

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Plains Health Centre.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Langenburg, Rocanville, Moosomin, Saskatoon, Spy Hill, Gerald, and the city of Regina.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

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

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

And the signatures on the petition are from Fort Qu'Appelle, from Nokomis, and from Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by many concerned citizens from the communities right across southern Saskatchewan, starting at Mortlach, Brownlee, Mossbank, Central Butte, Eyebrow, Liberty, Penzance, Stalwart, Craik. There's some on here from Regina. And there's a number of them, Mr. Speaker, from the community of Regina Beach.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding 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.

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

All the signatures, Mr. Speaker, have come from the town of Nokomis.

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

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre closure. The prayer reads as follow, 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 such as Cabri, Swift Current, Mortlach, Gravelbourg, and a number from the city of Moose Jaw.

The names on the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Moosomin, Lafleche, Hodgeville, and other centres throughout the province. I so present.

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:

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

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

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 primarily from the community of Milestone, but also from Wilcox and the city of Regina. I so present.

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Moose Jaw. There's also a few from a few other communities, and I so present. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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:

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, on day no. 73, the 73rd time we've stood in this House presenting petitions on behalf of the people in south-west Saskatchewan in their efforts to save the Plains health care centre that in fact that government's willing to close. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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, many from Regina, in fact many from Regina Albert South constituency, Regina

Elphinstone, and Dewdney in particular, and of course Wilcox and some from Moose Jaw. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, seated in the east gallery, a group of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan that are opposing the construction of the Condie-Queen Elizabeth power line.

In the gallery — and I'd ask you to stand as I call your names, if you would, please — Mr. Darren Qualman from Dundurn, Mr. Jim Smith from Allan, and we have Mr. Linty Crawford from Kenaston. We have from Liberty, which is my home town, Mr. Don Wolff, who is a neighbouring farmer of mine and has been a neighbour for most of his life, being much older than I. We also have Mrs. Vi Fuchs from Dilke, as well as Mr. Joe Fuchs from Dilke as well.

And I'd ask all the Assembly to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, some guests who are visiting our province from Manitoba. They are 52 grade 3 to 6 students from Pierson, Manitoba. And they're seated in the west gallery.

Mr. Speaker, they're here with teachers Mavis Halls, John Casavant, and Jennifer Klassen, as well as 10 chaperons helping to make this trip possible. They're also accompanied by Orville and Eleanor Renwick.

I'll be meeting with this group at 10:30 in room 218 to share refreshments and any questions they might have of the proceedings that they witness today from the gallery. So I'd ask all members to be on their best behaviour and join with me to give them a warm welcome to this Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have some very special guests visiting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. There are 15 grade 7 students from Dene High School; La Loche is their home community and they're here for the morning.

I'd like to introduce a couple of their teachers, Christine Chuey — if I could get her to stand — and another teacher, Tammy Pow. And these two fine teachers have taken the time to plan this trip and bring 15 of these grade 7 students to visit the Assembly. And I did offer to buy them hamburgers and treats and drinks, but they are on a tough schedule. They're only going to be here for a couple . . . for half an hour so the offer

can't be made. But on behalf of the Assembly, and I ask that my colleagues join me in welcoming this grade 7, 15 students from grade 7. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the rest of my colleagues, a group from Delisle Elementary School; total of 38 people filling up your gallery along with Doreen's visitors. Sitting in the west gallery is the grade 5, with teachers Deborah Seib and Elaine Jarvis, along with 9 parents as chaperons. And I will be meeting with them in room 131 from 11 until 11:30 and I'd ask everyone here to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If all hon. members have completed introductions, I'd like to introduce to the Assembly some guests of the Speaker who are seated in the Speaker's gallery today. There are 50 grade 4 and 5 students from King George School in Moose Jaw in my constituency. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Ms. Jessica Roedeba and Ms. Marlene Hart, as well as chaperons Mrs. Dobrescu, Mrs. Couture, and Mr. Hill.

They will be following the proceedings in the Assembly here until 10:30, at which time they'll take a tour of the building, and with the assistance of the Deputy Speaker, I look forward to meeting with them at 11 o'clock for a visit and questions and refreshments as well as a photo before they leave. And I'll ask all hon. members to welcome my guests from King George School in Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Goodsoil and Meadow Lake Credit Unions' 50th Anniversaries

Mr. Sonntag: — This year both the Goodsoil and Meadow Lake credit unions are celebrating 50 years of service in their respective communities, and I had the privilege of managing both of them. No, I wasn't around when either one opened, but like many people in this province, it's where I did hold my first account as a youngster.

After months of planning, the Meadow Lake Credit Union opened on December 13, 1946. Six weeks later it had assets of — get this — \$728.60 and had 36 members. It now has nearly 28 million in assets, over 5,000 members, and employs 21 people.

In the last 15 years alone they have granted in excess of 125 million in loans, proving that capital from the community is employed locally for the social and economic benefit of everyone living there.

The Goodsoil Credit Union had similar modest beginnings. Many community meetings were held before they were incorporated on September 23, 1946. Today they have over 11 million in assets.

This growth and success would not have been possible without the members who had faith and trust in their organization, the dedicated and loyal staff, and the directors who spent numerous volunteer hours ensuring that prudent policies and practices were in place.

The Goodsoil Credit Union is holding an old-fashioned picnic this Sunday, and Meadow Lake Credit Union next Sunday, to honour their 50 years of service. Both are models of what people helping people is all about.

I want to thank them for the important contribution they have made to our communities and wish them equal success in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Father's Day

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sunday is Father's Day and I like to give heartfelt recognition to all the fathers across the province.

Fathers play a crucial role in the lives of their children. They are counsellors, care-givers, and role models. They offer guidance, comfort, and love.

As I look around this Assembly, I know there are many fathers who are looking forward to spending the day with their children. And I know many members who still have the opportunity to share the day with their own fathers.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus, I would like to wish every father in Saskatchewan a wonderful Father's Day. I wish anyone travelling home for this weekend, a very safe trip. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Successful Saskatchewan Hockey Career

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You'll have to pardon me if I sound like I am a bit boastful today, but the community of Swift Current has every reason to be proud of the hockey talent it has developed over the years.

I am referring to the captain of the Colorado Avalanche, Joe Sakic, who was instrumental in helping his team win the Stanley Cup four games in a row against Florida. Joe's clutch goals were a big reason why Colorado won the cup, and as a result, he was rewarded with the Conn Smythe trophy.

The long road from junior hockey in Swift Current to the Stanley Cup final was at times a difficult one. Joe has paid his share of emotional dues. In 1986 he had to cope with a personal tragedy, losing four of his team-mates on the Swift Current Broncos hockey team who were killed in a bus accident.

Perhaps he learned something from that tragedy, giving him the determination to succeed and enjoy the ultimate honour that the game of hockey offers. I know that the community of Swift

Current is elated with Joe Sakic's successful hockey career, and his commitment and hard work at the junior level has paid off.

Mr. Speaker, there were several other players who made it to the Stanley Cup final and played junior hockey in Saskatchewan. Congratulations to former Saskatoon Blades, Brian Skrudland, Curtis Leschyshyn, and Rhett Warrenner.

Not only is Saskatchewan the best place to live but we also have the best hockey players as well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Decline in South-west Area Economy

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform members of this House of an issue of serious concern. Over recent months this government painted a glowing picture of our provincial economy. While the economy as a whole is growing slowly, I would like to bring the members' attention to the difficulties faced by towns and rural communities in the south-western area of Saskatchewan.

According to the latest *Sask Trends Monitor*, that area suffered a 1.6 per cent decline in the number of employers hiring rural men and women over last year. That tragic loss, Mr. Speaker, is much in part to blame for a 5.7 per cent drop in the number of jobs in the south-west region in just one year.

Mr. Speaker, members on the government side, such as members from Regina South and Regina Elphinstone, continue to paint everything in a rosy fashion. By doing so, they are ignoring the plight of some 4,000 residents of communities and constituencies like Wood River, Cypress Hills, and Thunder Creek, who no longer have jobs.

I urge this government to take action by adjusting an economic development strategy which continues to fail the residents of these communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Good News for Thunder Creek Constituency

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some good economic news this morning to report and it's in the Thunder Creek constituency. Since the member from Thunder Creek has not had anything positive to say about his own constituency so far this session, I thought the people in that part of the province are entitled to some good news for a change.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Did you know that Saskferco Products has announced a \$37 million expansion of its Belle Plaine plant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — The company estimates \$15 million worth of economic activity would be generated in Saskatchewan. About a hundred construction jobs will be created with the expansion. And that's good news for Thunder Creek.

Did you know that the River Lake Pig Production facility at Riverhurst is expected to produce 13,000 market pigs per year at an estimated value of \$1.7 million? That's good news for Thunder Creek constituency.

The Moose Jaw-Diefenbaker Lake region is in the first phase of developing 2,000 acres of potatoes, and in a number of years the area will attract a major French fry plant, creating hundreds of jobs. That's good news for Thunder Creek constituency.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I'll ask all hon. members to come to order. I am unable to hear the member making her member's statement and I'll ask all hon. members . . . Order. Order. I'll ask all hon. members to allow the member the courtesy — Order — of being able to be heard.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Did you know that the Herbert Cooperative reported record-breaking sales of \$3.6 million for 1995 — a 12.3 per cent increase over the previous year. That's good news for Thunder Creek constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have enough time in a member's statement to list all of the positive activity taking place in Thunder Creek. And if the member for Thunder Creek was able to find the time to report some good news from his riding, it would make my job a lot easier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Developments in Stony Rapids

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to commend all the people in the extremely northern community of Stony Rapids. Stony Rapids has a population of about 350 people and is located near Black Lake. Forestry and mining industries are very important to the local economy, but people also make a living in small business, hunting, and trapping.

There are some new developments taking place there right now. The village is helping set up its first new playground on playground equipment that will be arriving on the first barge.

Stony Rapids is also in the process of setting up a new outreach office that will focus on job placement. This is being achieved through a partnership with Northlands College.

This community continues to press into the future despite facing some tough challenges. It lacks proper water and sewer services, and heating costs are extremely high because fuel and electricity are so expensive. Many people spend many hours every week trying to gather enough firewood to compensate for the heat costs of their homes.

I would like to commend the people of Stony Rapids for their efforts to lobby this provincial government to live up to its promise to provide quality health care services for all people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

1996 Vintage Building Award

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge a person in my constituency who has received an award for his work in preserving a part of Saskatchewan's heritage.

Logan W. Bjarnason has received the 1996 Vintage Building Award from the Saskatchewan Architectural Heritage Society for his work in restoring the 1907 Symes homestead house in the hamlet of Froude. He won the award in the category of Restoration-Exterior-Residential.

Ernest and Mary Symes's homestead house is a typical turn-of-the-century, wood frame house with drop-siding cedar shingles. The present owner and grandson of the original homesteaders, Logan Bjarnason, undertook the restoration of the property from an interest in the family history and the antiques within the house.

The restoration work involved a number of elements such as retarring, shingling the roof, replacement of the floor joists, floor boards, and replacing the original chimney on the roof peak. Almost all of the materials used were recycled to retain the vintage quality of the building.

The homestead is being used as a museum/interpretive centre of the family's background and of early prairie life. Plans to make the home more available to the general public are being considered for this summer.

I am looking forward to attending the presentation of this award to Logan Bjarnason next week. I would like to congratulate Mr. Bjarnason for all of his hard work in preserving a part of our Saskatchewan heritage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mount St. Joseph Home Opens in Prince Albert

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I brought good news to this House and advised the House that there was going to be a new CT (computerized axial tomograph) scanner coming to Prince Albert which would be welcome very much.

Today I have more good news with respect to what's happening in the health field in Prince Albert. My colleague from Prince Albert Northcote and I will be attending a sod-turning ceremony for the new 120-bed Mount St. Joseph Home this afternoon.

This home is located near Carlton Comprehensive School in Prime Minister's Park, and it will allow for the sharing of some services between the two operations. Mr. Speaker, this has been in the planning stages for over a decade. The cost will be approximately \$13.8 million of which the province is contributing 9.3 million. The federal contribution is 2.3 million, and the local share is 2.1 million.

The project will be over 5,000 metre-square facility. And it will be affiliated with the Prince Albert Health District. It will be owned by the Roman Catholic diocese and operated by a board appointed by the bishop.

I wish the bishop and the board the best in the construction and

fund-raising for this facility.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Political Donations

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given recent revelations of secret trust funds, people of Saskatchewan are definitely concerned that secret donations may mean big business may benefit from or influence government decisions. Yesterday in this House we presented a letter from Extencicare to demonstrate how corporations can hold finances over the head of a political party or government.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier may be aware, Extencicare owns a 30 per cent stake in Crown Life and has benefited from government involvement in that company. Mr. Speaker, the letter from Extencicare serves as proof that some donations come at a price. If political parties favour the interests of the taxpayer over big business, they don't get donations.

Will the Premier explain to this House whether this particular company has been donating to secret funds of the NDP (New Democratic Party) and using these donations to acquire influence with this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I will ask all hon. members of the House to come to order.

Order. I will ask all hon. members of the House to come to order. All hon. members of the House will come to order now.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, that question is not worthy of the hon. member. The hon. member knows — must know — and if he doesn't know, I'll assure him that this political party and this government would not ever be influenced by political donations or the lack of political donations.

We are bringing to the Government of Saskatchewan a level of integrity that just would make that impossible. I'm ashamed to have to stand here and answer such a question. It is not worthy of the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to clarify the concerns that we have brought forward would be through an independent inquiry to put it to rest once and for all, Mr. Speaker. There is evidence; there are some concerns.

Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers deserve to know how many corporations may have been involved in getting favours because they made donations to secret trust funds. If Extencicare is trying to hold finances over the head of the Liberal Party, there must be others who have used the same method to influence decisions of this government or previous governments.

Will the minister address this serious issue today by ordering a review of political party financing to assure taxpayers that their democratic system isn't bought with secret corporate donations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As I understood the letter that was given to me yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition addressed to Senator Sparrow, Extencicare were dealing with the irresponsibility of the Liberal Party, and not any more than that.

I can tell the hon. member again that this government would never let a political donation or the lack of political donation affect any of our decisions with respect to the administration of this government, and it is not worthy of the hon. member to raise such allegations in this House. If you've got something to say about that, walk outside the Chamber and say it in public where you will have to bear the responsibility, you will have to bear the responsibility of that scurrilous allegation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order! Order, order. Hon. members on both sides of the House . . . Order! Hon. members on both sides of the House will come to order and stop the shouting across the floor which prohibits the Leader of the Opposition from being able to be heard in putting his question.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to bring to the attention of the House the fact that a corporate search reveals that this government's own Conflict of Interest and Freedom of Information Commissioner serves as a director of Extencicare, and also the official spokesperson for Extencicare in Saskatchewan, with power of attorney. This is a company that is a major shareholder in Crown Life, a company which this government has directed hundreds of millions of tax dollars into.

Extencicare is also a big business that openly admits its donations are dependent upon parties not questioning any government dealings that impact on its profits. Mr. Speaker, clearly Mr. McLeod, our Conflict Commissioner, is in conflict himself; that he is heavily involved in a company that may have donated funds to the New Democratic Party which governs this province. Will the Premier do the honourable thing and remove Mr. McLeod from his post?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, this is beyond being humorous — this is shocking. Mr. McLeod is one — is and was — one of the province's most respected lawyers of years and years standing. He is a long-time supporter of the leader's own party. Everybody knew that. His appointment was made only after the most careful and thorough consultation with both opposition parties. He is beyond reproach.

If the member will step outside the legislature and make those remarks, I'm sure Mr. McLeod would appreciate an opportunity

to react. You can't stand in this House behind legislative immunity and make such scurrilous comments. It is not worthy of the Leader of the Opposition, and he should be ashamed of himself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Condie to Queen Elizabeth Power Line

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

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order! I will ask the cooperation of all the hon. members on both sides of the House whose shouting across the floor prohibits the hon. member from Arm River from being able to be heard in putting his question. Order. Order.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government recently approved construction of the \$40 million Condie-Queen Elizabeth transmission line. This decision was arrived at in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of landowners who reside along the proposed corridor are opposed to the project. They have registered many environmental, health, and economic concerns relating to the construction of this transmission line.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment has registered his opposition to this project in the past. Will he explain what these concerns were at that time and how they have been addressed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the member opposite that this particular proposal has been under review by SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management). It has had a lot of public input. It's been a process that's gone on for many, many months.

The Power Corporation is proposing this particular line to provide service to Saskatoon and to the northern area of our province for a number of reasons. We would propose this, Mr. Speaker, so that there could be a secure supply of energy for that area. The fact of the matter is that this proposal would reduce the amount of line loss, creating a lot of efficiency.

It has been studied by numerous departments, the proper environmental process has taken place, and I want to say that we have done due diligence and followed all of the appropriate channels with respect to the Condie-QE (Queen Elizabeth) line.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, these landowners are very much opposed to the project. In fact 228 are refusing to sign construction easements which would allow work to begin.

Mr. Speaker, government expropriation of the land of hundreds of Saskatchewan residents is unprecedented in this province. However, this is exactly what these people are prepared to do.

Will the minister in charge of SaskPower explain if the government intends to enter into a bitter and expensive expropriation battle with hundreds of Saskatchewan landowners?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I would want to say to the member opposite that he has in fact suggested that 228 landowners have signed letters; that I in fact have been contacted by a number of residents in that area. I would want to say to the member that many of those people who have signed these letters have now signed their releases.

I have been asked for a letter by some concerned citizens . . . I have been asked for a meeting by some concerned citizens in this area. I have agreed to meet with them. My staff is in the process of putting together a meeting time and place, and I would want to say that it's my intention to discuss with the concerned residents in that area, and I think that's the appropriate measure to take.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for the Minister of Labour.

You just couldn't help yourself, could you, Mr. Minister? You just had to give Saskatchewan business one more kick in the head as you are on the way out the door. You're new occupational health and safety regulations are going to amount to a \$10 million tax on business according to your own report. Now it's no wonder you want to get out of this province as soon as possible. What's worse is that neither business nor labour have been consulted on this final set of regulations that you are bringing in.

Mr. Minister, what could be possibly have been thinking? Why are you launching another massive attack on business and job creation in your former province?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'll leave aside for the moment commenting on the overtones of the question directed to the Minister of Labour about former province and the like. The commitment of the Minister of Labour to this province and to this country, whatever and wherever his duties take him, is beyond reproach. And I really think the question can be asked without those little side bars which add nothing to the debate.

But the answer really simply is put in the context of the KPMG report itself, which was unfortunately only partially reported in the newspapers because the report goes on to say as follows. That if you could have a 5 per cent reduction, a 5 per cent reduction in injuries and deaths, the savings and the benefits are estimated at \$146.8 million. A 10 per cent reduction, the saving could be calculated to be a \$292.9 million. So that for the additional money that this might ask people to contribute, if we could educate, consolidate occupational health and safety, the savings would — by a country mile, 10 country miles — outweigh any of the costs by these numbers.

And that was not as reported. It's in the interest of employers and employees to seek these benefits.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplemental. When you say, Minister, or the Premier . . . the key word here, Mr. Premier, of course, is “if.” And of course we’d all like to live in a wonderful world of “if”; if you could eliminate all of the problems in the world, especially in occupational health and safety, and eliminate all accidents, you could balance the budget of this province. But your “if” won’t work; it’s a reality.

Mr. Minister of Labour, it flies in the face of the NDP government-stated commitment to reducing the government’s regulation and red tape, the actions that you are taking. And it is a massive change for a lame duck minister to be making, as you are about to leave and you’re walking out the door of this province.

Mr. Minister, do you really want your last act as a Minister of Labour to be a scorched-earth attack on the businesses of this province? Will you admit that this matter should be revisited by the new Minister of Labour? Mr. Premier, you might want to comment on this. Would you put these regulations on hold until a new minister is appointed and the proper consultation be taken place with the employers and the employees of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, has a bit of a wrong interpretation of a last act . . . and somehow people aren’t aware of these regulations. The Occupational Health and Safety Act was passed in 1993. It was the first major revision in at least 20 years, and when he talks about the scorched-earth attack on the business community, the average cost to the business community over all, an employer in the first year, of the average employer, would be \$327, Mr. Speaker. Years after that, it would be average \$93 per employer per year after that.

I’ll be proud if my last act in the Legislative Assembly is to pass legislation that protects the working men and women of this province from being maimed and injured and killed on the job. That’s the objective of the occupational health and safety regulations. There’ll be an overall net benefit to the businesses and the overall people in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I’d be proud if I can put through the occupational health and safety regulations.

No-fault Insurance

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). A constituent of mine, Sharon Diederichs was the victim of a severe car accident last December, but now she’s a victim of your government’s no-fault insurance.

Sharon was excited about her future and the future of her three children as she had just signed a three-year lease agreement to open a business. Unfortunately while driving home a couple of weeks later, she was hit head-on by a half ton truck being pulled by another. One of the drivers was drunk.

Ms. Diederichs suffered fractured facial bones, shattered eye

socket, a shattered knee cap, severe fractured femur, a fractured sternum, severe whiplash, bleeding in the skull around the brain, and much more. The lack of coverage under your no-fault insurance has left her financially destitute and with a shattered future with nowhere to turn.

Mr. Minister, what do you say to people like Sharon Diederichs? What can be done for her?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for the question. The response, first of all, that I want to make to the member opposite is that when we made our changes to the no-fault program in 1995, we took into considerable consideration making sure that if people are unable to resume their lifestyle again, that we would provide for them an income support program that would see them through to ensure that they might be able to support themselves and their families. That’s certainly there.

We’ve also provided, under the no-fault program, Mr. Speaker, a very comprehensive treatment program for individuals where they might be able to obtain rehab services, all sorts of medical treatment that can be provided to ensure that these people are capable of resuming again a quality of life that they had been accustomed to.

Those are the kinds of programs that we put into place under the no-fault program. And certainly all of these would be available to the individual, Mrs. Diederichs, that the member speaks of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister speaks in glowing terms of his no-fault insurance. Unfortunately it simply doesn’t work. Mrs. Diederichs states in her letters that “although the trauma to my face and neck still causes me severe headaches, my real headache started when I began dealing with SGI.”

She cannot sue the drivers, even though one of them was drunk. She can’t sue because you took away her right to sue with the no-fault insurance, Mr. Minister, and you claim that it makes Saskatchewan people’s life better. She could sue if she had made more money, if she grossed over \$50,000 a year, but she didn’t.

Incidentally, the at-fault driver walked away with a \$100 fine, while the drunk driver got off on a technicality. At the same time, this mother of three remains in a full-length body cast, undergoing reconstructive surgery to her face and leg; two separate blood transfusions and more.

And you, Mr. Minister, have the audacity to call this fair. How can you stand here and say that this system is good for Saskatchewan families?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the member that the changes that we made to the program, to no-fault insurance in 1995, were really intended to do a number of things.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the program was intended to provide,

as the member should be made aware of, rehabilitative programs across the province which would enable people to get better health treatment, quicker health treatment, and more extensive treatment, which is the case.

Also under the no-fault benefit, Mr. Speaker, we have provided opportunities for individuals to be on an income replacement program for as long as they need to be on that. So the benefits, in terms of financial benefits for these people, are far greater than they have ever been, and for a longer period of time.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at the strength of the no-fault program in Saskatchewan, it can be easily noted that we have in this province the best rehabilitative programs, the best income replacement programs anywhere in the province. And there is a process here if clients are not satisfied they can appeal this process. The appeal process in this province will . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sharon needs real assistance immediately. The income supplement you provide her is less than she would get under UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission). And she's trying her best to make lease payments on a business space she cannot use. She's trying to raise her children with a full-leg cast. She's doing her best to cope, but your no-fault insurance is providing no help, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, isn't insurance supposed to help those who are victims of an accident? Ms. Diederichs states in her letter:

My goal is not and never will be to get rich off this incident. I simply want to come out of this ridiculous mess in the same financial position as I went in.

Is that too much to ask, Mr. Minister? Will you personally take steps to see that Sharon Diederichs receives fair treatment from your no-fault insurance?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just in response to the member's question, again I've already indicated to the member that under the no-fault program in this province, we are already providing an income replacement for not only the person who's victimized by the accident but for also the family.

And the benefits that are provided in terms of income replacement, Mr. Speaker, comfortably exceed the insurances that people who are injured in car crashes . . . in fact are sustained, not only for the individual, but also for the family. At the end of the day this individual and other people who are injured in car crashes are far better off under the new system of no-fault than they were under the tort system.

Mr. Speaker, as well, as I've already mentioned, that we have the strongest rehabilitative programs anywhere in Canada under our no-fault program with expanding services that are going to be provided through our secondary and tertiary care services at the local levels. So when the member opposite stands up and says that individuals aren't adequately covered, simply is not the case, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Long-term Care

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has stood up in this House on many occasions to indicate that his government's version of health reform addresses all the needs of the sick and elderly.

As further evidence that this is nothing but a myth, I would like to bring to the attention of the minister an issue involving Katie Lonoway. This 91-year-old lady is a former resident of Gerald who presently resides in a private care home in Yorkton, a facility that can no longer provide the care she needs. As a result she has been asked to find other accommodations by the end of June.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that all long-term care facilities in Yorkton and surrounding communities of Esterhazy, Saltcoats, Kamsack, and Langenburg, are occupied and all have extensive waiting-lists. Respite care isn't even an option because all such beds are also occupied. The only option this elderly lady has is to be placed in the Esterhazy hospital until such time as — and this is what she was told — something comes up.

Mr. Speaker, this might be a valid answer if we were talking about . . .

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Will the Minister of Health justify this kind of treatment for our seniors?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I should indicate to the member, first of all, that I was at the opening of the Langenburg health centre yesterday, and it was a very pleasant day in the community.

I want to say to the member that if this resident, if her needs are not being met where she is, and that would be a decision made by the people that run the facility, and obviously they're looking for long-term care . . . This is not . . . the member will want to lay this at the feet of health reform and say it has something to do with health reform. My understanding in the Yorkton and area district is that it is an area that is under-resourced in terms of long-term care beds. In other words, unlike some areas, it doesn't have too many beds. It in fact doesn't have enough beds. And I acknowledge that.

And the funding takes into account the fact that in that area of the province we have to increase the number of beds. And I believe that's what the districts in the area will be working on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Minister, I understand you were at Langenburg the other day. But I noticed four years ago when

you closed their hospital, there wasn't a member of your government there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Lonoway, like many other seniors, has become a victim of this government's chronic underfunding of the health care system. She does not deserve the anxiety brought on by not knowing if she will be moved far away from family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is one that will not go away. As the minister well knows, the senior population continues to grow in this province, at the same time the NDP is forcing the closure of long-term care facilities and drastically reducing the quality of health care for our seniors. The sad part of this story is the fact that only the relief for people like Mrs. Lonoway come when other seniors pass away, opening up long-term respite spaces.

Will the minister justify this inhumane system in which people have to die before others can receive proper care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the fact that they're experiencing this problem with respect to this resident is of concern to me, but this is not a new situation. This is a problem that has gone on for years and years, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is, whether the member wants to acknowledge it or not, it has nothing to do with any cuts to long-term care. The district the member is referring to, as I've said, needs more long-term beds.

But I want to say to the member, who of course wants to confuse the issue with the closure of some nursing homes, that what we're trying to do across the province is not to end the availability of nursing home care. It is to have some rightsizing and to place some emphasis on taking care of people in their own homes and promoting their independence.

And I tell the member in the House this, Mr. Speaker: that despite the fearmongering of this Liberal Party over there, when people need nursing home in Saskatchewan . . . nursing home care, they're going to receive it, Mr. Speaker. And when they need hospital care, they're going to receive that too, notwithstanding the fact that there's fearmongering coming from the opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I'm going to ask the House Leader of the opposition and the Premier to come to order.

Why is the member on his feet?

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

The Speaker: — I'll recognize the member just before orders of the day.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McPherson: — To ask leave for introduction of guests.

The Speaker: — I'll say the same as I said to the member who just stood; I'll recognize you before orders of the day.

The hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to my colleagues for allowing leave.

I want to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the rest of the colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, 19 grade 5 students from Cupar School. They're seated in the Speaker's gallery today. They're in for a tour of the building and we will have a photo with them and a visit with them later. With them today is their teacher, Ms. Bajak, and chaperons Mr. Turner, Mrs. Brodner, and Mrs. Gerencser.

And I will be meeting with them and I hope to answer any of the questions they have. I hope they enjoy an enjoyable day in Regina. Don't miss school too much; it will be there for you on Monday again when you go back, I'm sure.

So welcome to the Legislative Assembly and do enjoy it. And I'll ask the hon. members from Saskatoon and everywhere to help me welcome them here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Wood River has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly, a couple of good friends and constituents of mine, Rod and Paulette Pearson from Coronach. Rod and Paulette are here to enjoy the city today and watch the proceedings in the House and wait with anticipation when the Premier announces a judicial inquiry. Thanks. I welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Scott: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 22 grade 5 and 6 students with us today from Qu'Appelle. Their teacher, Larry McCullough, and several

parents and bus driver also here. I will be meeting with the group shortly here, and I look forward to meeting with them. And I ask all members to join in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In accordance with our growing reputation for openness and accessibility, I table the answer.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 112 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 92 — An Act respecting Elections

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me today Mr. Darcy McGovern, Crown counsel in the legislative services branch of the Department of Justice. Darcy is seated to my left. And behind me is the hard-working Mr. Ian Brown, chief legislative Crown counsel with the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, welcome, and welcome to your officials.

Mr. Chairman, we obviously have a great deal to talk about when it comes to this particular Act. It's not a brief Act. It's one that involves various directives, directions, concerns that we have already previously discussed with respect to changes that may be required.

Before going into some of the issues that we have been talking about in the recent past, perhaps we might just be able to address some of the other items within the Act with respect to the changes. First of all, particularly with the estimate perhaps of how many people . . . With the extension of the absentee ballots and mobile polls, is there any . . . perhaps it might be a question that could be answered for how many people in the past have missed out on being able to vote. How many people in the future might this allow to become part of our democratic process?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, it is a pleasure to be able to begin discussions of this Act. And before I address the member's particular questions, I just want to say a few words for the record on the way in which this Act has developed.

I want to say first of all, that as the minister responsible for the carriage of this Act, I have deeply appreciated the willingness of the official opposition and the third party to consult with us about the content of the Bill. I think that's appropriate in . . .

more than appropriate in an Act like this which affects all of us, all of the constituencies that we represent, and indeed all the people of the province.

And we worked hard in those consultations to understand the concerns that had been raised over the years, to understand each other's concerns, and to move towards a legislative resolution to concerns that grew up as the result of years of experience under this Act. And I commend especially the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Wood River, who I know spent a lot of time on this Act, as well as the members from Moosomin and Cannington and the Leader of the Third Party for the time and effort that they put into it.

We tried mightily to respond to all of the concerns raised by both of the opposition parties. And with one or two exceptions we were able to accommodate that.

I also appreciate that we're now going to be able to discuss this Act with a little bit of the heat of question period removed from it, and sort of get down to some of the basics in a calmer environment. And I think this is a good thing for this Bill. It needs calmness and it needs wisdom and a bit of far-sightedness, if I can use that term, an ability to look at the consequences of our changes to the elections and by-elections that will be held in the future.

The member in his question raises one of the very important improvements to the Act, namely the absentee ballots and the mobile polls. We think this will be significant in terms of extending the franchise to people who often haven't been able to cast their ballot.

To some extent that depends upon circumstances, particularly in the case of the mobile polls, where depending upon when the election is held and what's happening at the time, people are often unable to get to their home ballot boxes and cast their votes.

(1100)

In the last provincial election in June '95, no one was able to predict what the forest fire situation would be like. But as it turned out it was a very, very serious forest fire situation. If I'm not mistaken, it was unprecedented in Saskatchewan.

As a result, really significant numbers of people were unable to vote. That includes the people who were out on the line fighting the dozens of forest fires that were going on. They went in before the advance polls opened and they came out after the election was over so they just were unable to vote. And that especially applies to the elections in Athabasca and in Cumberland although it impacts in other constituencies as well.

In addition the forest fires themselves caused at least one community to be evacuated, and that was Sandy Bay. Those people for the most part were put up in Saskatoon, housed in Saskatoon, until the dangers to their community had passed. And under the terms of The Election Act they were just unable to vote. So in '95 these amendments would have impacted a very large number. Who knows what it'll be like in '99 or 2000 in that respect. As I say, it depends on circumstances and those of course can't be foretold.

The absentee ballots and the new provisions we have with respect to that, I think will be significant. We of course don't have numbers for that but we have some numbers that are relevant. The number of votes cast at hospital polls in the last election was 1,375 — quite a large number when you consider we're talking about 58 constituencies. And the number of votes cast in the limited mail-in ballot provisions that existed under the old Act were 353. Well you can roughly extrapolate from that and imagine that the figure for mail-in ballots in the next election is likely to be some multiple of 353, maybe 10, 20 times as many.

But we don't know. We haven't seen it yet; we haven't tried it. And it'll be interesting to see what the results will be.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I can appreciate that specific numbers would be difficult to zero in on. Your explanation with respect to evacuees as a result of forest fires very definitely, no question, has an impact.

With the addition of now being allowed to extend the opportunities, how much do you anticipate that this may in fact cost? And I guess we're all cost-conscious in this day and age. Are there any projections — the possible costs or estimates?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, the absentee ballot provisions will cost practically nothing because they're just pieces of paper, they're just pieces of paper on which names are written. The mobile polls and the polls for temporarily displaced people will cost money. Again it all depends on the circumstances. It depends on where you have to go and how much it costs to go there.

It would be significant in some circumstances and less significant in others. But if you're dropping a mobile poll into a fire-fighting area, you can imagine it may be costly. It may be necessary to rent a helicopter in order to get there, and it may be difficult to do that.

An Hon. Member: — They always have extra ones sitting around.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — An hon. member says that there are always helicopters sitting around, and that's true, but they cost to operate. And so there'll be some cost involved.

I think the best answer I can give to the question of the Leader of the Opposition is that it depends on the circumstances, depends on where the poll has to be set up, and it's not possible in advance to estimate that. But there will be a cost.

I think we all welcome . . . or at least are not fearful of that cost. First of all, because it won't be excessive; we know that. And it's worth it. The right to vote and ensuring people the right to vote is a right that has a huge value in our system, and if it costs a little money to ensure that the citizen has the right to vote, I think we're all prepared to pay it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, and officials, I'd like to welcome you here today to deal with this issue that's of particular importance.

I'd like to move on to some of the contentious issues that have been brought forward. How are donations from corporations to be dealt with under The Election Act? And if a corporation, let's say, makes a donation of \$1,000, how is that to be dealt with? What types of disclosures are to be provided? How extensive is this? Does this include the names of the directors, who paid it, etc.? Can you explain that, please?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member's question, as I understood it, is: if the corporation gives \$1,000, what kind of reporting has to be done about it? And I believe the answer to that is to be found in section 250(2) of the Bill, which provides that for a return by the chief official agent of a registered political party, the return is to the Chief Electoral Officer. And in the case of a corporation, a donation from a corporation, the return is required to set out the amount of money contributed by the corporation. And it would be included in that return.

I hope I'm responsive to the member's questions.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So the only disclosure necessary is that corporation A donated a thousand dollars; there's nothing above and beyond that. There is no need to reveal the names of who signed the cheque, or who authorized the payment, or who the directors of the corporation are. Okay, I'll just leave it there for now.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's correct. Any donation from a corporation over \$250, under the Bill, would be required to be disclosed, as I indicated earlier, without any further information about directors or officers or anything like that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you can explain who would . . . qualifies under the term "corporation." What entities are you talking about? Obviously it's not individuals, but who qualifies under the definition of the term "corporation"?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The term "corporation" is not a defined term but is widely used in legislation, and it is understood to mean all incorporated entities, and that would include the ordinary business corporations. It would include non-profit corporations. It would include cooperatives — that sort of thing.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. What about trade unions? Where would they fit into this picture? Do they qualify under the term "corporation," or are they excluded from that term? What kind of reporting mechanism is in place in this Act for trade unions?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The obligation on the political parties to report with respect to contributions of trade unions is precisely the same as the requirements with respect to corporations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. It's my understanding that according to Department of Justice opinion, that there is currently no requirement under the Act to disclose the names of individual donors who make donations through a third party such as a trust fund or through a non-profit corporation such as the Tommy Douglas House or some other type of entity like that.

Could you confirm this, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we do not discuss Justice opinions with respect to the meaning of the present Act, the present law. And I have to honour that long-standing tradition.

The member will know, from the consultations that we've had, that we propose to introduce an amendment to section 240 of the printed Bill in due course. And we will be glad to discuss the contents of that and the meaning behind it and the reasons for it, but without reference to Justice opinions. We will be glad to answer all of the member's questions though in that connection.

(1115)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Well let me ask it a different way. Under the current Act, what are the requirements for disclosure of third-party contributions as the Act states today?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I will try to be responsive to the member's question. These are of course provisions that are administered by the Chief Electoral Officer and I provide my answer subject to that comment.

But I think the answers to the member's question are to be found in section 210, and then in some limited circumstances, section 219. And the provisions are there, and I think we understand them, although events of recent days sometimes makes you wonder about that.

But the section 210 describes the obligation of a chief official agent of a political party to file a return with the Chief Electoral Officer and sets out what the return will include. And that is set out in great detail in section 210(2).

Then section 219 also has to be considered with respect to a gift, contribution, loan, advance, or deposit, or other financial assistance given to a candidate or a registered party, and the provision that they may use an agent for that purpose, which is also relevant to the question that the member asks. And again there's a great deal of detail there.

But my understanding of the Act, of the present Act, is that the member's question will involve an interpretation of those two sections.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could outline for us the changes that are being proposed in dealing with Crown corporation advertising during a writ period.

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

Mr. Aldridge: — With leave, Mr. Chair, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated in the east

gallery is a group of grade 4 students from Parkview School in Melville with their teachers, Mrs. Taylor and Mr. Heska, and chaperons, Mrs. Rathgeber, Stokal, Dycer and also Mr. Melanson. And others include the bus driver, Mrs. Herbert.

These are constituents and school from the member from Melville's constituency. He's unfortunately not able to be here right at this time to introduce you to the House this morning. But I at this time would just like everybody here to acknowledge their presence, and I hope you enjoy your visit to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 92

(continued)

Clause 1

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The present Act contains a prohibition against advertising during a general election; let me put it that way. It says that no department — referring to a department of government, board, commission, Crown corporation, or agency of the Government of Saskatchewan — shall, during a general election or during a by-election, publish any information or particulars of the activities of that entity except in the case of an emergency where the public interest requires the publication of any such information or particulars.

And you know, we all have a general sense of what that covers. Maybe it's SaskPower in respect of a safety situation or something like that.

Now we are proposing in the present section 277, that that emergency . . . well first of all we're proposing that the general ban against publishing during an election or by-election period will be continued. And we are also proposing that the exception to that in the case of an emergency be continued.

The new situation that we're proposing is covered by clause (b) of subsection (5) of section 277, and that would create another exception to the general ban on publication. And it would be:

advertising by a Crown corporation that was contracted prior to the issue of a writ and is related to the corporation's business.

And we do that having just freshly experienced a situation that arose in SaskTel. And what happened there is that SaskTel, being involved in the mobility field in the cell phone field, found itself in an intensely competitive situation. And its competitors had a big blitz on, big advertising campaign, and were trying to take customers away from SaskTel or to sign up customers that SaskTel ought to have had a good crack at too. They're competing. And it's just one of the things we have to face in the telephone field these days. It is not a monopoly any more. It is a competitive situation, and we have to . . . SaskTel has to compete.

It therefore planned an advertising campaign. I don't have the numbers with me, but it was an expensive advertising campaign. And it entered into a contract with the agencies that you have to deal with in order to launch that campaign.

And then the election writ was dropped. And under the law as it now is, as it previously existed, they couldn't go ahead with the campaign, so they cancelled it at some considerable financial cost, according to what I've been told. And we think in those circumstances there ought to be an exception which would allow such a campaign to go forward which would allow such advertising to continue.

I'll just repeat the elements. It is a competitive situation. It is the kind of . . . the advertising or the publishing has already been contracted, and it just seems entirely appropriate that we would create that kind of an exemption in the interests of good business and keeping the Crown corporations in a position where they can be competitive even during an election period.

Now having said all that — the member and I have discussed this, or at least the member's party and I have discussed this, and we recognize the concern — we answered in the following way.

Any government party seeking re-election who would dare to abuse that section to take unfair advantage through an advertising campaign by a Crown corporation would, I think, lose more than they gain; that the opposition parties would make us pay for that, make the governing party pay for that over and over and over again by the time that election campaign was over; and that in the end, it would be a serious mistake for any governing party to try and use that exemption for their political advantage.

Now we're interested in debating this. I've had interesting discussions about it. We think this is fair. We think that it is unrealistic to be rigid in all circumstances. We've tried to define it in such a way that it's a limited exception. As I say, we're interested in this discussion. No doubt as I take my place, I'm going to hear some of that discussion, so I'll give the member an opportunity now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Indeed we have had some discussion on this, and it has been discussion, not agreement.

I believe when you're in the competitive field, such as SaskTel Mobility, I do have some sympathy for the fact that your competitors are still in the field advertising their products and attempting to gain access to the customer base. However this piece of the Act does not specify those Crown corporations who are in a non-monopoly situation. It applies to all the Crown corporations including the monopolies simply because they may have set up an advertising campaign prior to the election, an election which we, as the opposition, have no idea when it's going to be called.

But the Premier has an idea and has the ability then to say to the minister responsible — let's say, to SaskPower — you know, I believe that we should have a campaign out there to promote the benefits of SaskPower and the great service it provides to

the public. So this campaign starts up two weeks prior to the writ being dropped. You know, it was all in place before. It's all legitimate. And yet nevertheless, it's a benefit to the governing party with the ability to say what a great job we have done in managing your assets in whatever Crown corporation it may be that's providing the advertising.

You may have a point though when you say that there is a price to be paid sometimes by the governing party when they do this because I recall all the ads that were in place dealing with the family of Crown corporations prior to 1982. And I wouldn't want to give credit to that advertising to the crushing defeat that your party suffered that year, but I suppose if you wish to give the credit to that advertising campaign, you may do so.

(1130)

I think though that the opposition has limited resources when it comes to countering an advertising campaign by the Crown corporations. If the opposition wants to carry out a campaign of counter-advertising during a writ period, their funding is very limited, and there is a cap placed on that funding, whereas there is no cap placed on funding by a Crown corporation during a writ period under this Act.

And I think that's a great deal of . . . We have a great deal of concern about that, Mr. Minister. You claim that the opposition could raise a ruckus about this. Well that may get a little bit of news item, 30 seconds once or twice in the news during a writ period. But the Crown corporation advertising would carry on and on and on. And if advertising has the impact that the advertising agencies would have us believe that it has, then that constant repetition has an impact in the direction that the advertisers want it to go.

So I would argue, Mr. Minister, that while the opposition may have the opportunity to raise it as an issue during an election campaign, their opportunities are much greatly diminished as compared to the opportunities that advertising by a Crown corporation that could say, you know, we have done a great job in serving you . . .

The Chair: — Order. Before we were so rudely interrupted by the power outage, which I hope doesn't repeat itself, the hon. member for Cannington was full . . . mid-sentence might be the best way to describe it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I know that the minister has been in the dark on some of this issue in the past, so I'll try to enlighten him on this now.

With a Crown corporation advertising, Mr. Minister, I believe that there should be more restrictions placed on it than is currently under the Act. I believe that at the very least it should be restricted to those Crown corporations . . . the exemption should be restricted to those Crown corporations that are in a competitive field.

The Crown corporations such as SaskPower, SaskEnergy, the SaskTel general area that they deal with is all a monopoly situation. SGI auto is a monopoly situation. All those in the monopoly categories should have to cease providing advertising during the writ period.

I'm prepared to discuss with you and debate with you the idea of having those in the competitive field where they do not have a monopoly situation, such as SGI CANADA, whether or not they should be allowed to provide advertising during that period to provide services to their customers. I think though that perhaps there should be some cap on the amount of advertising that even they could do within that period. If they were simply flooding the airways with advertising, I think that would be most inappropriate.

So I think, Mr. Minister, that there needs to be some changes to this. There needs to be some adjustment, some amendment to this particular section of the Act to restrict further the advertising, to put a prohibition on those Crown corporations which are in a monopoly situation and do not face direct competition in their market-place.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I tried to indicate in an earlier answer that . . . I tried to first of all indicate clearly what policy issues we were addressing and tried to also indicate that we were interested in listening to the discussion about it because we are prepared to consider and will consider how the section might be amended to more clearly reflect the policy position that I expressed earlier.

And I understand that we're going to not complete the Bill today, so we will attempt at the next time round to come up with something. And we'll have consultations with the two opposition parties in the meantime. We'll have consultation with the two opposition parties in the meantime on the subject.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just along this same line, only pertaining to the situations where candidates may be in a position of having a potentially large sum of money available to them pre-writ, and not that much unlike the situation where Crown corporations have large sums of money available to them to enter into advertising campaigns . . . could I get the minister's comment in this regard, whether it's fair that candidates with large sums of money available would be able to spend those sorts of sums of money in a pre-writ period when other candidates may not have that available to them. It would seem like this is an imbalance in the whole electoral system as well. Could I just have your comment?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member's question is interesting, and I want to respond to it in very general terms.

I think our election machinery in this country has been slowly moving towards a situation where your elect-ability does not depend on your wealth. And so in recent years, I think all the jurisdictions in Canada have introduced election expense ceilings for constituencies, that is to say for the constituency associations of political parties and for the registered political parties generally. That's been a long difficult process in this country.

In this province we've been doing that since, I think, 1974. The first caps were put in, and those caps have been adjusted in accordance with inflation since then. But when the hon. member ran in Thunder Creek or when I ran in Saskatoon Fairview, we knew with clarity what the election expense

ceilings were.

The member, Mr. Chair, introduces another thought to the debate, and that is whether the amounts spent in the pre-election period should be somehow limited. And in a general way I agree with that. We haven't included any provisions for it in the Bill because we frankly haven't done enough research or given enough analysis to the problem. But I believe that some day those questions will be addressed in the election laws of this country.

And all that will be in pursuit of the general proposition that anyone ought to be able to offer themselves as a candidate on more or less equal footing with everyone else. And that the wealth of a person ought not to give that person the potential for a huge advantage which was how I understood the member's question.

But we're not in any position at all to consider introducing those matters into this Bill. That's for I think another day, another decade, probably another century. But I think the member is on the track that we will all be following in the future in this country.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Move to report progress.

Bill No. 111 — An Act to amend The Teachers' Life Insurance (Government Contributory) Act

The Chair: — I will begin by inviting the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Behind me today is seated John McLaughlin who is the executive director of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. And beside me on my left is Michael Littlewood who is the director of third party funding and legislative services in the Department of Education.

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 112 — An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And, Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials. A couple of quick questions on this Bill just for clarification.

I note that the eligibility rule has changed regarding the qualification as far as contributions. You indicate that there is a change from contributory years of service to eligibility years. Could you clarify whether eligibility means any part of a year. Is it a half time? Is it a quarter time? Is it a very, very short period of time?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The matter is set up on a monthly credit basis as the member will know. And a teacher will get a month's credit for any month in which that teacher performed

service, whether it is full time or part time, and with no limitation as to what the part time is.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The second question is around the two pension plans, and I understand that the person may now purchase pensionable time and have it applied to . . . Will it apply to either of the plans? Or is it only the old superannuation plan?

And the second question that you could maybe tie in as well is because there will be a further liability imposed on the plan. Is this a problem? Has there been an investigation in terms of how many years may be purchased back? And indeed what is the long-term liability on the pension plan, if it's only the one, or on both of course if it's the annuity plan?

(1200)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, these changes apply only to the old plan, defined benefit plan.

As to the cost of it, it is very, very small — marginal. It will affect fewer than 50 teachers, so we're only talking about a small number of people, and the increase to the costs or the unfunded liability will be tiny. But we don't know how much uptake there will be, so we are not able to estimate exactly. But in a worst case scenario, it's a very small amount.

Mr. Krawetz: — One further clarification point, Mr. Minister. Has there been any change in terms of the number of years of service that a person can purchase that are not directly within the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation *per se*? Has there been any change in negotiated settlement in terms of the number of years?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No there has not.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I will move that we report the Bill without amendment, and while I'm on my feet I'd like to thank Mr. Littlewood and Mr. McLaughlin for coming to assist the committee today.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 96 — An Act to amend
The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act**

The Chair: — I'll begin by inviting the minister to introduce his official.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Brian Smith, in pensions.

Clause 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and also our welcome to Mr. Smith here this morning, still.

Just a very few questions here with respect to The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act. When we're talking about making a change to take and fund any future deficits from out of the General Revenue Fund, I understand at this point in time this particular fund is in a surplus situation. Could you perhaps give us some comment as to how you may ensure in the future that that might occur.

Perhaps this also ties in with the provision now where you're going to be allowing people who have moved away from the province to continue to contribute to the plan. Is this your solution to maintain the surpluses in this particular fund?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There is no prospect of this fund slipping into a deficit. It's not being done for that reason. The reason why it's being done is because the Provincial Auditor brought it to our attention, suggested this should be done, and we are in effect complying with the suggestion by the Provincial Auditor. There's no prospect that the pension will slip into a deficit.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. With respect to the number of additional pension benefits that we are looking at here, now I understand there's a number of them named here: life income funds, locked-in retirement income funds, and locked-in retirement accounts. Could you provide us with perhaps some brief overview as to how these will be positive for Saskatchewan residents. Would there be any mechanism in place to ensure that the contributors to the plan are made aware of all of these various choices that now will be available to them, given this change?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — These of course are in addition to the options that are there now. And this is consistent with the options which are available under The Pension Benefits Act.

So we're simply making available, under this legislation, the options that are available under The Pension Benefits Act. And that's really all there is to that.

Mr. Aldridge: — I think that really takes care of any minor concerns we'd had with respect to this particular piece of legislation here. And I would just again like to give our thanks to the official here this morning, or this afternoon now, for having taken the time to come down here and answer a few questions. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I want to join my colleague in those courteous comments of his. I want to join my colleague in thanking this official, not only for his time here today. The public may not appreciate he's been sitting out there I think for close to a couple of hours waiting on this.

Also because we are in a period of transition in pensions in this province as we seek to come to terms with some age-old problems and deficits, Mr. Smith in fact has done yeoman's service in advising the government and suggesting alternatives which the government might take, representative I think of a very high quality of public servants which serve this province.

I thank Mr. Smith for his services today and otherwise, and through him we're thanking all public servants who work on our behalf.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 14 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 97 — An Act to amend
The Department of Agriculture Act**

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I want to say how pleased I am to be here to answer questions on this Bill on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture. With me today is the associate deputy minister of Agriculture, Terry Scott, who many of you will know, as well as Harvey Murchison, the director of livestock operations.

I'll try to answer any questions. If there are questions that I don't have the answers here, we'll be sure to get back to the members as quickly as possible.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, a few questions, a few short questions, I think, on the Bill. We have heard from the Minister of Agriculture previously in first readings and second readings as to the reasons for the Bill from his point of view. I wonder if you might explain to the House and to the public as to the reasons, if there were any, from the stakeholders as to why this Bill was necessary.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member will be interested to know that the fund being established here is a revolving fund that will have as much as a million and a half or two million dollars in the revolving fund which is basically made up of monies that is arrived at from inspection fees or brand fees.

The consultations that have gone on with the industry, the stock growers and other associated entities involved in the area, indicate that the flexibility that will be arrived at to respond quicker to the needs of the industry will be allowed under these changes. So this is something that comes after some discussion with the stakeholders in the industry and we think will actually streamline the operations of meeting the needs of the industry by having this revolving fund established.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the sections of the Act indicates that where there is no specific fee charged for services, it indicates that the minister will be given the authority to, and I think the quote is, "charge a fee to recover amounts incurred by the revolving fund to provide that service."

Do you not see this as a very . . . as a potentially controversial clause or point, where the minister may create a wide range of fees, different values of fees, and in the end probably the people out there who you've indicated wanted this in terms of streamlining and in terms of understanding and in terms of having a more workable system . . . Do you foresee that this may confuse things?

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member will be interested to know that at the present time the system is balanced — the revenues coming in from the services I mentioned and the expenditures are pretty much in balance and therefore the revolving fund concept.

But in the clause that you mentioned in the Bill, and just to quote:

Where the minister provides a service through the revolving fund for which no fee is provided by Act or regulation, the minister may charge a fee to recover . . .

These services that would be provided would only be at the request of the industry. And so obviously in requesting the services, there's obviously an understanding of the industry that somewhere that money has to be recovered. And it would be recovered through the industry.

So it's a balancing act. But the industry is well aware of this clause and accepts the concept that if they request a service at a given time, that obviously a fee structure will be needed to replenish the revolving fund.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Specifically it indicates that there will be exemptions of certain categories as far as the fees and as far as actually charging them or crediting them back to the fund — I think the fur farming regulations, the game farming regulations, and there's about four or five, as I understand it.

Could you explain why these fees are not to be included in the fund?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I just want to say to the member that the game farms that you're talking about, the reason that they're not included in the revolving fund is because at the request of that industry, because it's an emerging industry, they are not in a position to know exactly what the structure will be, what the balance will be between service and fees.

So the option at some point of this industry coming into the revolving fund is obviously there, but they're not quite ready at this point to be included in the fund. And so here again this is being done with the consent of the industry, both the established industry that is included in the revolving fund, and the emerging industry. And I think that's a good way to look at it, as sort of the long-standing industry, the cattle or whatever that we tend to think of being included in the revolving fund, and then the emerging industry. And here again this is being done in consultation and approval of the industry.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, a final question I guess, sir, or nearly the final one, on administration. For those groups that have entered into this fund and are now part of it, prior the creation of this new fund, those obviously operated independently. Were there problems that have been identified regarding the administration of whether or not it's the cattle industry, whether it's the poultry; were there problems in terms of administration of those funds that existed separately and are

we now inheriting those problems into a bigger picture as far as the complete fund?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — There are two reasons again why the revolving fund will work more effectively. I think the member alludes to it. But there were gaps in services under the old arrangement. I don't want to go into all of them, although we could probably list some areas where we wanted a smoother, seamless servicing of the industry which this will do a better job of achieving. So that's one side of it.

But on the other side is the ease with which new services can be provided to the industry. Under the old arrangement, there had to be a budgetary processing and it could be months or even up to a year, a year and half, before new services could be implemented. Under the revolving fund it will be much easier to respond to new services because the revolving fund will be able to react much quicker.

So two sides. One, it will be much more of a complete service with eliminating many of the gaps that were there; but secondly, it will be much quicker to respond to the needs of the industry.

Mr. Krawetz: — You have indicated that the fees that will be charged of course are based on almost like a fee-for-service type of situation. And I guess there's always the possibility that, through terrific management and the good workings of the fund, there will be a surplus.

And I think the final point I'd like to ask you about, Mr. Minister, is that if there is a surplus, it indicates in the Bill that the surplus can be transferred to the general fund. Do you foresee that happening or is it the intent of the fund to work as close as possible to a break-even and that you may in fact adjust fees downwards if indeed you've shown that a surplus begins to exist? Or is this a way of ensuring that there will be additional monies since the fees can be set by the minister?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The objective of course of a revolving fund is to remain balanced, and you indicate obviously that's the objective of a revolving fund. But obviously if the fund got too big you would not want to leave millions of dollars in a revolving fund.

So the balance has been struck by saying that if there's a surplus at any given time — less than half a million dollars, so that you have a cushion of about \$500,000 — that money would be simply left in the fund.

So the anticipation is that with that kind of a cushion being built into the plan, that there really would never be a time when there would be a payment back to general revenue. And I think services and fees will be modified accordingly to make sure that if there is a surplus, it will be minimal.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Management of Forest Resources

The Chair: — We'll begin by having the minister introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have with me on my right, Stuart Kramer, deputy minister; on my left, Rod Thompson, forester from the forestry branch; and behind me is Doug Kosloski, legislative analyst, policy and public involvement branch; and also Hugh Hunt, chief forest management agreement negotiator from the forestry branch.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to clause 2 which reads as follows:

Strike out clause (1)(e) of clause 2 of the printed Bill and substitute the following:

“(e) ‘fees’ means any money, other than dues, including administrative penalties, interest charges and fees for renewal of forest products, reforestation, fire protection and suppression, forest inventory, seedlings and insect and disease control, that is owed pursuant to this Act, the regulations or a licence, to:

- (i) the Crown; or
- (ii) a forest management fund”.

(1230)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I believe there are still some important issues to be discussed on this particular Bill. Yesterday we were discussing co-management and the interpretations of co-management and how the co-management boards would work in relationship to this particular Act.

I wonder if you have an explanation today of how those co-management boards will work in conjunction with the forest management and what kind of relationship they have with the Act. Are they an advisory board?

The Chair: — Order, order. Order. I'll have to remind the hon. member that clause 1 has been agreed and we are past it. We are now on the amendment to clause no. 2.

An Hon. Member: — Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

The Chair: — What is your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I would urge, by leave, that rather than make a motion to go back to clause 1 that these questions be allowed. I think the minister has agreed.

The member wasn't quite ready on clause 1 and we've agreed to allow these questions.

The Chair: — I would prefer someone to ask, with leave, to revert to clause 1.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would ask leave of the Assembly to revert back to clause 1.

Leave granted.

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, the same question all over again without going through all the words.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I thank the hon. member for his question. Co-management boards are something that we have been involved with for several years here in Saskatchewan, and they've been very successful. And by and large, we have some that are working real well, some which could use a little touch up here and there.

But the role of a co-management board is to involve the local people, the stakeholders that may be interested in a forest resource, and to . . . they're more of an advisory board but certainly their ideas and their concerns are given serious consideration, and we only see room for more co-management and more input from stakeholders, people who live in the forest.

And every board is different. Some of them perhaps deal around employment opportunities and certainly the concern of the resource is utmost in everybody's book. So we see co-management boards playing a very important role.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could indicate who serves on the co-management board? How do they become a member of the co-management board?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Every co-management board is different and some are large, some are small. We have some co-management boards with Indian bands; for an example with Peter Ballantyne Band, we have a co-management agreement there. But if we look at a broader scale, the east side forest management area, we have provincial stakeholders as well as local input.

So the makeup of the board is determined on the basis of the issues being discussed, the area of the province, the size of the area, and the scale. And so our goal is to involve everybody that has expressed an interest or that we feel has an interest in these co-management boards and agreements.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. For those co-management boards outside of the reserve settings, outside of reserves, do other stakeholders other than the people actually living in the area get to participate in the co-management board, such as a hunting outfitter who may have his block, hunting block, in that area but doesn't reside in the area. Does he get some input on to the co-management board? Or do cottage owners who own some property in the area but who do not reside in the area, do they get some input on the co-management board?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes they do, and again if we use the east side FMA (Forest Management Agreement) as an example, we have groups, provincial groups like the wildlife federation, Nature Saskatchewan, FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) involved in that process. And again we welcome the input, and we seek out the input from any group that we feel has an interest in a particular area.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well why then, Mr. Minister, was there such a controversy up in the Montreal Lake area with the cottage owners and the co-management plan dealing with the federal government, the provincial government, and some of the native bands in the area? The cottage owners in that particular area felt that they had no input. They had no voice on the co-management board and seemed to have a great deal of concern about some of the things that were happening in the area.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Our co-management boards are in an advisory capacity. The Montreal Lake proposal that it was, was federally driven. In fact the federal government never even consulted the province, let alone the cottage owners and the people that were affected. And that's why that one blew up and did not work.

Consultation is the only way that we are going to succeed in having public input and arriving at good decisions.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. On another section of the Bill, clause 32, it says:

On the request of an officer, every person who has a licence shall immediately produce it for examination.

Now, Mr. Minister, if someone is out in the bush cutting trees, is he expected to carry his logging licence, his permits, around with him at all times?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes. The idea is to have the licence with you. And this may, in the bush, may mean that the licence is in the logging . . . or the camp headquarters or in a vehicle. And certainly if it is not there, we will give a certain amount of time to produce it. Similarly, if you fail to have your driver's licence with you, you're usually given a few hours to produce it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have never seen one of these licences, so I don't know what kind of a physical object we're talking about here. Is it a significant piece of paper, or is it just the size of a driver's licence?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — It's a standard one-sheet piece of paper basically.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well perhaps, Mr. Minister, if the individuals who hold these licences have to carry them with them, you should be looking at somewhat smaller piece of paper, maybe even something that wouldn't deteriorate carrying around in your wallet all the time while you're working.

An Hon. Member: — Something you could put on their forehead.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's right. And perhaps the paper could be of a quality similar to that being used in hunting licences where they don't deteriorate simply by wear and weather.

Mr. Minister, under section 41, term supply and licences, it says here that:

The minister, in accordance with regulations, may grant a term supply licence conferring the right to harvest specified forest products.

What do you mean by that? I'm thinking of in the Hudson Bay area where one of the logging outfits there deals in peeler bolts. How does that apply to this particular piece of the legislation?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The clause is designed to assist the small, independent operators in obtaining a supply of wood. They may only operate part of the year, and they may need a wood supply for a few months. And it's to address these concerns. It's not expected to be used in the case of large companies. But an independent operator that would like to harvest wood for a few months, it's an opportunity to provide a supply of wood for him.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, because I had a concern there that if you took a large section out of the forest of one particular type of product, that you could be developing a monoculture in that area, or you could have very young trees, one or two years old, and 50-year-old trees and nothing in between there. So I think it's important to keep that in mind.

Section 43, where it gives you the right to adjust the terms of a licence, and then it says that you:

(b) shall pay to the licensee who holds the term supply licence, in accordance with the regulations, the value of all forest products to which that licensee is entitled . . .

Who determines what fees that will be paid to the license holder if those wood products are denied him under terms that he would normally have accessed them in his licence?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The compensation rates will be set out in regulations, and those will be worked on during the coming year. And we certainly will be consulting, with industry and anyone else that may be affected by this clause, to come up with an appropriate rate and schedule.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think you need some sort of a variable factor in there though that allows for adjustments in the market-place. If you set the schedule this year, five years down the road it may not be relevant whatsoever. I think it has to be market sensitive to the time of the change and to the long-term impact.

If you won't give someone a deposition to go in and take a special type of wood out of an area by another licence holder, that person may not have wanted to harvest that particular form of wood at this particular time, understanding that maybe five years down the road this particular type of product would have

a greater value or that the trees would have grown to a larger degree and would now become a different type of product. So I think you have to take that into consideration also.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, you are right. And we certainly want to look at all avenues when we develop these regulations, and we welcome all input.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under section 52, I wonder if you could explain why the government should be able to direct to someone who has wood residue products who they will sell or deliver those wood residue products to. Should they not have the opportunity to make their own marketing decisions as to who they would supply those products to?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — By and large it will be market driven; however it gives us the opportunity to become involved to find a market or a way of utilizing this wood. The purpose is we do not waste the material, so we want to salvage as much as we can. And if need be, we will become involved and help the harvester find a market or a processor for the product.

(1245)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. Your explanation though doesn't jibe with what the Act says. It says you will direct that to a particular processor, direct that person to sell the wood residue to the owner of any processing facility that the minister may specify.

It says you can tell whomever is cutting wood that their sawdust will be delivered to point A and sold to that person. They don't have the choice even though perhaps processor B is offering more money. Nevertheless you could direct it to go to A. I think your position should be to facilitate finding a processor who would deal with the wood residues and also to say that all wood residues should be processed if they exceed a certain minimum.

But when it comes to the government saying you will deliver all of your wood residues to processor A, I think that is getting a little Draconian if not a whole lot Draconian. The government's role in this should be to say that the wood residues are used and then allow the person with the wood residue to find their own market. And if they need some assistance in finding a market, then the government could play a role in advising there. But I don't think the government should be playing a role of directing the producers who have the wood residues as to which processor they must use.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I thank you. Also in this clause, it does specifically say that we will not cause undo financial hardship to either party. Plus we have an amendment to clause 52, and I apologize for not identifying that at your first comments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Hopefully your amendment will allow the producers to make their own marketing decisions while still utilizing their residue, under protection of forest products, forests and trees.

What provisions in this Act is available for the protection of products that one would not normally associate with forest products in that sense? I'm thinking of an article, or I heard on

the radio, dealing with fungi, mushrooms in British Columbia. Is there some provisions in here for some temporary protection to be provided in those circumstances where in isolated cases there are special plants and animals that need some form of temporary protection until investigations can be carried out and perhaps more long-term measures put in place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, and in our legislation we certainly recognize the importance of other forest products, fungi, mushrooms for an example. And any commercial operator would have to have a licence to work in any particular area, and we would do an inventory prior to that to see if the area would sustain the commercial operations in addition to the local use.

And we're also looking at completing our representative areas network across the northern part of the province which will identify key areas, and we will ensure species' diversity and abundance in that way as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Although my concern is more related to after the licence has been granted, something is discovered in an area that needs to be investigated. You simply don't want to have clear-cutting going through the area before that investigation is carried out. What measures or what protections are available through this Act to temporarily isolate a small area so that an investigation can be carried out of that area?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Another good feature of this new Act is that the forest companies, the FMA holders, have to also in their inventory not only identify harvestable trees, but other important natural features and species and products that can be used. So this will be done in the overall inventory process which we'll be involved in as well.

So we will have a fairly good handle on where some of these particular other products from the forest are located and how much can be used.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is this inventory done prior to the granting to the of the licence, immediately after the granting of the licence, or is it added to on an ongoing as the forest company would utilize their privileges throughout their block?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Another new activity is that all FMA holders are required to do an environmental impact assessment. Some have completed this process. Others are just starting. So we'll have a handle on that.

Also every 10 years, a 20-year plan has to be submitted by the companies, and those 10-year plans . . . or 20-year plans every 10 years will also identify these types of issues and concerns.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Unfortunately what you describe would not deal with the circumstances that are being described in British Columbia where a licence was granted and an unusual feature was found later while production was ongoing. The people concerned about it don't want to have to wait five years down the road for another review process to take place, because at that point in time that particular feature may no longer exist.

So you need, I believe, some sort of measure in place in the Act to deal with very specific, localized circumstances until an investigation can be carried out to determine whether or not, say, something is an endangered species in that area — an endangered plant or something — whether it actually exists or whether or not it was just someone's imagination that they had found a particular product in that area and raised a concern about it.

I think you need to be able to set aside a very localized area on a temporary, short-term basis to be able to deal with any of those types of concerns that may arise.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Clause 60(1) does provide, under protection of forest products, forests and trees, the opportunity for an officer to go in and order harvesting or any damage that may be occurring in a fragile area to be stopped immediately, and an assessment could be done. And if found suitable, the harvesting could continue.

So we do have that option if a unique area is stumbled across; we can stop operations whether it's a road, or tree cutting, or whatever the case might be.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, that was the information I was looking for.

Under section 62, dealing with insects and animals, you talk about the minister may make an order requiring the owner or occupant to take measures to control the insects or diseases or to dispose of trees or vegetable matter that may be contaminated. Just who would qualify as either the owner or the occupant in this particular clause?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I guess in general in the North, certainly on the Crown land, the province is the owner and the FMAs are the operator. So it would be up to either, or a joint effort to control problems.

On private land an issue which has surfaced more recently is the Dutch elm disease. This does give us the opportunity to order the clean-up and control of Dutch elm disease on private land or in communities. So it's basically whoever the owner of the land is, is responsible.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. My concern was if someone had a hunting lease in the area, or a fishing camp, are they the owner of a certain block of forest there that they would have to bear the costs of?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — No. As you say, it would be a lease, so we would still be the owner.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. That will relieve some fishing camp owners and some hunter . . . people who have hunting camps in the North.

There has been some concern, Mr. Minister, in the past about the stumpage fees that have been proposed under this particular Act. Who did you consult with when proposing the changes to the stumpage fees?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Obviously we are discussing this with industry. And because the discussions are in process and both parties have agreed not to discuss details, the discussions are ongoing and we will look to an appropriate solution.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. This is an extremely important industry for Saskatchewan. I believe we have about 11,000 people employed in the industry, generating about a half a billion dollars worth of economic activity in the province. And I think we need to do everything we can to make sure that the industry remains a viable industry.

We need to also be conscious of the fact that the province owns the Crown land and therefore it certainly deserves a return on that. But we have to also make sure that the industry remains in a strong and viable position.

Part of this Act is setting out 20-year licences. But within that it allows the government to make changes to those licences in the effect of setting stumpage fees I believe, based on a 10-year cycle. Now when those stumpage fees are changed, Mr. Minister, at the 10-year time frame, what input do the companies or the licence holder have in that? Is it simply the government who sets the stumpage fee, or do the people who hold the FMAs, do they have the opportunity to negotiate those stumpage fees and to have direct input into what those stumpage fees will be?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — These agreements will be renewed through negotiation. And we certainly value the forest industry and we want to try to arrive at fair negotiations. I guess if all else fails the government does have the power to initiate new fees or whatever. But our goal is to work with the industry to come up with agreeable solutions.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then if it's your contention that you wish to negotiate this and provide amenable negotiations and an agreeable price on the stumpage fees, perhaps it would be desirable then to have a cap placed on the maximum changes allowed within those stumpage fees. I'm greatly concerned that we could run into a situation that occurred with workers' compensation where some of the people involved in that had fee increases of up to 500 per cent.

They didn't have an option of negotiating it. They didn't have an option of changing it. The government simply said, through the Workers' Compensation Board this is what your new fee will be and you will pay it.

So I think, Mr. Minister, that it's important that there either be a cap or a ceiling placed on the amount of change. The initial negotiation for the stumpage fee will have been put in place when the licensee took out the licence. They have a 20-year agreement so you should have a cap in there or a ceiling on the maximum amount of change that would be allowed.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Certainly there's a wide fluctuation in the value of forest products. Our goal is to work with industry. There's an opportunity for industry to sign this agreement and we certainly will not be making any unreasonable demands or I'm sure the opposition of the day will be on our case.

But we're looking forward to working with industry, and it's hard to put a cap on when you're looking 10, 20 years down the road.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have some other concerns as they deal with some of the other aspects of this, but they deal with fire-fighting and pest control and some of the other items, and I think reforestation, that are impacted on this, and we can deal with them in estimates with the Environment department.

And hopefully you will provide us the answers, and through regulations make any necessary changes.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to propose an amendment to Clause 2 which reads as follows:

Strike out clause (1)(e) of clause 2 of the printed Bill and substitute the following:

“(e) ‘fees’ means any money, other than dues, including administrative penalties, interest charges and fees for renewal of forest products, reforestation, fire protection and suppression, forest inventory, seedlings and insect and disease control, that is owed pursuant to this Act, the regulations or a licence, to:

- (i) the Crown; or
- (ii) a forest management fund”.

Amendment agreed to.

The Assembly recessed until 2 p.m.

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 20 — An Act respecting the
Management of Forest Resources**

The Chair: — When the committee recessed before the lunch, we had gave approval to the House amendment by the minister to clause no. 2. We had not okayed clause no. 2 as amended. So clause 2 as amended, is that agreed?

Clause 2 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 20 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 21

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to clause 21 which reads as follows:

Amend clause 21 of the printed Bill:

(a) by adding the following subsection after subsection (4):

“(5) Notwithstanding any other provision in this Act, where dues and the manner of payment are set out in a licence or agreement respecting a period mentioned in this section, no changes may be made during that period respecting those dues or the manner of payment except in accordance with the licence or agreement”;

(b) by renumbering subsections (5) to (8) as subsections (6) to (9).

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure, on behalf of the member for Regina Dewdney, to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues in the Assembly, 29 students that are seated in the west gallery. They're from grade 3 and 4 at Stewart Russell School. They've had a tour and they're now going to watch the proceedings for a few minutes longer and be on their way.

They have with them today their teacher, Terry Thomas. And my eyes not quite being what they used to, I do believe that's the same Ms. Thomas that had taught my son and daughter. And so I'm just very pleased to welcome her here, and the chaperons, Mrs. Kossatz and Mrs. Ingram.

I'd like to have all members give the students, teachers, and chaperons a warm welcome to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 20
(continued)**

Clause 21

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 21 as amended agreed to.

Clause 22

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to clause 22 which reads as follows:

Amend clause 22 of the printed Bill:

(a) by adding the following subsection after subsection (4):

“(5) Notwithstanding any other provision in this Act, where fees and the manner of payment are set out in a licence or agreement respecting a period mentioned in this section, no changes may be made during that period respecting those fees or the manner of payment except in accordance with the licence or agreement”;

(b) by renumbering subsections (5) and (6) as subsections (6) and (7).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 22 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 23 to 25 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 26

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to clause 26 which reads as follows:

Strike out clause 26 of the printed Bill and substitute the following:

“Fees for forest management

26(1) The fees for the renewal, protection, development and management of forest products are to be paid, in accordance with section 22, to:

(a) the Crown; or

(b) a forest management fund established:

(i) by the licensee; or

(ii) by any person designated by the minister.

(2) Where those fees are paid into a forest management fund established and administered by the licensee or any person designated by the minister, the licensee or other person shall ensure that those fees are used for the purposes of renewal, protection, development and management of forest products as set out in the licence or regulations, as the case may be”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 26 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 32 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 33

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess there’s a few questions I have in this particular clause, when you look at the situation. And I’ve only got about maybe 5, 10 minutes here — and also an amendment.

I guess the first question I have for the minister is in reference to an article that was shared with you dated June 7, 1996 in which it’s a personal viewpoint of a writer, a Saskatoon resident. And I can’t pronounce his name, but I believe it’s Thijs Kuiken. And I’m just going to quickly read just a few paragraphs of that if I may, and I quote:

Last week, I flew from Buffalo Narrows to Dore Lake in a float plane and passed over kilometre after kilometre of nearly untouched wilderness, a beautiful patchwork of dark green spruce trees, light green aspen and grey-green muskeg interspersed with lakes and rivers.

And they also spoke about the people that live in the area around Dore and Smoothstone Lakes, and I quote:

The people . . . in the area . . . carry out a number of activities, including fishing, hunting and trapping fur animals. By and large, they have not had a major impact on the forest ecosystem.

Then he goes on to talk about, you know, the wonderful land that we have and the beautiful trees and the fact that the northern part of our province is just an absolutely beautiful place to be.

And he also goes on to state that:

We who live in Saskatchewan are lucky because we still can choose whether we want to keep this forest as it is. Many people in the world have no such choice.

For example, in the Netherlands where I used to live, most natural forests were cut down several centuries ago. What remain are man-made plantations, raised for the production of wood. In such plantations, the trees are planted in rows, hardly any plants grow on the forest floor and few birds or mammals are present.

Then he goes on to talk about other areas like Guatemala where they’re cutting forest down at a alarming rate, and that of course is going to have a drastic effect on the pattern of rainfall. And

then he also speaks again about his personal viewpoints:

I do not wish to present these viewpoints here or to pass judgement on them. But I want to make clear that the forest is still there and that we who live in Saskatchewan can choose to use it wisely or not.

Now these are some very positive, powerful statements by this writer. And I share that with you, Mr. Minister, to indicate to you the extreme balance that we must achieve between the development of the forestry industry as well as the sustainable management of that industry, plus the fact that we need to also look at the role that the northern people play in preserving some of the forests and certainly maintaining a positive balance.

And the big thing when we speak about co-management, and we’ve been dealing with this issue on a number of occasions here, and I share with you a press release from Weyerhaeuser Canada. And I’d like to ask one of the pages to take this to the minister.

And this is the extreme important matter that I speak about when we talk about your interpretation on the difference of co-management versus advisory committee. And I turn your attention, Mr. Minister, to the second page. And this letter is from Steve Smith, the vice-president of Weyerhaeuser. And I quote from his press release:

Smith says the idea for the new committee was to provide advice to Weyerhaeuser in its planning. There are no plans for a committee or board that would have the power to decide where harvesting can take place, Smith says. The authority is vested in the Minister of SERM.

In reference to some of the different ways that the people of the North view the roles of co-management and also the difference in the terms of how the different industries view the role of co-management.

And I put it to you, Mr. Minister, first of all what’s your interpretation of co-management; and secondly, as Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), you do have that authority; is there any way through this Act that you can return the authority to the local co-management boards to really justify their position when it comes to the balancing needed for the environment versus business.

(1415)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I think the key word in your comments was balancing, and certainly we all want a sustainable forest industry; we all want jobs; we want economic opportunities. And it is a balancing act. And certainly the role of advisory boards, co-management boards, is to provide input, and we as well as industry are cooperating and working with groups, hearing what they have to say. And although perhaps the forest company does not have to adhere to every particular thing, a lot of ideas brought forward are being incorporated.

For an example, environment impact assessments were not required, but because of the people lobbying for such a thing,

the forest companies are all . . . either have completed or are in the process of doing this. And we will continue to have this input from the public and there'll be more input because people are demanding such.

As you pointed out, other countries in the world don't have the opportunity and choices which we still have before us. So our goal is to work with the public and industry and come up with the best balanced approach possible.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I guess in essence we can talk about co-management and you have a number of forestry companies operating in the North. There's obviously got to be some guidelines or some framework to establish what a co-management board should be or have to look like. We shouldn't leave it to the interpretation of the forestry companies.

One forestry company could be doing really well in co-management while the other could completely disregard the whole system and the whole process saying, well we'll put these advisory committees in, period.

So I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that there has to be some effort, and I would strongly urge you to put in some kind of guidelines before this thing becomes implemented by next year, to try and determine what exactly is interpreted as a co-management board, and what authority the co-management board will have, especially when it comes into relation to the management of forest products.

And certainly the northern native people have a vested interest in seeing that this whole industry is managed properly and this would really clear the confusion, and it would for once set a precedent saying that yes, we are concerned about the environment, and yes we will listen to the co-management board, and yes we will ask them to help us protect the forest.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Certainly the definition of co-management boards . . . every one is different because every particular area that we have one, there's different issues, different groups of people involved. The key thing is to get the stakeholders and the people at the table and then decide what the terms of reference will be, what they would like to achieve.

And so we are certainly committed to working towards this goal. And the regulations, which you yourself are most welcome to participate in development of, we wish to address as many of these concerns as we can and do what's best for all the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In view of what you've said, I still have the very strong belief that there is a lot of confusion out there on the issue and authority of co-management boards. There are no clear rules, there are no clear guidelines, nor is there any interpretation for the role of co-management boards.

The people of the North deserve greater control over the extraction of all resources, which includes forestry. And that this control can only be achieved through two means: ownership of the resource industries and/or the participation of the industry through clear laws that grant greater power to local

co-management boards in this instance.

The fishermen, the trappers, the wild rice users, cabin owners, tourism industry, and the community people, have equal, if not a greater, vested interest in balancing environmental concerns alongside forestry industry.

The forestry industry has aspirations. And in order for us to all come to a true level of co-management in the pursuit of sustainable and equitable forest management, we must have good, solid co-management policies in boards, and powers. The people of the North must be finally heard.

We know that government cannot guarantee a balance on its own. Therefore the impacted and affected people deserve and must have the opportunity to ensure that forests are for ever, and that our children and our grandchildren can continue to enjoy the rich, natural forests in northern Saskatchewan.

Therefore I move a proposed House amendment to:

Amend clause 33 of the printed Bill by adding immediately after the words "the minister may enter into a forest management agreement with any person." the words:

"but whereas the excluded and impacted northern communities shall have equal or greater authority on management decisions of northern resources operating in their regions, but also seek partial ownership of the resource industries operating in northern Saskatchewan. Furthermore, in relation to this Act, there will be greater powers and authorities to local co-management committees to allow equal or greater influence with forestry and government parties on forestry management issues.

Thank you.

The Chair: — I thank the member for supplying us with the amendment earlier, and after looking at the amendment and relating it to the Bill, I find that the amendment to clause 33 as moved by the member from Athabasca is proposed in the form of a preamble and does not constitute an effective or operable amendment and is therefore out of order.

I refer members to Beauchesne's, 6th edition, citation 698(4)(b). I rule the amendment as out of order.

Clause 33 agreed to.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's a bit of confusion as to the reason the amendment was called out of order. I would like to get further clarification on that matter, please.

The Chair: — I will read the reason one more time. I would assume that if the member wants to challenge the Chair there are proper . . . The amendment to clause 33 as moved by the member from Athabasca is proposed in the form of a preamble and does not constitute an effective or operable amendment and is therefore out of order.

I refer members to Beauchesne's, 6th edition, citation

698(4)(b), and because of that rule, out of order.

Clause 34 agreed to.

Clause 35

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to clause 35 which reads as follows:

Amend subclause (b)(ii) of clause 35 of the printed Bill by striking out “in accordance with the regulations”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 35 as amended agreed to.

Clause 36

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose new clause 36 which reads as follows . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. I think according to Beauchesne’s, any new clauses should be dealt with at the last. We will go through all the clauses first. And then if you’re adding a new clause, it’ll come at the end of the Bill.

Clause 36 agreed to.

Clauses 37 to 51 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 52

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I propose an amendment to clause 52 which reads as follows:

Amend subsection (1) of clause 52 of the printed Bill by striking out “The minister” and substituting “Unless otherwise specified in a licence, the minister”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 52 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 53 to 75 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 76

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to clause 76 which reads as follows:

Amend clause (1)(e) of clause 76 of the printed Bill by striking out “22” and substituting “23”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 76 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 77 to 107 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 108

Mr. Krawetz: — I move that:

Clause 108 of the printed Bill is amended by deleting the words “on proclamation” where they appear therein and substituting the following words:

“upon consideration and acceptance by the Committee of the Whole of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly of regulations proposed pursuant to this Act”.

I so move.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 108 agreed to.

(1430)

Clause 36

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I propose a new clause 36 for the Bill, which reads as follows:

Add the following clause after clause 35 of the printed Bill:

“Changes, amendments and alterations

36(1) In this section, “terms” means those provisions in a management licence issued pursuant to section 19 of The Forest Act or in a forest management agreement entered into after the coming into force of this Act respecting:

(a) the rights of the holder of the licence or agreement for the harvesting of forest products;

(b) the area within which the licence rights apply and the location, quantity and type of forest products specified in a licence or agreement; and

(c) the compensation for the loss of improvements and forest products respecting land withdrawals.

(2) No changes, amendments or alterations shall be made to terms set out in a management licence issued pursuant to section 19 of The Forest Act, except in accordance with the licence, until the first extension date of that licence after the coming into force of this Act.

(3) At the first extension date of the licence mentioned in subsection (2) and at every second extension date after that, the licensee and the minister may agree in the licence to the manner of changing, amending or altering the terms, and no changes, amendments or alterations shall be made to those terms for the 10-year period following that extension date except in accordance with that licence.

(4) At each extension date mentioned in subsection (3), where the licensee and the minister do not agree in the licence to the manner of changing, amending or altering the terms, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting those terms.

(5) Subsections (3) and (4) apply, with any necessary modification, to a forest management agreement.”

Amendment agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officials here today and for their work during the past years in bringing forward this very complex Act. And I appreciate their help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and his officials for coming in today and for answering our questions, and we look forward to working with them in the future and hope that this Bill fulfils the need that is out there in the manner that we all hope it prescribes.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 111 — An Act to amend The Teachers’ Life Insurance (Government Contributory) Act

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

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

Bill No. 112 — An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits 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. 96 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan 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. 97 — An Act to amend The Department of Agriculture Act

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

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

Bill No. 20 — An Act respecting the Management of Forest Resources

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 20 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 92.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 120 — An Act respecting the Reorganization of Labour Relations between Health Sector Employers and Employees

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act.

As all members know, part of the health reform process in Saskatchewan involved the creation of health district boards. As the health delivery system has been reorganized, there has been some concern and perhaps some confusion over the issue of union representation and jurisdiction. The health reform process has established new employment relationships.

As the health district system continues to evolve and health services are integrated, old employment relationships will also need to evolve. I think we can agree it is desirable to promote the integration of the delivery of health services as well as develop consistency regarding the terms and conditions of employment amongst health sector employers and employees. Given that the need to examine collective bargaining structures in the health care system becomes quite clear, these are complex issues that cannot be resolved solely on the basis of existing practices and tradition.

The Trade Union Act does not provide the Labour Relations Board with the necessary scope to enable it to address many of the specific issues faced by the parties in the health care sector. While our system works best if contentious issues can be worked out by negotiation and consensus, it is not always possible to resolve the issues in this way.

When the health district boards were created four years ago, both the employers and unions determined that the best way to resolve the issues facing them was through bargaining and consensus. This government is committed to that collective bargaining process.

Both parties should be commended for what they have achieved. However, it has become apparent that not every issue could be resolved within the legislative framework of The Trade Union Act, yet the need for a resolution of these issues is beyond dispute. Hence the legislation before us here today.

I want to point out to all members that both the Saskatchewan

Association of Health Organizations — SAHO — and the health sector unions support this legislation and the appointment of a commissioner to address these issues.

Mr. Speaker, this is the crux of this legislation. It is a way to have an independent, objective look at the outstanding labour relations issues in the health care sector. It is an attempt to resolve outstanding issues without the acrimonious debate and potential work stoppages.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us is a way to resolve outstanding labour relations issues in the health care sector fairly and effectively. This Act will require the appointment of a commissioner to look into the current collective bargaining structures in the health care sector.

It requires the commissioner to consider many things, including new employment relationships that have been established as a result of the restructuring of the delivery of health services pursuant to The Health Districts Act; the need to promote the integration of the delivery of health services; the need to facilitate the development over time of consistency in terms and conditions of employment amongst health sector employers and employees; the history of trade union representation amongst employees of the health sector employers; and the need to promote orderly collective bargaining between health sector employees and employees.

(1445)

Perhaps at this point, Mr. Speaker, I should mention the scope of this legislation includes all district health boards and their major affiliates. This includes all denominational hospitals and other facilities approved under The Hospital Standards Act and the special care homes licensed under The Housing and Special-Care Homes Act.

Members should also be aware that because no health district boards have yet been established in the North, many northern health services may not come under the scope of the commissioner's inquiry. I think it is clear why this legislation is needed and what it will do.

It is needed because the health system is changing. The collective bargaining structures within the system should reflect that change. In order to identify how those bargaining structures might best ensure harmonious employer-employee relations, the commissioner will examine all of the relevant issues.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to say a few words about how this legislation will in fact achieve its goals. The legislation before us is an enabling Act. While it allows for a variety of outcomes, none are guaranteed. The purpose of this legislation is to deal with some very real issues in the health sector, but it does not do this by presupposing a solution and then imposing that solution on the parties.

Rather it establishes a mediated approach that makes possible a reasoned, comprehensive inquiry into the outstanding issues. And it provides a means whereby the results of that inquiry can be used to fashion a workable solution to the issues with which the respective parties must deal.

The Act will require the commissioner to make regulations which will provide a new framework for collective bargaining in the health care sector. However, those regulations must be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. And it will enable the Labour Relations Board to deal with implementation issues following the enactment of those regulations.

During the commissioner's examination, the jurisdiction of the Labour Relations Board to hear applications regarding appropriate bargaining units and the trade union jurisdiction will be suspended. The board's jurisdiction will be reinstated on the earliest of, 90 days after the regulations are submitted to the minister, or the date the regulations are filed, or on a date set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Mr. Speaker, both employers and employees in the health system have shown courage, they have shown vision and understanding, in this process. They have shown courage to meet the challenges of change head on.

It would have been easy for either side to retreat to the traditional adversarial roles of collective bargaining, but they chose not to. They have shown an understanding that we must set aside adversarial roles to meet the challenge of change.

Because of the vision they share, that of an effective health system meeting the needs of all, it's important that narrow, partisan considerations be set aside.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to call on all members of the Assembly to support this legislation before us. And there are at least early indications that that support is there, because it's a request made to this Assembly by parties on both sides of the issue who seek a remedy.

Now is the time to examine how rational collective bargaining structures can best protect health interests of the people of Saskatchewan. The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act establishes the parameters for an inquiry into that question. It does not impose preconceived solutions. However, I am confident that with the help of the commission, the parties can find those solutions. And in doing so it will further strengthen the health system by providing the stability that that system needs.

I want to commend both the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and the unions that represent their employees for their good faith and willingness to work together to find a common cause and a common solution.

Today those of us in this Assembly are called upon to do our part. That is what this legislation is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to inform the Assembly that his Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of this Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly. And I move that Bill No. 120, An Act respecting the Reorganization of Labour Relations between Health Sector Employers and Employees, be now read a second time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we thought we'd seen all the Bills this government would introduce a long time ago, particularly considering when they seem to want out of the House so badly. Perhaps it was just an opportunity for the Labour minister to have one last kick at the cat before he goes west, north, east, or whichever he may choose.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, it seems a bit late into the session to be introducing this Bill. However, fortunately we . . . because this Act was in fact mentioned in the throne speech, we did some preliminary research on it. And we were also lucky enough to get some opinions and some legal advice on short notice.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill seems to be a positive step for health care unions. Finally this government has decided to listen to what the people want. In this case it may only be because it has little effect on the government, or it may be because this Bill, like all other legislation they have introduced this session, gives even more power to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, as we understand, this Bill was actually generated by the health care unions. They were looking for a more efficient bargaining process. The current system was full of jurisdictional issues and made the process confusing and probably less effective. After initiating the process, they got the support of SAHO, and then finally got the government involved. However the district health boards have not seen this legislation.

I'm sure if the government let the people generate more legislation and took less of a top-down approach, we would come up with more laws that are supported.

Mr. Speaker, the unions' suggestion was to have a commissioner appointed who would make the decisions on the restructuring of unions. When the Health minister talked about this Bill last week, he assured people that this process would be independent from his government.

Mr. Speaker, this is a real concern about this Bill. If the government can indeed keep out of the process and let the review be independent, we will not object to the Bill. However, if the government plans on using this Bill to play controlling, political games, we will object.

I'm absolutely certain that when the unions approached the government it was with the clear intent that the commissioner would remain free from government control. This is something we will be watching for when this legislation is implemented.

Mr. Speaker, any questions that we have concerning this Bill, we can ask in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the minister as he gave his reasons for the Bill, or the piece of legislation that has been brought to this Assembly at the late hours of a lengthened time period in the Assembly. And while I

can concur with the fact that there appears to be some working arrangement between SAHO and the unions regarding the implementation of this Act and this Bill, there are still some questions to be asked.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I have a few concerns on the basis of what do the membership at the bottom of the ladder basically say about the Bill. When you look at the piece of legislation, the fact that the unions themselves are saying we need to have better ability or more of an ability to bargain and represent our membership — I can see some real problems emerging in the fact that we have . . . with regards to the number of different bargaining units across this province.

And while there is certainly a positive attitude about getting into and having one arm to bargain, the problems that may arise, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that as we look at the changes in health reform and the changes in health care and the delivery of health care in this province, we have many people who may say, well on the top — as union members, if you will — may say, yes this sounds like a good piece of legislation. And it certainly answers some of the concerns we have about the process of jobs and the opportunity for jobs, because if the hospital I happen to be working in today happens to shut down some more beds and I'm on the bottom of the ladder in my hospital, by amalgamating the working process and bargaining process, I then have the ability to move from this specific hospital to another jurisdiction and find myself a job.

But what people may not realize is, the person in this other hospital all of a sudden where they felt quite comfortable in the fact that their facility may stay open, that they would have a job as you amalgamate and form one union or one bargaining unit, all of a sudden these individuals may find they are not in that position of having that job specifically waiting there for them.

And so it appears to me that there are some concerns that need to be raised and need to be addressed, Mr. Speaker. And we talked with SAHO yesterday, who certainly have been in contact with some of the unions. And we've had, as far as the union leadership, there's quite a positive feeling towards this piece of legislation before us. As far as SAHO, there's a positive feeling towards the piece of legislation before us.

But as was just mentioned, one has to ask, what about the district boards in general and the people who were elected across this province, and the people who deal directly with the employees? If there's a concern I have, it's the fact that I look at the piece of legislation in front of us and there is no appeal from an order or decision of the board pursuant to this Act.

And I can see, Mr. Speaker, as a representative in this Assembly, when individuals are all of a sudden confronted with the realities of this piece of legislation, whether it's tomorrow or two or three years down the road, there are going to be people coming to me. What can you do to help me? I'm working in a facility that continues to function, and yet all of a sudden someone from 200 miles away has the ability to come in. And because of their seniority, I find myself without a job. And I find as well, I don't even have an appeal process. There is no mechanism for me to appeal the decision.

I also find that this piece of legislation certainly gives a lot of powers to the commissioner. Now if the commissioner is going to take the time to listen and take the time to really review and talk to people who will be affected and then come up with a sound decision that seems to be agreeable to everyone, then we can certainly agree with that. We can certainly appreciate that.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, as I review the Bill, there seem to be some areas of this Bill that seem to be fairly Draconian in the piece of legislation. And I feel that we should allow a little more of a time period to debate this Bill and to get some more feedback.

And the reason I'm speaking here this afternoon is so that we can bring out some of these concerns and hopefully get some feedback from the people at the bottom level, and not just the union leadership but some of the membership and even directorships within the districts and those members of the boards that have been elected to represent the individuals.

And to allow that process to take place, at least through the weekend and into the first part of next week, I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

(1500)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

The Chair: — Let's begin by inviting the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We'll be assisted today in our deliberations by Vic Taylor, the assistant deputy minister of Social Services; by Richard Hazel, who is the executive director, family and youth services division; by Phil Walsh, who's the executive director of the income security division; by Deborah Bryck, who is director of our child day care division; and Bob Wilhlidal, who is our director of the budget branch.

Item 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, and I welcome your officials today.

Mr. Minister, the last time that we were looking at estimates in this House, I was asking some general questions, and I would like to resume some of those general questions.

At the time that we adjourned the last time, I was talking about safe homes for victims of abuse that are available to women and children across the province. And I do believe you gave me a number of locations of those safe homes that were located throughout the province.

What I would like to do right now . . . I believe I didn't really specify what I was getting at there. I wanted to know how many

of those safe homes are located outside of Regina and Saskatoon. There's a safe home or some sort of shelter for women in the province, other than Saskatoon and Regina; and where their locations are, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, outside of Regina and Saskatoon would be the following transition or interval or safe houses, safe homes for families fleeing domestic violence.

They would be the Battlefords Interval House in North Battleford. The Moose Jaw Women's Transition Association house . . . the Moose Jaw transition house in Moose Jaw. There is the Yorkton Women in Need Shelwin House in Yorkton. The La Ronge native women's organization. The Southwest Crisis Services in Swift Current. Wichihik safe shelter . . . oh, check that, that's in Regina. There is the Hudson Bay Crisis Centre. There is the Prince Albert and District Community Service Centre.

Beyond that . . . Those are all funded by the Department of Social Services. There are two other safe houses in the province which are funded by the federal government — Indian and Northern Affairs Canada — and they fund the shelter in Meadow Lake and one in Fort Qu'Appelle. If you add to those, that list, the shelters in Regina and Saskatoon, we have a total of 13 in the province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like you to refer . . . I'd like to refer you, rather, to my concern about safe shelters for children. And as you well know, I have a grave concern about children on the inner streets in Saskatoon and Regina and throughout the province for that matter.

I guess we're struggling to try to find a way where we can have a safe house for children, particularly child prostitutes, that are on the streets in Saskatoon. The numbers are escalating, and I do believe that we are working towards a civilized society and a society that does value not only our children but our women and our young girls because we have to acknowledge that in fact they do have great value if given a chance in this province.

As far as funding for a continued outreach program out of Egadz in Saskatoon, I understand from talks with you just yesterday, that orders in council may be made or granted by Social Services in order to fund emergency situations or situations that have come up that merit, in your opinion, merit having those funds for. And so at this time, I can see no greater need really, because of the violence and so on that's associated with this, but mainly the assault on human dignity that is also associated with this situation and this problem.

So I would like to get some clarification on orders in council. From my conversation with you yesterday, I understand that orders in council have to be granted the year previous to in fact the funds being accepted. So in fact if Egadz would have asked you for money to finance the outreach program, funding of which is over by the end of this month, this month of June, they would have had to make a request for that a year previous. I'm presuming that with escalating numbers of people in trouble in that area, that they would have certainly done this. I think they would have asked for it.

So I'm asking you if there was a request by Egadz and in fact the community of Saskatoon — inadvertently it is that — to fund the outreach program for the year 1996-97.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I want to just, before answering specifically the member's question, I want to say how much I appreciate, and I think all members of the House appreciate, her concern for this issue and the concerns she has brought to this House about that issue. While I may not have available to me some of the solutions on an immediate basis as the member would desire, there is no question we appreciate her interest in this issue.

And if I may say, many of the observations which the member from Humboldt has made around this issue I fully agree with. She brought to the attention of the House yesterday the need for we, as a community and a society, to deal with those men who are abusing the children of our communities, because it's nothing but abuse. And we as a community and a society need to find mechanisms to deal with those individuals.

As we look at the needs of the young children in this regard, we need to look at the broad package and we know that many people, particularly in Saskatoon where this issue is of much importance — in other communities as well, but particularly in Saskatoon — there has been a great deal of work done by agencies and groups within that community, around the mayor's task force, and so on.

The Egadz program, as the member will know, consists of a variety of programs. One of them has been the outreach program. Much of the Egadz program is funded by the Department of Social Services and has been for some time. I was checking my notes. The department provides \$283,000 to Egadz for three separate programs: the drop-in centre, the back-to-school program, and the day support program. The outreach program, as I understand it, began and existed with a three-year project funding from the federal government which began in 1992, which funding essentially was ended in 1995. And Egadz, I think has been able to find, through internal resources, the ability to carry the program on. But the federal funding has disappeared and that has presented the challenge or the problem for Egadz.

To the member's very specific question, Egadz has not approached the Department of Social Services in a formal way or at least to the central office. There was an application made from Egadz to the Department of Justice. They sought some funding under the victims assistance program to continue this street outreach program. In doing their budgeting, that proposal was not approved by the Department of Justice. And I'm also aware that there has been some approach on a more local basis from Egadz to the Saskatoon region of the department. I think that's more recently.

Just to be clear with the member, Mr. Chair, in terms of how programs are initiated and funded. It is typical that if a community group has a project which they believe merits funding, that they would make application either through existing programs or through a direct approach to the department. So as we move into our budgetary planning for the budget year, we would consider all of those applications or

program initiatives or suggestions as we put together the budget.

And I don't hesitate in saying there are always more worthy applications and programs than we'll have the resources to meet. That's almost inevitable. And every year we have to go through that very difficult process of trying to allocate the resources where we believe they can be best utilized.

After the budget is established, some aspects of department work, the issuance of social assistance cheques, the payment of our workers and so on, become functions of the department. However, when we want to provide funding to a third party, we will do that through an order in council. But the order in council is simply authorizing payment of budgeted amounts to a third party. So we work from the global budget, although some of that money must be authorized through orders in council.

Now this is not to say that in an extreme circumstance, the department could recommend to the cabinet an order in council calling for new monies. Now that, however, would represent an overexpenditure above and beyond what we would have budgeted.

In terms of the Egadz youth project, and we've just not had an opportunity as yet to complete our conversations around this, I'm hoping that you and I could sit down together further around the Egadz and the outreach program and the possibility or potentials that might exist for a safe house in Saskatoon; that we might work together and that we might together approach our federal colleagues and see if there isn't some means by which in some combination we could begin to address both the issue of the outreach work at Egadz, but perhaps even more important, the issue of a safe house in Saskatoon.

Just on that subject, we have had at least some limited experience about the safe house concept in Saskatoon. There was established within the walls of the St. Paul's Hospital an area which was described and suggested to serve as a safe house for children and youth in trouble; not simply in the area of child prostitution, but children and youth in crisis or difficulty in Saskatoon.

The experience there I think demonstrated a number of things. It was not entirely successful. That may have been simply because of its location in a large, formal institution. I think we've had some learnings from that.

I think before we re-establish something like that, we'd look at all the options. You would understand that to provide a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week, 52-week-a-year safe house is a relatively expensive proposal unless we can team up with some other existing programing perhaps. And we'd want to be careful, I think, if we were going to just establish a standalone safe house, that that would be the very best use of those resources, given all of the needs of those young people, children in need, in the inner city.

I'm certainly willing to work with yourself, and I think the two of us can perhaps work with some of our federal colleagues to look at some real options.

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much. And I thank the Minister of Social Services and the member from Humboldt for the courtesy.

Seated in the west gallery is a group of students which I'm very pleased to introduce on behalf of my colleague and friend, the member from Rosetown-Biggar. We have from Mildred a group of 24 grade 10 and 12 students who are here visiting, spending some time in the Assembly, and having a tour of the building later on. They are accompanied by teachers and chaperons Nicole Lay, Trisha Groves, D.J. Bursaw, Debbie Sparks, Lorraine Fennell, and Donna Keith.

I hope that you are going to have a fine time while you're here in Regina and in the building, and I will ask all my colleagues to join me in extending a warm welcome to all of you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1515)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Item 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you kindly, Mr. Minister, for that explanation. As time goes on in this House, a lot of things fall in place and a better understanding of what has I guess transpired in the past and what has been successful and what hasn't is certainly valuable to me.

Mr. Minister, when you had talked about the federal government funding the outreach program for three years, was that money that they gave specifically for that program, above and beyond any other payments or any money that came from the federal government to the provincial government for social services?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'm just consulting my notes again. And they indicate that in 1992, Egadz received a three-year project funding of 50,000 per year from the federal health promotions directorate. And so it was direct funding from the federal government to Egadz. That would be above and beyond any of the transfer payments to the province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, on the document you have there with you, is it stated that that was under the name of a specific program or for what specific reason did the federal government grant this? Did they have some sort of funding available for programs of that type at that time that they don't have at this time?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I can share with you the information I have, and I don't have a lot, about that program. It's indicated here that it came from the federal health promotions directorate for the "purpose of assisting street youth meet their health needs". I suspect that Egadz designed the outreach program sort of under those broad parameters that would have fell then under the parameters of the health promotions directorate.

It indicates that the project has a prevention and education focus while assisting youth to access existing medical resources.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You had made mention of the use of St. Paul's or a portion of it for a program that was in place for awhile to assist youth at risk. I won't get into any in-depth figures or what not. I'm not going to ask you those kind of things. But what I would . . . obviously the program didn't work because of the institutional structure that you mentioned. That sort of leads myself to thoughts about White Spruce and how in fact that's going to work in an institutional structure also. I think I'll get to that after though.

Is there any chance then, if in fact an institutional structure of that kind didn't work, that perhaps a safe house or some kind of a complex that may be donated by the city of Saskatoon, as far as tax exemptions and possibly a donation of some sort of structure for this, is it feasible to think that the Department of Social Services— if in fact the federal government would assist us with this in let's say splitting the cost of the ongoing treatment and staffing and so on — would the department of Social Services . . . do you think the Department of Social Services here would be willing to look at the funding of the ongoing program that may be needed through the safe house set-up?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think . . . of course the member will understand that the minister would not commit sight unseen to any program expenditure. In terms of the conversations that we might want to participate in, in looking at potentials in Saskatoon, around the potential of a safe house, I think you're right. We should appropriately speak with the city of Saskatoon, the municipal body. We may want to be in conversation with the district health board who is doing a fair bit of their own kind of programing in that area.

We'd certainly want to work with the groups that have been involved in the mayor's task force and groups like Egadz. And I think together we would want to work with the federal government.

The challenge is to put the concept of a safe house into the continuum of services. I think we both agree that a safe house alone is not the answer to the problem. It may provide some answer to the need of some, but clearly there is a broader problem we really have to put this in the context of.

So I think all of that put together means that we just have to sit down and see what the options are. The potential that was hoped for in St. Paul's is that here you have an institution that is open 24 hours a day and fully staffed. The potential of finding another option like that, I don't know how great that is. But it certainly would assist the work if you can find some

circumstance which already exists on a 24-hour basis and not have to staff separately to provide the work.

I as minister, and I know the department, would sure be willing to look at whatever options we can maybe create to try and meet the need.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Chair, I ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in the Speaker's gallery, we have a wonderful group of students from Lintlaw School. They are students that are in grade 3 and 4, and they're in Regina today to observe the proceedings of the legislature and to enjoy some of the other sights and happenings around Regina.

I would like to welcome them, and along with them, their teacher, Gwen Olshewski, is here and chaperons Joy Guy, Carol Smith, Bob Schindel, and Colleen Foster. I do hope that they are all here, and they were all able to make it.

Your MLA, Ms. Draude, could not be here today. Something came up, and she had to leave. So on her behalf, I would like to welcome you to the Assembly. And I hope that you have a great time in Regina, and I'd like the Assembly to join me in welcoming this group.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Just before I again recognize the member, you, I suspect inadvertently, used the proper name of a sitting member, and I just draw that to all members' attention; that's not in the rule book.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have to make mention to them; you are going to get your drinks after. I'll meet with you a little bit later on. Thank you. . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I don't know. I think being in the Assembly they may get bull burgers. But anyway.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Item 1

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, we'll go off the topic of the safe houses. And I'd be interested in knowing what your forecast is for the number of people that may be on social assistance at this time next year.

It seems that this is growing, this number. There are currently over 82,000 people on social assistance in the province, and if there's any way of calculating or estimating how many people there may be on social services, I would appreciate having that number.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just to be clear. I think I heard the member suggest that in fact case-loads are going up when in fact they're going down. Perhaps not moving down as quickly as any of us would like, but the fact of the matter is they are going down.

Year over year . . . We're now in the month of June . . . Well I guess . . . (inaudible) . . . No I can't do June; we're not finished June. Let me go back to the month of May. In the month of May, 1994-95, the total number of cases — this will be households, not individuals, but households — the number of households then were 41,284. In '95-96, the month of May, it was 41,236 — a small, a small decline. But in this year's May, it's 40,850, for a decline of, year over year, 386.

And we are showing these trends month after month, year after year, that the case-load is gradually reducing. I guess the best that I could do by way of projection for a year from now would sort of take that gradual reduction line and extend it and see where we might be.

I'm hoping that as we move through the process of redesigning social assistance, that in fact we will see a more rapid decrease of the actual number of households, the actual number of cases, receiving social assistance. But we have seen, over the last few years and month over month, declines.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. As one goes through the days in this legislature, you're not always too sure whether or not you're hearing right or everything is changing with you. But I thought last week or the week before that one of the hon. members from the third party had spoken of welfare rolls on the increase — 82,000 as compared to 80,000. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Just if I may, Mr. Chairman, to the member — and I know she has not been in the House that long — I'm just going to give her a little advice: never believe a Tory number.

No, in fact what the Leader of the Opposition was doing was taking the month of — and I should have the article in front of me — he was taking the month of December one year and comparing it to the month of May or March in another year. You will see the fluctuations in the course of a year. The accurate comparison needs to be made months, as opposed to the month in the following year, so that you accept these seasonal trends.

I would suggest that the Leader of the Third Party was just playing a little mischief with the figures. But if you compare year over year, month to month, you will see a reduction in the numbers.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess people can play with numbers in any way or form. However the fact is, from my recollection — let's not even refer to the third party — my recollection of reading some of the stats, there was 80,000-and-some people on welfare as of December 1995. And I believe by the end of March it was, or March or April, it was 82,000-and-some.

So any way you cut it, we have, it seems to me, at this time 82,000 people that are receiving welfare. I'm not speaking of households; I'm speaking of recipients, in total. So is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Okay, Mr. Chair, we'll use — if the member prefers — we'll use individuals rather than households. And let me again go through the figures for May to May, or if she wants, we can go back to December to December. But it is important, again I remind her, that you go month of one year to the same month in the next year because of the seasonal changes.

If we look at May 1995-96, a full year ago, the total number of people receiving welfare in Saskatchewan — this is all individuals — was 84,269. In this May, the number is now 83,100, for a reduction of 1,169 people. So May over May.

Now if you go to December, for instance, of last year, you will find that in December — and this is traditionally the case — the case-load falls. And so in December of last year, yes, the case-load was 80,197. But if you apply that to the December before, it too is down about 300 . . . well not about, exactly 365 people.

So if you compare month to month, you will see the consistent reduction in the case-load, whether you look at households or individuals.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So from my recollection of my question prior to this last question I gave you and your answer, your answer was that you expected that the welfare rolls would decline within the next year. And I would then take it that from your explanation now, if the welfare rolls went down from 84,000 last year to 83,000 this year, that you're expecting it will decline by 1,000 within the next year — at least by 1,000 — within the coming year. Is that correct? Would that be a proper assumption?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, our officials remind me of an important caveat. While we've seen this gradual track down, and I guess if we were to just project it, we might see that same projection, but we do know as well that there are going to be changes. There are being changes made to unemployment insurance . . . or employment insurance now.

And that may . . . because we've seen that happen in the past when unemployment insurance benefits are reduced at the federal level, that in past has brought significant numbers of new people into the welfare case load. And so we're not yet sure what the most recent changes in UI (unemployment insurance), or employment insurance now, will mean to our case load.

With that caveat, if we could remove that factor, I would expect the trend line to continue. In fact I'd hope that with some expansions in the economy and with the kinds of changes we hope to institute in how we deliver social services, we'll in fact see more people coming out of social services.

I'm also reminded that the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is also reducing their funding this year by \$10 million to Indian

peoples across Canada, and that too may have some impact on our welfare case-load.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I would like to go on to some questions about your discussion paper on redesigning social assistance. But before I do, I want to ask you one last question. Of all of the people that are on social assistance in this province, of the 82,000 that are on social assistance in this province, do you have any calculation of how many live in rural areas?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The member asks about rural as opposed to urban case-load. Here we get into the little challenge of defining rural and urban. I tend to define urban as including the smaller cities of our province. So it becomes a little more complicated then because our department is organized in regions around the province and each region will contain perhaps an urban centre and a number of rural centres.

It may be of interest to the member, and if she wishes, what I can do is send her a copy that describes by office the case-load. So you would see that in the Regina region itself there are 19,741 individuals receiving benefits; in the Saskatoon region, 25,795. So those two figures together about 44 or 45,000 people would represent the case-loads in the two large urbans; the rest of the case-load throughout the province. But many of those cases will be located in cities like Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Yorkton, North Battleford, and so on.

What I will do, Mr. Chair, is have provided to the member at an early opportunity this, which gives her the specific numbers.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I have to leave momentarily. I'm going to turn over the questioning to my colleague from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to come back to the social assistance numbers for a minute and this I'm going to go month by month . . . month to the year. I'd like some numbers based on — you were talking December; I'm going to go January 1 — for the years '91 through '96.

I wonder if you've got numbers of cases for that time period. Then I'm going to make some comparisons, just check and see. I jotted down the ones you gave for May and then I think I got a couple regarding December. But if you could give me the numbers for '91 through '96 in January.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we do not have that available to us. We can make it available to the member, the month by month going back right to '91. What might be of interest to the member would be the average case-load over the course of the full year for each of those years.

In 1991-92, the average case-load — and here we're talking about households, not individuals but the case-load households — was 28,167; 1992-93, 32,904. Now note these numbers: '93-94, 38,561; '94-95, 40,224; '95-96, 39,874. And our estimate for the current year will be 38,138.

And I ask you to note the years '93-94, because you would recognize that in 1993-94, federal government unilaterally

ceased their support to treaty Indians off reserve. And so all of those folks in our province then came on to our system, and we also saw then the changes to unemployment insurance that were made at the federal level which brought yet the case-load up.

So after those federal changes, what we see is a steady decline — not as rapid I don't think as any of us would wish — but a steady decline over the last two and three years.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, I would appreciate basically a month by month just to make that a comparison you were talking of. And if you're going to do it just for January, maybe we could have, just so we can kind of graph it out as well for ourselves, as to what the numbers have been. And I'll give you some time to do that. I appreciate that.

The facts are, Mr. Minister, we have seen . . . and yes, you've indicated that part of the problem has arisen when the federal government shirked its responsibility for the aboriginal communities of this province. Not just this province, I think other provinces have faced the same thing. I guess the concern I have, Mr. Minister, and it should be a concern to you if it isn't, is the comments that the Premier had made back prior to 1991 about eliminating poverty.

And I just pick up today's paper, and I find it very interesting, headline in the paper is, "Christmas in July, a bid to restock food bank." And we had a gentleman in our church last Sunday evening shared about something that he and his wife had gotten involved in since he's retired from teaching, and something that came to their attention.

They were just wondering what they could do with their time to maybe help somebody who was less fortunate. And they got involved in Souls Harbor down on Broad Street. I'm not sure if you're aware of the program. I believe Souls Harbor actually operates totally independent of any government's assistance. And he was amazed to find the people that were coming to seek the assistance of that program.

And when I look at the headline here, it certainly doesn't speak well of our society when we find the food bank in the province, at a time when it appears we should be maybe looking at an upswing, certainly the agricultural sector . . . and I think the problem even in the agricultural sector is while we look at grain prices today, Mr. Minister, most people just see the price, and they kind of read a dollar value on an income into a farm family's pocket. But the expenses have also gone up, to a point that the bottom line hasn't changed a lot.

And I know that even some farm families I think were looking towards social assistance for some help. Because by the time they had all their bills paid and just paid the utilities, they weren't left with a lot to operate. And in some cases they came to social assistance seeking some help at different periods in their lives. And it's certainly unfortunate.

I guess the question I have, and I wonder quietly in my own mind, if we're endeavouring to try and help people, why have our rolls increased? And while you talk about this month they've decreased the . . . there's a minor decrease in the month of May over May of last year, I noted by the article in the

Leader-Post on May 30 there was actually 2,500 more on welfare than there were in December if you go comparing back months, three or four months, and so of course it shows the graphical line you have here.

The thing I'm wondering about, Mr. Minister, is what are we doing and what are you doing to address the problem in the fact that why should we have food banks operating or why should we have Souls Harbor, if you will, operating? I think there's nothing wrong with Saskatchewan people having an ability to give an offer of something that they've been blessed with. And I think Saskatchewan residents through the years have shown that they have an ability to reach out to those who are less fortunate.

It would seem to me that there must be some problems in our society when we find numbers like this on an ongoing basis of people on assistance. Is it because there's a lack of jobs? Is it because people have become accustomed to living on welfare and have just become so discouraged in the job opportunity?

Or is it because it's the way welfare metes out services or gives out services that people are . . . individuals are penalized that they would even take a minimum job and they'd lose their welfare. So at the end of the day, because they can't meet it with the job they've got that may only pay 7 or \$800 a month when if it's a say — I'm just using a number — a family of three would be looking at a possibility of in the neighbourhood of 11 to \$1200. And so therefore they're on welfare rather than taking the job and then having, if you will, an income supplement, if I can only use that word.

And I think maybe that's part of your paper as well, that you've been talking about welfare reform in this province. And I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could make some comments.

I think, Mr. Minister, we have to go beyond just handing out services to people. I think we need to encourage people. I believe there are many people on welfare today who would feel much better about themselves if they were actually working or had the opportunity to work.

And if the job that was available wasn't quite enough to meet the needs of that family, that there was something that would be a bit of a supplement or a top-up like we have with senior citizens.

And the other thing, Mr. Minister, as well I noticed a number of states . . . and certainly the province of Ontario is asking people to go to work. There are communities who . . . they just don't have the funds to pay everyone to work, but they're asking people on social assistance to come . . . here's a job right now that's available to you. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could comment on maybe some of your ideas as to how we address this case-load and how we address the number of people on welfare.

And I believe, Mr. Minister, it's imperative we do it because if it just goes from one family to the next, it almost becomes an inter-generational thing where individuals just feel they're almost like a failure in society. And some way or other, we've got to find ways of encouraging — and if it's through education

— and some assistance of finding ways for people to start giving them the opportunity to work.

Because I know an experiment was done through the '80s and certainly in the community of . . . Whitewood was a good example where the community did take on some welfare recipients under a former program. And over a period of six . . . five years I believe it was, they hired . . . two individuals made application, had a couple of individuals on an annual basis. And every year, Mr. Minister, they had to hire somebody else. It wasn't like going back to the person they had before. And in seven out of eight cases, Mr. Minister . . . is because that person who had been hired the previous year found full-time employment and was able to provide for themselves. There was only one individual who actually left the community because they got tired of being asked to go to work, went to another community that didn't have the program so they could just continue to live off the program.

And I think these are some things we need to look at. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could respond, because I don't know if we like the numbers. I don't know if you like the numbers as well. I think we need to find alternatives so that people don't have to rely on welfare, but also can feel good about themselves if welfare is available to them to meet a specific need.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I much appreciate some of the comments that the member has made. He's sort of given me quite a wide base on which to respond, and I'd like to touch, if only briefly, on some of the points that the member has raised.

Let me just go back to his initial observation about the Souls Harbor. I would like to tell the member that I have had the experience to be at the Souls Harbor, to visit with Souls Harbor, and I took one evening the opportunity to be there at the supper hour. And the Souls Harbor here in Regina on Broad Street is doing a great work among some people who are very desperate in their needs. They're providing a very hot and very nutritious meal to, on average, over a hundred people every evening.

Souls Harbor, like many of the charitable organizations, are too struggling for funding and looking to the community and looking to government to continue their valuable work. And I'm hoping that we can work with Souls Harbor. They've got their own fund-raising program on right now, and I would hope the community of Regina and beyond would be very supportive of the Souls Harbor because they're doing extremely important work.

(1545)

It is indicative of what the Saskatchewan spirit is, and that is to reach out and help our neighbour. We see that in our smallest communities; we see that in our largest communities; and it is really indicative of the Saskatchewan spirit. And as we look at the challenge of dealing with poverty in our province, it is my view that no one of us is going to accomplish this alone — no one level of government, no one charitable organization, no one municipality — but it will take a partnership and a working together to continue to work at poverty in our province.

If I may say on behalf of government, we see this as a very significant part of our mandate and challenge. And I really, frankly, wouldn't want to be part of a government or part of a legislature that didn't see the urgency of which you speak, and I think we all feel, around the issues of poverty particularly as this issue relates to children. We have the very unhappy circumstance of statistically having the second highest rate of child poverty in our province all across Canada.

This is not a happy circumstance. A happier circumstance is that we have the second lowest rate of poverty among seniors in our province. That's a happier statistic certainly. But our situation in terms of children is not a happy situation, and I don't . . . I'm sure all members would be committed to looking at options to change that.

The member speaks of some of the causes of poverty and he's absolutely right, there is not a single cause; it's a many-faceted issue. We've seen significant changes in our economy, in a very rapidly changing economy over the last decade and longer. We know that much of the poverty is related to the educational levels of individuals who may not find themselves able to participate in the economy.

We know that we live in a time of changing demographics — a fast-growing youth population, an urbanization in our province. We know that family structures have undergone significant change in household structures.

And then as well, as the member points out, we have in our own system of social services and social assistance, some structural disincentives for individuals to escape the welfare cycle, to move to independence beyond the system. And the member points out one of those structural deficiencies in our current system, and that is, in my view, the deficiency which, rather than encouraging individuals to maximize employment earnings — in fact, by the way, we deduct now your extra earnings over \$150, or whatever the amount — that becomes a disincentive to access your own private sector earnings or to access support payments from a matrimonial settlement.

And so we are, as the member knows, through our redesign proposals, proposing as a significant part of that redesign the creation of a working income supplement, where in fact we would seek to supplement the income earned by an individual, whether it be in the workplace or through other sources of income.

We also know that we need to combine all that we're doing in Social Services with all that we're doing in post-secondary and adult education, in the K to 12 system. We need to combine what we're doing with all the good work that's being done in re-establishing and building our economy.

And when I look into this economy of ours and see how it is growing, we want to try to ensure, while we see this economy growing, that it does provide entry level opportunities for individuals. And on this front, there are some very exciting things happening. And I'll just give the member one example.

He will have heard by now, I'm sure, of the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw which has just opened, creating

many new jobs in our community. Many of the people who are now working at the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa were people who were, to this point in time, unemployed. They undertook some very intensive training for the hospitality industry, and they are today working. And their children will know the support now of a working parent.

While these indications don't receive the big headlines, they are happening, and there are lots of signs of good news.

I repeat again, I appreciate the member's comments and his concern, and I think that working together within this House, in government, be it with the federal government and municipal governments, with business, with labour, and with the charitable groups like the Souls Harbor, we can begin to see some real change.

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

Mr. Ward: — To introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery I have two of the finest constituents in Estevan. They also happen to be two of the finest constituency assistants in Estevan. My two assistants that share the job in my office is Mrs. Denise Wright and Mrs. Marnie McKnight.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, I appreciate those comments. But what is your government actively doing at this time?

We've all heard, especially via the news media, that the province of Ontario is implementing a work program for welfare recipients. There was a Saskatchewan works program available in this province in the latter part of the '80s — and I'm not exactly sure when I referred to it a little bit — where a number of communities did take advantage of the program offering jobs to individuals in the community who were on social assistance.

As a result of that program, there were many individuals who found their way off assistance because they had an avenue whereby they could certainly build their job-training skills and certainly build résumés whereby they could go to an employer and say well this . . . I've worked for this person. Or I've been . . . or it might have been a program that some people grumbled at. But I know there were many people that I talked to who were really appreciative of the program.

Mr. Minister, what are you specifically doing today other than maybe looking at some things you may be doing down the road? Have you got anything, or any plans today, whereby you're helping people try and find some alternatives to welfare assistance?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'm sorry when I was on my feet earlier I forgot to address some of that part of the member's earlier statements. Some very specific things are happening now.

Let me say this. We have not taken . . . in terms of those who are receiving benefits and who are living in poverty, we have not taken the direction of many of the other provinces in Canada, which has been to reduce the level of benefits for families or to reduce the level of benefits for children or to reduce the level of benefits for the disabled.

We have not taken that course, even though we've seen that happen in other provinces. We have not either taken the course that we've seen happen at least in our neighbouring province of Alberta, which has been to provide to the poorest in Alberta one-way bus tickets encouraging those individuals to simply leave the province, which in fact did bring down their case-loads.

We have continued to believe that we have a responsibility to our neighbours in poverty.

In terms of programing to assist the movement from welfare to independence, we have, as the member will know because his government . . . And I would compliment he and other members of his government that pioneered this although there's been significant change in it. We have at work the New Careers Corporation which provides opportunities in significant number for people who are currently on welfare or receiving social assistance.

Under New Careers there's a number of programs being offered. There's a career planning and job search program. There are a number of work preparation centres in the province. There's the SSDP, the Saskatchewan skills development program. There is the community employment program. There is the work experience program. There's young careers. And there's simply a referral process through New Careers to jobs.

All of these programs providing opportunities for individuals to gain training or education to better equip them then to move into the active job market. While they're doing that, they for the most part are providing some very valuable community service to agencies across our province. The indication here is that this program last year will have offered opportunities for 8,740 people.

Now we also know that through the Department of Education we've had the JobStart-Future Skills programing going on.

The member will know that those who are accessing social assistance are each provided a social worker. When there is the ability to work, each individual who has that ability, through the work of their social worker, is encouraged and in fact required to be searching the job market for opportunities.

I do think, as we can move now to redesigning our social assistance system and as we look at changes in the training program and how we deliver the benefits, we can even build on this rather successful and substantive program.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, in regards to some of the discussion we've had regarding welfare recipients and individuals who might find themselves looking at social assistance or welfare for some help at a specific time, some specific complaints have been brought to my attention. And on one, I contacted your office. Unfortunately it's not much that could really be done.

This comes in regards to if a person has some kind of assets or some kind of assets that could be liquid assets. And in one case in particular, an individual who had been working ended up in a situation, I believe, where there was a separation in a household — a young family situation, actually. And this person while working had been putting money aside in an RRSP (registered retirement savings plan). And of course the policy in applying for assistance is that you've got to liquidate that fund.

And I guess the concern I have, the question I have, Mr. Speaker, is what happens down the road? We're basically asking . . . Someone has a specific need today. So you've got a little bit of money set aside for a retirement to kind of help you in the future, but we're telling you today you've got to liquidate those funds before we can give you any type of assistance.

Mr. Minister, if that person isn't able to really actively get back into the job force, ends on assistance for a long extended . . . or an extended period of time and, God forbid, ends up on assistance till the time they start drawing a pension and all they've got is the old age security and maybe not much Canada Pension because they didn't have really any opportunity to put into it, they're left with basically just being totally dependent on government for all of their lives.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if we couldn't review some of this. Now if you're looking at an RRSP that has ballooned to a substantial sum of money, that may be one thing. But if we're looking at fairly little or small sums of money, and we're basically asking someone to draw down before he even has a chance to build, Mr. Minister, are we not just encouraging people to continue to live on assistance rather than giving them the opportunity to . . . while they had a chance to put some money away, to let that build so that they are not totally dependent on government all their lives?

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could respond to that, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I certainly can respond, Mr. Chair. It's not a simple matter. We have in some ways, unfortunately I think, lost sight of the intention, the initial and underlying intention of what welfare or social assistance should be.

When in the 1960s we more or less gave shape to the system we have today, it was intended to be a short-term relief for short-term need and that welfare ought to be the program of very last resort; that one would only access the welfare system in the most extreme circumstances and then only for a short

period of time. Over the intervening years, unfortunately I think, we have come to conceive of welfare as being a life-time income security system for some.

It is a difficult issue when someone comes to access or to apply for welfare benefits with assets of their own. And the debate becomes I guess on how many assets should one be able to keep. Of course we allow individuals to keep their homes and so on. But if there are financial assets and we allow individuals to hold those financial assets, is that not in some way then encouraging some dependence on the system? That's the conundrum. That's the difficulty.

And if we are to allow some assets, and we do, what is the appropriate level? I know that . . . I don't think anyone would agree, if there are substantial assets in a bank account or in RRSPs or in other financial instruments, that we would ask the taxpayer then, through the welfare system, to support those individuals.

I recall being some months ago, at a meeting in Ottawa, and there was a big headline in the Ottawa newspaper about an individual in Hull, Quebec, who had saved a million dollars and was collecting social assistance. Well I don't think anyone would suggest that that's appropriate.

So it is a challenge to find a balance that encourages independence from the system, that encourages to understand that the welfare system should be a program of last resort, and yet not so completely destitute and bankrupt that there is no hope then of future.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, I do have an extended length of questions. But seeing as the member from Humboldt was gracious enough to allow me in a little earlier, if she would like to ask some questions that are related or some more of her questions, I'm more than prepared to give her that opportunity and get into further debate after the member from Humboldt has raised some of her questions.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, in the budget I noticed that the amount of full-time equivalent staff is not increasing for the fiscal year. Is this correct?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. It seems though the amount being paid out for salaries on a whole is increasing by over \$2 million for the 1996-97 fiscal year. Could you explain to me why more is being paid out for salaries when the number of employees has not increased and services are being cut?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — There would be perhaps some small other adjustments, but essentially the change would be because of the negotiated contract with our employees which has a small . . . the increase in it.

Ms. Julé: — So am I to assume from that comment that there has been an increase in wages for the employees?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes. Under the agreement bargained with SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union)

there are certain classifications which have had increase. That's been part of the public sector bargaining, widely known and widely discussed.

(1600)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess that's where I find a lot of difficulty within myself, trying to justify increases in wages. And I understand what you have to contend with, but none the less, in this day and age when we can see that there are needs such as the Egadz outreach program and safe houses that are not being met, we do certainly have to all take part in this and share. And the Egadz centre, I think with just a mere \$50,000 from this province could make quite a big change there for this outreach program to continue.

Mr. Minister, there has been some concern on the part of teachers and social workers in rural, and for that matter in urban Saskatchewan over the lack of aid with regards to children at risk. And it has been made apparent to me that the government's integrated services system isn't working as effectively certainly as was hoped.

Due to the fact that social workers have been cut back to part time in many rural areas, are there any provisions in this budget to ensure that teachers and others in a position of trust in rural areas will have access to social workers and social services promptly when dealing with children in need and families in crisis in rural areas?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think the member recognizes, by the preamble to her question, that we have been building and attempting to build a much more integrated approach through the child action plan, primarily between the Department of Social Services, the Department of Education, between our social workers, teachers in schools, and so on. In some circumstances now, we in fact have social workers working right in the schools.

If the member is aware of particular instances where she feels or where those who have been in contact with her feel that the integration or the communication isn't as good as it should be or there isn't that opportunity for immediate contact, I would hope that in each and every one of our regions there would be opportunity for immediate contact in the event of family crisis or child protection issues. If you're aware of some circumstances that are not functioning as well as we'd like them to, please let us know.

Ms. Julé: — I shall do. Mr. Minister, is there any allocation of funds in the budget to provide for a similar service, hopefully a service that is more effective as far as integrated services are concerned, to provide a similar service to rural areas in the province as well? Because I have spoken to a number of schools in the rural areas, and to have prompt attention to their needs is far from adequate right now. And so I'm wondering whether or not there has been an addition to the budget to provide some sort of a betterment, I guess I would say, to integrated services in the rural areas of the province.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the member . . . we're just trying to get some more precise numbers. But the member will recognize that . . . or we can sure provide it for her. Under the

action plan, the child action plan now, we try and bring together resources not just from the Department of Social Services budget, but also from Education, from Justice, from Health, focused around this integration of services.

We don't have the Education numbers with us specifically; we'll get them here. But this year for instance, there are new monies identified under Social Services in the area of some child-youth issues. But also there's some money coming in through Education for the integration of services.

So it's through a combination of budgetary efforts that we're hoping to build on the system that we've now built and gained some confidence in knowing that it can work. We're discovering it can work — that departments of government can work together. It can then work with community organizations, with local schools, with teachers, and provide better programing stretching those dollars that we all have so stretched already to an even greater extent and provide better service. So we're convinced by the Child Action Plan, the experience we've had thus far that it really can work.

There are new monies this year. Many of those new dollars in this area will be coming in through the Department of Education.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, do you yourself have meetings, I guess I would say, with the supervisors or directors of services or regional directors on an ongoing basis? Or are there a specific number a year you have with them in order for them to channel some of their concerns through you? And . . . well I'll leave it at that for now.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, to the member, since becoming minister, although we sort of got ourselves into the legislature not too long after I assumed the position, but I have had the opportunity, number one, to travel as much as I possibly can into our various regions and meet both our regional managers, directors, and front-line staff in their workplace. There are yet some stops that I have to make before I complete that tour.

I've also had the opportunity to meet with our regional directors as a group. The regional directors are brought together by the deputy minister and the associate and the assistant deputy minister on a regular basis . . . they come together.

It's my hope that when those meetings are occurring, if my schedule permits, that I can at least be there for a part of the meeting to have that conversation face to face with our regional people. I find it equally important that I speak with as many of our front-line providers as I possibly can.

Now the Department of Social Services has a very large workforce in all aspects of the department, so I don't propose that I could meet and speak with each. But as much as possible I try to be in the local workplace and meet the people in their local circumstances.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I would like to pose some questions to you regarding vote 36, just discussing family and youth services. I'd like to focus

specifically on some youth centres across the province and the funding that they've received.

I'm going to start off today with the North Battleford youth centre, and I presume that this is under your jurisdiction, is it? I wanted to talk about some of the youth centres in the province and their funding. Is this funding your responsibility or is it the Minister of Justice, or is it a combination? Can you answer these questions for me?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes, it is our responsibility. Whether I can answer your questions, we'll see. But yes, it's my responsibility; it is the Department of Social Services responsibility.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the North Battleford youth centre, as we well know, has been in the past plagued with some problems. And I understand that there was a Jackson report by Marion R. Jackson done in 1992. I have still some concerns because I still get some ongoing complaints. This place should serve an extremely valuable purpose and it is needed. And I really want to ensure that the centre is doing all it was designed to do.

So I would ask you first, in regards to the Jackson report, it was an independent review. All the costs of the review I understand were borne by the Department of Social Services. Can you tell me what the cost in fact of that review was?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I'm going to invite the member if she would please just finish her comment again. I was a bit distracted.

Yes, I'm certainly aware of the youth centre in North Battleford. I'm certainly aware of many of the concerns that have been raised about it, and I know that you've taken a particular interest in this yourself — the Jackson report; there has been an Ombudsman's inquiry; and there has been some ongoing concerns raised, particularly about the open custody facility, some specific concerns raised by the Children's Advocate.

And I've been involved with discussions with the department. And the department, I can report to the member, has been very, very actively, very actively looking at the concerns around the Battleford youth centre. And we hope within a relatively short period of time to be able to be making some announcements that we hope will provide some lasting solutions.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the Jackson report revealed some deficiencies within the centre which have resulted in ineffective communication, basically, and inconsistent practices throughout the facility. Some of the shortfalls included a shortage of qualified staff, difficulty in attracting staff, orientation and training deficiencies, conflicting ideologies of service delivery between program staff, case management staff, and care staff; a lack of accountability, a lack of consistent application of policies and procedures.

Ms. Jackson determined the need for development of a model of service which supports a more clearly defined philosophy between the balance of rehab, custody, and care requirements.

And I do believe you probably have got some of the notes in front of you, maybe, about this report and what the recommendations were.

Now there were 23 recommendations that were put forward by Marion Jackson. I want to know specifically how many of those recommendations were purposely worked towards and how many of them have yet to be looked at, I guess, or work towards in the future.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I would want to say that the department has taken all of the recommendations very seriously and has tried to address each of those. We don't sort of have a tally to say that no. 1 is done and no. 17 is half done or something, but each of the recommendations of the Jackson work has been taken very seriously by the department.

I have in front of me some rather lengthy notes about activities that have been undertaken in light of the recommendations made by the Jackson report. Perhaps I can just share some of them with you to give you a sense of things that have happened.

There are now, for instance, biweekly meetings of all unit staff to ensure that overall programing and administration are meeting the general needs of the resident population and specific needs of individuals.

There's an in-house UMAC, a Union-Management Advisory Committee, which is now meeting regularly to discuss and propose resolution of any issues that may arise between the union and management.

There is now an active in-house occupational health and safety committee which comprise both union and management representation, and that's to try and address some of the physical plant issues impacting on the health and safety of the residents and staff.

There are now regularly scheduled management team meetings including all of the supervisory staff to address the areas of general administration and program issues.

The recommendations, I can assure the member, have been taken very seriously and I believe we've moved some real distance in meeting the goals of the Jackson report.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the Jackson report was done in — what did I say? — December, 1992. So from the beginning of 1993 to 1995 there were 13 staff members that just within those two years that were off on, I would say, fairly extensive stress leave. And of those members that were off on stress leave, it seems that a number of them had been assaulted by youth. Why do you think that is happening? Why such a large number of kids assaulting the staff?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I think the member even in her comment recognizes that some of that extreme difficulty now is somewhat dated; that there has been some change since we had that real problem. I understand from some of the materials that I have with me here today that at one point in 1993 the number of staff vacancies had reached 17. That's how bad it got.

Now I think we do recognize we're dealing with here some very, very troubled youth, and in some cases very difficult young people. But I think we've also recognized as a result of the Jackson work and the Ombudsman and others that changes were required.

Some of those changes have been made and we're seeing now, I think, the result of some of those changes. The information I have now, or at least at the end of March, indicates that the staff turnover problem has significantly declined; that at the end of March there were only two social work positions vacant, one parental care supervisor, and they were presently in the hiring process.

So while we saw that, as you described, the difficulties of '93, hopefully now we're coming to much more stability in the centres as a result of some of the things I've talked about and other things.

(1615)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I understand that 90 per cent of the clients at the North Battleford youth centre are aboriginal people. Has the private sector ever been given an opportunity to run this place, particularly I have in mind the North Battleford tribal council. Have they ever been approached with the opportunity of running the place?

And if in fact there are 90 per cent of these clients that are aboriginal people, it seems to me that this would aid the aboriginal people in their desire to become responsible for their youth. Could you comment on that please?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Let me say to the member, we recognize the high representation of aboriginal young people in the facility. And again as a result of some of the concerns that exist, there has been some significant change made in our efforts around staffing. There has been now some aboriginal programming put in place in the centre. We're utilizing elders in a greater extent within the centre, and in fact have made efforts to involve aboriginal people in the staffing of the centre.

To your question of whether we have considered working with one of the tribal councils, Battleford or P.A. (Prince Albert) Grand Council, the answer is yes. We have had discussions with the North Battleford tribal council. You'll understand that we do have contractual obligations to our staff, and as these conversations proceed, we want to be sensitive to that and want to work carefully with the tribal council and with the existing staff and so on.

We're also working on a more broad base with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) province-wide on looking at strategies to deal with young offenders, as we have worked with the tribal councils or bands, in some circumstances, to provide child and family services on reserve.

In the North, we have arrangements and agreements with some of the bands to provide social assistance. And so we're working in a variety of ways.

We certainly don't reject working with either the band council

or the P.A. Grand Council or the FSIN. But it needs to be a careful process as we move towards it.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, for the sake of conserving some time, because I have a number of questions in front of me here and more extensive discussion than we can in fact take care of within the time limit, I think I would like to pose some questions to you of which I would like you to give me the answer in the days ahead. They will be of course documented through *Hansard*, so you can take it from there.

The questions are: (1) what is the total annual cost of running the North Battleford youth centre; (2) what are the total administrative costs; (3) what are the programming costs; (4) how much of the budget is federally funded; (5) what percentage of the budget is provincially funded; (6) what is the total annual cost of staff salaries; (7) what is the salary earned by the director; (8) how many female employees are on staff; (9) what percentage of youth at the centre are of native ancestry; (10) how many native employees are on staff; (11) how many staff members at the North Battleford youth centre have Bachelor of Social Work degrees; (12) how many staff members have been on long-term sick leave since 1991, in total; (13) which you've already answered, I had a question about which of the Jackson report recommendations have been implemented by the youth centre.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to continue today by asking some similar questions about the Dojack Youth Centre that is located in Regina. I understand that Dojack, and in fact Saskatoon and Regina youth and young offender facilities, get better resources, more money and programs, and more experienced staff. Whether or not that is completely the situation, I would like your comments on it first of all before I go on with more particular questions on that.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, if the member could just clarify a little, I believe she said Regina and Saskatoon, the Dojack and the Saskatoon facilities are getting more and better qualified staff than other . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . than North Battleford. I'll ask my officials and . . . Well let me say while I'm on my feet, I would not suggest that that is the case.

When we have opportunities for employment, those opportunities are advertised within the public service existing, and then they will be advertised to the public. And the positions will be advertised. And through the process of the Public Service Commission, for which I'm also responsible, I know that the selections are made on the basis of the best qualified applicants.

Now we recognize that in North Battleford there has been, as we pointed out earlier, some significant vacancies and staff turnover in the last number of years and I think a certain . . . some difficulties within that centre. But I would not want to suggest for a moment that we have in one facility more qualified people than in another facility. I just don't believe that to be the case.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess I make that . . . or I pose that question to you because I have not

heard and neither have the people of the province heard of as many difficulties arising from out of the facilities in Saskatoon and Regina as they do out of the North Battleford facility. So there must be some particular reasons for that. And I think that although assumptions may not be fair at all times, sometimes the stark reality of what's happening in front of us leads us to asking these questions and making that comparison.

Mr. Minister, again I would like to pose some questions to you of which I would be happy if you could answer in the days ahead. These questions are in regard to the Dojack Youth Centre. The same questions almost apply here. What is the total annual cost of running the Dojack Centre? Number two, what are the total administrative costs? Number three, what are the programing costs? Number four, what percentage of the funding is federally backed? Number five, what percentage of the funding is from the provincial government?

What is the annual cost of staff salaries? What is the salary earned by the director? How many female employees are on staff? And what percentage of youth at the Dojack Centre are of native ancestry? How many native employees are on staff? How many staff members at the Dojack Centre have Bachelor of Social Work degrees? And how many of the staff members have been on long-term sick leave since 1991?

I would pose the same questions to you about Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon.

Okay, I would like to move onto some talking about the discussion paper on the reform of Social Services. I have some questions about the evaluation of the system of Social Services. How often are programs offered by the Department of Social Services up for review and evaluation? The programs — how often are they up for review and evaluation?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I believe, Mr. Chair, at a minimum, every year. We are constantly trying to evaluate our programing. We have a very small but, I think, very effective research component within the department who, on a monthly basis, will be evaluating what's happening. On an annual basis, as we go through the budgeting process, we have to look at everything we're doing and say, is this the appropriate way to spend our budgetary expenses?

Now in the broad stroke when we talk about sort of, as we are here in the redesign paper, overall redesign of the way we provide social welfare for instance, this doesn't occur on this kind of scale as regularly. In fact I would argue we've been a little late in doing this broad evaluation of social assistance generally. This may be . . . this is about 30 years since we've given a real look at this.

But in terms of specific programs and the way things are working, it is almost a constant evaluation for sure, once annually, as we go through the budget exercise.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, there must be a process in place that has some mechanisms that are currently in place that ensure that programs, you know, that are presently taking place are working. So can you explain what those mechanisms are that you have in place that would ensure

the general public that there in fact is evaluation taking place. How do you go about doing that? I just want to know. Some day I might be the Social Services minister, so I'd like to know that.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now, Mr. Chair, that is debatable. I guess if the member has a specific . . . an illustration she'd like us to pursue it might be a little easier to describe.

But let's take for instance a funding to a third party. We would ask our third party each year to report to the department the work that they're doing at the community level. And we would be reviewing, for instance, the numbers of people they may be serving, the issues they're trying to deal with. and then, in our own evaluations, be sure that we believe that that's the appropriate place to be spending the tax dollar, getting the maximum benefit at the community level.

We are evaluating constantly the numbers of people on welfare, the trends. And we see for instance in our evaluations of late a trend that we don't like, and that's seeing the numbers of young people coming on to welfare growing. That's a trend we don't like to see. But we learn those trends, and we make those observations through the kind of evaluation. Sometimes it's statistical evaluation. Sometimes it will be evaluation by our people working in the field, visiting projects and so on.

(1630)

In terms of, for instance, the important work this department does in child care and funding to third-party child care providers, we have a number of people in the department who work very closely with each of the day cares and the child cares, and we'll be doing evaluations of what's happening on the ground. So it's both a statistic evaluation, an evaluation based on research, and then an evaluation that's based on the face-to-face personal contact between department people and those that work in the field.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm concerned more about the effectiveness of programs. So if you have any documentation of evaluation that you have done on the effectiveness of programs, I would appreciate having those forwarded to me.

Mr. Minister, getting back to the discussion paper and the proposals put forward, I don't see a lot in there that would help northern Saskatchewan, that would be effective in northern Saskatchewan, just because of the geographics and the proximity of a number of the clients to towns, and they're a distance from some of the villages and some of the towns. And there's also I guess a lack of educational facilities for the training that you propose in the discussion paper.

Are there going to be some special kind of programs implemented to help the people of the North, and have you made any plans for that? And if so, have you calculated any costs for that?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I recognize with the member that we have some real particular challenges in the North of our province. Our case-load numbers are high in some of our

northern communities, and there are some very challenging geographical factors in the North: small communities very widely dispersed across a large geography; particular challenges in finding employment, providing education, and so on.

Let me say this to the member. The redesign proposals equally apply of course to anyone, no matter where they live in Saskatchewan. And so if we are talking about a child benefit, a Saskatchewan child benefit, or if we're able to partner with the federal government in a provincial-federal child benefit; or if we can come, as the Premier has been suggesting, to the nation, that we should be looking at a national child benefit, that provision of course would apply to all the children in the North. There's no exclusion of course.

We do have existing, under the current social assistance program, some particular benefits targeted to the North. For instance we have a northern food supplement providing a \$50-a-month supplement for those who live in the North for their food budget, recognizing that food costs in the North are more expensive than they are for those of us who live in the South.

On the broader issue of the North, I think as government we can take some pride in having put together, under the minister responsible, a ministry now that looks at the issues of the North in totality, trying to draw together all of the issues facing the North. And clearly the issues of poverty in the North must be teamed with the issues of employment opportunities.

The issue of poverty in the North has to be linked with the opportunity of educational opportunities for the North. And that's what this ministry is trying to do — for the first time, or at least for the first time in a long time, trying to bring together under one ministry, all of those factors to both strengthen the economy, strengthen the educational opportunities, make it more possible for Northerners to achieve independence and security while remaining in the North.

So there are some targeted programs under Social Services, but this too requires the integration that we're seeing happening under the minister.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if you have any documentation of programs that have been established or that are in the works right now to work specifically with the people in the North in regards to social and economic assistance, I would appreciate having that kind of information.

Mr. Minister, how much money, how much provincial money is presently being allocated to northern social services and social programs this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — If the member will agree, we will provide the exact amount that we provide under welfare or social assistance to the North. We wouldn't have at our disposal the monies that would be spent by the Department of Education and Post-Secondary Education, but we can provide for the member the exact amount of money that will be provided to the North. And again what we can do is just send this very specific information.

But if we use the northern case-loads, the total amount paid in March 1986 for the month of March under welfare would be two and half million dollars. This would be in the month of March '96 — two and a half million. So on an annual basis, that'll to work out to somewhere near \$18 million. We'll provide . . . no check that, not 18 million — 30 million. You see that's the problem with me trying to do mathematics on my feet. We'll provide for you these exact numbers.

But that would only describe . . . not the total of social programming in the North because Health is spending money. Education is spending money. Justice will be spending money. This will be the social assistance payments only.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. If you could provide me with a combination of all of the monies, provincial monies going towards all those programs, somehow I would appreciate that — the education, the whole works.

I would like to ask a few questions on post-adoption services. It's my understanding that in '92-93 there were 1,797 post-adoptive services were provided. How many of these services are expected to be provided in '96-97, and at what cost?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I can maybe just run through the totals for the last number of years. In '92-93, as the member identified, there were 1,797 post-adoption services . . . or adoption services. In '93-94 the number was 1,886. In '94-95 it was 1,844; last year, '95-96, 1,752. So our estimation is it would be in that range. That seems to be kind of a consistent range year after year.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in regards to the child nutrition and development program, how many schools and community organizations receive grants through this program right now? And what is the cost to administer this program?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, again if the member would permit, we can provide the information. There is a lengthy list of programs being funded. We unfortunately don't have them numbered on the sheet, but there's a lengthy list. We could provide the whole sheet, and the member will see that . . . or we can provide the whole list. The member will see that where the total funds expended will be in the neighbourhood of a million dollars. It was a little bit over a million in '94-95, a little bit under in '95-96, but in the neighbourhood of a million dollars.

Someone has just found the number. It's a total of 118 projects across the province.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, in reference to the respite services program, what is the cost to run that program this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, perhaps I could ask the member to clarify her question. There will be a respite program under community living, and there's also respite programs in Health. And the question is, is she requesting information of the respite program for the client that would be there under the auspices of community living?

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm going to give you the rest of my questions and hand them to you, and I'm going to have you answer them for me at another time. But I only have 5 minutes left, I'm told, and so I would like to just present a couple of my reflections about the workfare program. And they are reflections in fact of the people in my constituency and some throughout the province who have . . . are not concerned . . . they would like to see work for people on Social Services, but they're wondering how this is going to happen.

Mr. Minister, as quickly as possible, can you tell me again the total number of our youth between the ages of 18 and 21-years-old that are on social assistance. I believe it's something like 79,000, if I'm right.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the number of youth between 18 and 21 will be between 5 and 6,000. Between five and six, not the total case load.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. So we would hope to get those youth to work somewhere. Okay. Now viewing the fact that economic activity is hoped for in the province but not exactly at its peak right now, I'm wondering how we're going to get 6,000 jobs for people within that age group, let alone for people above that age group. I believe the training is a good thing. I see that it's going to be in need of a great deal of funding, but at the same time, it's a good thing.

After training, I presume these people will be placed into jobs or else the training is for nothing. Okay. Once they're placed into jobs, how are we going to ensure that there's long-term jobs, because if they're placed into some sort of a work project or a job and it's going to be for a short period of time, just long enough maybe to get on unemployment insurance, the federal government is going to have to pay for unemployment insurance. Well that may be very well but in the final analysis the taxpayers are going to have to pay anyway, regardless of whether it comes out of provincial or federal funds.

So most of the people out there are concerned about how we are going to end up with long-term, meaningful jobs for these people. It's going to take quite some doing. Would you like to comment on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just a quick comment. First to say that here we are talking about a proposal amongst a series of proposals and again I underline the word proposal. This proposal is advanced because I don't think any of us are satisfied with the notion that more and more young people are coming onto welfare.

In this proposal, the focus is equally if not more heavily weighted on providing educational opportunities for young people as work opportunities or work experience, but it needs to be a combination of both. Let me say, Mr. Chair, that I appreciate the member's comments and I appreciate her observations on this and we are yet, if I may say, some distance from implementation of this kind of program. And many of the issues that the member raises has been raised with me in the community, and before we could move to this kind of program we'd want to have some very clear directions and answers to the things that she raises.

(1645)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I understand there was a statement made by yourself or a member of your government that you were hoping to implement some of this program . . . or beginning in 1997. That's not very far away. I don't know . . .

You know I would hope that it's thoroughly thought through before we implement anything, because you're hoping to have 24,000 children I believe off of social assistance through some of your program or through implementation of some of this program. And I don't want to see those 24,000 children without funding coming in, especially if it's in relation to income support.

Their mothers or their parents have to have income in the first place. A support is no good if there's no income and if that is the only qualification that . . . or if that's the only thing for them I can't understand how we're going to ensure that those children are not going to be left out in the cold.

I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I would turn the questioning over to the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to come back to adoptions for questions.

If I heard you correctly — I may have to be corrected on this — I think I heard something about a million dollars that were used for adoption services last year. There was a million dollars came out when that question . . . and I'm not sure exactly what that was for.

An Hon. Member: — That was child nutrition.

Mr. Toth: — Pardon me?

An Hon. Member: — Child nutrition.

Mr. Toth: — Okay. I missed that one. What I'm wondering is, how many adoptions does the Department of Social Services handle in a year, or how many did it handle in the last year, and what amount of money do you have available to cover adoptions in the province — the ones that your department handles?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I apologize for the delay. The total number of adoptions in 1995-96 was 28. We have a little difficulty in determining the amount of money spent, because the amount that will be spent in the department around adoptions will provide for the adoption services of traditional . . . but it also provides for all the post-adoptions services, the searches that are undertaken, and so that becomes a global budget in that area of the department. So it's sort of hard to separate out specifically what is used to provide for adoptions.

Mr. Toth: — What's the total in that area of the department, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I need to make a correction in

what I said earlier. I didn't describe . . . I was thinking about the budgetary numbers and I didn't describe for the member the total number of adoptions.

I think I indicated to the member there were 28 — that's special adoptions. Beyond that there were 26 infant adoptions; there were 20 international adoptions; so the total number of adoptions in the last calendar year was 74.

Our difficulty, Mr. Chair, in trying to sort out the actual cost, we budget for the family and youth services of the department, and the staff of family and youth services will be working in the adoption area.

If it's acceptable to the member, I'm going to ask the department to try and do some arithmetic and sort . . . pull out what staffing costs may be directly related to the adoption programs. Today we have only the global numbers. If it's satisfactory to the member that's . . . and we can get that information to him.

Mr. Toth: — Okay. I look forward to receiving that information, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I raise this question because it's something that I've raised in the Assembly before, when it comes to the Christian Counselling Services and the adoption procedure that is offered through Christian Counselling. And I believe, Mr. Minister, your number for infant adoptions was 26, if I'm . . . And last year the Christian Counselling was involved in 21 infant adoptions at a total cost of \$150,000 to operate their program — which is about 7,000, quick figures, per adoption. And, Mr. Minister, I'm raising it because I've had adoptive parents who have contacted my office and certainly contacted our caucus office.

And in fact, Mr. Minister, we've also had young mothers who've contacted our office personally who have suggested that this program was a program that they really had a lot of respect for. Prior to being referred to, or it being suggested that . . . In one case, one young lady had indicated to our office that she was fully contemplating an abortion because she wasn't feeling good about herself. The pressure of having to disclose and for her peers to realize that she was pregnant was so much . . . and the only services or the only information that seemed to be coming her way was have an abortion. It's simple, quick, and it's over, and you don't have to worry about it.

She started talking to the Christian Counselling Services and found out that there is more to think about. She thought about that new life that was beginning within her.

And at the end of the day, she phoned us and said she was really supportive of the program because they helped her overcome some of the emotional stress that had entered her life as a result of the pregnancy. She gave birth to a beautiful child. And, Mr. Minister, she is now telling us that this little child that was born to her was adopted by a lovely family; that she was involved in choosing who would be the adoptive parents. And she had nothing but praise for the program.

And in fact just two weeks ago, Mr. Minister, I had a young gentleman come into my office who also was in support of the program. Of course in his case it's a little different. He and his

wife would love to have a family, have been unable to have a family. They've just nicely started working with the Christian Counselling Services and now they find that the service . . . well it's not going to be discontinued; the Christian Counselling Services is not getting any funding. And so he came to my office asking why, when they're providing such a good service.

And certainly this service has really provided a very stable . . . and given a good feeling to people who, those young mothers, who would like to have a child and would like to adopt that child out — and realize that their child has a beautiful home — to the adoptive parents who couldn't have children.

It's been a very positive program. And there's a couple out at Kipling. I'm sure the lady may have even written you. Her name is Sandra White. She's been . . . and I'm pretty sure she's been in contact with your office. And she has spoken very positively of this program.

And so what I'm asking, Mr. Minister, when you talked, I think in the Assembly, you mentioned that you had to look for areas to cut funding. And I guess what I would ask of you is, when you look at the adoptions and you look at where your department is today — you have to pay personnel to provide the service — if you'd made comparisons, do you think that your department would be able to offer the same type . . . and the same wholesome, fulfilling role in the adoptive process as Christian Counselling?

And as well, wouldn't it be possible to work with this program to offer some assistance, whether you maintain the same level and continue to give them that bit of support so that they can meet the need out there, Mr. Minister? I realize . . . I think you have extended it till July 1 or whatever. But I'm wondering if your department will just take a closer look in view of the supportive role Christian Counselling has played in the adoption program.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, let me say I've had, from the member and from others, correspondence and interest in the Christian Counselling Services. It's been a tough budget. We did have to find resources to maintain other programming, and this was one of the tougher decisions. We did it I think on the basis that we do provide adoption services, that number, through the department. We have adoption workers across the province and so on.

I can report to the member that we are continuing to work with Christian Counselling; that a fee-for-service proposal has been submitted by Christian Counselling. We've extended the transitional funding, as the member mentioned. And I'm told that the fee-for-service proposal will be coming to my attention for review or approval or denial in very short order.

So we do look forward to a continuing working relationship with Christian Counselling Services, even though we are not able to continue our budgetary allocation to them.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, when you mention a fee for service coming to your office for your perusal, I'm wondering exactly why would you be asking them to put a fee for service forward, or coming to you. Does your office have to give an approval for

that? If people want to use the service, and are willing to pay the fee that is needed, why would they have to come to your office or to your department if you're not going to be funding the program?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, by legislation, we need to provide a licence for any group to provide adoption services. For the member's information, Christian Counselling is the only, only private adoption service that we license or have licensed in the past, and so it's a matter of licensing from the department.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — When will the committee sit again?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Before responding to the question, let me take the occasion to wish everyone a happy Father's Day. When we are in here, hour after hour, day after day, we sometimes forget these occasions. They're important to members and their families. So let me wish everyone a happy Father's Day, and with that I'll say that the committee will meet again next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. It now being near the hour of 5 o'clock . . . and if I may first of all as well join with the Government House Leader in wishing a happy Father's Day to the members of the Assembly who do know the joy of fatherhood, and for all members that this weekend may be one that you can share with the fathers in your life and with your families.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.