabled people are very vulnerable when it comes to these changes. I for one am glad to know that the Voice is watching, and listening, and making sure its members are well informed about these important issues.

It's also appropriate that the Voice held its meeting in North Battleford because the Battlefords are an active and inclusive community that delivers programs and services that are accessible to people with disabilities.

I'd like to thank the Voice and its members for contributing to our province. I'd also like to congratulate them on a successful annual meeting. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Stony Rapids Small-school Games

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate all the participants in the small-school games being held in Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan. Thirteen schools are participating in the games all week — students from Uranium City, Black Lake, Stony Rapids, Deschambeau Lake, Garson Lake, Cole Bay, Jans Bay, Michel Village, Brabant Lake, Timber Bay, Weyakwin Lake, Dore Lake, and St. George's Hill.

These students are taking part in a wide range of activities ranging from track and field events to cultural and fine arts events. One of the most interesting aspects of these competitions is that a member of every community will be on each team, so that if one team wins an event, every community will go home with a medal.

This is a creative approach to community enhancement. Any time we can teach our children cooperation and good sportsmanship, we are building stronger adults for the future. I would like to commend all the organizers, the teachers, the parents, and the community of Stony Rapids, who helped make the small-school games possible. I'd like to also congratulate all the students who are participating in these events. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mosaic — Regina's Festival of Cultures

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Beginning tomorrow in Regina you'll be able to travel the world in three days and visit 18 different countries. I am referring, of course, to Mosaic 1996, festival of cultures.

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, thousands of volunteers will be busy greeting, feeding, and entertaining people who will be able to visit the 18 pavilions. Each pavilion reflects the culture, traditions, cuisine, and costumes of their host countries.

The hon. member from Regina Lakeview will be pleased to know that the Scandinavian pavilion is back this year at the Student Union Building at the University of Regina.

A number of new attractions have been included in the 1996 edition of Mosaic. Children's Corner is an interactive, hands-on experience where children can explore the cultures of participating pavilions.

Passports can now be purchased at a number of businesses in Regina. It's great entertainment value; adults pay \$9 for a passport; seniors and youth, \$6; and children under five get in free. Passports contain valuable information about bus routes, the pavilions, and special performances. Free bus transportation is available for everyone who has a passport.

I offer my best wishes to the Regina Multicultural Council, all of the Mosaic participants, and the volunteers, who make this yearly celebration such a wonderful success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Building Moving Industry

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the actions recently taken by a number of individuals to prevent disaster for the building moving industry in Saskatchewan. A short time ago, building movers were sent letters informing them that SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and the Department of Highways had severely tightened up the rules regulating how building movers obtain permits for each job.

I was contacted by two movers from my constituency who were irate with what had taken place. They claimed that the new guidelines established by the government were so restrictive that they would actually drive many building movers out of business. Furthermore, the new rules were drawn up without any consultation with the moving industry. Eventually a few individuals spearheaded a meeting among the building movers, including Ron Hudye of Canora and representatives from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), SGI, and the Department of Highways. I'm happy to report that a settlement was mediated without much difficulty and that it seems satisfactory to all parties.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard much talk from the members opposite about loosening the restrictions on Saskatchewan's small business, but if these outside people had not intervened, the government would have effectively tightened the noose on the entire moving industry. I would like to thank all the parties that helped diffuse this potentially disastrous situation. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Recovery of Government Funds

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, yesterday yet another sad chapter in a very sordid tale was played out in a Regina courtroom as another former Tory cabinet minister was sentenced for her misdeeds of the '80s. I

was simply astounded last evening as I watched the news, to see the new leader of the new PCs (Progressive Conservative) say with a straight face that his party feels as wronged by the actions as his one-time colleagues as do the people of Saskatchewan. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that leader feels absolutely no remorse for the actions of his party and has no intention of making it up to the people.

Mr. Speaker, a Bill I'm introducing immediately following question period, the so called THIEF (The House Internal Economy Fraud) Act, will make collecting such ill-gotten money back directly from political parties possible. I ask the Premier today whether he's prepared to support this Bill.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well I say to the leader opposite we are not going to disclose our position at this time. When the matter comes up, we will debate it. But we are not going to give you any commitments at this point in time as to what will be done with the agenda of the House.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Board of Internal Economy decided to look into ways of getting some of this money back; however, the Minister of Energy and Mines told the media that he's unsure whether it will be possible to recover this money.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill I'm introducing today will in fact make it eminently possible to get this money back, so I'll ask that minister whether he thinks this Bill or a Bill similar to it would not help the Board of Internal Economy take steps to recover this money.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — What the Minister of Energy and Mines said yesterday was that the Board of Internal Economy might well benefit from some independent legal advice. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that seems to me to be far preferable than passing a Bill which prejudices the matter.

There is a question of civil liberties involved here, a question of due process. It strikes me that the process suggested by the Minister of Energy and Mines respects that due process. Your Bill really does not.

Restitution for Victims of Youth Crime

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a Bill was introduced in this House which finally tipped the scales of justice a little more towards the victims of crime — namely, the government will now allow police to identify some released offenders. I do believe that this will help our society as a whole but, Mr. Speaker, the work cannot stop there. There are many other areas in our justice system that should and must be looked at. One of these is restitution to victims of crime, namely crimes committed by youths.

I noted with interest a Bill introduced in the Manitoba legislature which allows victims of youth crimes to seek compensation from young criminals' parents. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, some parents, guardians, should be held accountable for the misdeeds of their children.

My question to the minister is whether he believes this type of

legislation would be beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. The whole issue of restitution has been dealt with in many ways. The civil law at present allows for restitution to be sought from parents and I think the new Manitoba legislation actually confirms that they are not changing the law in that sense. What they are doing is they're reversing the onus.

Our position is that this whole issue is being dealt with by the federal government as they look at the Young Offenders Act, the review of the federal Justice Committee going across the country. There are many things that need to be looked at. One of the things is: who bears responsibility for youth in our community and the damages that they cause in our community?

We don't want to be in a situation where we are further compounding the difficulties for young people and for parents of young people. It's a community issue. We're very concerned about it. We're interested in listening to any suggestions, but we're going to be very careful before we make any moves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Swift Current Care Centre Closure

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Liberal opposition members from Wood River and Arm River were in Swift Current this morning, where many of the seniors who are being kicked out of the Swift Current Care Centre are picketing the local health board office today. As one might expect, it is difficult for many of these frail pioneers to get around, but they are in a desperate situation. They are doing what they can to draw attention to the pain and anxiety that this NDP (New Democratic Party) government is creating.

The minister has stated in the past that a home will be found for each of the 70 residents. However at this meeting today it was confirmed that every long-term care facility in Swift Current is full. In addition, there is also a substantial waiting-list.

Given these facts, will the Minister of Health explain where these seniors will be placed? How far do they have to be moved from family and friends to be placed in a suitable living accommodations that the minister constantly speaks about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the facility is not slated to close until December 1 of this year. The member knows that, Mr. Speaker. And there are several months, obviously, for suitable arrangements to be made, and I'm sure that the district health board will want to consult with the residents of the care home and with their families.

But I think the member also knows that 30 long-term care beds are currently available at Palliser Regional Care Centre in Swift Current. Twenty beds will be converted for long-term care at the Swift Current Regional Hospital, and there are additional beds, contingency beds, available at Swift Current Regional Hospital in the event there is a problem accommodating people.

But it is not expected that by December 1 there will be a problem accommodating the people, Mr. Speaker.

And as I indicated in the House yesterday, I give the House my assurance that no one in long-term care in Swift Current or indeed in the province will be left without good and decent and adequate care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, once again this government is attempting to shift the blame to a district health board when in fact it is the NDP government that is creating the problem through its chronic under-funding of the health care system.

And who are the victims? Our sick and our elderly. Isn't it ironic that in the NDP's 1991 election platform document they stated and I quote:

Saskatchewan is proud of its senior citizens. They are our pioneers. Their hard work and determination help to build our communities and our province. They have earned the right to a retirement with dignity and security. They deserve no less.

Perhaps the Premier would like to explain why our seniors are getting so much less, why his government is treating them with absolutely no dignity or security.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I obtained some information from the Department of Health that I'd like to send over to the member. And one thing this information — and the other members of the opposition — one thing this information discloses is that the Swift Current Health District received an increase in funding this year of \$159,000.

It also indicates that if the federal Liberal cut to health care had been applied to that district, the district would have incurred a decrease in funding of \$544,000, Mr. Speaker, which was back-filled by us.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I think that I have to accept responsibility for the level of funding that is provided to the districts. There's no question about that. The districts have to live within their financial means. And I say to the Liberal Party — notwithstanding the fact that they've cut health care spending through their federal counterparts, which we've back-filled — if you believe that the solution to health care situations is to pour more and more money into them, would you please tell the people of Saskatchewan where the money comes from?

Does it come in the form of a tax increase or does it come in the form of a \$1,000 per family premium? Please tell the people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Proposed Four-day School Week

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for

the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, Scenic Valley School Division is going ahead with a sound proposal that will alter the way the school week is organized, improve education for their children, and save precious education dollars. It is a proposal that their teachers support, the local division supports, 92 per cent of parents support, and that includes taxpayer support, and support staff was onside as well.

Unfortunately, Madam Minister, the school division has to proceed against your wishes since you said no to this proposal. Last week when you met with the Scenic Valley Division representatives, you scolded them. You said you needed to ensure the children wouldn't be harmed by this project.

Madam Minister, they had the same concerns. They asked the same questions. They've done their research. There will be more teaching time in every week. There will be fewer days lost to substitute teachers. There will be no time loss because kids are pulled out for driver ed and these sorts of things.

Madam Minister, your government promotes . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The hon. member has been quite lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to go directly to his question.

Mr. Heppner: — Your government promotes creative solutions. It doesn't make sense, Madam Minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Now I have asked the hon. member to go directly to his question. And I'll ask him to go directly to his question now or I'll recognize another questioner. Directly to the question.

Mr. Heppner: — And I'm doing that. Why have you changed your mind about something you were so actively promoting just a little while ago?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Scenic Valley School Division did put forward a proposal to go to a four-day week in the province of Saskatchewan. It was to be a one-year pilot project.

The proposal came to me in early May. I had a very good meeting with the Scenic Valley School Division last week where we discussed the proposal and I indicated that we had some issues that we needed to sort out before we could go forward with the pilot project. But I certainly did not rule out the pilot project for the 1997-1998 school year.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that we're concerned about is the impacts that this proposal would have on small children, children in middle years, and children with learning disabilities. Mr. Speaker, this proposal talks about an extended school day. It means that classroom time would extend by some 25 minutes and we wanted to ensure that this proposal would not impact upon the quality of education to the children I've referred to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Scenic Valley has done their research. No one is more concerned about what will

happen to the children than the parents themselves, and they are almost totally in support of what they want to do.

It's like your colleague said the other day: either you believe in the local decision making or you do not. Clearly you don't.

Well, Madam Minister, this is just another example of an NDP minister sitting in the ivory tower in Regina telling rural people what's best for them, when you promised just the opposite. Does it make sense that educational professionals, school board members, and 92 per cent of the population want it, and you're going to say no?

Madam Minister, the least you could do is support the pilot project that will improve education and save them money. And they need to do that now. Will you do that today? Will you promise not to stand in the way of this pilot project? Will you promise not to waste precious tax dollars on court challenges or something else frivolous?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the people in Scenic Valley — and I did have an opportunity to meet with the board of education and the director of education — are extremely concerned about issues of quality of education. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is concerned about those issues as well.

This is a proposal that has not received much work in Canada and I understand that there is one such project in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we would want to evaluate the project in Alberta, and other parts of Canada, or the United States, to ensure that the extended school day did not dramatically impact upon small children, middle years children, and children with learning disabilities.

Those are important issues, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Education and government should be concerned about. And I think that the public will agree with us, that it's important that we take those kinds of considerations into proper evaluation in order that we can go forward with any potential pilot project in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Service Districts Act

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, we understand that yesterday you met with the presidents of both SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM. And we understand that once again you heard definitively from these people their opposition to your Service Districts Act. Your government's Act has been reported to you as being unacceptable to rural Saskatchewan and to the towns and villages and cities of this province. But as Sinclair Harrison put it, and he summed it up nicely, "It's up to you (this is a quote now, it's up to you) how the legislation goes."

Mr. Premier, what he is recognizing here is that you're the boss and you're in charge. So I ask for them today, from you, the

boss that's in charge of this government: Mr. Premier, have you made up your mind? Have you made a decision? Will you today stand in this Assembly and tell the people of Saskatchewan that you have heard them and that you will withdraw this Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is the same answer that I gave yesterday in anticipation of the meeting. And I'll repeat it very briefly for the member.

It may come as a surprise to the Conservative Party but we're but four years away to the 21st century, or less, and the world is changing dramatically everywhere, including in rural Saskatchewan as it is in urban Saskatchewan. And it is incumbent upon us, given the fact that we all face the task of public debt — all governments everywhere, all ideologies — to make sure that we have the best infrastructure that we can have for the 21st century for rural people.

Now in that task we seek the cooperation of SARM and SUMA and the government as a partner in active partnership. The methodology of achieving the end result is not important. What is important is that we prepare our rural people, our urban people, our young people, everybody in Saskatchewan, to be ready for the 21st century.

And we heard the submissions. I communicated my considerations to them. Both sides are doing some considerable thinking, I would suspect, of the points that we articulated and in the next few days some announcement will be made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Increased Welfare Rolls

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Minister, once again the number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan is increasing. There were 82,070 Saskatchewan residents on welfare in March. That's an increase of 2,500 since the end of last year and an increase of 25,000 since your government took over office in 1991.

Other provinces are taking positive action to bring their welfare numbers down, but here in Saskatchewan the numbers continue to climb — 82,000-plus on welfare. I think that's a disgrace, Mr. Minister. And it's a direct result of a lack of new jobs and opportunities for the people here in this province.

Mr. Minister, why are the welfare numbers in this province continuing to grow?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Third Party for that question and I believe he is aware of the answer to that question in some regards even before he asks it. He will know that the social assistance case-load in Saskatchewan has taken some dramatic rises over the last few years, essentially as a result of two decisions made in Ottawa.

One, the decision to make fundamental changes to the

unemployment insurance program which brought many new cases and people onto our welfare system. And number two, the unilateral decision by the federal government to abdicate their responsibility to care for treaty Indian people off reserve. That too presented a significant increase in the Saskatchewan case-load.

The member should know that if those two factors were taken out of today's case-load, this case-load would be considerably smaller than it was in 1991.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we share the view of the member that this is not a satisfactory situation. We've seen the economic fortunes of this province turning around. We're seeing jobs being created and we are determined, Mr. Speaker, to reform the social assistance program to make it the best program in all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, other provinces are breaking the welfare cycle. They are making fundamental changes through job creation and through positive work . . . welfare reform initiatives . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . like workfare, yes. Yet on Friday the Premier was at a conference in Ontario slamming workfare.

Mr. Minister, from March '93 to March '96 Alberta has cut the number of people on welfare by over 50 per cent through job creation — through job creation — and a workfare program. During the same time frame, the number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan grew by nearly 14,000 — during that same time.

Mr. Minister, every day we hear members of your government bragging about how well the economy is doing. And if this is the case, why are the number of people on welfare continuing to rise and why are you refusing to consider a program that has worked well in other provinces, like workfare?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say one or two things. I explained to the member carefully, I thought, why the numbers in Saskatchewan have taken a dramatic rise. It's because of decisions of right-wing governments; this decision being made by the right-wing government in Ottawa. He asks about what other provinces are doing. Well I refer him to his right-wing friends that are the Government of Alberta. What has been the solution in Alberta, Mr. Speaker? It's to take the poorest of the poor and give them one-way bus tickets, mostly to Saskatchewan or British Columbia. That's how they bring their rolls down in Alberta.

That is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, and this government, this government has taken the position since its election — and it's a fundamental principle of our political movement — that we will not punish the poor for being poor; but we will seek ways to provide independence for those who are today dependent on social assistance; that we will seek ways to strengthen this economy to provide opportunities, not only for people on welfare, but for all of our people in Saskatchewan. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker; we're going to lead the nation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Highways

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

The Speaker: — Order, order. I will ask all hon. members to come to order to allow the hon. member for Athabasca to put his question.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan highways are a complete mess, Mr. Speaker, and northern Saskatchewan is worse. My question is for either the Minister of Northern Affairs or the Minister of Highways, whoever gives us an adequate answer.

Mr. Minister, as you know, northern highways are in a state of constant disrepair. Hundreds of people become stranded every season because the road conditions are atrocious and maintenance is non-existent. Who do you think is going to pay the cost to fix thousands of dollars of damage caused by ruts, by rocks, by washouts, and washboards? Northern people, Mr. Minister, that's who.

Now I hear your government's grand solution is to provide 10 yards of gravel for every kilometre of northern roads — 10 yards, Mr. Speaker. In the South, RMs (rural municipality) and contractors at least budget 100 to 150 yards of gravel per kilometre.

Now my question to the minister: are you trading in your gravel trucks for a helicopter? Because the only way you can spread 10 yards of gravel over one kilometre of road is by aerial seeding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Athabasca is trying to run away from the major issue. The major issue, Mr. Speaker, is the \$114 million cut-back from the Liberals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — If we had \$114 million, Mr. Speaker, we would probably be able to pave all the roads in northern Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, the member has a problem with the Liberals in Ottawa. The only reason why he's not able to see the . . . Mr. Speaker, the only reason why when I spoke last time on the member from Prince Albert-Churchill, Kirkby . . . I would say this much: he was dancing up a jig before the last election. I understand now that some people say he might be line-dancing in Prince Albert, but with all the mess that he created in co-management, I don't think that's the case. I think he's probably doing some ballroom dancing in Ottawa because we never see him and that's the reason why. He's down there dancing for the Liberals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Northern Affairs has a brand-new name. We just thought of this now. We're going to call him Quiet Owl because he don't give a hoot

for the North.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — The Minister of Northern Affairs can blame the federal government all he wants. The fact is his government is giving northern highways only one-tenth of the gravel the roads in the rest of the province gets — one-tenth, Mr. Speaker. He's now telling the people of northern Saskatchewan that he thinks their concerns about safety and transportation are only worth one-tenth of the people living in the rest of the province.

Mr. Minister, is your government planning to close down depots and start selling off Highways' equipment in the North, showing even less of a commitment to northern people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the Liberals from across represent the blind owl. Basically because, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a \$6 million program on the Cumberland bridge that the member from Arm River opposed this past week, and the member from Athabasca had to apologize for this week.

I think he's a blind owl over there and I think, Mr. Speaker, didn't see the road to Grandmother's Bay. I think that the blind owl on the other side did not see the road to Athabasca in his own constituency. Mr. Speaker, the improvements on ... (inaudible) ... in his own constituency to improve it in regards to forestry in northern Saskatchewan and also the five kilometres on Garson Lake road, Mr. Speaker. I think we have blind owls over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Service Districts Act

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Cypress Hills asked a very important question today, Mr. Speaker, and mine is much of a follow-up of the same. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House I called on the Minister of Municipal Government to answer questions relating to The Service Districts Act, and ask her to explain who truly is in charge of this portfolio.

This question was answered by the fact that the Premier stood and addressed the issue. This morning when questioned by the media about a meeting with the heads of SARM and SUMA, the Premier indicated that he will give further consideration to The Service Districts Act, and he stated and I quote:

We are open-minded to consider the arguments and positions advanced by people like Mr. Harasen and Mr. Westby. If we can get the cooperation of our partners, I'd always prefer no legislation.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the person in charge of Municipal Government. Will the Premier explain if this means he is now prepared to put this Bill on the back burner until all parties involved have reached a consensus on sharing services which, by the way, municipalities are already doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. I did not hear part of the question, but I wonder whether or not the hon. member was saying until all parties come to their senses, I think was the question as it was prefaced. And I don't believe that that's a proper accusation, if I heard correctly, a proper accusation to make against SARM or SUMA.

I think that SARM and SUMA have been ... (inaudible interjection) ... Listen, Mr. Speaker, I said I did not know what he said. If ...

An Hon. Member: — Well then sit down and listen.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The hon. member from Wood River — who was not here and the House was operating in an orderly and functioning fashion — should be out of the House all the time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order! Order. Order. I will ask hon. members on both sides of the House to come to order. I want to remind the Premier that it is inappropriate to refer to either presence or absence of members of the Assembly and I'll ... Order, order, and I'll give the Premier a moment to complete his answer if he wishes.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'm advised by others of my colleagues who have heard the question that the word used was consensus, I believe. That being the case, I apologize to the hon. member for using the words that I did because that's what I thought he said, but I was obviously in error.

The question has to be answered as I did to the question by the Tories. We want a cooperative manner, a mechanism to make sure that the people in SUMA and SARM and the Government of Saskatchewan work together to revamp rural Saskatchewan for the 21st century. That's building for the future. It's working for the future.

We've always preferred a cooperative approach. We still prefer a cooperative approach. And if SUMA and SARM indicate that there's a partnership approach which takes place with respect to us, we're prepared, more than prepared, to do the same.

But the reality is the world is progressing. And we either are on that side of working for progress and positive change, or we are like the Liberals and the Conservatives, sticking our heads in the sands and fighting that change.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Provincial Training Strategy

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the Assembly that Saskatchewan is developing a new provincial

training strategy. Today I released a discussion paper outlining the reasons we need a new training strategy and the principles on which that strategy will be based. Copies have been made available to all members.

This draft paper will help to focus discussions with our training partners. We have had some preliminary discussions on this subject, but the consultation will now be formalized and organized in round table meetings across the province.

There are four main reasons why we are developing a new training strategy. First, there is less money in the system because of federal funding cuts; second, the economy is changing, requiring new types of skills; third, technology is changing rapidly, offering new ways to deliver training and causing changes in how we do our work, which requires changes to our training; and fourth, Saskatchewan population is changing.

Mr. Speaker, as we shape this strategy we will ensure that it is responsive to the market-place. We will ensure that training is linked to jobs. We will ensure equitable access to training and we will design the training as a shared responsibility among learners, industry, education institutions, communities, and governments.

Our recent experience with the JobStart, Future Skills program, is one example of the innovative, more effective approaches we are exploring.

Mr. Speaker, the province is facing many choices as we design a system of labour market services for the next century. The new provincial training strategy will be developed in cooperation and collaboration with the many people and organizations who have an interest in that system. It will build on Saskatchewan's considerable strengths and on the contributions of many people.

At the end of the day, we will have a relevant, flexible, high-quality training system that helps Saskatchewan people get jobs. We will have a system that helps to make Saskatchewan business and industry competitive in the global economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, I encourage the input of all members of the Assembly, as well as interested partners in education and training. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Minister, thank you for the copy of your document and your announcement as well. I'm very encouraged by the fact that we are recognizing, of course, that job creation, job training, and a new strategy are necessary. Ever since the election we have been calling for real action on job creation. And I think that addressing training and education and in trying to develop a new plan are very crucial for this province's success in job creation.

The minister has stated that training will be linked to jobs, and

that is essential. Our young people need the opportunities, they need the opportunities here in Saskatchewan, so that when they complete these highly skilled, new training programs that indeed that there is a job available for them. And I look forward to that kind of input.

In the short time that I've had to look at the document, I note that there is a lot of comments made about the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Technology. The program at SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) has been . . . the programs at SIAST have been excellent. But there is a need to readdress it. We need to look at new partnerships. The finances, as the minister has indicated, are crucial, and we can't look at the situation where students will be expected to pay the huge increases in tuition.

So we have to establish a strategy. That strategy has to involve new partners; it has to involve a development of new training. There is a constant change in terms of the kind of skilled worker that we need. So I look forward to contributing as I might, and my colleagues do, and I encourage all people in Saskatchewan to assist in developing a strong partnership with all of the people involved in creating an excellent training program in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our party, I think we should also respond in kind to this proposal and the information brought to us by the minister.

We certainly can never, ever educate our children too much. And so I guess tentatively we would say that we support in principle what we are hearing being said. Obviously though, nothing is 100 per cent, as we have discovered in the past few days. We even find people aspiring to get to 99.9 and thinking that's close enough, when in fact in life we have to use a 100 per cent goal and maybe accept 99.9 if we get there. And most of us will never achieve that kind of a goal.

So I ask the minister not to set his goals too low. Let's set our goals at 100 per cent of employment, 100 per cent of education, 100 per cent of opportunity. And having said that, then I would suggest to the minister that there may be some more room to move in terms of looking around the world at what can be done to achieve the goals we need to achieve.

He has outlined some aspirations of what his goals are. They're lofty aspirations and we applaud him for those directions that he wants to go in, but there are never too many things that you can learn about how to achieve that goal better.

Take a look at Switzerland. I'd remind you again, here is a country that has for many, many years looked at the problems of getting their young people into the job market and how to best achieve that without expanding costs.

So they've backed up the system from post-secondary back down to the high school level. And in fact in the high school level they have an apprenticeship program over there, I understand, where some of the children now are being trained for specific jobs along with their reading, writing, and arithmetic that normally we would look at, just to use an old

cliché of how the educational system works.

And so some of that cost then is translated, Mr. Speaker, back into the high school system where it's sort of absorbed, just as though the same ordinary costs would be now for an education. And it doesn't cost them very much more that way. In fact maybe not as much.

And yet these people have made up their minds a little bit about where they're going to go. And these are of course targeted towards the kind of jobs that are available in society.

So maybe we do have to take a look at some of the outside world and see if there are some better ways that we can improve on it, although we do agree that the minister is going in the right direction and we hope that you will continue to work hard to help our young people to find work in the jobs that are available. It's no use educating people if there are no jobs after they are finished with their education.

And so thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 117 — An Act to Enable the Recovery of Funds Stolen by Members of the Legislative Assembly (The House Internal Economy Fraud/"THIEF")

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move first reading of a Bill to Enable the Recovery of Funds Stolen by Members of the Legislative Assembly.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I wish to table a report from the Provincial Auditor on the 1995 financial statements of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) subsidiary Crown corporations, pursuant to section 14 of The Provincial Auditor Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In accordance with our policy and being an open and accessible government, I table the answer.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 109 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 94 — An Act to amend The Education and Health Tax Act

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after my remarks, I will be moving second reading of The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1996. This Bill

adds new provisions that will improve the application of the education and health tax to inter-jurisdictional carriers as announced in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, truckers who operate in Saskatchewan and in one or more other provinces or states are required to pay the education and health tax on their vehicles and repair parts based on their proportionate use in Saskatchewan. The amount of tax payable is determined by the value of the acquisition, the percentage of total distance travelled in Saskatchewan, and the tax rate.

Starting January 1, 1997, Mr. Speaker, the method of taxing these vehicles is being changed so that the tax will be collected each time the vehicle is registered. The tax rate will decrease each year from about 4.2 per cent in the year the vehicle is acquired to less than 2 per cent in later years. In addition, eligible carriers will not be required to pay tax on their trailers and repair parts.

These changes, Mr. Speaker, are expected to be revenue neutral, and will benefit both the province and the trucking industry.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, inter-jurisdictional carriers are licensed to file monthly tax returns or pay tax when they register their vehicles to each province in which they operate. This arrangement has worked reasonably well over the years. However some carriers, particularly those based in Alberta and the United States, have been able to avoid paying their fair share of tax on their vehicle usage in Saskatchewan. To fix this problem and to provide an incentive for carriers to purchase their vehicles, parts, and repairs in Saskatchewan, the recurring sales tax is being introduced.

Under the recurring sales tax, Mr. Speaker, inter-jurisdictional carriers will be exempt from paying tax on their trailers, parts, and repairs purchased in Saskatchewan. This initiative, Mr. Speaker, will benefit both the carriers and Saskatchewan truck dealers. It will essentially put them on the same level playing-field as carriers and truck dealers in Alberta where there is no provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, carriers who register their vehicles in other jurisdictions for use partly in Saskatchewan will pay the Saskatchewan recurring sales tax to their home vehicle registration office. This revenue will be forwarded to Saskatchewan when the vehicle registration office in that province or state submits the registration fees that they collected from their carriers on behalf of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the recurring sales tax is similar to the sales tax changes implemented by British Columbia earlier this year. Also several American states have a similar tax that is collected by each jurisdiction on a mileage-prorated formula.

Once the recurring sales tax is fully implemented, it should provide the following benefits to the trucking industry and to the province. It will simplify and streamline tax reporting for carriers. It will reduce the time spent on auditing carriers. Compliance will be improved so that all carriers will pay their fair share of tax. The exemption for trailers and parts will benefit inter-jurisdictional carriers and Saskatchewan truck

dealers. It will improve the cash flow for carriers, and it will be consistent with one-stop shopping.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of responsible, targeted tax measure that strengthens our economy and creates jobs.

I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Trucking Association has been very supportive of replacing the current sales tax formula with a recurring sales tax. And they have been working with Finance officials to ensure that it is implemented as smoothly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Education and Health Tax Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to take a few moments today to discuss the amendments that have been tabled to The Education and Health Tax Act.

The purpose of this Bill, as I understand it, is to deal with the problems of inter-provincial trucking companies and bus lines which operate in Saskatchewan, but register their operations and their vehicles outside of the province. By doing this, these companies avoid paying the education and health tax on their new vehicles. When this tax is applied to new vehicles, it is more commonly known as the Saskatchewan vehicle tax. This tax varies from the 9 per cent E&H (education and health) tax because the rate of taxation is reoccurring and declines depending on the length of time that vehicle is owned or leased.

The Bill before us today attempts to create a new process whereby two or more jurisdictions may cooperate in the collection of these taxes. This is to attempt to ensure that each jurisdiction is able to collect the taxes owed to it by trucking and bus line companies.

Under this new system of taxation, companies will be able to purchase or lease their vehicles tax free, but will pay a prorated tax each time they register their vehicles. The vehicle registration office in each jurisdiction will collect the tax and registration fees and remit them to the province.

This Bill goes on to set up a formula for the calculation of the amount of the Saskatchewan vehicle tax that is to be paid on commercial vehicles that only operate partially in Saskatchewan. The formula and annual tax rates will be used in determining the amount of prorated tax that must be paid each year on these commercial vehicles.

New sections also establish tax exemptions for trailers and repair parts used with these vehicles but are subject to this reoccurring tax. It seems to me that these amendments are mainly for clarification purposes and are not highly controversial in nature.

The liability of payment of this tax falls on one of three people: either the person who finances the vehicle, the person who manages the vehicle while it is in Saskatchewan, or any person who determines the utilization of the vehicle in question while it is in our province, can be held liable to pay the Saskatchewan

vehicle tax.

It is this section that causes a few questions and concerns. Does the truck or bus driver fall under the wording of, the person managing or determining utilization of the vehicle? Due to the fact that this tax is joint and several, the government can collect the tax from any of the above people. I think the truck drivers have a right to be concerned that they may be liable for the truck company's tax payments. This area will be discussed in more detail in Committee of the Whole.

(1445)

The Act goes on to deal with distance ratios, tax rates, and adjustments to tax payable under the discretion of the minister. The Minister of Finance may increase the amount of tax payable by a truck or bus company and may also intervene in situations where an agreement or arrangement has been made that artificially reduces taxes owed.

It is somewhat alarming that the minister is not required to show or to prove that there has been a deliberate attempt to evade or avoid the tax in question before cutting through agreements and changing the amount of tax owed. This seems to me as though the minister has been given an extraordinary amount of power in this regard.

With the passage of these amendments into law, the government will have the power to make regulations with regards to agreements between Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions; the manner in which the tax can be paid; listing tax exemptions; the calculation of refunds or credits; and the form of refund or credit.

Again there is a bit of concern over regulations, but they too can be dealt with more effectively in a Committee of the Whole. Due to the fairly straightforward nature of this Bill, I see no reason to hold up debate any longer.

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

Bill No. 95 — An Act to amend The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move second reading of a Bill to amend The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. This Bill introduces changes to the Saskatchewan tax incentive for investments in labour-sponsored venture capital corporations that will parallel the changes to the federal tax incentive as announced in the March 6, 1996 federal budget.

The Bill also introduces several technical amendments necessary to clarify existing program policies. The labour-sponsored ventured capital corporation, LSVCC, program was introduced in 1986 to provide organized labour the opportunity to create and maintain jobs in Saskatchewan by sponsoring the raising of capital and channelling that capital to small and medium-sized businesses. The program also provides encouragements for groups of employees to invest in their own places of employment.

The program allows for the creation of three different types of venture capital funds. A type A pool fund is permitted to issue equity shares to any Saskatchewan resident and use the capital thus raised to invest in a number of different small and medium-sized businesses. A type B employee fund is a single purpose LSVCC which can only issue shares of its equity capital to employees of the business in which the corporation is investing. National LSVCCs are broadly based investment corporations registered under federal income tax legislation.

To encourage Saskatchewan residents to support these venture capital funds, The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporation Act permits the issuance of provincial income tax credits.

This Bill introduces changes which will reduce the value of the Saskatchewan tax credit for investments in national LSVCCs. The Saskatchewan tax credit will decline from 20 per cent on the value of an individual's investment to 15 per cent. The provincial tax incentive for investments in type A and type B funds will remain unchanged at 20 per cent.

It is also the intention of this government to parallel federal changes by extending the minimum holding period for investments in provincially registered LSVCCs from five years to eight years and by instituting a three-year waiting period during which an investor who has redeemed an LSVCC share will be ineligible for new provincial tax credits.

In addition to these policy initiatives, this Bill implements several technical amendments to The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. These amendments represent clarifications of current policy and administrative practices with respect to the labour-sponsored venture capital program.

I would be pleased to answer questions concerning the amendments when discussing this Bill at Committee of the Whole. It therefore gives me great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to move second reading of An Act to amend The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act for a second time. Thank you.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we haven't had a lot of time to consider the ramifications of Bill 95, which amends The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. And because of this, I'll only speak to it very, very briefly today. From what we can see, much of it is just a housekeeping Bill to clean up the original Act proclaimed in 1988.

Mr. Speaker, anything that encourages investment into our province by its citizens is welcomed by this caucus. Because in the end, for all the sanctimonious nonsense spouted by this government about job creation, it truly is the people of this province who create the wealth and create the jobs.

This particular Act deals with the workers of the province. It allows workers in Saskatchewan to conscientiously invest their hard-earned money into the world of business. Instead of being employees, through these investments they would have a real stake in what happens.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's a good idea for everyone in our province to get a taste of both the world of business owners, particularly small-business owners, and the world of employees. In our free enterprise system, each of these factors depend on the other for survival. Very often in our province one gets the feeling that workers, particularly those workers who are part of trade unions, really don't have a good understanding about the pressures that face the owners and operators of business. And perhaps in many cases the opposite is true as well.

Mr. Speaker, the changes proposed in Bill 95 offer some amendments to the Act passed some years ago. I understand, however, workers in the province have not often used the provisions laid out in this Act to their fullest extent. I understand so far there's been an under-used . . . it's been an under-used Act. In committee, we will be asking the minister why she thinks this is, if in fact she agrees to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I obviously get suspicious whenever the government opposite deals with a Bill that touches on the power or rights of our trade unions. I believe that suspicion is justified, given the unconditional loyalty the government has shown to trade unions over the years, sometimes at the expense of those of us who are not a part of unions. And we want assurance about the power to invest by the leaders of trade unions.

In committee, we'll be asking the minister to clarify potential concerns we might have after being able to study its ramifications to a closer extent.

However, I do recognize as well that many of the changes appearing in these amendments do appear to be that of clarification. For example, the time limit for any monies raised under the provisions of this Bill to invest in type A corporations have been shortened.

As well, many of the changes regarding tax credits issued under this Act are being made to coincide with amendments set by our federal government. This is also true for the new clause mandating a waiting period for reinvesting in one of these venture capital schemes once an investor has cashed out.

Mr. Speaker, while we do have some questions about this Bill and these amendments, we're willing to take these questions up with minister 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. 96 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to move second reading of a Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act.

The Saskatchewan Pension Plan, with over 30,000 members and more than \$116 million under trusteeship, has established itself as an integral part of the retirement savings plans of the people of Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Pension Plan is the only tax deferred plan available to people who don't qualify for an RRSP (registered retirement savings plan). Member funds are professionally managed and the plan has generated a competitive rate of return averaging 9.5 per cent over the past 10 years. There are no minimum contributions or fixed payment schedules. The money is protected from seizure, claim, or garnishee by creditors of any sort.

The changes we are introducing in this Bill are designed to make the plan more flexible. These changes are necessary so that the plan can better meet the needs of its members.

People have told us they want to contribute to the plan for more years. They want to contribute beyond the current maximum age of 65. We are therefore prolonging the upper age limit for joining and contributing to the plan. Members will be able to contribute to their Saskatchewan Pension Plan accounts for a longer time.

As a result of this change, the plan will also raise its mandatory retirement age. These changes also make the rules more consistent with those governing other pension plans and retirement savings plans.

People will no longer have to be Saskatchewan residents to join the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. This Bill will remove the Saskatchewan residency requirement and provide future, new marketing opportunities for the plan.

The Saskatchewan Pension Plan includes many couples where both spouses are members of the plan. One of the amendments contained in this Bill will allow the transfer of death benefits between spouses within their plan accounts.

Members of the plan have told us they want more options available to them when they begin receiving their pension from the plan. Changes in this Bill will pave the way for offering additional options to retiring members. These changes will allow the plan to offer products similar to those available to those in the market-place. Products — such as life income funds, LIFs; locked-in retirement income funds, LRIFs; and locked-in retirement accounts, LIRAs — will give retiring members more control over the income generated by their Saskatchewan Pension Plan account. These options will be prescribed in the regulations.

Another amendment in this Bill will allow members to transfer funds to their Saskatchewan Pension Plan accounts from other pension or retirement savings plans. Recent changes to The Pension Benefits Act and regulations have given employees greater portability of their pensions.

People will now be seeking to consolidate their retirement savings by transferring their funds to one vehicle. It is anticipated that these transfer amounts will be relatively small. The Saskatchewan Pension Plan is ideally suited to handle these small pension amounts. The regulations will establish the rules governing these transfers.

To set the framework for the future growth of the plan, this Bill establishes that any deficits in the annuity fund are payable

from the General Revenue Fund. The Saskatchewan Pension Plan is prudently managed by an independent board of trustees, and the chance of a deficit in the fund is small as pension liabilities are closely matched to the income stream generated by investments. The fund currently has a surplus of more than \$145,000.

Other amendments included in this Bill are of a housekeeping nature consistent with these announced measures. The changes announced in this Bill will provide more opportunities for people to build a financially secure future through their personal retirement savings plans. The Saskatchewan Pension Plan has a cost-effective administration which can effectively provide pensions for its members. The prudent management of this plan will serve members well into the next century.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not speak at length on this Bill since it appears to be a mainly housekeeping piece of legislation.

But, Mr. Speaker, thousands of Saskatchewan residents have contributed to the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. For many, it is the only plan that they have outside of the Canada Pension Plan. It is important that we do everything in our power to ensure this pension plan remains strong and provides our residents with at least some small measure of additional security at their old age.

Mr. Speaker, it appears some of the changes proposed in this amending Bill will give contributors to the Saskatchewan Pension Plan some increased options in how they receive their benefits once they do in fact retire. They'll have the option of taking a life annuity from the plan or having their retirement funds transferred to one of three pension benefits: lifelong funds, locked-in retirement income funds, and locked-in retirement accounts, which I understand will be established by cabinet.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, we will have some questions about these types of pension benefits when this Bill comes before us once again at Committee of the Whole, because, Mr. Speaker, we have to have the government's guarantee that these types of benefit payment plans will serve Saskatchewan residents well. We will also want assurances that there will be a mechanism in place so contributors to the plan are made well aware of their choices and the implications of each.

Mr. Speaker, many of the changes prescribed in this Bill bring the Saskatchewan Pension Plan closer in line with the registered retirement savings plans which quite obviously have become a major part of Canadians' retirements plans as they become less and less trusting of the Canada Pension Plan.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill now allows residents who have moved from Saskatchewan to continue to contribute to the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. We will want to know why this change was made. Other changes include such minor modification as increasing the maximum age of contributors to

the Saskatchewan Pension Plan to 71 from the original 70. Again, this brings the plan in line with the rules governing RRSPs.

Mr. Speaker, we will also have some questions regarding clause 4 of this Bill. Under this clause, it is spelled out that any deficits in the plan's annuity fund are payable out of general revenue. While we understand the annuity fund currently is in a surplus situation, we will want some assurances this will remain the case in future years.

Mr. Speaker, we see no reason to hold this Bill in second reading. However, as I stated, we will be asking the minister for many clarifications on the new and the old clauses of this Bill. We'll want continuing assurances that the Saskatchewan Pension Plan remains a valuable tool for Saskatchewan residents in the future, and we'll want to be assured that these proposed changes will make the plan stronger. 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. 44

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wiens that **Bill No. 44 — An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act, 1993** be now read a second time.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for this opportunity to once again address Bill 44, a Bill to amend The Crown Corporations Act.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous comments on the Bill, I made the argument that before the government asks permission to give more freedoms to Crown corporations, both government and the Crowns should be made more accountable to the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that this argument will not fall on deaf ears. Here we have the government wanting to give Crown corporations extra powers to engage in more activities when so many suggestions and recommendations for improving accountability continue collecting dust. Mr. Speaker, that's much like giving a kid a car when they've shown every reason that they couldn't be trusted with a bicycle.

While the troubled Crown sector has re-jigged some deals on a piece-by-piece basis since this government has come to office, no real improvements have been made to the accountability of Crown corporations. That's a disturbing comment on a government which promised from day one to open the books. Inherent in such a promise was a commitment that they would not only open them, but this government would do something to ensure abuses never occurred again in the Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite basically ask for two things in this Bill today. They ask for freedom to lend money or provide assistance to any company, even though they may not have shares in that company. They also ask for free rein to enter

into capital market activities. These activities in both cases are so poorly defined and left wide opened that the government will basically be able to do whatever it wants.

Mr. Speaker, people are tired of governments that do whatever they want. The assets of the people of Saskatchewan tied up in these Crowns are immense in size and they should not be put at the mercy of politicians whose foresight and planning is limited to a four-year period of office. Setting up a better system of accountability would improve upon this situation.

With respect to this Bill, the members opposite may ask why they should provide this House with better tools of accountability before asking for more powers for the Crowns as they are doing in Bill 44 here today.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should provide more tools of accountability for the simple reason that they focused on this in their 1991 election platform. The people of Saskatchewan deserve the best. They deserve to see this commitment to accountability kept. They deserve the innovation that our community leaders have offered this province since it was founded. This government should try to be an innovator rather than an evader when it comes to public accountability.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should provide these tools because our Crown sector has undergone some fundamental changes. While the Crown sector changed, the tools of accountability remain as they were some 20-odd years ago.

While a few changes occurred such as giving the Crown Corporations Committee a mandate to ask about the future direction of Crowns, the committee remains somewhat powerless for several reasons. The primary reason is that it's dominated by government members who usually follow the marching orders of their parties. Unless significant improvements are made, providing Crowns with the sorts of powers they are asking for in Bill 44 would simply just make this problem worse.

The basic problem with Crown corporation accountability, which the members opposite must recognize, is that times have changed. In the 1970s, Saskatchewan Crown corporations were vastly different. Since that time, we fought many holy wars over the usefulness of Crown corporations, but none of these conflicts have improved upon the accountability system.

In the 1970s we had the debate over the nationalization of a significant portion of our potash industry. In the early '80s, we fought over whether the NDP's family of Crown corporations were gouging our own families. In the 1980s, the Tories tried to privatize Crowns through public participation, while in the 1990s, the NDP re-jigged some of the deals and said that they would open the books.

Through all of this, Crown corporations drastically changed but little, if anything, improved with respect to accountability. Since the 1970s, there's been a profound change. Crown corporations expanded drastically to the point that they had more people on their payrolls than our entire public service. After the '80s they shrank, thanks to privatization. The

combination of these two events and others profoundly changed the nature of our Crown corporations.

In the 1970s we had a host of utility Crown corporations that were accompanied by a group of wholly owned, export-oriented resource Crowns. Mr. Speaker, what we have today is a whole different bag of goods. We have a small number of utility Crowns that are engaged in an ever wider range of activities. Added to this is a number of resource companies that are only minority owned by the government. The changes, however, go on.

We now have a number of Crown enterprises — like NewGrade, Crown Life-HARO, and the Bi-Provincial upgrader — where the government is a majority or significant owner but exercises little control. Add to this a series of direct loans to things like banks and packing plants. There is also an ever widening net of Crown corporation subsidiaries, and partnerships with private corporations.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm pointing out here is that over the last 20 years, through a combination of events and decisions, our Crown sector has become a very mixed enterprise. No longer does it boast a large but simple portfolio of enterprises or investments. It's a very complicated web that involves some 40 per cent of all government financial activity.

No longer are ministers clearly answerable for the performance of a public investment, Mr. Speaker. While these people are actually answerable for getting us involved in a variety of investments, they often manage an investment along with a series of private partners. As minority shareholders, they're responsible to us for their activities. But they now have the company of private partners who may feel that they have no responsibility to us even though they benefit from taxpayers' money. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the days when everyone understood that the minister was strictly answerable for what occurred in the Crowns has passed into an evening of cloud and confusion. Unfortunately, accountability measures have not kept pace with these changes.

Mr. Speaker, in 1991 the NDP government took over a Crown sector that had greatly changed from the one it left behind in 1982. While deals have been re-jigged, no overall attempt to change the system of accountability to meet the challenges posed by the new, mixed set of investments was ever made. The usual post-activity set of controls continues. These controls were inadequate 20 years ago, and they're still inadequate today. If new powers are given to the Crown through Bill 44, it will just make these entities even less accountable. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us is a bad idea.

Mr. Speaker, this government has finally announced their undertaking to review the Crowns in a public review process. Aside from being curious about how much this review will cost the taxpayer, from all indications it will not involve a review of failings of the accountability system.

While this government has no clear, decided purpose for its Crowns, it should not only find one, but it should also produce a coherent vision of how they feel these Crowns will be held accountable in the mixed-enterprise era.

Back in the 1970s the former premier, Allan Blakeney, used to argue the Crowns made profits so that the government could support programs for the public. In 1982 the public didn't buy that argument, and they still don't buy it today. Frankly, the residents of this province are more likely to believe that the purpose that this government has for its Crowns is to indirectly raise taxes.

Despite the fact Crowns are making record profits, the government collects less money from them while they continue to shovel more into projects like HARO Financial and others. It goes there instead of to support our programs.

Clearly no one knows what purpose this government wants our Crowns to serve. Without a clearly defined purpose, Mr. Speaker, it defies logic that the government should be asking for more powers for the Crowns. Obviously Crowns will require certain powers, but I would suggest to the members opposite that those powers should reflect the purposes which Crowns are expected to achieve.

Deciding what powers Crowns should have, or giving them more, and only after that deciding what purpose they are to serve makes no sense. To use an often used metaphor, that's like putting the cart before the horse.

Mr. Speaker, earlier in my speech I referred to the changing environment facing the Crowns. One aspect which has held constant through all the years and through that changed environment is found in the behaviour of the politicians involved. Every party represented in this House has engaged in selective responsibility when it comes to Crown corporations.

(1500)

The members opposite and their CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) predecessors are by far, however, the most practised at this. Selective responsibility is the sort of behaviour that should really concern everyone when we are discussing a Bill like The Crown Corporations Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, selective responsibility is the process where politicians try and get closely identified with the good things which Crowns do while distancing themselves from the less popular things.

After his first bout with state-funded enterprise, T.C. Douglas learned this lesson quite quickly. A failed brick, shoe, and box plant meant the government of the time had to put something between themselves and the Crowns, something that would allow them to take credit where possible and avoid blame where desirable. Over the years, Mr. Speaker, that's evolved into the government finance office and then into the Crown Investments Corporation. Both these agencies helped ministers avoid being accountable all of the time. They oversaw the Crowns and began handling much of their financial affairs. They distributed monies between the Crowns and collected the profits from them and made decisions as to how they would be used. This arms-length relationship let politicians come close when it came to handing out a new power line or phone exchange but still allowed them to keep their distance when money was lost or a project failed.

Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite ask for more powers to lend money and engage in capital market activities in this Bill, this problem of selective responsibility remains unfixed. As the Crown corporation sector's activities became more mixed, this whole problem actually worsened. Ministers have carried selective responsibility to new heights. The whole process has turned into a new tower, but unfortunately if nothing is done, it's just going to topple over.

Ministers are accustomed to using organizations like the Crown Investments Corporation and its predecessor to avoid accountability for unpopular projects or decisions. Today, with the mixed investments, loans, warrants, partnerships, and subsidiaries, the politicians have found yet another defence. They now can say that they can't disclose all the necessary information to hold themselves accountable because it might reveal secrets which would harm their private sector partners.

Mr. Speaker, instead of shielding their private sector partner, the mixed investments, which often involve all types of interactions with private partners, are just a disguise. They disguise what the government really wants. All too often what this government and its predecessor, the Tory government, wanted was to use the private sector partners to help the government avoid accountability.

Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty poor way to treat your shareholders, the taxpayers of this province. So here we have a government that wants to give Crown corporations more powers when they haven't even solved the current mess they found themselves in.

Mr. Speaker, the problem with our current situation is that all we have in this province is after-the-fact accountability. There is almost no means of demanding that the corporations which spend our money and manage assets, which belong to us, provide some pre-activity controls to the Assembly. The Crown Corporations Committee can ask questions but it's still constrained by what sort of information the Crowns are willing to give. That, Mr. Speaker, is the very failing in our system, and government should be fixing it before asking for more powers like they are doing in this Bill to amend The Crown Corporations Act.

Basically we are in a messy position. To sum up how ineffectual the tools of accountability have become in this province is to paint a pretty sad picture indeed. We have a mixed Crown sector where ministers use private partners to shield themselves from accountability. That mixed sector is involved in a much wider range of activities, often across the world, that could lead to many unforeseen problems.

All the controls which we have on our Crowns as members of this House only involve an after-the-fact review of their actions. To make matters worse, our Crown corporations still basically control what information is released. The Provincial Auditor, for example, reports that certain Crowns don't even give the cabinet documents they really require to properly plan for the corporation.

Last of all, ministers continue to use the selective responsibility tactic to cheat Saskatchewan residents out of a reasonable

chance to know how their money is being handled in the Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, these things should be solved before this government gets the additional powers it is asking for here today. Giving them any more powers will just further complicate matters and make it more difficult to fix the system down the road.

We should not be surprised however, Mr. Speaker. This government has been in power for close to five years, and even though it's known about problems like the unfunded pension liabilities, they don't want to deal with them until the next century. With that sort of attitude, we can see why they ask for more powers to make a mess of things so another, let's say Liberal, government will have to sort them out.

Mr. Speaker, before the government gets the powers they are asking for, I would like to suggest that it should go searching on the shelves of commissions' and auditor's reports. Brush some of that dust off and take positive action on the recommendations that are laid out in those reports.

Mr. Speaker, the Gass Commission provides a good example. The government had the Gass Commission do a study in an effort to fulfil its open-the-books promise. That commission made a number of key recommendations that should not be sitting idly on the shelf.

One of those recommendations dealt with the issue of selective responsibility which I mentioned earlier. This is one of the suggestions which I believe should be addressed before any more powers are given to the Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, the Gass Commission recommended that all dividends made by a Crown corporation or a joint venture should be paid directly into the Consolidated Fund which is now known as the General Revenue Fund. Mr. Speaker, today we currently have government allowing the CIC Crowns to pay their holding company. The Crown Investments Corporation, in concert with government, decides what amount it is going to pay to the government. Through this process, ministers are able to keep their distance but yet still cosy up to the Crowns when it's desirable to do so.

The greatest shortfall of this process is that the Assembly and the public are frozen out of the process. What results, Mr. Speaker, is much like what we saw earlier this year. We have a government out on the road telling us that they must cut all sorts of programs, while Crown corporations make hundreds of millions in dividends. The government has the Crowns pay a mere 50 million in dividends, while it threatens all our rural communities with cuts. This, Mr. Speaker, is all done without any debate in the legislature.

If all these dividends had to be paid into the General Revenue Fund, we could have a debate in this House as to whether the Crowns should get a couple hundred million while our schools, health care, and roads only receive 50 million, which works out to be a much smaller share of total Crown dividends.

I fear, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite don't want a debate. They don't want to subject more spending to the

legislative budget process where it rightfully belongs. They just want to go on spending money from the Crowns, money that belongs to the public, as though it were some private slush fund. They don't think that public debates on how much Crowns should get versus how much our rural health districts and our universities should get would be worthwhile.

Once again, it goes to show that the private school kids over there on the government benches think they know better. Well the truth is, Mr. Speaker, they don't. They might know a lot about evading accountability, but they don't know what's best for Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite, and to the minister, if you want these powers you first have to demonstrate that you will be using them wisely. Try and show that you can do this by immediately implementing the Gass Commission's recommendation and bring Crown revenues back into the fold. By doing so, you will end the behind-the-doors approach . . .

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

Mr. Langford: — To ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I got 28 students from East Central School, just east of P.A. (Prince Albert). They've driven here I'd say for probably a four-hour trip and I wish them a good journey back, a safe trip. I will be meeting with them for drinks and photos and questions. These students are accompanied by the teacher, Mr. Phaneuf, accompanied by chairperson Mrs. Chandler, Mrs. Byrne, Mrs. Jinjoe, and Mrs. Buckingham.

I'd like to ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce two very special people to me and to my constituents, Mary and Chester Rustad, from Rose Valley. Thank you for stopping in to see.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 44 (continued)

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, it's

time to bring Crown revenues back into the fold. By doing so you will end the behind-the-doors approach where our Crown profits end up building cable in Chicago and England, instead of making jobs in Saskatchewan. By doing so you will end the destructive, shameful practice of selective responsibility now practised by cabinet ministers when it comes to the Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, before the government gets more powers for the Crowns, they should also act on a few more recommendations found in the Gass Commission. That commission recommended that a process should be laid out whereby significant transactions within the Crowns are reported soon after they take place. The government suggested it was committed to doing this but their record makes one wonder.

Mr. Speaker, these very same people who want more powers today also are the same people who can't seem to get it together to inform taxpayers about significant transactions. The Gass Commission suggested that the people of this province deserved an overview about major transactions which would include a number of useful pieces of information. They suggested that it should include an outline of the specific purposes of the transaction and how they were to be managed. They also proposed mandatory risk assessments while also calling for a clear outline of how the public and government would be regularly informed about progress of any project or investment. That, Mr. Speaker, is the ideal, and I think that that is worth pursuing.

Effort should be spent pursuing ideals like this, Mr. Speaker, but instead this government wastes its efforts trying to get more powers for Crown corporations without any regard for accountability. The lack of regard they're showing today is a continuation of their decision to brush off recommendations like that to inform the public of significant transactions. In the last year, for example, they bought 94 per cent of HARO. The minister said nothing of this transaction, but only left the CIC press officer to say a few brief words to the public.

Last year this government also purchased several cable franchises in the United Kingdom, in several major transactions. In fact they did it during the election. The only word we heard of it was in a news release announcing the sale of the new cable franchises. Those franchises involved obligations ranging up to \$50 million by the end of the century. Somehow, Mr. Speaker, they were not important or significant enough to warrant providing the information that the Gass Commission suggested should be offered to the public.

(1530)

Mr. Speaker, the minister should be ashamed of this record. He should be ashamed to come before this House and ask for more when they can't even handle what they've got. They want more power when they don't even take the time to ensure that the Crowns provide the CIC board, which is made up of cabinet ministers, with the information they need to make proper decisions.

Mr. Speaker, aside from that shameful display, there are a number of other key improvements to the accountability system that should be made before any other powers are granted.

Unfortunately, like the others, they remain sitting on the shelf gathering dust.

Included among other major recommendations of the Gass Commission, which was not acted upon, is a call to ensure that public policy initiatives like rural bus transportation are clearly dealt with. The commissioners wanted the government to decide to either continue cross-subsidization or start directly funding such public policy initiatives by subsidy to the corporation from the General Revenue Fund.

The argument behind the latter is simple. If some corporate activities aren't intended to make profit but are supposed to deliver some desirable social service, then the taxpayer should consider funding those services instead of continuing the charade of straddling a corporation with an impossible mandate.

The commission also suggested that rules be clarified as to how much money can be committed to a project or program before legislative approval is required. Just last year the government committed another \$150 million through the Crown Investments Corporation to HARO Financial, who then directed it to Crown Life without any debate in this legislature. Add to that the \$37 million commitment to a casino, also without any debate.

While all this goes on, nurses are laid off and health facilities continue to close in many areas across rural and urban Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, if the government feels these are worthwhile activities, then they should not be afraid to put them to the test of debate in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite show such little regard for accountability but yet the minister and the members opposite are here today asking for more and saying, trust me, we'll handle the new responsibilities in the Bill to amend The Crown Corporations Act just fine. I will give the members opposite credit for being so boldfaced. Any member who can defend such an indefensible position must have a lot of gumption to keep on doing this.

Mr. Speaker, the Gass Commission also recommended that a clear policy be laid out with respect to the circumstances that Crown corporations should be able to retain their surpluses. It also suggested that a process be decided to sort out how Crowns could recover their losses from future income.

No action has been taken on this, but yet it appears this government puts grabbing more powers ahead of acting responsibly. The commission also wanted the government to clearly lay out mandates for each Crown and outline the reasons and the extent to which the government should have interfered in the Crowns. The Gass Commission also asked government to consider no longer having its ministers serve as Chairs or Vice-Chairs on the boards of the various Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, instead of acting on these matters, the government decided to ignore the problems plaguing our system of accountability. It felt that getting Don Ching a job or giving Jack Messer a new car or a raise were far more pressing concerns facing our Crown sector.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, these things are not important. The most important thing in the operation of our Crown corporations is to ensure they serve a clearly defined purpose that will better the lives of the taxpayers in this province, who own them.

Secondly, the residents of this province should be able to hold the government accountable for how it runs these Crowns through this House and its committees. The opposition, Mr. Speaker, should have access to the information that it needs. The Crowns should not be able to determine what sort of information they give us. More efforts should be made to provide pre-decision controls. Some of these improvements could come by implementing suggestions from the auditor and the Gass Commission, but should by no means stop there. These are common sense suggestions and solutions.

I ask the members opposite to consider the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote: "Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes." Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan do have a great deal of common sense and common genius, and they deserve better.

In this Bill before the House today, this government wants to continue to erode the already battered system of public accountability for our Crown corporations. They want to give the Crowns more freedom, but they offer no suggestions as to how to improve the accountability, to ensure that the powers they ask for will be well used and properly monitored.

Mr. Speaker, we have an out-dated system of accountability that had its flaws to begin with. Those flaws became more pronounced over the years as the nature of the Crown sector changed. This system needs to be modernized to head off potential abuse. The members opposite should focus their efforts in this direction, take action on some of the recommendations to improve the system that have come forward in various reports and commissions.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, before I give up the floor to others in the opposition benches, I must add that I will not be supporting this Bill. No additional powers like those laid out in the Bill to amend The Crown Corporation Act should be granted until this government takes action toward improving the system by which we, as taxpayers, can hold our Crown corporations accountable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my learned colleague from Thunder Creek has already spoken at great lengths on this Bill . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I thank the members opposite for their attention, Mr. Speaker. And I believe he brought up some very valid points. I can only hope the members opposite were paying attention, and that they are willing to reconsider this self-serving piece of legislation.

But, Mr. Speaker, although I think we have made our point of view clear, I think that there is even more to be said about this Bill. We strongly believe that any Bill that proposes giving even greater power to Crown corporations must be thoroughly explored. It is because of this that I would like to speak briefly to the Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, Fred Van Parys and Don Ching must be overcome with joy. You see, I have to mention both of them since both of them are pulling in \$167,000 in salary as president of SaskTel. If the government pushes Bill 44 through, the Crowns will have seen even less accountability to the taxpayers of this province. Is this fair?

Do the members opposite think that the public wants Crowns like SaskTel to invest their money at random without being accountable to the people of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak for the large majority of people when I say no, that's not what they want.

Mr. Speaker, before this government even considers giving SaskTel more power, they should look at the problems that the company has already had. For example, has this government already forgotten the re-engineering fiasco at SaskTel in 1993? Mr. Speaker, in this completely disastrous approach to restructuring, SaskTel pushed employees to the absolute limits. The 11 middle management participants involved in the process were removed from the office, daily communication, and their co-workers, and worked long hours in a high-pressure environment on tasks that served no purpose.

Mr. Speaker, this devastating decision by SaskTel is still warranting a place in the press. Just last week the *Financial Post* talked specifically about the failure of SaskTel's re-engineering. The article said:

In the end, miscommunication, mistrust, and mistakes undermined the effort, and after several years and an investment of several million dollars, the re-engineering was quietly wound down.

The loss of time, money, and initiative was wasteful enough, but these represent only a fraction of the cost. The heavy-handedness, particularly of the consultants, broke the framework of trust between management and labour that is a prerequisite for the enduring change.

This does not paint a pretty picture for SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. And of course we've heard rumours lately that there's been a power struggle between Don Ching and Mark Stobbe which has seen Stobbe get fired. In fact in Dale Eisler's commentary in yesterday's *Leader-Post*, he outlines some of the power struggles between this government and SaskTel. He says:

The word from some at SaskTel was that Stobbe's loyalties rested more with the government than with SaskTel. That is nothing but code language for saying Stobbe was too closely aligned to Aldridge, which is why Ching wanted a change. Whatever the case, expect Stobbe to resurface at a senior position somewhere within government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this sounds like a lot of poorly hidden political gains. It shows that there are power struggles going on between SaskTel and the government. So why does the government want to give more power to the Crown corporations? As the member from Thunder Creek suggested, it must be because they want to avoid accountability for any poor choices that are made.

Maybe by passing Bill 44 they think they will erect a legal shield so they can pass responsibility off to someone else. We know they have done that with municipalities, school boards, and district health boards, so it would come as no surprise if this were their motive. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it would almost come as more of a surprise if this wasn't their motive.

Mr. Speaker, they want to play with the taxpayers' money without telling these taxpayers what they are doing. A classic case in point of this is the LCL (Leicester Communications Limited) cable deal that this government made last year. This government purchased cable franchises in the United Kingdom without letting Saskatchewan people know. In fact most people had no idea that the purchase had been made until the government talked about selling it.

Mr. Speaker, those franchises could have cost the people of this province up to \$50 million. Is this what we can look forward to if this Bill goes through — more huge spending sprees with no accountability? If so, Mr. Speaker, we will protest loudly.

Mr. Speaker, at this stage of the game there is little point on going on over the details of Bill 44. My colleague, the member from Thunder Creek, gave an excellent overview of why this Bill is not good for the people of Saskatchewan. And having heard about the disasters in a Crown corporation like SaskTel, I can't see how this Bill could possibly produce anything positive.

People want more accountability from this government, particularly when it comes to tax dollars. And the members opposite must admit this Bill has the completely opposite effect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — With leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure, on behalf of the Minister of Labour, the member from North Battleford, to introduce to you and through you a group of students, 12 grade 7 students, from St. Joseph School in the city of North Battleford, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Teachers accompanying are Denis Carignan and Rhonda Patterson. The Minister of Labour is out at a meeting in Kenosee this afternoon, so I'm pleased to introduce these folks. I'll be meeting with them in a few minutes, I believe, to answer any questions they might have. And I would ask all members of this Assembly to warmly welcome them to the Chamber.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1545)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 88

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 88 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I have already spoken about this Bill and have expressed how deeply disappointed we are that the government would bring forward such a thoughtless piece of legislation. Well my opinion is no different now after I've had time to examine it in greater detail. Therefore, before Bill 88 is passed to the Committee of the Whole, I would like to make a few additional comments.

Mr. Speaker, this government has continued to disregard rural Saskatchewan. Time and time again we have come up with concrete examples to show how contemptuous this government is when it comes to rural communities. I'm sure the members opposite would like to pass it off as a political game. They would like to think we are saying these things simply because we are in opposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we say these things because they are true. And when we say them . . . because we see firsthand how rural Saskatchewan is suffering because this government has turned its back on the unique lifestyle of rural residents. Every day we talk to constituents who are fed up with this government's actions. Hospitals are closing. Jobs are being lost. Their communities are dying, and this government doesn't care.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the members opposite would like to think, we are not the only ones who have noticed the government's vicious cuts. The Melville *Advance* published a letter that was sent to the Justice minister by the mayor of Melville condemning the closure of the Melville court-house.

The letter says, and I quote:

Dear Sir:

I write this letter with regret and anger. Your cold, faxed letter of March 28, 1996, is indicative of your style of government. You wrote us March 8, 1996, saying no final decision has been made with respect to Melville. Clearly that was intentionally misleading or naïvely so. The statistics do not justify your government's action. I reject the lack of consultation, this cold-blooded approach and pure disregard for our community. The community for no reason is being battered by your government.

We have been quiet as long as we can. We respect the government's right to make decisions for the good of the general public, but here we feel that has not occurred. Why would you mislead us? Why would you not have the courtesy to meet with us to hear our proposals?

For example, why must the consolidation be to Yorkton? We have the facilities of equivalent nature to Yorkton. Our statistics justified our existence. Political expediency is not

the same as doing the right thing. Was consideration given to closing Yorkton's Court of Queen's Bench office and consolidating to Melville?

I have lost respect for your government. My council requests that a meeting be held with yourself, the Premier, and other government officials to discuss reversing this decision. As well, the future of our Crop Insurance office, Renewable Resources office, and the movement of other government services from our community to other communities must be discussed.

We fear it is the intention of your government to seek retribution from us because we do not have a government MLA, and we cannot stand idly by while you try to destroy our community. We will become the only city in this province to lose a Queen's Bench office. Our statistics for trials show we are ahead of every community of a comparable size. Does closing this office make better use of government resources? Let people judge your actions by the standards you establish. Yours truly, Michael Fisher, mayor.

Mr. Speaker, this letter is coming from the mayor, not from the opposition parties. So obviously the issue here is not whether we are playing a political game or not. The issue is that people are frustrated and angry with this government, and they want a change.

Mr. Speaker, is that . . . The Justice minister never even replied to the letter. An editorial in the May 15 edition of the Melville *Advance* said, quote:

We find it inexcusable and unacceptable that government cannot at least extend our city the courtesy of a reply to the letter to Justice minister John Nilson written by Mike Fisher, March 29.

The editorial goes on to say:

It's little wonder an almost palpable cloud of pessimism hangs over our community. Unfortunately, Nilson isn't the only one guilty of silence and ignoring the legitimate concerns of city officials. Premier Roy Romanow was sent a letter, also dated March 29, in which a meeting with him and the appropriate ministers to discuss Melville's future has been requested. Again there's been no response. The silence has been deafening.

The silence has been deafening, Mr. Speaker. This is what the people in communities are saying about this government. They think the government has long since stopped listening to their concerns, and they are getting sick and tired of it. All they want is someone who will listen to them and who will look out for their best interests. Instead they get a Bill like No. 88, which essentially lets the government close down court-houses with a greater ease. Already Melville and Kerrobert have hit the chopping block, which has had a significant impact on these communities.

Mr. Speaker, we can't help but wonder how many more are slated for closure across this province. We already know that

the government is anything but open about their plans when it comes to closures, whether it is Crop Insurance offices, highway depots, or court-houses. They keep their plans closely guarded and then spring it on everyone involved. I can't understand how they think this strategy fits into their promise to have an open and accountable government.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite may not realize how serious the loss of a court-house can be to a small town. For one thing, like any business, a closure means job loss, and job loss means that some people may be forced to leave the community. Every time a family leaves a community the impact has a domino effect.

Because this government bases education funding on the number of students, the loss of students can mean a loss of programs or resources. And of course the other businesses in the community suffer as well. They are losing potential customers, and this hurts their profits. If they are forced to close and leave town, the cycle goes on. So before the members opposite defend legislation like Bill No. 88, they should take a good hard look at what the long-term results may be.

Mr. Speaker, I see no point in continuing to speak on this Bill. The people of Saskatchewan will be better served if we can discuss it rationally and seriously 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.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 55 — An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Pension Act

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

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Bill Jones, the deputy minister of Finance. Behind Bill is Bill Van Sickle, executive director of administration. And on my right is Brian Smith, the executive director of the Public Employees Benefits Agency.

Clause 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And also I'd like to welcome the minister's officials here this afternoon.

With respect to Bill 55, under clause 3, Madam Minister, clause 3 proposes to replace section 6(3) of the Act with new wording. And as I understand it, section 6(3) of the Act deals with the situation of a municipal employer that decides to participate in the municipal employees pension commission but does not begin making contributions immediately. In this situation, as I understand it, the municipality would make a lump sum contribution to the commission.

Now the existing section 6(3) sets out a clear formula for calculating that sum. Under that section, the sum was calculated as being the greater of either an actuarially determined amount

or two times the amount that would have been contributed by the employees during the relevant period.

I understand, Madam Minister, that the Bill would replace that method with the following formula:

... (an) amount, determined by the commission in accordance with generally accepted actuarial principles, that the commission requires for the purpose of funding any allowances that have accrued to the employees of the employer during the period of participation . . .

Madam Minister, the difficulty that I see with this new formula is it doesn't include any fall-back element in case the actuarial calculations prove to be inadequate.

So what are the financial consequences of having no fall-back formula and becoming totally dependent on actuarial calculations?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, what happens is municipal employers have to be in the plan. They have no choice but to be in the plan. Often they're not aware of that so they don't contribute initially to the employees' pension. Then they become aware of the fact they have to be in the plan and then there is this clause stipulating how they have to participate.

Really what this is saying is that they have to contribute the actuarial value of participation in the plan. And that's a fair and reasonable way of doing it.

I should point out all of the changes. This is not a government-run plan. All we do is administer the plan for the municipal sector. They're the ones who decide on the changes. They're the ones who do that sort of analysis. So the changes in this Act are either of that kind or they're changes required because of compliance with the Income Tax Act.

(1600)

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, though, in this respect, what convinces you though that the lack of any fall-back formula will not place the fund in any sort of danger of not having sufficient reserves. We don't want to see anything happen to the municipal employees pension commission, I mean, if there's no fall-back formula any more. Could you please comment?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, I don't see that there's any fall back in the existing situation. An actuary looks at the plan and says, okay this is how much you owe to the plan to ensure that the plan can provide for the benefits.

But again, what I'm saying to the member opposite is unless we want to say to the federal government that we don't want to comply with the Income Tax Act, or we want to say to the municipal employees, even though this is your plan, you own it, it's your money, all we're doing is administering it for you, but we know better than you how you should be running this and therefore we're going to use power we don't have to block changes that you desire to make or that the Income Tax Act

requires, the government is not in a position to do anything unless, as I say, they want to, say, forget the Income Tax Act or forget what the employees themselves have decided they want to do.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to the explanatory notes and what we've heard here. The reason for the change is to bring the legislation in line with the requirements of section 147.22 of the Income Tax Act of Canada. These notes explain that the Income Tax Act does not allow employers to match contributions based on the salaries of members.

And that may be the case, but if the federal legislation will not allow a formula based strictly upon employee contributions, then we have to ask a question: is it adequate to simply delegate the entire process to the commission or its actuaries? Shouldn't there be some other formula to fall back on in the event that they may be proved wrong?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, no I don't believe so.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to clause 4, subsection 14(3), it's a change, one that has a potentially dramatic financial consequence for the municipal employees' pension plan.

My questions would be several, but one would be, what will be the financial consequences upon the municipal employees' pension plan of increasing the permitted length of breaks in service from six months up to two years?

And another would be what financial guarantees are there going to be in the plan to make sure that it doesn't run out of money as a result of such breaks in service?

And another question would be would it be appropriate to provide for some special contributions in this regard?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, the extending of the leave requirement costs very little to the plan because you're not accruing any benefits when you're on leave. It just allows you to be on leave for a longer period of time. So the cost would be infinitesimal.

The other thing is The Pension Benefits Act ensures that plans like this have to have certain requirements to guarantee their solvency.

Mr. Aldridge: — Also with respect to clause 4, should there be some graduated scale for some small, reasonable contributions to be made by the employee who would take more than two years off?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, everyone pays the same contribution. The length of time they're away doesn't affect the plan or its solvency.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, I realize your department's provided us with explanatory notes; and my next comments and questions are with respect to clause 5, but your notes argue that

the changes in clause 5 are necessary in order to fully comply with the, I'm told, section 8506(4)(a) of the income tax regulations.

Now for my part, Madam Minister, I'll accept this explanation. But there surely must be something that we could do with the interest that's more creative than merely pretending it doesn't exist with respect to this particular part of the income tax regulations.

So I have a few questions. Would it not be possible for the interest on contributions in excess of the limits to be credited to the individual employee's own entitlement account with the plan?

Another question would be where does the minister plan to put the interest on contributions in excess of the permitted limits? And just another question would be where is the interest going.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Because of The Income Tax Act, we have to correct the legislation to ensure that interest is not paid out. But the chances of this happening are very, very, very slim because the plan is never likely to be in a surplus position.

Mr. Aldridge: — I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wasn't able to hear the minister's response there just now. If you wouldn't mind, Madam Minister, just to repeat it.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the answer is that in order to comply with The Income Tax Act, you have to say that you cannot pay any surplus that is not required for the solvency of the plan to the members with interest. But it's not a significant change because the likelihood of that ever happening is very, very slim. It has never occurred and we don't anticipate it ever occurring.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to clause 6 section 17(1.1), again I realize the explanatory notes provided by your department tell the reader that you've apparently received a legal opinion telling you that section 147.22 of the Income Tax Act no longer allows employers to match contributions based on the salary of members, and so in this case, a change is necessary.

Could you just respond as far as who provided that legal opinion? And can you elaborate on the opinion and explain why dollar-for-dollar contributions on the employers would actually run afoul of the Income Tax Act?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, Revenue Canada was the one that told us specifically that we had to make that change.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, if we are required by federal legislation to move away from old, tried and true dollar-for-dollar formulas, I think we'd owe it to our municipal employees to enact a formula that is at least sound financially as was the old formula. Have you considered any formulas other than simply delegating the entire process to actuaries?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, Revenue Canada said this has been removed from the legislation. They didn't say that the commission cannot

continue to do dollar for dollar. The commission intends to continue to do dollar for dollar. It just can't be specified in the legislation.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, I thought this was somewhere where we could combine as members on opposite sides of the House here and perhaps we could have established some made-in-Saskatchewan formula here to protect our municipal workers.

But I'll go on to clause 7, section 21(1), the next major change proposed by the Bill being found in clause 7. It changes section 21(1) of the Act which covers payments to employees who pass away after their pension is vested but before becoming entitled to receive an allowance and who've not left a named beneficiary.

Under the existing rule, as I understand it, the pension plan would pay to the estate an amount that would be . . . for one example, twice the employee's contribution to the plan plus the amount in the employee additional contribution account plus the employee's annuity account plus the employee's annuity surplus account, and plus the employer's additional contribution account, and finally, the amount in the employer annuity account.

Under the Bill, that entitlement of the estate will be altered and the new entitlement, as I understand it, is to be the total of three things here. One is the commuted value of the employee's allowance calculated as if the employee's date of death were the employee's date of termination. And plus the amount by which the employee's contributions plus interest exceed 50 per cent of the amount mentioned in sub-clause (1), and the last five items in the old formula.

So, Madam Minister, how is the commuted value, how is it to be calculated, if you could?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The commuted value is computed with the help of an actuary, and it's defined in the Act, page 1 of the interpretation part of the legislation.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to clause 7 (21)(1), the old formula was replaced by something called commuted value based on the assumption that the employee was terminated at the time of his death. And added to that is another value, and that other value is the amount by which the employees own contribution to the pension plus the interest earned on those contributions are greater than the commuted value of the pension.

So in other words, if the employers contribution plus interest is greater than 50 per cent of the total commuted value, then that excess margin is added onto the entitlement. So I'd have just a few questions with respect to this.

Madam Minister, is the family of the deceased municipal employee going to get more or less than before because of this; and does the change that you propose in your Bill promote good investment practices by those who are in charge of administering the plan?

And another question is what mechanisms are going to be put into place in order to make sure that the commuted value is going to be a fair one?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, people will get less, probably, because again it's Revenue Canada that has said the practice of the past was too rich. And again to ensure that that the pension plan is solvent, the actuary will . . . an actuarial report will ensure that that occurs.

(1615)

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, also with respect to clause 7, the new provision referring to the death benefit calls for a payment of a commuted value, then it goes on to add a specific small additional amount to that entitlement. And I'm referring to the portion of the employees contribution plus interest that is in excess of over 50 per cent of the commuted value.

And it sounds great at the first glance but the worries are that the size of the employees contribution plus interest, especially if it's a large amount, will be used by those in charge who alter the commuted value in such a way to keep our payment to a minimum.

So, just a final two questions here with respect to this Bill. What mechanisms would be put in place to calculate the commuted value of the death benefit and how those rules will be applied?

And another question: what assurances can you provide that the rules for determining a commuted value will not be used so as to minimize entitlements for the families of deceased municipal employees?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I think the main guarantee of fairness is that the commission has employees on the commission. So the employees' goal will not be to minimize the benefits to their members. The employees' goal on the commission will be to ensure that it's fair.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 65 — An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act

Clause 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, the Act will basically make a number of positive amendments. It straightens out the rules upon marriage break-up while it also ensures that those on disability benefits as well as their employers continue to contribute to pension plans while the employee receives those benefits.

In addition with the other pension-related Bills that we have before the House, this particular Bill will separate much of the legislation which deals with defined contribution pensions from

those which deal with defined benefit pensions.

Now this piece of legislation primarily deals with defined benefit pensions, and that leads me to the following question. If you're willing to commit the time and effort to refinements like these, why are you not willing to commit yourself to the modest amount of time and effort it would take to appoint a committee to examine the unfunded liabilities in these defined plans as well as some of the other pension issues?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, this is a minor change to a piece of legislation. If we want to get into that other issue, we could get into it, and we could be here for a period of time.

But this is something to ensure that this is a fairer piece of legislation when it comes to people who unfortunately have a marriage breakdown.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to the Bill, I was curious as to why the government feels the need to change the meaning of the term employee. Clause 3 of the Bill amends section 2(c). The explanatory notes that your department kindly provided to the Bill give one the impression that this change of meaning is necessary to provide some sort of tie between this Bill and the public employees superannuation plan which is being continued under Bill 64 as the public employees pension Act.

What I'm curious about is why a tie is necessary here when most of the provisions dealing with that latter-defined contribution plan were removed and placed in their own piece of legislation?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — This is . . . (inaudible) . . . for the purposes of early retirement programs.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to clause 4 in the Bill, there are some new provisions with respect to disability benefits. Could you tell us what groups or persons in the province were consulted with regard to those changes? And secondly, could you tell us whether any of those groups approached you or your department to ask that these changes be made?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we talked to all of the major employers involved in the plan and also to their bargaining agents.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, in clause 6 of the Bill there's also amendments which will impact upon children of an employee who dies prior to superannuating. The new provision states that the maximum total allowable payable to the children of such an employee would be one-quarter of the allowance to which the employee would have been entitled if the employee would have been superannuated on the date of his or her death.

This is a change from the previous provision, which said that the maximum for all children was to be 250 per cent of the allowance to which each child is entitled, which in turn was to be divided equally amongst the children. The department's explanation of this change is that it clarifies terminology which

is obviously confusing. And I'd like to ask, however, if this change in terminology in any way will reduce amounts which surviving children would receive.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, no, it won't.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Madam Minister, this Bill makes particular reference to commuted value in clause 3(a); it's just one of those references, while clause 11 is another one. And while it uses this term, it makes no reference as to exactly how the benefits will be calculated beyond saying that they must be in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

And I wonder if the minister could provide an explanation of the method by which those benefits would be calculated. And secondly, I wonder if she could provide an explanation of why it's not made more clear within the Bill itself.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The boards will make the criteria more specific. And generally accepted accounting principles and actuarial soundness are in fact quite specific in terms of what they mean as general framework, and then the boards will decide the specifics.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, moving along . . . With respect to marriage breakdown, there are provisions in the Bill which deal with objections. In the event that a couple settles a dispute between themselves of their own volition or in a court, there's no problem. This Bill, however, provides an opportunity to object to the splitting of the pension asset at the time of the agreement. And that's a positive change.

There however is a problem, and I might have mentioned it before with respect to another Bill. But the problem is that one of the parties has an objection to . . . the board involved is not obliged to follow any court order regarding a settlement between a separated couple.

It says in the Bill that in this situation the board may apply to the Court of Queen's Bench for direction. And I'd say the board should be required to apply to the court for directions. In lieu of that, it should be at least be forced to hold back on complying with the court order until they've received a certificate signed by the registrar of the court noting that the time for appeal has passed and that no appeal has been filed.

And I wonder if the minister could just offer a comment on why the board, in this, is placed in a situation where it isn't required to apply for direction from the court or abide by a court order. That would just be my final question, asking for comment on this particular Bill.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. We still don't understand exactly that question that you're asking. Could you explain that again or clarify that?

Mr. Aldridge: — I think what is happening here with respect to the Bill is you're making the board have to proceed . . . placing them in a situation where they're not getting any court ordered direction, I guess, is what I'm getting at with respect to this — if you just could make some comment in that regard.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, if I understand his question correctly, the answer is the board cannot act without some direction from the court. That is, they cannot just decide to split assets; they have to get direction from the court in order to do that.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I have no other questions with respect to this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 13 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 64 — An Act respecting Pensions for Public Employees

Clause 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, in clause 3 of this Bill, you outline the mechanics of the plan, and at the outset we find that the existing body . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Are you able to hear?

At the outset we find that the existing body, the Supervisory Board of the Public Employees (Government Contributory) Superannuation Plan will continue, but it will be referred to as the Public Employees Pension Board. The Bill also proposes leaving the board composition virtually the same, namely a chairman, three members representing participating employers, and three members representing employees — and all of which you appoint.

So, Madam Minister, have you given any consideration to allowing any of the appointees to this board to be chosen by either the employees' organizations or the employers?

(1630)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, although we have the legal power to make the appointments, in fact the members are chosen by the employees; we just accept their choices and appoint them on their advice.

Mr. Aldridge: — With respect to clause 5, Madam Minister, among the powers of the board, there appears to be some duplication. In subclause 5(a), the Bill appears to seek the authority to delegate a large portion of the powers and responsibilities of the board under a contract or a series of contracts, now that being in, as I say, subclause 5(a). Yet in subclause 5(b), the Bill appears to authorize the board to hire its own staff.

So, Madam Minister, is it presently the intention of the government to have the board contract out its work using subclause 5(a), or is it presently the intention of the government to have the board hire its own staff as defined in the latter clause, subclause 5(b).

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Neither one. We assume that the Department of Finance will continue to do the administration.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, then could you provide us with an explanation for that then please.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — You just have to give people freedom of choice. But we don't anticipate contracting out to be the result.

Mr. Aldridge: — Along with that freedom of choice then, Madam Minister, I assume that there is a consultation with others, and if there is some indication that they wish to do so, they could. If you would just comment.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — No, there's no desire to change. It's just giving them the freedom to change if they did desire to do so.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to clause 5(e), the proposed powers of the board as set out in that clause include the means to, and I'll quote:

enter into any agreement, engage the services of or retain any technical, professional or other adviser, specialist or consultant or do any other things that the board considers necessary for the purposes of managing, investing or disposing of all or any part of the assets of the fund;

So, Madam Minister, how will this power to engage the services of specialists be different than the powers to either retain people on contract or hire people on staff? And in theory, could the provision put the entire pension fund into the hands of a single investment professional?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The board would not be wise to do that, and there would be no reason why they would do that. But there's no change here relative to what the situation is today.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, with respect to clause 5(g), and this is a clause giving the board the power to establish policies for the investment of the assets of the fund and for the calculation and allocation of revenues accruing to the fund.

Madam Minister, do you accept that, since it's the minister who appoints all seven members of the board, and it is in fact the government who will have power to establish policies for the investment of the assets of the fund, as well as develop policies for the calculation and allocation of the fund, revenues accruing to the fund.

Another question I have, what policies does the minister and the government intend to establish for the investment of the assets of this fund? And will the minister affirm that the government will definitely not be tying the hands of the board by insisting that they restrict their investments in instances, for example, they're referred to as ethical investments and maybe you might just outline what that in particular means.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The government since 1977 has never tried to impose anything; there's no interest in changing that from here on either, so we have no desire to interfere in the activities of the board.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, also in respect to clause 6,

section 6, my next question will deal with that.

And as I read the clause it appears to give the board absolute and final authority to determine, and again I would quote here:

... any question as to the application, interpretation or intent of a provision of this Act or of the regulations, (and furthermore the clause states that) ... the decision of the board is final.

So, Madam Minister, in the old section found at section 40 of The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act it's somewhat different. And in my view it was less restrictive. It read, and again I'll quote here:

If any question arises as to the application, interpretation or intention of a provision of the plan or of the regulation made under section 47, it shall be determined by the board and decision of the board shall be final.

Madam Minister, you're proposing to expand the area of jurisdiction of the board to include absolute power, with no right of appeal from what used to be called the plan, to the entire Act.

And I'm sure you'll agree it's unusual to allow an appointed body to interpret its own legislative mandate. Interpretation of a legislation usually is performed by the courts. The courts are one of the important pillars of government and one of their jobs is to interpret legislation, making sure that the bodies which have been given power by the legislation would do three things. One would be, obey the directions in the legislation. Next would be, perform their functions in a fair and reasonable manner. And thirdly, that they don't exceed their jurisdiction.

So, Madam Minister, why do you want to deviate from those principles in this case by allowing the Public Employees Pension Board the exclusive power to interpret this legislation without any recourse to the courts?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — We believe they already have that under the current legislation and this is just a continuation of that.

Mr. Aldridge: — But, Madam Minister, I believe there is a change here and it's not going to allow any affected parties a forum for review of your chosen board's decision. So I think that it's not quite fair to be suggesting that there is no change with respect to this. So if you would just make some further comment.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I think the key thing is that the board members are actually members chosen by the members of the plan themselves, so that they have the capacity to approach their own board member and revisit decisions.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, other pension plans though, they're governed by legislation which includes recourse to courts. Like, for example, The Pension Benefits Act, 1992 includes provisions for applications to the court for various purposes. So why should the provincial employees' pension plan in this case be any different?

I don't want to belabour this for any longer. This will be my final question to you with respect to Bill 64 today.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we do not believe this is different and we do not believe that there is an issue here. There has never been an issue raised with respect to this. There's never been a problem. So in a sense we don't see anything broke that needs to be fixed here.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 30 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 63 — An Act respecting the Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair, and welcome, Madam Minister, and to your officials. And I'm delighted to talk about this exciting Bill.

To begin with, I'd like to ask a question regarding interpretive aspects of this Bill. The Bill before us will involve a number of pension plans that'll be designated according to the regulations. Can the minister explain which pension plans will be designated, and why those particular plans will be designated?

(1645)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The only ones we've determined to date are the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and the public employees.

Ms. Draude: — Does this mean that all provincially supported, defined contribution plans or just some of them?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Right now, to the member opposite, it's just some.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Under the list of powers given to the board, I see the board will be given the power to enter into any contractual service with respect to the activities of the board, and the board may delegate any of its powers to a contractor. I wonder if the minister could explain what sort of contracting services are being contemplated under provision clause 3(2)(a)?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, this is the same as the previous Bill. It's just permissive. It allows this to occur. It doesn't mean that there's any intention for any contracting out to occur, and we don't anticipate any occurring.

Ms. Draude: — Could the minister explain how the provisions I spoke of in the previous questions differ from the provisional clause found in 3(2)(e)? If you read their clause, it talks about hiring technical professionals, advisers, consultants, or other specialists. I would like to know why this Bill contains these

two different references, and why there's not simply just one of them?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, one part of the Bill talks about the assets of the fund and what you can do with respect to the assets. The other part talks about the administration of the fund. So they're quite separate issues.

Ms. Draude: — I'm concerned about these references . . . is that there appears to be no limit on either one of them. And that could be a problem. What we could have is a board giving some of its authority to possibly just one consultant.

I'd like to ask the minister why these powers are so broad and if she's not concerned that this may place pensioners in a certain degree of risk.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — This is consistent with the previous legislation. There's no difference in terms of the powers. I think the other thing you have to have is some level of confidence that the board is not about to do anything foolish because its members will not allow it to do anything that is unwise.

Ms. Draude: — With respect to the powers of the board, I see the board will have the power to charge a fee for any service it provides. I would like to know if the minister could list the sort of fees that the board will likely be imposing under this provision.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, there will not be any monthly fees charged to members. The only thing that this allows to occur is — again, it's permissive — fees to cover any administrative costs that should be charged back to the fund.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, in this Bill there is a clause which will make the decisions of the board final. When I read that provision it concerns me, because the board has the final say to the application, interpretation, and the intent of this Bill and its regulations. It's fairly sweeping.

Could the minister explain why such a sweeping provision is in this legislation? And can she assure us that this will not usurp anyone's common law rights to seek legal remedy, particularly for something like error of law or jurisdiction.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, this is consistent with what is in other plans and again there's no issue here. There's never been a problem so again you have to rely on the good judgement of the members of the plan and also the good judgement of the people who sit on the board who represent the members.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, under clause 6 can you firstly confirm to me that the concept of specialty funds is a new concept, and that the concept was not found in the old legislation under any other name.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, that's true.

Ms. Draude: — Can you give me a concrete example of how a

specialty fund would be different than the regular pool of assets in the fund?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, you may for example want to set up only a bond fund rather than merely a bond and equity fund.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, I see this Bill will allow for the creation of specialty funds for pensioners. The board will gain the power to designate which categories of pensioners and whose annuities will be paid out of any such specialty funds.

Could the minister provide an example of what sort of specialty funds will be set up and what classes of people she will expect to have interest in these monies invested in the funds.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Again what it is, Mr. Chairman, is it's facilitating. It's allowing these things to occur. There's no plan or design to create any particular specialty funds. It allows more flexibility.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, with regard to this specialty fund, could you provide the list of people or groups you feel that was consulted with and showed interest in having such a provision in this Bill?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — As with other legislation affecting pensions, we talked to all of the major players and their bargaining agents.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, and Madam Minister, we have here the possibility for several funds. Can the minister tell us how the board or the government intends to report on the performance of the funds to the person whose funds are at stake as well as to the Assembly?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, in the annual report back to the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Draude: — Will people receive orderly statements and will this Assembly receive financial statements that report the performance of each fund, or will it simply be the ineffective global or consolidation reports that we often see government give?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, these are annuities and the regular monthly payments are guaranteed. So what matters then is what is reported in the annual report back to the government.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, why have you decided to ask us to expressly declare by law that provisions of The Saskatchewan Insurance Act will not apply to the Public Employees Pension Board, the funds, and the annuities purchased from the fund?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, this is absolutely consistent with what is happening now and what has happened since these funds have been created.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, in his recent report the Provincial Auditor suggested that there is a definite problem with the administrative charges and costs of various pension funds.

One of the powers the board will acquire will include the ability to levy charges or fees for service. Imaginably, administration could or will be one of these fees. The auditor says that the cost of administrations vary significantly between pension plans. In this Bill we have specialty funds set up and kept separate from other funds.

Could the minister explain what provisions or policies will be put in place to ensure administrative charges will not involve too great or unnecessary a variance from one fund to another?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, people will be allowed to buy the annuities elsewhere, so if the costs are too high they will obviously buy them elsewhere.

Ms. Draude: — While I have no problem with what I see the government has added when he's added the term "former spouse" essentially to categorize a certain number of people and their particular rights or privileges under this Bill, could the minister tell the committee why this term "former spouse" is not defined. I understand it is not defined under The Income Tax Act either. I think that if it's this government's intent to ensure that people's needs are addressed in the Bill, then the term used to describe them should have been properly defined.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I would think the term "former spouse" is pretty clear. I would ask the member opposite how she would define a former spouse.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I think that I have no other questions at this time and we'll proceed to the conclusion of this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 55 — An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Pension Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move the 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. 65 — An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act

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

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

Bill No. 64 — An Act respecting Pensions for Public Employees

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

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

Bill No. 63 — An Act respecting the Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund

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

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

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I ask leave, Mr. Speaker, to make a motion which I shall read for the benefit of the House. If given leave, I will move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone, the Deputy Premier:

That this Assembly, notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, do observe an evening sitting time on Wednesday, May 29, 1996, from 7 p.m. until 10:30 p.m.

The Speaker: — That motion is not in order. It has to be seconded by a member who is seated in his assigned seat.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I would ask for leave.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That this Assembly, notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, do observe an evening sitting time on Wednesday, May 29, 1996, from 7 p.m. until 10:30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock, this House will stand recessed, unless . . . Okay. This House stands recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Just before you make that comment, perhaps it might be of convenience to yourself — and I think some of the staff to the Assembly — if we actually went to Committee of the Whole. Why don't we invite the Clerk to call out the next order of business, and then it'll be some

convenience to yourself and the staff.

The Speaker: — The House will require leave to revert to the . . . prior to this Chair's ruling. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.