

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of citizens — the great communities of Melville, Duff, and Goodeve. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan, in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts, as well as crimes of violence, including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd also like to present a petition; represent people who would like to create a regional telephone exchange within the province. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The community involved is Odessa, Mr. Speaker.

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

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That the St. Martin's Hospital in La Loche must serve as a facility to meet the health needs of a large percentage of people living in north-western Saskatchewan;

That the present hospital facilities in La Loche are inadequate to provide comprehensive health care to these residents;

And that there is a desperate need for a new facility to serve the health needs of the people living in this area of the province:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the construction of a new hospital in La Loche that will provide adequate health

care to northern residents.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, and they're primarily from La Loche. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to establish a task force to aid in the fight against youth crime; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to change the big game damage compensation program; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

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

Their committee has considered the following Bills and has agreed to report the same without amendment:

Bill No. 301 - The Lutheran Church-Canada, Central District Act

Bill No. 302 - The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company Act, 1997

Your committee has considered the following Bill and has agreed to report the same with amendment:

Bill No. 303 - The TD Trust Company Act, 1997

Your committee recommends under the provision of rule 66 that fees be remitted less the cost of printing with respect to Bill No. 301.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from North Battleford:

That this fourth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in and that the said Bills be accordingly referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for northern highways and transportation: (1) what is the financial breakdown in terms of (a) location, and (b) type of project for the \$5 million the government allocated to northern highways; for example, how much of that money will be spent on roads and how much on bridges; furthermore, where are these roads and bridges located; (2) what proportion of the money allocated to northern highways was collected from the following sources — please break down accordingly: (a) the forestry industry; (b) the mining industry; (c) Indian bands; (d) the federal government; and (e) community contributions; (3) how much money was allocated from specific training programs to the above projects from any of the following sources: (a) Metis pathways; (b) the forestry industry; (c) the mining industry; (d) Indian bands; (e) the federal government; and (f) community contributions; and finally, (4) of the total expenditure on highways in the North, what proportion is allocated for the primary purpose of extracting resources from the North; by primary purpose we are referring to those roads with a higher rate of use by heavy-haul vehicles as opposed to that of civilian traffic.

And I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, 51 grade 5 students from McLurg School in my constituency of Regina Sherwood.

They're here this afternoon accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Verna Taylor and Mrs. Carol Grant. And I also would like to introduce a chaperon that's here with the group, Mrs. Flo Coffey; and a special student of the group who, I might say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is also the Easter Seal representative or ambassador for southern Saskatchewan, Ms. Jennifer Hall, here on the main floor.

I'd ask that everyone join with me in welcoming these students from McLurg School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Assembly, I have some special guests in your gallery today. With us of course is my wife, Beverley, who resides in Imperial with me most of the time. Sitting next to her is my or our newly married daughter, Mrs. Nicole Bateman, from Eastend, Saskatchewan. Next to her is her sister-in-law, Bonnie Bateman, and her mother, Ellen Bateman, who reside in the Dubuc-Grayson area.

And I ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to

introduce a constituent of mine in the west gallery, Paul Meid, who's joined us today. And Paul is an active participant in the democratic process and is probably here to make sure that his MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) is doing her job today. So thank you for joining us, Paul.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Maintenance Payments Improve

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we in this Assembly have been reminded this week during our discussion of The Family Maintenance Act, the issues surrounding the care, support, and custody of children from separated families is a very complex one. With the well-being of children our primary concern, we have recognized that there is no single solution, no one-sided approach, to ensure this well-being.

First I want to echo the Minister of Justice by complimenting all members from all sides who contributed to the improvement of this Act. Secondly, I want to report briefly on some just-released statistics from the maintenance enforcement office showing that on the maintenance side, substantial progress has been made. Non-custodial parents are either taking their responsibilities more seriously or are being made to take their responsibilities more seriously. Either way, Mr. Speaker, the results are good.

Basically, Mr. Speaker, money going to support dependent children is up substantially; defaults on those payments are down tremendously. When the program began, the default rate was approximately 85 per cent; last year it was less than 25 per cent. So over \$24 million was collected for children in the past year — more than the office collected in its first five years of existence.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is only part of the child support equation, but it's an important part. These improvements, I believe, demonstrate that this government's priority is children and their well-being. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Street Proofing Our Kids

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in this Assembly I would like to recognize the efforts of Frank Olson, who developed and brought to Saskatoon and Saskatchewan a program called Street Proofing Our Kids. The program is designed to teach our children: number one, how to avoid situations where they may be vulnerable to abductions; and number two, how to fight off an abduction once it happens. These types of community programs are important initiatives and should be encouraged.

It is most unfortunate that the provincial government's underfunding has forced the closure of the community policing program in the Riversdale district of Saskatoon. This program was a natural fit for similar types of volunteer programs.

Because of the closure of the Riversdale police satellite, such programs that assist vulnerable children may never be developed as was previously planned.

Again I would like to commend not only Frank Olson on his commitment and his efforts, but also the United Food and Commercial Workers, local 1518, which made this initiative possible through a \$12,000 donation. This is a much needed initiative and deserves great applaud.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Vancouver Port Corporation Conference

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today a very important conference is being held in Regina — the Vancouver Port Corporation conference. The Vancouver port provides Saskatchewan shippers and users access to world markets, especially Asian markets. This year's theme is therefore appropriately called, "Port of Vancouver, Saskatchewan's Gateway to the Asia Pacific."

Mr. Speaker, choosing Saskatchewan as the location for their first conference will allow us an opportunity to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest. The Vancouver port is an important part of Saskatchewan's transportation system. It is our gateway to important world markets that have a tremendous impact on our economy.

Working in partnership — shippers, producers, labour, governments, and the Vancouver port — to ensure the most efficient and effective operation of the port, is everyone's common goal.

Mr. Speaker, on average, Saskatchewan ships approximately 13 million tonnes of product through Vancouver. Almost one-third of our total rail exports are directed there. And our exports account for 20 per cent of all Canadian exports shipped through Vancouver.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan does have a stake in the successful operation of Vancouver port. The crisis our prairie farmers suffered this past winter must never be repeated. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to improve the competitiveness of the port and thereby help secure our future success. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Accomplishments of Battlefords Athletes

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my privilege to rise to inform you and members of the House of two remarkable women from the Battlefords.

Fiona Smith of North Battleford, presently living in Edmonton, was born and raised in Edam and she was a member of that Canadian women's hockey team that recently won the gold medal in Kitchener. Now she's been asked to move to Calgary to train full time with our national team in preparation for the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 1998. And she is one step closer to her dream of winning an

Olympic gold medal.

Also attending training in Calgary will be Hayley Wickenheiser, formerly of Shaunavon, and Shannon Miller, the coach, born and raised in Melfort.

I would also like to inform you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of another remarkable Battleford woman, Alma Jean Peters. Ms. Peters just ran the Boston Marathon. The 51-year-old grandmother didn't begin running until she was aged 34. She started by running down country roads in the Battleford area.

Now she has taken to running marathons. She qualified at the Boston Marathon to come back. However, her next plan is to go to France with her daughter where she'll be running a tour. She will be running 50 miles a day.

We wish her well in her tour of France and continued success in her running. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Preservation of Swainson's Hawk

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to commend a truly remarkable Saskatchewan person, Dr. Stuart Houston, who has an international reputation not only for radiology but for the preservation of the Swainson's hawk.

Dr. Houston can be seen often with a pair of well-worn binoculars to his face as he scans the Saskatchewan horizon for Swainson's hawks.

Dr. Houston is especially concerned about the population of hawks in their breeding grounds. He monitors a study area near Kindersley and hopes to sight the return of a special hawk wearing a radio satellite transmitter. This mature female hawk winters in Argentina and flies 11,000 kilometres to return to its mate and breeding grounds in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Houston tells us that in both wintering and breeding grounds, the hawks' population is under pressure of steady decline. A mass killing of hawks occurred in Argentina last year due to pesticides. In Saskatchewan the hawks' primary food source has also declined drastically. The grasslands have seen a decline and so has the Richardson's ground squirrels over the last eight years; and this food source is not as available to feed the nesting young, themselves declining from two to one chick per nest.

In the future we can look forward to viewing a video about the Swainson's hawks that Dr. Houston and a Saskatchewan company have produced, soon to air on the Discovery Channel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prairie West Terminal in Dodsland-Plenty Area

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, this is the beginning of Saskatchewan's biggest annual megaproject, spring seeding. During the past number of years we have witnessed many changes in the agricultural sector in Saskatchewan. There's

been rapid diversification and, to support this, increased development and research into new technologies including biotechnology.

Mr. Speaker, there have also been many negative changes for our farm people through . . . the federal Bill C-101 has allowed railroads to abandon branch lines without consulting the public or proving that the branch line being abandoned is no longer economically viable.

One consequence of the increased rail line abandonment is an increase in the number of local elevators that are being forced to close. In the face of threatened loss of rail and elevator service in the west-central region of this province, in the Dodsland-Plenty area, Mr. Speaker, producers are taking control of their situation by spearheading a project to build an eight and half billion dollar grain terminal. This new, 32,000-tonne facility is scheduled to begin construction in late May or early June and be operational by August 1, 1998. It will employ approximately 120 people, Mr. Speaker. The terminal is expected to handle approximately 200,000 tonnes of grain per year and have a cleaning capacity of 6,000 bushels per hour and a drying rate of 2,500 bushels per hour.

This initiative demonstrates the determination of our farmers to succeed in the face of federal policy changes which caused the loss of the Crow and the loss of branch lines across . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time is expired.

Moose Jaw Dance Festival May 2 to 10

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to talk about the city of Moose Jaw, and today is no exception.

I wish to share with members of the House today that from May 2 to May 10, the friendly city once again will hold and host the Moose Jaw festival of dance, Mr. Speaker.

In the course of that week and a few more days, Mr. Speaker, over 1,500 dancers from all across Saskatchewan and Alberta will showcase individual and group talent in a variety of dance styles, including tap, jazz, ethnic, ballet, and musical theatre.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this occasion good news for we fans of dance and the participants, but it's good news to an increasingly vibrant business community in Moose Jaw. The visitors will have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to tour and explore the many attractions, shops, and services that Moose Jaw has to offer. Our hotels, our restaurants, our stores will be alive with activity to accommodate the visitors to our city.

Mr. Speaker, no event of this magnitude can take place without hours of time and commitment from all involved, and a special thanks must be extended to all the organizers, the volunteers, and the adjudicators, who unselfishly offer themselves to host such a first class event.

Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw Dance Festival is a great opportunity to see the talents and the hard work of our young

people and adults alike, and to visit the friendliest city in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this occasion is a must-see for anyone that wants to be swept off their feet. And good luck, Stephanie.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cellular Phone Service Fraud

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The popularity of cellular phone service is one which has exploded in the last several years. In fact thousands of Saskatchewan residents have cellular phone service and many more would have cell phones too if this government would give us better service across the province.

This growth has also increased concerns about the pirating of signals from cell phones, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister in charge of SaskTel today if this is a common concern and if it's a problem that we should be worried about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, SaskTel now covers, or provides service to, over 85 per cent of the Saskatchewan population, and we are adding to that network at least a half a dozen communities every year. There are very few spots now that do not get reliable cell service.

But we have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, because this is a competitive service, and we cannot put up towers where there is not an economic return because the new wave of technology, satellite technology, is already here. As soon as it becomes more portable and cheaper, which is likely to be a relatively short period of time, the towers will be obsolete. So in the name of business prudence, Mr. Speaker, we have to expand the network as we can afford to pay those capital expenses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As usual, the minister responsible is out of touch with the people of Saskatchewan, and she's out of touch with the Crown corporation of SaskTel.

My question was about pirating, Mr. Speaker, and it appears that the minister doesn't believe that there is a problem.

Let me give you an example, Madam Minister. Recently I was contacted by a neighbour of ours who had recently received a cellular bill for \$33,000. That was in the month of March, Madam Minister. Following, in April, he received another bill for \$62,000, Madam Speaker.

The constituent, the neighbour of mine, contacted SaskTel and of course was told that he would not have to pay the bill. And that's great, and that's the way it should be.

Will the minister explain how these matters are taken care of and who pays for this bill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, this is a very grave problem in the telecommunications industry for all cellular telephone providers. It is of course not . . . it's a violation of the Criminal Code in Canada, but there are devices which will allow people with unscrupulous objectives to pick up through cellular conversations, the code number of the telephone and have the ability to copy, to clone that code.

So people should be reminded to be very discreet when they're using their cellular phones as to the kind of conversations they're carrying on and the locale. A land line is always more secure. And of course these costs are always absorbed by the telecommunications companies.

If for instance these calls were placed into the U.S. (United States) or somewhere else, the cost of writing off these bills would be shared by all of the telephone providers involved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that maybe SaskTel has been communicating with the minister very well. When Mr. Baht brought this issue to the attention of SaskTel, he indicated he'd like to pass on his concerns to the minister in charge of the Crown.

He was very surprised to hear that the SaskTel rep said that he didn't need to know who the minister is. Which suggests that maybe the minister in no way is accountable to the people of Saskatchewan who indeed are picking up the tab for this bill.

Madam Minister, a private business would not allow this situation to take place. In fact no private business would sink \$16 million into a dead-end venture such as you did with NST. If not you, maybe the problem is with your high-priced patronage help, Don Ching. Maybe you should talk to Mr. Ching and find out what's happening.

Madam Minister, this case represents a cost of almost \$100,000. There probably are others. How much are the taxpayers of this province on the hook for, for this type of pirating?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, is the member opposite talking about privatizing the telephone company? Is he talking about privatizing it? Is he talking about a company that would not extend digital service to each and every remote and rural customer in this province, Mr. Speaker? Is he talking about a private company that would not extend their network on to the first nations' reserves? Is he talking about a private company like the other private cellular providers we have in this province who confine their activities to the large, urban centres only? Is that what he's talking about?

And when he talks about the staff at SaskTel handling a problem, agreeing to write-off a bill, then why in the world should the minister, or should the CEO (chief executive officer) of a private company be involved in that? The staff is doing their job. There's no need to affect the political level.

And if you're talking about privatization, you better tell us, and turn people's eyes towards the privatization south of the border and look what's happening there, where farmers are out putting up new telephone poles and new wires because the rural infrastructure has been so neglected by the private company. That's not the kind of service we want in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Madam Minister, what I'm asking you is a very simple question. It involves taxpayers' money — in this case, \$100,000. How many more are they, and how much is the taxpayer of this province on the hook for inadequate management of SaskTel?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, again it sounds as if the member opposite is talking about privatizing. This is not taxpayers' money; this is a cost to the telecommunications companies worldwide, private or public. This is what happens in the normal course of business. And that's what SaskTel operates, on behalf of its shareholders, the people of Saskatchewan, is an efficient, accountable, and the best telephone service, Mr. Speaker, in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Income Tax Surcharges

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out an example of how unaccountable this government can be. Officials have gone on record saying they have no idea of how much money is collected from the province's three income tax surcharges.

I thought I misunderstood or misheard the report, Mr. Speaker, but I didn't. Officials said that they don't have the breakdown of how much is collected on the 2 per cent flat tax, the high income surcharge, and the debt reduction surcharge — all three courtesy of Mr. Blakeney, Mr. Devine, and the current Premier.

It seems incredible, Mr. Speaker. How can this government properly plan if they don't have a breakdown. Will the minister give us the breakdown of these three income surcharges?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question because it gives me an opportunity to clarify a story that obviously never was intended to be a balanced story.

First of all the government did give the information in terms of what we collect from surtaxes. What is absolutely amazing to me though: here's what we collect from surtaxes in the province

— they're obviously trying to hide that. Well the other thing that we're trying to hide is how much we give to people in tax credits, because we gave that information in exactly the same way. It occurs on the tax form in exactly the same way as the surtaxes.

So what I would say to the member opposite is, don't be fooled by a story that had no intention of balance.

We have a fair tax system because we have surtaxes at the top. We have a fair tax system because we have credits at the bottom to help low income people and help seniors. That's what we call tax fairness.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker. If this information is available, then I take your answer is that yes, the detailed breakdown of the money coming from these three surcharges is available.

And if that's the case, Madam Minister, I note that one of these surcharges is a debt reduction surcharge which was put in specifically to be applied against the long-term debt of this province that was left to us by the previous administration.

Madam Minister, can you tell the public where indeed this money specifically has gone and how that the fact that the debt reduction has been largely accounted for solely by the proceeds of the Cameco shares?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — To the member opposite, again I have to correct his answer. If you look at the Cameco shares, that was all applied to debt. But if you look at what this government did in terms of paying down government debt, not Crown corporation debt, government debt this year, we exceeded our own Cameco targets by \$100 million.

So in fact not only have we applied all of the proceeds to Cameco to debt, we have exceeded our own targets and paid down an extra \$100 million in government debt, never mind the fact that we've reduced Crown corporation debt.

And I think the one number that Saskatchewan people should be very proud of is, by the end of this cycle the government's debt will be \$4 billion less than it was four years ago. That's something all Saskatchewan people can be proud of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Shand Accident Lawsuit

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Six workers who suffered serious injuries and the families of two others who died in the 1990 Shand accident appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada today. This is part of their ongoing fight to sue the provincial government for allegedly failing in its duty as a workplace regulator.

Should the Supreme Court of Canada rule in favour of the injured workers and the family of those who were killed in the

Shand accident, it will have major implications. Such a ruling would open the door for anyone to sue the government following a workplace injury. It could also make the very existence of the workmen's compensation board redundant.

As a matter of responsibility, will the minister tell the House what plans have been developed in the event Canada's highest court rules in favour of these workers? Does the minister realize the workmen's compensation system is at stake, and have you done any forward planning?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, as the member has indicated, lawsuits have been brought against the Saskatchewan Power Corporation, Procrane limited, and the Government of Saskatchewan on behalf of five people who unfortunately were injured and the estates of two people who were tragically killed when a crane collapsed at a work site on May 25, 1990.

As the member knows, this matter is before the courts, as the member has stated, and it would not be appropriate to comment further on it.

Income Tax Surcharges

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance, following on the member for Melfort's questions.

Madam Minister, as you know, the deadline for income tax returns is today, and your government will collect about \$1.3 billion in income tax this year. Yet you say that you do provide a breakdown between the different taxes.

Well we would ask you, Madam Minister, if you would commit to the legislature here to provide the details on the 10 per cent debt surcharge, the high income tax surcharge, and the flat tax, and commit to the legislature to release that information. In order that we can have a meaningful debate on tax relief and tax reduction in future, we need to have that information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, thank you for the question, but it's the same question that I just answered. We did give to the press the amount that we collect from surtaxes.

Now what I want to get clear here from the members opposite is one thing. A couple of years ago the members opposite were in the House saying, you're getting less money from taxes — bad news, because our economy is not doing well. Now you're saying, you're getting more money from taxes.

We have no increased taxes in this province for four years. In fact we've been lowering taxes each and every year since 1993 — lowering taxes. We're getting more money from taxes because the economy's doing well. People are making more money, people are buying more things, companies are more profitable. And now they're still unhappy.

Mr. Speaker, I think the only conclusion I can reach is the opposition is perpetually unhappy, but the people of Saskatchewan aren't. They're proud of what we've done in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, I don't understand your reluctance to release this information. So much for an open and accountable government.

You know, Madam Minister, you could learn a lesson from the federal Liberals about open and accountable lesson. You won't even share basic, you won't even share basic tax information with us, and yet Jean Chrétien has shared his entire platform with Preston Manning. Now that's an example of open and accountable government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Madam Minister, all we're asking for is a simple breakdown on how Saskatchewan income tax is split between the four types of taxes that you collect. Will you commit to give us that information today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, the Department of Finance has provided the information on how much is collected from surtaxes.

And the members opposite will understand, I very rarely criticize a story. But when I heard this story this morning, it was absolutely no attempt to be balanced. That is, there was mention of the surtaxes at the top; no mention of the tax credits for low income people, seniors, at the bottom. There was mention of increases in surtaxes; no mention of decreases in surtaxes. There was mention of all the problems in the tax system by the same radio station, by the way, who had a tax expert, Mr. Perry, on at the time of our budget who said very complimentary things about Saskatchewan's tax system, ending with a quotable quote. Mr. Perry said what lots of people in Canada say, "I wish I lived in Saskatchewan."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Voting Hours in Saskatchewan

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question is for the Premier on an unrelated subject.

Mr. Premier, I understand Elections Canada has now decided to screw this election time issue up even worse. Three ridings in Saskatchewan — Churchill, Battleford-Lloydminster, and Cypress — have been given the option of picking their own polling times. Two of them have selected Mountain Time, which means their polls will be closing an hour earlier than everyone else in Saskatchewan. That's Ottawa's solution — two different times for Saskatchewan.

As you know, Mr. Premier, I don't think this is a big, serious issue. It isn't rocket science. All they have to do is use the same

time or polling times as Alberta to correct this problem.

Mr. Premier, will you give the Prime Minister a call and explain this simple solution to the federal government? Will you tell the federal Liberals that they'd better figure out what time it is in Saskatchewan before in the election they get their clock cleaned?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I think with or without the time foul-up by the federal Liberal government, they're still going to get their clock cleaned in this federal election on June 2.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — But on a more serious note, on a more serious note I have written to the Prime Minister and I've written to the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, twice now, as late as yesterday the second time, asking for a response from one of them. Perhaps the Prime Minister on the campaign trail, I can understand is occupied. But we are owed the courtesy from the Chief Electoral Officer — I believe we, the members of this Assembly — to explain exactly why they're doing what you say they're doing.

It makes no sense. It is really a hodgepodge, it's a *mélange* of the kind of a mix-up which flows quite naturally and unacceptably from the very fact that they didn't know we're on central standard time.

I don't know what more I can do. I've written both the Prime Minister and the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. I still have not received a response from either one of those officials. I'm hoping that I will get a response. And if I don't have any influence, maybe the very close kissing cousins of the provincial Liberal Party do have some influence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Disaster Assistance for Manitoba

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, I think everyone in our province is watching the growing flood disaster in southern Manitoba and praying for all the families who have been forced from their homes. However, these families could use more than just our prayers.

You recently signed an order in council setting aside \$300,000 for disaster relief, including flood relief in foreign countries. We think disaster relief in Canada should take precedence over disaster relief in other countries.

Mr. Premier, will you take that \$300,000 today and redirect it to providing flood disaster assistance for the people in Manitoba?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the fight by the people of Manitoba against nature is courageous. It really tells the

strength of western Canadian people, in fact of all Canadian people. And to state again — it has to be said; it cannot be said enough times — our hearts, our sympathies, everything goes for what's going on in Manitoba.

Now the question is about the issue of money. What I've done is I have written to Mr. Filmon, the Premier of Manitoba, on at least two occasions. I've endeavoured to get a hold of him by telephone, asking him if there's anything that we can do as the Government of Saskatchewan, as the people of Saskatchewan, to assist. I've not been able to contact him because he's obviously tied up in his day-to-day problems there doing his job.

We know that there are volunteers from Red Cross; we know there are reservists that are coming across to Manitoba. We know there are just people who are volunteering in the Saskatchewan spirit to help out in Manitoba.

Before any kinds of commitments of sums or anything is done in a concrete and tangible way, I think we should await exactly what the needs of Manitoba people are. They're a proud, independent, self-reliant group of people, as we are in Saskatchewan as well. Let them sort out their difficulties and if they need some assistance from us, we'll consider what, if anything, we can do in the light of our situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Reform

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In spring when the Provincial Auditor released his spring report, he noted a litany of problems. And of course at the head of the list was the health districts.

The result of this government's failure to properly plan its health reform has put these districts in a tenuous situation and part of the problem is with the CEOs. In fact between January of 1996 and '97, at least 10 district CEOs have been fired or have resigned. In fact ads have appeared in major newspapers the past two weekends advertising for CEO positions in the Moose Jaw-Thunder Creek and the Greenhead health districts.

Can the Minister of Health explain if this turnover rate is further proof of a health care system in crisis?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to say to the House and to the member, Mr. Speaker, that what the Provincial Auditor said in his report was this. I don't have the report in front of me, but the Provincial Auditor said that considerable progress and improvement was being made in the health districts in terms of financial accountability. And the Provincial Auditor congratulated the health districts for the job that they're doing.

The other thing I want to tell the member in the House is that the deficit situation that the health boards were in three years ago has done what my predecessor, the member from Moose Jaw, said would happen — it's moved into a surplus position, Mr. Speaker. We used to hear the opposition ask questions about the deficits every day. There are no deficits across the board in the health districts.

And I want to say before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, that I want to thank the member from Arm River for answering the question I have asked in the past, which is, where in the world is there a better health care system than this province. And yesterday, and I want to quote the member, he said this:

The minister has stated on many occasions that there is no better health system than here in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we agree with that.

And so do we, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the minister could continue and read the rest of the quote, but he's reluctant to do that — if these guys stay in power much longer we won't have a health system in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, there have been many, many problems created by this government's so-called health reform — the wellness model. A December 7 *Leader-Post* article hits the point and hits the nail right on the head. It points out that many of the problems district boards are encountering are the result of the financial stranglehold this government has put on them. The news item goes on to state, and I quote:

At least partly because of the financial crunch, bitter administrative fights and feuds have developed in the health districts and heads have rolled.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the actions of this government have a great deal to do with the high rate and . . . a high turnover rate of the district CEOs. Will the minister agree that perhaps future CEOs should have written into their contracts, a prerequisite that they have their suitcase packed and a good severance package?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the chief researcher for the Liberal caucus office have his suitcase packed. I don't think the CEOs need to have their suitcases packed. Yesterday the member's up on his feet agreeing that we have the best health care system in the world. Today he's quoting an article pre the March 20 budget saying that there's some financial problem.

I want to remind the member in the House, Mr. Speaker, that the leader of that member's party said, on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) television in November, that we should take hundreds of millions of dollars out of the health care budget. That's what he said. In April he said, in response to our provincial budget, that we should be more fiscally conservative and not put the money into health care we're putting into health care.

Now today, this member gets up and says somehow that we're not putting enough money into health care even though we've back-filled the Liberal cuts to health care 100 per cent, Mr.

Speaker.

So I want to ask the member where the Liberal Party stands. Do they agree with their leader who says we should cut health care spending, or do they agree with what the member said yesterday, that we have the best health care system in the world?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Out-of-province Medical Expenses

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister won't answer the question about the CEOs so we'll move on and we'll talk about the user pay concept that the NDP (New Democratic Party) has in this province.

Allen Serdachny is just one of the many people in this province who are suffering from this policy. Mr. Serdachny suffers from a rare disease called amyloidosis. The doctors at the Plains hospital said there was nothing they could do and gave him two years to live. The family wasn't prepared to give up so easily and they headed to the Mayo Clinic for treatment. Today he's living a prosperous and healthy life.

The family has no problem with the personal expenses they incurred, but the family does have a problem with the medical expenses the province refuses to fully reimburse them for. The bill from the Mayo Clinic, over \$6,900; the payment from the province, 1,600. User pay, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister of Health agree this is unacceptable, and reimburse this family for the full treatment they could not get in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the case that the member raises because the member hasn't had the courtesy to refer that case to me. If the member would do so, which is part of his responsibility as a member of the legislature and on behalf of his constituents, I'd be happy to look into it, Mr. Speaker.

But I'd like to know how that member has the audacity to get up in this House and ask about two-tiered medicine, when last year this is what that member had to say. He said, if there are people that are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay. That's what he said.

And then the Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr. Melenchuk, had this to say. This is a quote from the *Leader-Post*:

Private surgical clinics should be permitted to open in the province, says Liberal leader Jim Melenchuk. Profits, he says, I have no problem with for-profit medicine.

That's what they say, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request that question no. 60 be converted to notice of motion for return.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved that question no. 60 be converted.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure on behalf of the government to hereby submit question 61, and with leave, in the interest of open, accountable, and responsible government to also submit the responses to questions 62 and 63.

Leave granted.

The Deputy Speaker: — The questions are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 50 — The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, 1997.

Mr. Speaker, the existing legislation in this area was introduced in 1976. And the security industry has undergone a significant evolution since that time, both in terms of operations and in terms of the variety of functions which modern security guards are asked to perform.

This Bill recognizes these fundamental changes by providing for the following initiatives: (1) the creation of a framework to implement specific training and equipment standards for the industry; (2) the statement of clearly enunciated rules and responsibilities for the security guard and private investigator industries; (3) the establishment of an industry advisory committee; (4) a provision for a code of ethical conduct; and finally, the modernization of the role and the powers of the registrar to enforce and administer the Act.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this House that the security guard industry itself has been in the forefront in acknowledging the need to update the existing legislation to provide for the development of training and equipment standards in their rapidly changing industry.

The members of the industry are concerned that any such requirements be fair and effective. As a result, they have agreed to participate in consultations to develop the regulations required to implement these changes.

The registrar's powers are being modernized. Security guard companies who play by the rules, as well as members of the general public, can be assured that companies who do not comply with industry standards will be required to answer to the registrar. This will require that the registrar be empowered to monitor practices and to respond to any concerns raised by

the public.

It is the intention of this government to extend the operation of the Act to cover the Corps of Commissionaires. This step is being taken in recognition of the security guard functions which they undertake in our communities. The commissionaires have been leaders in the field of security guard training. By including the corps within the scope of this Act, we hope to learn from this well-established and professional organization in creating consistent and appropriate industry training requirements.

This Bill also covers the armoured vehicle industry for the first time. As with the Corps of Commissionaires, this step is taken not in response to any particular problem but as a recognition that their function is one which should properly fall within security industry legislation. Through the licensing of armoured vehicle companies, the government will enhance its ability to ensure proper training and standards within this important industry.

Mr. Speaker, as the security guard and private investigator industries continue to evolve, the development of a code of ethics and the need for an industry advisory committee become even more apparent. The goal of this framework legislation is to increase professionalism in these key security industries through the leadership of the owners, the employees, and the union representatives.

Recent tragic events have crystallized the need to require that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of both the employees who work in the security guard industry and the members of the public.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this House that during our consultations, the employers, the employees, and the union representatives have all consistently supported training and education as the best way to increase safety for security guards.

This government strongly supports this position. We have already commenced consultations within the industry to establish mandatory training and equipment standards.

Mr. Speaker, through ongoing consultations, as well as through initiatives such as an industry advisory committee and a code of ethical conduct, Saskatchewan's private investigator, security guard, and armoured vehicle industries will continue to build a modern, professional security industry.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act respecting Private Investigators and Security Guards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've been looking forward to debating a Bill on this subject matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since hearing of the tragic death of Jason Nikolichuk. After the death of this young security guard in Saskatoon, the government was urged to tighten up the law to better ensure those involved in the private security field in Saskatchewan are adequately trained and adequately equipped to do their jobs with a minimum amount of danger.

Now obviously there is no law that can be passed by this House that will be able to ensure that no security guard will ever come to harm again in our province. But laws that we do pass must do all they can towards that end. And the question here before us today is whether or not this Bill C-50 does that.

Mr. Speaker, though I've had a 25-year career with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), I'm not an expert in this particular field. However, in speaking with some representatives and experts in matters dealing with private security and private investigations, I'm told that at this point this Bill comes up short in some very key areas in keeping those involved in this industry safe.

I believe we have to be honest with the people of Saskatchewan. The government has spun this Bill as a law that will help to prevent deaths down the line. But those from the industry who obviously know it best, say there are several areas of the legislation that need improvement; that it doesn't go far enough in determining in black and white what specific measures are being taken to ensure better safety of those who work in the field, and the safety of the public as well.

The minister calls this framework legislation — something to build future regulations on. However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without knowing what those regulations will look like, it's very hard indeed to comment on very many specifics of this particular Bill because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are in fact very few specifics in the body of this legislation.

Yes, we're all for a strengthened law. But how do we as legislators in good conscience, vote for or against this Bill without knowing in the end what measures are really going to be taken. And that same concern has been brought to our attention by representatives of security firms in Saskatchewan.

First and foremost, those who are involved in the private security field have told me they don't feel the Bill itself goes far enough in mandating who is licensed to act as a security guard in our province.

(1430)

And furthermore, I've heard that there's not enough in the Bill to spell out who is trained, what training they receive, and who in fact oversees that training. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all security guards throughout the province, adequate training is first and foremost a prerequisite. And we have to ensure we have qualified people overseeing the industry.

Again, I'm told by those who know the industry better than myself, is that we still will not have an adequate governance of this industry. While the Bill gives the registrar great authority and great power to regulate the licensing of individual security guards or firms which employ security guards, the Bill does not state what his or her qualifications must be in order to carry out these duties.

It simply states that, "The minister appoints a Registrar of Private Investigators and Security Guards . . ." Who is this person to be who will be overseeing this entire industry? Do

they have the experience in the field itself? Do they have to be licensed in the field themselves? Should they have to be licensed in the field?

These are all questions that have been brought to our attention. And I believe they are important questions, given the sweeping powers the registrar will have over private security companies.

The language in the Bill regarding the provisions for licensing is extremely ambiguous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to give the registrar tremendous discretionary power in these matters.

Section 14, for instance, states the registrar can cancel a licence where he or she sees a person or a company no longer as, and I quote, "fit and proper" to carry a licence. Who is going to determine what fit and proper means, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The industry should know as well the registrar will have great authority to simply pull a licence on a company without any notice and without the right for the company to be heard. Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously this provision is meant to allow quick action to be taken against a company that is not living up to the standards set by the province — whatever they might be.

But there is a concern that if the registrar with such wide discretion somehow jumps the gun and makes a rash judgement in pulling a licence, it will jeopardize the business. That's because many of these security firms have contracts to provide service. If a licence is revoked, only to be returned shortly after, it will be irreparably hurt . . . it will irreparably hurt — I'm sorry — the security company since its clients will be forced to go elsewhere for service in the interim. The chances of regaining those clients would be rather slim following that kind of a process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, aside from those issues that are of concern to the industry, the most important thing we have to do with this Bill is to make being a security officer a safer job. And like I say, we're not totally convinced that this Bill will do that — not when we don't really know how the regulations will look like. We don't know if there will be parity in the types of firearms, the type of safety equipment.

I am encouraged by the fact that an advisory committee of interested parties will have input into the creation of the regulations. However given this government's less than stellar record in actually listening to what's said in these types of consultations, I'm not filled with a great sense of confidence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to all do everything we possibly can to make sure the role of a security guard is safe. Is this the Act that will do that? Until we see the real meat and potatoes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we simply will not know. And that's of a concern to us, and it should be of a concern to all Saskatchewan people.

There is a limited role for regulations in legislation, to be sure. But in a case like this where simply everything that the Bill is supposed to accomplish is left to regulations, I don't think it's fair to this House or to the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the government introduces

legislation, they are aware of the type of legislation well in advance. They have ample members within their caucus that could have been working on some of these regulations in order that when the Bill is introduced, the regulations may also be presented. So that we in the opposition, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, have an opportunity to review those regulations and ensure that they are in fact adequate enough to meet the standards and to meet the needs and to complement the Bill and the legislation that is being proposed, and subsequently, Bills that we have to vote for or against.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also wish to make some comments on second reading here; although I may at the outset say that I think the hon. member for Melville has very adequately set out the basic concerns that our caucus has with this legislation.

As we are all aware, the initiative for bringing forward legislation on security guards was the tragedy last year in Saskatoon which showed the need for some assistance for this industry. Now admittedly tragic events can never be totally eliminated. And even with care and security and proper measures, unfortunately awful things do from time to time happen.

But I think there is a strong feeling in this province that that particular tragedy of a security guard with no equipment on him whatsoever — was killed in a dark area, in a very isolated area, where he was all by himself, and that raises some questions as to whether his life could have been spared, had some proper measures been in place.

And I know that the public was looking to the minister and looking to this government to give a signal today as to how they intended to address the situation. And I think there will be some disappointment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there really is nothing in the legislation that has been placed before us this date which specifically addresses that issue, the issue of the security of security guards. And I wish we could have had a clearer statement from the minister as to what he intends to do by way of regulations to address that issue.

I'll come back to that in a moment, because I think that is the key in the Bill presently before us — that we have a Bill which has been brought before us because of the problem of poor security for our security guards, the safety of our security guards, the tragedy which occurred in Saskatoon last year. So we get regulation of the industry, but we don't find anything at all in the Bill that addresses that issue. I want to speak on two other matters first, but I will be coming back to that basic issue.

First of all, the attempt to regulate professional standards in the industry — it appears that the main point of this Bill is to regulate companies as opposed to the individuals who are security guards. We would like to pose for the minister whether it would not make more sense to certify security guards, as opposed to companies.

And the reason for this is that of course when you obtain professional certification, be it as a teacher or a nurse or a lawyer or whatever, then you have that certification, you have that qualification as an individual and you can of course take it to any prospective employer. Whereas if instead we are certifying employers, the companies, that really doesn't say anything about the individuals who are being retained.

So would it not make more sense, if the minister wants to regulate the industry, to regulate the front-line workers, the actual practitioners, the security guards themselves, as opposed to regulating the employers of security guards? Surely the issue is, who is going to be a security guard, what professional standards they have to meet, and what personal and ethical standards they have to meet with regard to criminal record, etc.

My colleague from Melville has mentioned that we have some concerns with the very sweeping powers granted to the registrar here, the fact that a company can be shut down without hearing and without notice.

Now what we understand from the industry is that if a company is shut down even for a very brief period, it effectively puts that company permanently out of business. The reason for that is that these companies provide security to various operations that must have security on a daily basis.

So consequently, if the registrar came along this date and said, security company X is shut down, then the customers, the clients of that agency, would immediately have to retain other security, on the spot. So that even if a week down the road the registrar decided that there really was nothing to this complaint and decided to return the licence, it wouldn't make any difference. By that time, the customers would be gone and the security company would be a shell.

So even a brief cessation of operations caused by the registrar would have devastating effects, and they would not merely be losing income for say a week; they would in fact be permanently out of business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the old saying, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well in this case of course with the security industry, that's not entirely on the mark. I mean the demand, the public demand for legislation came about because of a tragic occurrence which outlined the necessity for some provision to be made for the safety of security personnel.

But instead of addressing that issue, that very serious, that very important issue, the minister seems more bent on regulating an industry, creating a new bureaucracy, and not really addressing the issues that gave rise to the demand for this legislation in the first place.

And I think that will be of concern to a lot of people when they actually read what's in the Bill and they say, well how does this relate to the tragedy in Saskatoon. And I really would invite the minister, when he closes debate, to tell us how this relates to addressing the concerns which have come about as a result of that unfortunate incident.

I think we require a clear statement from the minister as to

where his thinking is going. For example, this new Act, I understand, will regulate everyone from commissionaires to security officers working in isolated areas, as Mr. Nikolichuk was. Would it not make sense, I say to my friend the minister, would it not make sense to give some clear indication as to what minimal standards of safety the government intends to enact?

There are many suggestions . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry this isn't an issue which interests members opposite. I don't know why they are indifferent to this issue, but I know many people in Saskatchewan are extremely concerned about safety for security guards since this incident.

To just throw out some obvious suggestions. When we have . . . when security . . .

An Hon. Member: — Why don't you support this Bill?

Mr. Hillson: — Because it doesn't address the problems. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask members to please allow the member to make his statements. There is ample time for anyone to get into the debate whenever the member's done.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that intervention and I assure the hon. member opposite that I will be very pleased to listen attentively to his remarks in debate. I hope he will have some remarks in this debate because this is a serious issue. I've told him before, he's got to quit cooking his food in aluminium pots; it seems to be having a deleterious effect. And I just hope he'll take my advice before it's too late.

Back to the issue though of safety for our security guards. There are some suggestions that are obvious here and I'd like to hear the minister respond to them. And one is, should there be mandatory radio contact for all security officers working in isolated areas? Should there be mandatory beepers?

Should security officers working in dangerous situations and in isolated situations, should they be required to work in pairs? Should other equipment such as, say flashlights, radios, become mandatory equipment?

(1445)

Does the minister intend to provide for minimum technological equipment for all officers working, say in isolated areas?

I think the public would like to hear these answers. I think the public would like some clear statement from the minister as to how he intends to regulate the industry instead of simply intruding into the public security industry and setting up a new bureaucracy and seizing more power for the department.

Can he simply tell us how this Act will address the tragedy which occurred in Saskatoon last year? That's what the public really wants to know. The public is upset, and rightly so with what happened to this unfortunate young man and his family, and we would be only too eager to support any Bill which attempts to address that problem.

But I say, I've been all through it, my learned friend from Melville has been all through it; we can't find anything in this Bill that addresses that tragedy or tells us how the government is going to try and prevent incidents like that in the future. And I really invite the minister in his closing statement to tell us where his thinking is at and how he can turn this Bill into an attempt to prevent tragedies like this in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very intrigued to listen to the remarks of the member for North Battleford because it points out, as they do so often, that the member for North Battleford and the Liberal caucus tend to take one position one day and take another position an entirely different day.

Here's a case where the member for North Battleford is evincing concerns about the measure of protection that will be there for security guards, putting aside, putting aside the question that there are measures in this Bill and there are measures that are covered by occupational health and safety. But this is the same caucus that turns around and will attack the government for trying to protect the interests of workers in Saskatchewan through occupational health and safety. Attack, attack, attack, attack. Attack the government and attack workers for these things, and now saying: you don't go far enough; you need to be more specific.

Mr. Speaker, there are words for these kinds of inconsistencies. We should not use these words in this Chamber, but I think the public and the Assembly knows full well what word I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I listened to the debate and listened to the remarks made by the minister in his presentation and second reading of this Bill, I have to just draw to the Assembly's attention that while I think the minister is meaning well, and I think the government are meaning well, the unfortunate part, as I've talked to some of the private groups out there, security guards that are providing, offering security, and many services across this province for companies . . . and like we had the situation that arose in Saskatoon, that this is being centred around, the unfortunate and tragic death of a young security guard.

I find from many of these private companies that they really don't feel that this legislation does anything for them. They don't feel that this legislation, had it been in place, would have even protected the young individual who unfortunately lost his life. It doesn't do anything for the family.

And one of the concerns they really have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that in their discussions in trying to formulate and bring forward information that would bring forward a piece of legislation that would really address the concerns and bring some controls, is the fact that they're told that the real meat will come through regulations.

Now I believe they've asked the government to let them see what the regulations will state — how the regulations will read, how they will address the concerns, and make the act of being a security guard . . . protect them and make it safer; so that they can do their jobs, certainly properly and appropriately and provide the security that they're offering.

And right to this date they really have not been informed as to how those regulations will read, what will be in them, and whether or not the regulations will address those concerns.

And so I think it's appropriate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government indeed even to this legislative body, really indicate what the regulations will be saying. Unfortunately I would like to see some meat in the legislation rather than just dropping everything into the area of regulations, where the government through order in council changes and can change an Act that may not have any meaningful support for security guards in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, these private companies that are offering security to many companies across the province are very concerned that the legislation we have here is just a window-dressing and doesn't really address the major problem that is out there.

In regards to these comments, Mr. Speaker, I think it certainly wouldn't be beneficial for us at this time to move through and to even allow this Bill to move into Committee of the Whole at this time, based on some of the discussion I've had. I'm sure discussion that members of the Liberal caucus have had as well.

I think it's . . . I think there's more that needs to be done, more time needs to be taken to address this a little further, and hopefully as we address it in a little more detail before we move into committee, we can get the government to recognize that there are some concerns here that they need to take a serious look at — that they need to look at — and sit down with the companies and with the individuals that they have been talking to and certainly recognize that there are some issues that need to be addressed.

And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's imperative that we allow that to happen — we allow the minister and his staff to see if they can come to a consensus. And in allowing that process to take place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's appropriate at this time that I move adjournment of debate on Bill No. 50.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 56 — The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to move second reading of The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997.

This Bill is the first of three major pieces of financial services legislation that are being reviewed by the Department of Justice. The other two Acts are The Saskatchewan Insurance Act and The Credit Union Act, 1985. We are continuing our work on

these Acts and expect to introduce amendments in future sessions of the legislature.

These three pieces of legislation have not been amended for many years. Indeed some of the provisions we are examining are more than 30 years old. The financial services industry has undergone significant change in the past three decades. Other jurisdictions have amended or are in the process of amending their financial services legislation.

This trust and loan Bill is the first example of state-of-the-art legislation that will take our financial institutions into the 21st century. In reviewing this legislation, we have consulted extensively with the financial industry, consumer groups, and other governments. We greatly appreciate the time, effort, and cooperation they have contributed throughout the consultation process.

Mr. Speaker, these trust and loan amendments are progressive. They move to eliminate costly and unnecessary duplication in the regulation of financial services. Many of the people who were consulted in reviewing this legislation strongly endorse the need for reduction in regulatory duplication. Currently more than 90 per cent of the trust and loan companies operating in Saskatchewan are already regulated with respect to their financial solvency by the federal government or by another provincial government.

Until now, Saskatchewan has been duplicating this regulation by conducting audits and other financial tests. Not only have companies found this duplication to be burdensome, it has also required the dedication of valuable resources within the Department of Justice. With this new Bill Saskatchewan will no longer be regulating the solvency of companies that are already regulated by their home jurisdiction. This will save time and costs for both companies and the provincial regulator.

Mr. Speaker, I must emphasize that these amendments will not mean a loss of assurance for Saskatchewan consumers. Trust and loan companies will still be subject to full financial regulation in their home province. The effect of this Bill is that regulation will no longer occur twice.

Mr. Speaker, the financial services industry has become extremely complex with a vast array of products available to the consumer, many different groups selling these products, and new ways of reaching the consumer, including telemarketing and the Internet.

It is for this reason that market conduct, or the way in which these financial products are sold to the consumer, must be monitored to ensure consumer protection. Although the majority of financial products are marketed in a responsible manner, legislative changes will require trust and loan companies to establish practices and standards so that their representatives adhere to market conduct standards in selling their products.

This Bill will allow companies to design their own market conduct systems and makes them responsible for insuring, among other things, that consumers are given an accurate and fair description of products, the personal financial information

which consumers provide to companies is used only for the purposes that the consumer designates, and consumers are able to exercise free and informed choices about the financial products they purchase.

Mr. Speaker, consumers should not be forced to buy products that they may not need or want in order to obtain a product they do need, such as a mortgage. By requiring the companies to have these market conduct systems in place and to file them with the regulator, this Bill aims to prevent these inappropriate practices from occurring.

Consumer groups have expressed their support for the inclusion of market conduct provisions in our legislation. However, Mr. Speaker, we do not intend to proclaim these new market conduct provisions in force immediately.

As I mentioned earlier, a very important part of the design of this legislation was the consultation process. As a result of responses that we have received from financial service representatives during this process, it was determined that more time was needed for the industry and government to work together to continue this consultation in developing market conduct rules and procedures.

Since many of the market conduct provisions will be contained in regulations, we will want to continue this extensive consultation before these regulations are implemented. We believe in the need for market conduct regulation, but we also believe in the need for a thorough consultation process. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in order to balance the needs of both the industry and consumers, we will not be proclaiming the market conduct provisions within the Act until these consultations are complete.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the existing legislation allows the regulator to enforce compliance by using a single sanction; that of cancelling the trust or loan company's licence.

Modernizing our legislation requires that we have a range of remedies that is comparable to that of other regulators. This Bill provides us with a range of remedies, allowing the regulator to respond more appropriately to infractions under the Act, from a very minor incident to a more serious breach of the Act.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have incorporated the principles in the administrative process to ensure that companies facing sanctions are reasonably provided with an opportunity to know and respond to the case against them, and to be heard by the regulator regarding the appropriateness of the sanction.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997 will eliminate costly and unnecessary duplication of regulation; provide better consumer protection by regulating how financial services and products are sold to Saskatchewan residents; give the regulator the ability to enforce the requirements of the Act, while at the same time giving companies the right to be heard; and modernize the first of three pieces of this province's financial services legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997.

(1500)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to address the Bill before us, Bill No. 56, The Trust and Loan Corporations Act.

The people of Saskatchewan have long been known for having one of the highest rates of savings in Canada. Even now, Saskatchewan residents have the distinction of being the most prolific savers with a saving rate of 6.9 per cent — the highest rate in the country according to The Conference Board of Canada.

This would seem to contradict the results from a recent Conference Board of Canada survey that shows the index on consumer attitude at its highest point in 10 years. An encouraging outlook.

Even as our rate of savings is the highest in this country, we've also seen a rise in the average personal income among our residents. Obviously people are fearful of spending money when they have no assurance that they may even have a job next month.

This only furthered the point that the Royal Bank has made recently. That point being that the Saskatchewan economy is the most volatile in the country.

The volatility of the Saskatchewan economy also goes to strengthen the fact that the people of Saskatchewan are still the most prolific savers in Canada, simply because there's little confidence in this government's ability to encourage job growth. This essentially means people are not sure that the job that they do will last, and thus they continue to save at a high rate for a rainy day. And looking back on what this government has accomplished job-wise in this province over the past five years, when it rains, it pours.

Obviously Saskatchewan has not been able to take advantage of the low interest rates like other provinces such as Alberta and Manitoba have — those low interest rates being an advantage that businesses and consumers can partly attribute to our Liberal government in Ottawa and their mandate to improve the Canadian economy.

In reviewing this Act, I see that the new legislation is a big step in moving towards allowing the people of Saskatchewan to feel more secure about who they entrust their savings to. This is due to the new regulations for trust and loan companies operating in the province so that they will conform more closely to those of the federal government's. I'm confident this will make regulating these corporations much easier from the viewpoint of the governments and from the view of the superintendent of financial institutions.

I understand that this new legislation will hopefully ensure that the situation that occurred back in 1991, regarding the closure of the western Canada's oldest trust company, Saskatchewan Trust . . . I think that many business people in the province would agree that doing business in Saskatchewan requires a lot of patience to deal with the high degree of regulation and

duplication of services in this province, and I think that the people in the trust and loans business would reiterate those feelings.

The government obviously agrees with the business community on this issue as they have stated on numerous occasions, including in their own publication, *Partnership for Growth*, the need for elimination of many of the regulations that hinder existing businesses as well as impeding new businesses. This is why I'm sure these stakeholders will be pleased to see some elimination of costly and unnecessary duplication of regulation. The province has realized that regulating the solvency of non-Saskatchewan trust and loan companies is unnecessary because of the overlapping regulation that is administered in their home province or by their provincial government.

As I have already mentioned, the Act also lets many of Saskatchewan's rules mirror those that are already in place at the federal level. This will ensure that the province's laws conform to the standards across the country, while eliminating the chance of misinterpretation between the two. I am encouraged to see that this province adopt those changes which will again help to reduce any confusion between local and federal interpretations of this legislation.

I assume the new legislation will also have a significant effect on not only the regulatories of the industry, but also the consumers of financial services. I suspect that this new legislation will go further than the preceding legislation in ensuring that consumers will be more thoroughly protected from dishonest loan brokers — those that in the past requested significant advance fees paid for services or for loans that were never received.

It is encouraging to see that the government is doing more to ensure that consumers are protected when engaging in loan transactions to institutions other than that of major banks. What I think the people of Saskatchewan would like to see though is the government encouraging western or provincially based financial institutions. While I am not implying that this is government's job to set up these institutions, but I think it would be encouraging to see more western-based financial institutions in Saskatchewan.

Many people already have negative feelings towards the major banks because of the billions of dollars in profits the major banks have made. And many people also suspect that the decisions that take place on who receives loans are made in the East rather than someone who is closer to home.

This was probably one of the most appealing characteristics that made smaller trust companies more attractive to a number of consumers in the past. Unfortunately, bad decision making coupled with bad management brought many of these smaller trust companies to an end in the late '80s and the early '90s. Yet only a small amount of investors lost any substantial amount of money, thanks to the numerous bail-outs by the Canadian depositors insurance corporation.

I am also pleased to see that the government, while improving its own regulations of trust and loan companies by eliminating much of the overlap that presently exists, this overlap between

this provincial government, other provincial governments, and federal regulators should be eliminated. And from looking at this legislation, the government is even going further than this by requiring trust and loan companies to establish the practices and standards that would allow them to monitor the developments in their own industry while at the same time ensuring that their representatives follow these standards and practices in selling of their products and services.

While I understand that the government has consulted extensively with industry experts, consumer groups, and other governments when formulating this new legislation, the minister states that there's still some work to be completed with regard to the framework for market conduct regulations.

I think it would be fair to ask at this time what kind of time frame the government expects for these consultations, and when can we expect the remaining portion of the Act to be coming before us? However, I suspect that we can put that off until another time when this Bill comes before us again and we have a chance to scrutinize it further. Thank you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a few comments about the Bill that's before us and recognize the attempts the government is attempting to address in bringing forward this piece of legislation.

I understand that the government certainly has taken the time to consult with a number of groups. I can understand as well and appreciate the concern the public may have in what has happened in the past. And I believe that the legislation is trying to address some concerns that have happened in the past with regards to trust and loan corporations.

I think, however though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be inappropriate just to move quickly through this piece of legislation. I think there are some very important matters that we need to take a close look at and review a little closer before we move further into committee. And at this time therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 52 — The Community Bonds Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an amendment to this Act is necessary to permit the transfer of all responsibilities, assets, and liabilities associated with this Act to the Crown Investments Corporation.

With the passage of amendments to this Act, the community bond program will be administered by the Crown Investments Corporation rather than Economic and Cooperative Development.

The transfer of these responsibilities follows the wind-down of a community bonds program in Saskatchewan. Loan loss provisions and loans receivable will be transferred to CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). As CIC manages the province's financial holdings, its skill in negotiating settlements with bond projects will be reimbursed

... to reimburse the province where the guarantee has been paid, will be invaluable.

Although no further bond issues will be approved, there are still active community bond corporations and projects which require some administration and monitoring until the full-term maturity dates of community bonds.

Mr. Speaker, at the time the community bonds program started, the investment outlook in Saskatchewan was very different. People were not investing in their communities and few opportunities were open to those who did wish to explore the investment option. However, today there are many financing options open to business that were not available even five years ago.

The major lending institutions have become much more proactive about providing funding to small rural business and the public will still have many excellent opportunities to invest in community businesses through programs like the community ventures offering through the Securities Commission.

And, Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure the public that the government will continue to honour its guarantees for all approved projects.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of An Act to amend The Community Bonds Act.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. The roots of the community bonds program originate in 1985 with the task force on rural development chaired by the late and highly respected Jake Brown, dean of agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. The task force issued in 1985 a report entitled *Strategy for the Development of Rural Saskatchewan*. The strategy contained 92 recommendations covering a wide spectrum of rural development socio-economic issues in 15 chapters.

One of the chapters is entitled "Organization for Local Economic Development." That chapter explores the problems, the issues, constraints, and opportunities surrounding local rural economic development.

Many of the problems, issues, and constraints identified in 1985 are as relevant today as they were back then. Among the findings of the task force were things like the province needing to create effective mechanisms to both initiate and respond to rural development opportunities at the local, sub-provincial level.

There are numerous opportunities at the local level for enhanced social and economic development. Many of these opportunities, at least initially, are small scale with little impact or statistical visibility provincially. The development of such opportunities is important in the terms of economic, social, physical, and even psychological impact.

The existing structure and powers of rural and small urban municipalities are not ideally suited to the pursuit of development opportunities. The geographic area of these municipalities is generally small, their staff and financial resources are limited, and their main orientation is towards

administration, regulation, and the provision of basic municipal services.

Additional institutions are required in rural Saskatchewan to supplement but not supplant existing local government efforts in the area of economic development. There is a lack of information in rural Saskatchewan regarding provincial, federal, and other resources and programs that are available to assist with the development at local and area levels.

There is no identified individual or group with the mandate to search out and develop opportunities and then to relate them to the information and assistance available from senior governments and the private sector. We need more information to stress that farm and small urban areas are socially and economically interdependent and that there is even more secure future for all of them and greater voluntary cooperation and action on an area basis in an intermunicipal competition.

The task force concluded that what was needed was a local or area structure and development approach that would encompass a geographic area that is composed of a number of urban and rural municipalities that is logical from the development point of view, and that retains the existing municipal structure.

(1515)

It should instil an attitude of opportunity identification and entrepreneurship into the area. It should ensure that a wide range of interests are involved in the development process, including the local private sector, and not just interests of local governments.

It should provide for local initiative, control, and investment, and ensure that all relevant information is utilized in reviewing and implementing development opportunities; and finally, provide an ongoing educational process, stressing the economic and social interdependence of rural and urban municipalities in specific geographic areas.

The end result of the task force findings, conclusions, and recommendations was the establishment of the rural development corporation program in 1986, to enable urban and rural municipalities, Indian bands, and cities to cooperate and pursue economic development on an intermunicipal basis.

At one point there were 38 rural development corporations and more than 260 local governments involved in RDCs (rural development corporation). The community bonds program was launched in 1990 to complement the rural development corporation program. Between 1991 and 1993, 32 community bond projects were approved. Presently there are 28 community bond projects operating.

With the phasing-out of the rural development corporation program and the community bonds program, two government tools in support of local rural development initiatives have been lost. In their place the REDA (regional economic development authority) program is being emphasized because it presumably addresses more comprehensively the service needs of the community economic development sector.

According to a 1995-96 annual report of the Department of Economic Development, when the REDA initiative was established, the goal was to encourage and support the creation of between 20 and 25 community-owned and operated REDAs across this province.

Saskatchewan is a far-flung province with widely divergent regional resources, development potential, and opportunities. We wonder what degree of coverage 20 to 25 REDAs will give the province in terms of population, municipalities, and geographic distribution. If there are gaps in coverage once the plan for our REDAs are in place, what plan does the government have to ensure that untapped development opportunities in areas without the benefit of REDAs are realized.

Is it feasible to revitalize the RDC program and the community bonds program within the REDA? Granted that under the community bonds program the government has had to pay out \$6.5 million in guarantee. By the same token, 6,500 rural residents express their faith and commitment to their communities by pouring \$17.4 million into community bond projects during the life of this program — money that was invested in new and expanding businesses; investment in the future of the participating communities which created hundreds of jobs and optimism for the future and also helped provide reason and opportunity for the young people to stay and work. Without the young in our community there is not much future.

One can look at the RDC and community bonds program as an investment in rural youth, and as such, could argue that this is one of the few cases this government has determined that paying of government guarantees is an acceptable price to pay for development in rural areas.

The continued subsidization of money-losing STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) is the case in point. The subsidization is recognition that STC is an essential service and vital strand in the fabric of rural Saskatchewan. Discontinuing the bus service would deprive rural people of access to needed services giving further impetus to the rural and urban migration and depopulation of rural Saskatchewan.

I emphasize the paying of government guarantees must be within reason because certainly taxpayers' money should be spent prudently and effectively where it can do the most good. Clearly if the RDC and the community bonds program have outlived their usefulness, they should be wound down.

What I ask of the minister are assurances that development needs of rural Saskatchewan and access to investment funds are not jeopardized and not diminished. I would further ask the minister to outline the specific rural development programs in place besides REDA, and what other programs he might be working on in support of rural development.

And finally, we would ask that the government outline the procedures and forward planning in place to deal with existing community bonds, existing guarantees, and existing monies already in the community bond system.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a

Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 8

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 8 — The Tourism Authority Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. This Bill will be of benefit to the whole province, and is of particular interest to me because of my involvement in tourism in the Kelvington-Wadena constituency.

I recently reviewed statistics which stated that visitors to our constituency spent an estimated \$10.7 million directly in the area. This is a substantial amount of income to our area and has resulted in employment of 5.9 per cent or 480 employed residents in our constituency. Tourism is the fifth largest employer in the Kelvington-Wadena area, after agriculture, retail trade, health, and manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible for the government to be aware of the needs of these very innovative business people who play a very valuable role in the economy of Saskatchewan. Recognizing that government alone cannot develop and promote this industry is a very positive and progressive step.

The involvement of industry stakeholders in setting strategies for tourism in Saskatchewan will be beneficial for the province as well as for the taxpayers. Saskatchewan people are well aware of tourism within their own area, but they seldom realize the vast array of tourism opportunities throughout the whole province. If our own residents are unaware of Saskatchewan's tourism potential, how will they promote it nationally or internationally?

The merging of TISASK (Tourism Industry Association of Saskatchewan), the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council, and the Saskatchewan Tourism Authority provided one body to promote tourism within the province, as well as nationally and internationally. The profile of this industry will be strengthened and members will benefit from having a single organization to represent their interest, support their activities, and focus their resources. We can all agree that such a role will be beneficial to the industry as well as to the province as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill, to clarify the role in making up . . . and the powers of the Tourism Authority, is very positive. To develop one strong tourism body in this province, it is imperative that the mandate of the Tourism Authority allow all stakeholders in the industry an opportunity to obtain membership within the body.

As this Act currently states, an organization which meets the criteria set out in the Bill's regulations will be automatically welcomed. The Tourism Authority is being given the power to levy membership fees for its members. This legislation allows

the amount of the fees to vary for various types of members.

It is imperative that the Tourism Authority recognize that many of the organizations or tourism operators who may want to join are on a very tight budget. The development of a strong Tourism Authority must include stakeholders from every industry, and therefore the membership levy must be kept at a very affordable level.

Mr. Speaker, a strong and successful Saskatchewan Tourism Authority is very important and we encourage the continued development of that organization. It appears this Bill, which accelerates the role and structure of the Tourism Authority, will be beneficial to the industry as a whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 22

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 22 — The Justices of the Peace Amendment Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les juges de paix** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 30

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 30 — The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 20 — The Small Claims Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me today, Ron Hewitt, the assistant deputy minister, registry services division; and Susan Amrud, the director of legislative services.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I hope we have no empty barrels echoing around in the back recesses of the chambers today. But I think that those who have intelligent, profound, and positive comments to make don't require, you know, loud heckling from the back, back, back benches which will probably never, never reach the exotic heights of the ministerial benches.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to say to the minister that we are aware that there is, I think, consensus in the community that we

should increase the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court, not only financially but of course this Act would also facilitate expanding the jurisdiction in terms of the types of cases which can be brought in the Small Claims Court.

However, my understanding is that the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court has always been found in legislation, not in regulation, and that the effect of this new Act is that the jurisdiction of the court will be in regulation, and that is of concern to us.

(1530)

My concern is also deepened by virtue of the fact that the accompanying explanatory notes, which your department was good enough to supply us with, said that the jurisdiction of the court may vary from community to community and judicial centre to judicial centre. And that I find very troubling — the prospect that the regulations may not even be standard but that the cases which can be heard in one community may not be the same in another.

So I would like the minister to kindly address us on three things, if he would be so good. First of all, I regret I was speaking to the Clerk when the officials were introduced, so I would appreciate him introducing the officials again. Secondly, why is it found necessary to remove jurisdiction from the Act into regulations? And three, is there a contemplation that the jurisdiction will in fact vary around the province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, I'm pleased to introduce my officials again. And as long as I have your attention, this is Mr. Ron Hewitt, who's assistant deputy minister, registry services division, and this is Susan Amrud, who is the director of legislative services.

Well I think what I can do is give an explanation of why we are proceeding with the Act in this way. And I think what you will find from my explanation is that with proper consultation with the bar and with the judiciary and with members of the community, we've come up with a proposed legislation that meets many of the needs that people in Saskatchewan have. And the questions that you're raised have been thoroughly discussed and advice provided.

Now the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Dispute Resolution was set up by the Minister of Justice, and they report regularly. One of the things that they worked on specifically and provided to me in a written report in October 1996 was a resolution as to the Small Claims Court and how it should be dealt with. And the recommendation that they gave was as follows:

That the monetary jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court be increased to \$7,000 to account for inflation and (underlined) that consideration be given to adopting a higher rate in a particular part of the province on a pilot project basis.

As you know, this perceived gap between the monetary jurisdiction of a Small Claims Court and the monetary limit at which it is economically sensible to bring an action in the Court

of Queen's Bench is really the issue. The dispute resolution committee, and I think others within the bar and the judiciary, was of the view that a solution that would best address this gap in Regina or Swift Current would not necessarily be the best solution for centres such as North Battleford, Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, or La Ronge. Their advice was that the Act should be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of individual communities.

Now this is not a novel idea. Saskatchewan is not the first province to set the limits of its Small Claims Court by regulation. And it's also not the first place that would maintain different limits around the province.

Ontario already has different limits — in Toronto, \$3,000 versus the rest of the province from \$1,000. And that was in place in Ontario from 1979 to 1992. The higher limit was set in Toronto to ease the backlog facing the district court in Toronto. And the validity of having two different limits was challenged in the court cases but the challenges were not successful.

Small claims courts throughout the province do not all operate in the same way. They adopt different procedures to suit their local practice. The procedure used in North Battleford is quite different from the procedure followed in Regina. And we've been responding to the local bars who have made suggestions about how this should happen, and we're more than willing to try different solutions in different areas.

One of the things that this legislation will do is to give us the flexibility to respond to the needs of local communities, and this is based on the consultation that we have.

Now you've raised the question about the limit of the small claims jurisdiction being set in regulation. And I said before, this isn't the . . . Saskatchewan's not the first one to do this. It's already done in Ontario and in Prince Edward Island, and the new Small Claims Act passed in New Brunswick in February of 1997 also did set the limit of a Small Claims Court by regulation there as well.

So I think that I've answered all your questions but I'm sure you'll have some more, and I'll be glad to respond.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, the minister is very perceptive. I do indeed have further questions on this point.

Now I think the minister will agree with me that certain provisions can be legal without necessarily being sensible, and I'm frankly surprised that he holds out the two-tier system of Tory Ontario as something that socialist Saskatchewan ought to embrace.

I realize that the NDP in this province is moving further and further and further to the right, but I'm a little bit surprised that the minister now considers that Mike Harris is his beacon, his guiding light. And if Mike Harris is now the prophet of the Saskatchewan NDP, I anticipate that we're going to see a lot of other most interesting innovations come in from this government in the future.

It may in fact be perfectly legal to have a different jurisdiction

from one community to another around Saskatchewan, but that doesn't answer the question of is it sensible? Is it wise? Is it fair? Is it compatible with our overall concept of justice, our overall concept of some meaningful and equal level of service throughout the province? And it's the position of my colleagues and myself that it is not.

And nor does it seem to me that there is any great need for this to go into regulation. My understanding is that we put in regulation, one, details that are too voluminous for legislation; and two, matters which may have to be changed on a frequent, frequent basis.

Now I'd like to ask the minister, when was the last time we increased the jurisdiction of our Small Claims Court? I know it has been increased over the years, and I'd be embarrassed to tell you what the jurisdiction for Small Claims Court was when I first became a lawyer. But the fact is, it only has to be increased every few years depending on inflation. It's not something that you're going to have to do two and three times a year, so why the need to push this into regulation? Why the need to take away this historic power of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I am not sure what the first sort of five minutes of your comments had to do with what we're talking about here, but I know that there are some specialists in two-tier whatever over on your side of the House and I think you should probably leave them to do that themselves.

But practically, the last time the limit was changed for The Small Claims Act was in 1988. But one of the things that we were looking at here . . . and I guess we have a profound disagreement on how one provides access to justice in the province. We think that providing access to justice includes consulting with the community, consulting with the people who are the users of the system, the people who are part of the system, and consulting with the public to figure out how we can provide the best service to the justice system in the province.

After extensive consultation, we are coming forward with the provisions that we have suggested here to provide some flexibility so that we can provide services all over the province. And it's for that reason that we've ended up putting some of the limits in the regulatory power rather than in the Act itself.

I think also there's a whole question about the Court of Queen's Bench and what kind of jurisdiction they have. We have been working carefully with the Court of Queen's Bench, because we know that they are also proposing or bringing forward rules that relate to smaller dollar claims to allow for a simplified procedure in the Court of Queen's Bench.

And practically, we want to make sure that what we do in The Small Claims Act meshes with what they're doing in the Court of Queen's Bench, and by having the flexibility that we've designed in this legislation, that will allow us to respond to how the use arises from the Court of Queen's Bench smaller claims rules.

Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, if the minister is saying that the jurisdiction may vary as to whether or not the

community has had its Queen's Bench ripped out the way Kerrobert and Melville have had, or whether it still has a Queen's Bench, I guess I wonder really how that should link up with the provision of Small Claims, so that we'd have a different Small Claims in Melville than we would in Yorkton, a few miles down the road.

I do want to ask the minister though, he says that there were public consultations. I'm not aware of any public hearings. In the matter of the Small Claims Court I'd like him to outline for me what public hearings, what public consultations did take place on the issue of the Small Claims Court.

And while he's at it, if he cares to comment on what public consultations he conducted before taking away the Queen's Bench court from Melville, I'd certainly be interested in hearing that as well.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I know that the hon. member is a recent person, you know, a recent new member to this Assembly and wasn't always that concerned about the policies and practice that took place in this legislature. But I think it's quite well acknowledged throughout Saskatchewan that the Department of Justice does extensive consultation especially as it relates to Bills that relate to the public and the courts and access to justice.

And I guess what I can say is that there have been ongoing committees of the bar, the bench, and people within the Department of Justice as it relates to the Small Claims Court. And some of the proposals have gone forward. All of them include discussions with the community.

Now as I said before, the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Dispute Resolution has a broad base of members and they represent quite a number of groups throughout the province. And just for your edification and for the edification of all of us, I'll mention the various groups that are on this committee through representatives.

There are two representatives of the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Bar Association; there is one bencher from The Law Society of Saskatchewan. There are two mediators who represent Mediation Saskatchewan; there are two arbitrator-mediators from the Arbitration and Mediation Institution of Saskatchewan. There are two consumers representing the Consumers' Association of Canada (Saskatchewan Branch).

There's a person representing Saskatchewan Community Mediation. There's a representative of the John Howard Society; and there's a representative of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. There's a representative from the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan.

There's a union representative representing the labour interests. There's a member or professor of law from the law school in Saskatoon representing an academic perspective on dispute resolution. There are three people from the Department of Justice who are representing the Government of Saskatchewan in this committee. And as well there are one judge of the Court of Queen's Bench and one judge from the Provincial Court of

Saskatchewan.

(1545)

And this group works carefully and diligently and has done a lot of very good work. And part of what . . . well what we're coming forward with now is very much a product of the discussion that they've had. They come together as representatives of their various areas, and I know that they end up discussing these issues within their organizations before they come and discuss them as part of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Dispute Resolution. So that aspect is quite broadly covered.

Some of their recommendations as well are discussed publicly now and again, and I know that often you end up with conversations that I have with people, where they have specific questions or comments on some of the discussion that's gone on in this committee.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am aware that the legal community is of the view that the time has come to increase the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court. And as you've indicated, it was last done nearly 10 years ago. So apparently in terms of reviewing the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court we're talking about something we may have to do once in a decade. So I still just don't see how once in a decade justifies taking it away from the legislature for the first time in Saskatchewan history and putting it into regulations.

This doesn't sound like an onerous task for this Assembly, and it doesn't sound like a task that we're going to go through two or three times a year. We last did it nine years ago.

So while I'm aware that the legal community was certainly of the view that it was timely to increase the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court, frankly I am unaware of any loud public outcry, either from our profession or from the public at large, on the issue that I am raising; namely, to put jurisdiction in regs. And that specifically is to say, I just don't know that we have out there in Saskatchewan an agitated public that is demanding that the jurisdiction of the court be set by regulation.

And what I am suggesting and will be moving, Mr. Minister, and I encourage our government to accept it — I believe you have it already — is that we do in fact increase the jurisdiction of Small Claims to 10,000. And I submit that if that amendment is allowed we probably have handled the situation for another 10 years.

We've brought the legislation up to current financial standards. Would that not better address the situation than to say that we will do it by regs, and it will be different from one community to another, leading to all sorts of confusion that's going to be caused if we have different jurisdictions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I've had a chance to see your suggested change to this Bill and I'd say that I do not agree with it and will be opposing it.

And I'll reiterate some of what I've said before. I think the key

thing for us is access to justice for all the people in Saskatchewan. And practically, what that does mean is to respond to the people who use the system. And we have set up some mechanisms whereby we can do that.

The whole situation as it relates to the Small Claims Court is that the people want the ability to have some of these smaller claims dealt with in a way that's affordable. And that's not just a concern in the Provincial Court, it's also a concern in the Court of Queen's Bench.

Now we have an interesting situation in Saskatchewan, and practically across the country, where we have federally appointed judges who sit on the Court of Queen's Bench and the Court of Appeal, provincially appointed judges who sit in the Provincial Court. The federally appointed judges have the power to make rules, the Queen's Bench rules, and in that power, they can set some of the limits on the financial amounts that are in dispute in their court.

What we are trying to do — and that gives them a fair bit of flexibility, because they can meet together as judges and set some new rules — what we are trying to do is recognize that in the Provincial Court we need some of the same kind of flexibility so that the public can have access to the courts in a seamless way, whether it's Provincial Court or Court of Queen's Bench.

The recommendations that we're coming forward with are as a result of extensive discussion among the people who are very concerned about that; it appears maybe you haven't had a chance to participate in some of those discussions.

But practically, we want to stick with the program that we have, which includes this flexibility which will allow for greater access to justice. And for those reasons we would not be interested in the suggestions that you make.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, if I understand the minister correctly, I thought he was saying that Queen's Bench jurisdiction differs from one judicial centre to the next. And that's certainly not my understanding, and yet that seems to be what is being proposed for our Provincial Court here this afternoon.

And I guess even with the explanations that the minister has been kind enough to supply, I really just don't understand the reason why we have to take away from this legislature a process that we apparently do about once in a decade.

I want to ask the minister though, how do we deal with the situation where a summons is issued in one judicial centre, returnable in another judicial centre, and they have different jurisdictions? How are we ever going to get around that problem?

If the jurisdiction is going to be different from community to community, then I see massive confusion resulting. When you get a Small Claims summons issued in one town for the sum that applies to that town, when in point of fact it's returnable in another town that has another set of rules, isn't this going to create a lot of confusion?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I don't think so. I think practically, where the matter would be held, where the court proceeding would be held, the monetary amount of jurisdiction in that area would apply. And if there was some problem with that, well then, you know, people could know that before they started their proceeding. I don't think it's an insurmountable problem at all.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, I do have an amendment to move here, both versions. I would like to move that we:

Amend clause 3 of the printed Bill by deleting all the words after the words "to which relief may be sought" where they occur in subclause (7) and by substituting the words "is ten thousand dollars."

I move this, seconded by the hon. member for Melville. And I also have the French version, the version Français.

An Hon. Member: — Très bien.

Mr. Hillson: — Merci.

The Chair: — I simply point out to the hon. member you do not require a seconder on amendments to the clause. There is an amendment to clause 3 of the printed Bill. Will committee members take the amendment as read?

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just in speaking briefly to the amendment if I may. We're talking about making the whole process of justice available and more accessible, and probably easier to deal with for the people that have access to this type of a process.

I'm curious. When we talk about accessibility — now that in some areas jurisdictions have changed to the point where people, for example, an individual from Melville has to go to Lanigan, travel to Lanigan to participate in a small claims action — if we're talking about accessibility and availability and something that's going to improve the process, I would just like to support the amendment that my hon. colleague from North Battleford has just proposed.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 9

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I see that the hearing point can be done by agreement. Does that mean that when we move the hearing point we have also moved the jurisdiction? Do you see the confusion that's going to be caused by this two-tier justice system you are foisting on the people of Saskatchewan?

When we've got different jurisdictions in different communities, and the only reason that the minister can tell me for it is because Mike Harris in Ontario thinks it's a good idea and whatever Mike Harris says, this government wants to follow. Where Ontario goes we have to follow.

But here we have, here we have a situation where we're going to have different jurisdictions in different communities. We're going to have transfers of cases for hearing from one community to another. But when we transfer a case from one community to another, do we also change the jurisdiction of this case? Can you try and clarify the confusion that the principle of this Bill leaves?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I'm not sure whether this Act has come to the attention of the member before, but the clause that he seems to be very excited about is the existing clause, or section 12 of the existing Act. And so I think his question relates to the legislation as it presently exists which says that all parties may consent to the jurisdiction of an action. The present Act already has that.

So if that's his question, then it relates to the existing Act.

But the new part to this section 9 is 9(1)(b) and then (2) and (3) where a judge after reviewing all of the information decides that there should be a different jurisdiction. But if the objection is to 9(1)(a), well that's the present law right now.

(1600)

Mr. Hillson: — I think though that the point is though, Mr. Deputy Chair, that now when we change from one community to another, both communities are operating under the same set of rules. The problem is now that when you change communities, you're going to a community that has a different set of rules. So while you're correct that this is only what's in the present legislation, on the other hand Melville and Yorkton, at present, have the same set of rules.

And you're telling me that under the new legislation, Melville and Yorkton may have different sets of rules. So which set applies when the parties agree to transfer their action?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm not quite certain what the argument is here but if the question is that there might be a \$5,000 limit in Melville and a \$7,000 limit in Yorkton, then that, I mean, that's a question that can be asked. But I think that people will know when they commence their action whether that's there.

And as you see, the parties can consent to which jurisdiction that there is. This may actually provide . . . I mean if there was that flexibility — I doubt that there will be — but if there was that much of a difference, the parties who had a claim for \$5,500 might get the defendant to agree that we should have the matter heard in Yorkton so they can do it in Small Claims rather than have to go to the higher court.

But I think practically, we have very reasonable people who work as judges in our system. They have a fair say in how these

matters are dealt with. We also have very able lawyers, both plaintiffs and defence lawyers, throughout the province who will make good use of these rules.

We think that the suggestions that we've brought forward here are practical ones and that they will be used in a positive way to increase access to justice throughout the whole province.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, increase access, but what you seem to be saying is that you anticipate that litigants may be driving to another point in order to take advantage of a higher jurisdiction.

Is that how we're going to have access? By saying that, well if we have a pilot project with 7,000 and you have a claim for 7,000 and your home community has a limit of 5,000 by law, you're going to drive to the pilot project? And that's the way we're going to increase access rather than have a standard jurisdiction throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think that there is some possibility here of what people often call "law schoolitis." You think about the most crazy idea you can and then ask questions about it and try to get students to write answers. But I quite enjoy this kind of discussion so I'm happy to be here to respond.

But practically, what your suggestion is here is that we can deal with the fact that people may choose to take a case another place.

Right now we know we have a mediation project going in Saskatoon . . . I mean in Regina and Swift Current. And because people have an ability to start a case where they wish in Saskatchewan, we know that some people who want to make use of some of the mediation facilities that are part of that project come and start actions in Regina or in Swift Current.

That may happen here. But I think practically our goal would be to provide equal service throughout the province.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Clause 10 agreed to.

The Chair: — The Chair asks for leave of committee members to go page by page up until clause 51 which appears on page 33. We're currently on page 10 of the printed Bill. Does the Chair have leave to go page by page?

Leave granted.

Clauses 11 to 50 inclusive agreed to.

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

Ms. Stanger: — With leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Chair, to you and through you to the

legislature, I'd like to introduce a former colleague of ours: was Hon. Carol Carson from Melfort; is now Carol Carson from Melfort. Please welcome her.

An Hon. Member: — Still honourable.

Ms. Stanger: — And still honourable.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 20 (continued)

Clauses 51 to 57 inclusive agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd first like to thank the officials who have been with me, and all of the others who have provided many years of consultation in bringing forth this legislation. And I therefore move that we report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, I would also like to join the minister in thanking the officials for their attendance today and for their assistance in committee.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 20 — The Small Claims Act, 1997/ Loi de 1997 sur les petites créances

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Public Service Commission Vote 33

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With us today for the deliberations are, seated right beside me, Mr. Michael Shaw, who is the Chair of the Public Service Commission. To his right, Mr. Ron Wight, executive director of staffing. Behind us, Sharon Roulston, who is our director of administration and information services. Directly behind myself, Mr. Rick McKillop, who is the executive director of employee relations. And seated in the back today, Mr. Chair, is Mr. Warren Nicholson, who is the director of employee relations.

(1615)

Item 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and a welcome to the minister's officials here this afternoon.

When I'm looking at the total of expenses under the estimates here for Public Service Commission this afternoon I see a total figure of 7.714 million on the year. Would the minister be able to elaborate for us if that particular estimate is net of revenues for the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, that would be our total expenditures. That does not include any revenues, but any revenues would be very minimal to the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I just felt obliged to ask that question seeing as it has been a source of concern, I think, that the auditor has raised in previous years, where revenues were I think rather substantial, something in the order of a half of million dollars and they were netted off of your expenses. I note for . . . oh this was in the auditor's spring report of 1996 where that was so reported.

And I was just wondering for . . . I've got a copy of your annual report for 1995-96 in here, and would the minister or your officials be able to refer me within this document as to where I might find what were the revenues of the Public Service Commission for the '95-96 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I think we need to clarify the issue of revenues to the Public Service Commission. There will be very minimal revenues to the commission itself, but because the commission takes responsibility for the placement of career ads on behalf of the departments of executive of government . . . the various departments fund those ads, but because the Public Service Commission does the actual work and the placements and so on, it shows as money coming through the Public Service Commission.

Now we were very careful to follow the auditor's advice and so in this year's reporting you will see those amounts separately identified. But those amounts — which are, I'm told, \$357,000 — will be the amounts of money expended by the Public Service Commission to place the career ads on behalf of all the departments of executive government.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Minister, the total amount is 357,000 for the '96-97 fiscal year then; is that what we're saying? And then what would you be anticipating those sources of revenues for your department for the fiscal year that we're speaking of here today?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we expect it'll be about the same. Now it's difficult to be absolutely precise because departments will have various staffing needs in the course of a year. And again I repeat, these are not revenues to the Public Service Commission; they are payments made for the placement of the career ads that we all see in our local papers around the province.

The commission expects that because we expect the need to do the career advertising to be about the same this year as it was

last year, it should be very close to the same amount. And I think we're essentially working on about the same advertising rates in the industry.

Mr. Aldridge: — So, Mr. Minister, you're saying these aren't revenues; therefore they're expenses of the Public Service Commission. So are they included within this \$7.714 million that we see before us today? Or are your expenses for the Public Service Commission actually more in the order of \$8.2 million for this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the expenses for the career ads will be shown by the departments who request the ad placement. We simply provide the coordinating role. So the expenses, that 357, will be accounted for in the budgets of the departments that placed the ads. It's not within the \$7.1 million that's shown as expense of the Public Service Commission. So it will be shown as expenses of the various departments who will be requesting the ads.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Minister, I'm going to continue to look at your annual report from '95-96 here; and on page 18, I see quite a neat statistical profile here and it shows the number of employees by location as of March of 1996 and the total employees being 10,303. And I wonder if you might have something similar in the way of a profile available for us this afternoon as of March of this year.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, yes, we have it here in about the same kind of graphic form. And so I'd be happy to provide it to the member. This is as of March 31, 1997.

The Chair: — Before . . . order. Before recognizing the member for Thunder Creek, I just want to remind, particularly the minister, about the use of exhibits in the Legislative Assembly. It is certainly proper to share information, but it should not be held up in a way that it might be deemed an exhibit.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just before the exhibit was whisked away to be photocopied, I didn't make note of the number of employees. What was the difference there? How many less employees were there from March '96 to March '97.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, this is a little embarrassing. This is a little embarrassing. I sent over our only copy of that most recent information so we have to wait for it to be whisked back. But I can say, Mr. Chair, and I want to be accurate — but the information that I brought into the House today is not as current as the officials' information — the information that I have, as of February 26, 1997, the total employees were 9,854. So perhaps my critic could stand up and fill us in on the correct information for the end of March, 1997.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister. And yes, as of March 31 of '97 the total employees are now 9,925.

I want to just make some comment here in terms of, I guess you could call it a form of employment equity, in that I notice a number of areas in the province, particularly the south-west

region, are not all that well represented here. I guess you could call it a form of regional employment equity in some ways. And I know our Tory representatives here have in the past had their own share . . . their own idea of what that entailed.

But I was just wondering, in terms of your overall strategic plan here that I note you undertook in I believe 1995 to cover the period from '95 through to the end of this century, did you take anything into consideration in terms of regional employment opportunities within the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think the member will recognize by the placement of this kind of information in our annual report, we certainly are conscious and track where government employees are serving the people of Saskatchewan. But our principal goal is to provide services to the people of Saskatchewan where those services are best provided and in the means in which they can be best provided.

Understandably I think, with Regina being the capital, it is and has always been . . . and I suspect so long as Regina is the capital of the province, Regina will see the bulk of the public service.

And then as we travel around the province, we will see in some communities — for instance, my own — where we have something like a Valley View Centre, there will be a large number of employees, you know, that would be associated with that particular institution. And so it goes around the province.

We'll see changes over the course of the year. In the North, for instance, if we're into a season of forest fighting, you'll see a significant bump up of employees there.

So our placement of employees in the province is where the services are being delivered and where they need to be delivered and we hope in the best possible way.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well, Mr. Minister, it would seem that some of the comments that we've just heard from you aren't in keeping with the spirit of employment equity in the province. I hear from your comments that delivery of services will always take precedence over hiring practices, and it doesn't seem that that would be consistent with your own employment equity undertakings as I see in this report before me.

I'd like to know, in terms of where the Public Service Commission is at today, are you anywhere approaching your objectives in terms of how many opportunities open up for aboriginals, for women, for disabled individuals in the province within the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just to be clear, so the member's not in any way confused, we have not set as one of our strategic goals or objectives of the Public Service Commission to achieve geographical equity. That is not seen as a goal of equity within the Public Service Commission. As I said, we try and provide the services where they're best provided and where they're needed. But we have not set out a goal of geographic equity.

Our goals in terms of equity will include, as the member has

just indicated, persons of aboriginal ancestry, persons with disabilities, members of other visible minority groups, women — particularly women in management, women in non-traditional positions, and women totally in government. And so I can report to the member today that we are making progress towards our goals in each of those categories. I think any member of the Public Service Commission, including the minister responsible, would say we're always hoping that we can achieve these goals as soon as possible. We haven't achieved all of our goals but we have been making progress.

I will give the member some examples and then we can easily provide this information to him. For instance, if we look at those persons of aboriginal ancestry, in March 1992, they represented 3.1 per cent of the public service of Saskatchewan in March '92. By March '96, they now represent 6.5 per cent of the public service, which is significant improvement.

(1630)

Mr. Chair, we've not moved as quickly in terms of persons with disabilities. In March '92, 2.4 per cent of the public service represented persons with disabilities. In March '96 that had grown to 3.3 per cent — progress, but not as far as we might like.

I can't go back to March of '92 with members of visible minority groups. That tracking didn't really begin until March '94. But in March '94, 1.9 per cent of the public service were members of visible minority groups; that, by March '96, had grown to 2.3.

If we look at the percentage of women in management in government as an equity issue, in '92, March, that represented 26.8 per cent of the total management in government; by March '96 that had risen to 32.7.

And so we have seen over these years improvement in those areas of equity that we are concerned about. But I say again we're attempting to achieve to move it even closer to our goals.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And, Mr. Minister, I would like to know when was the employment equity unit within the Public Service Commission developed? Do we take that back to 1992 or is that a development of 1995? Would you be able to just clarify that for me this afternoon?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the equity program, the employment equity program actually began in 1988, and there are two individuals in the unit which the member refers to within the Public Service Commission. But — of course it is the role of the Public Service Commission to coordinate — but we call on our various departments of government as they're approaching their own staffing needs to be very conscious of building towards our equity goals.

The Public Service Commission tries through this very small unit, tries to provide the coordination of that effort. But we do see the responsibility falling to our various departments of government.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Minister, one other thing too before we go on. And you're mentioning how perhaps I wasn't

understanding the employment equity aspect of the Public Service Commission, and that it doesn't in fact have any bearing with respect to geography or regional representation.

And I guess I am fully aware of that, given the number of losses of jobs in the public service that we have experienced in the south and the south-west, some of those being in your own community, within the various departments that you would be aware of. We've had numerous closures of depots of highways, we've had other closures of offices related to SaskPower, SaskEnergy, all of these sorts of things that have occurred. A number of jobs lost in Swift Current as of last year. So I am quite aware that there isn't any aspect of geographic or regional employment equity in the province, even though a number of those jobs were providing some very valuable services to people of those communities from which they were removed.

So if we could get back to employment equity as you're outlining here this afternoon, you've mentioned that in fact you aren't reaching your desired objectives. Within your plan, would you be able to quantify, in terms of numbers of jobs of the groups that we've been speaking of this afternoon for the period from 1995 through to the turn of the century, how many people of these visible minorities, with disabilities, of aboriginal descent, are you hoping to employ in the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I can give to the hon. member the percentage goals that we've set for the various categories. And these goals will be set on that portion of the population, the demographics of Saskatchewan, which that particular group would represent. That more or less reflects the goals we've set.

And so our desired representation for persons of aboriginal ancestry would ultimately be 12.2 per cent in the public service; for persons with disabilities, 9.7 per cent; for members of visible minority groups, 5.1 per cent; women in management, 45 per cent; women in non-traditional occupations, 45 per cent.

So those are the goals, and if the member applies those percentages to the total number of public servants in our province which is around 10,000 — has been around 10,000, a little lower now — you would see the numbers that we would hope to achieve in actual positions.

And I want to just reflect back a moment on the member's earlier comments about the geographical representation. He will be aware, and certainly the people of Saskatchewan are aware that over the last number of years we've had to reduce the actual size of government. We believe that we have done that in as compassionate a fashion as is possible in dealing with those employees whose jobs have been removed from the public service.

But I want to assure the member that in terms of any proportional withdrawal of public sector employment, for certain in absolute numbers, the capital city has seen the largest decrease of public service positions. And so it's not been an easy exercise, but we believe we've reached now a level of the public service that is appropriate both to our fiscal capacities and our program capacities. In fact I think in this most current budget year, we're showing a small increase in the number of

public service.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Minister, the objectives that you're outlining for employment equity are certainly ones that we would be in agreement with. In fact I would suggest perhaps it would be more appropriate to not only just factor for the demographics of the populations of these groups within the province, because certainly some of these groups that we're talking of are at a disadvantage in terms of obtaining employment opportunities.

So if you're strictly just applying in terms of numbers — of total population within the province therefore this is what we want to accomplish in terms of a percentage of our public service that we want to have of the various groups that we're discussing — it would seem to me that it's not doing the best service to those individuals in that some of them do, we all recognize, have some disadvantages in terms of gaining employment opportunities in the province. And it would seem to me that there should be something a little bit more than just a cold formula applied in this regard. And I would just be interested in hearing your comments in that regard, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I rather appreciate the member's comments. I want to say that point number one, in terms of our goals that we've set, these have been established in partnership with the Human Rights Commission. It's not something we've just done, but they are set with us, before us, by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. That's important to note. Point number two, we do see these as benchmarks. You need some benchmarks to which to move towards and to try and achieve.

I would suggest that in terms of the equity issues, there may in fact be some areas of service delivery the government provides where you may in fact want to see . . . best example perhaps is more aboriginal representation, particularly in the North, in our departments and services in the North, where the demographics of the North of course would have a much higher percentage of aboriginal population.

But these are set as benchmarks. They're set in consultation and by the Human Rights Commission. And within government itself we are endeavouring to as best we can support the diversity, to support equity, to open opportunities within government itself for some of the minority groups to find advancement within government.

The minister for SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat) and I just yesterday had a very productive meeting with a group of individuals that use the acronym AGEN, aboriginal government employees' network. They are a sort of a self-formed group of the aboriginal public servants within the Saskatchewan public service. They now have a membership of about 600.

They've been holding some annual conferences to look at the issues that face aboriginal people at work within the public service. And we've got, I think, a very good working relationship through the Public Service Commission, through SIMAS, and through the Crowns, with that organization. So

there are some good things happening. Again I repeat, we're not to our desired benchmarks but we're working in that direction.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I hear in your reply consultations with the Human Rights Commission and with the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat. I didn't hear any comment about the Women's Secretariat in amongst that, and I'm wondering how often you're consulting with them with respect to employment equity opportunities.

And also, I know you were somewhat heartened last year with the establishment of the provincial interagency network of the disabled. And you had indicated when this group was established that you would be interested in meeting with groups of these individuals and talking about access to training and employment opportunities. And I'm wondering if you've done so and if there have been any initiatives springing forward from that. And if so, how much monies that we see before us today in these estimates might be allotted for such initiatives?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes. On the member's latter question, yes. In fact I have met with a representative of PIND (provincial interagency network of the disabled), both formally and informally. Members of the commission have been meeting with PIND and we are looking at the very issues that you raised. And in terms of the Women's Secretariat of course — I used the aboriginal government employees' network as just one example and SIMAS as one example — we're very often in touch with the Women's Secretariat.

I now happen to occupy the bench beside the minister responsible for both, and she is consistently raising, consistently raising the issues of women in government, women in the public service, particularly women in the management of the public service, as well as the role of the aboriginal community within the public service.

And I would just like to report to the House that the establishment of the provincial interagency network of the disabled I think has been a very progressive step in bringing together the similar but sometimes varied interests of all the disabled community as an umbrella organization that we can meet with and work with. And I'm looking forward to some very positive results as a result of that.

Mr. Aldridge: — One further question concerning employment equity, and it surrounds the week of awareness on the whole issue, the Employment Equity Week. When will that be taking place this year and how many staff of the Public Service Commission of the employment equity unit may be involved in any initiatives undertaken that week? And are you expanding your activities in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we don't have the exact dates here, but the minister for SIMAS and the Women's Secretariat indicates to me that she in fact will be speaking at some of the events this year in Employment Equity Week. And it's not something that's just narrowly focused in the Public Service Commission. I mean we expect many areas of government to be involved in that week, celebrating the diversity that is within our public service, which is to celebrate the diversity of people within our province.

We can get the actual dates for the member if he would like them.

Mr. Aldridge: — I'd certainly appreciate that. And I'll just take my place now and let some other colleagues ask some questions here this afternoon, but I'd like to thank the minister and his officials here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. Mr. Minister, before I get started on some of my questions, I'd just like to inquire as to our global questions that we had presented to you. Do you have those prepared?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'm aware that the global questions were provided to the Department of Social Services, but the Public Service Commission say they have not received the request of . . . sort of the global package of questions this year from the third party.

(1645)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. They had been passed on to the Deputy Premier to be distributed to all departments, so we'll have to inquire with him why he hasn't done his duties.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to carry on where my colleague from Thunder Creek was discussing, and that is pay equity. I wonder if you could please give me your definition of pay equity.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just on the question of the global estimates, we're more than happy to provide all the information; there's been a little glitch somewhere. So we'll be more than happy to provide the information.

I think my most succinct definition — and it's, in my view, is an accurate definition — that pay equity be defined as equal pay for work of equal value. Equal pay for work of equal value.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, because I think there's some confusion in the general public as to exactly what that means, and they confuse it with equal work for equal pay. And they use those terms interchangeably at times, Mr. Minister. And they actually are very, very different in application.

So, Mr. Minister, where does Saskatchewan presently rate in the area of women's salaries compared to men's salaries in the same jobs?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, are we here talking about the public service of Saskatchewan or the Saskatchewan economy generally?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, within the public service.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, because we have only begun the efforts to achieve equal pay for work of equal value within the Public Service, we have not tracked that precisely.

Generally in the economy in the province of Saskatchewan, it

would likely represent 73 to 75 cents on the dollar. Now that would be in the broad, but we do not have the precise number for Public Service.

However, we know there are inequities, we know there are inequities and have begun within government a framework and now implementation of that framework. I'd be very, very pleased to provide for the member a document that's very current, printed in March of this year, which describes our policy framework around equal pay for working for equal value and the pay equity issues. We would be very pleased to provide for the member this document which fully describes where the government's going, what we're doing, our framework, and our plans for implementation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. My question wasn't about work of equal value. It was about equal work. Are there any areas within the Government of Saskatchewan that women employees are discriminated against in the same jobs as their male counterparts?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The answer, Mr. Chair, is no, there are not. We have a job evaluation process. The answer is a clear and consistent no.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. How do you propose to determine what jobs are worth? What their value are? Who will make this determination?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, these are . . . I appreciate the questions the member is raising because we are just in that process now. We are developing, within the Public Service Commission, a universal job evaluation process so that we can evaluate each and every position within the public service. And they will be evaluated on the four categories: responsibility — can't read my own writing — skill, effort, and working conditions.

Skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions — those will become the four measurements and that will be applied to universal job evaluation for the Public Service.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Well then, what studies have you done to determine that there are actually inequities in the system; that there are jobs of equal value out there that are not receiving the same pay scales?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — We have not conducted particular studies in the public service. What indicates this is when we're working on this universal evaluation, it will point out the areas of difficulty and areas of difference. And through that then, we level them out.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So you're carrying out this study that you don't even know if there's a problem there, is that correct? You say you don't have a study that determines that there are inequities in an equal value circumstance, and yet you're going to go ahead and evaluate every position to determine what its value is when you don't even know if there's a problem there, Mr. Minister.

What are you basing the need to have this study done on?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think it's fairly plain there's a significant wage gap. I think that the member knows that. And that would indicate that we need to be at this task. It's been pointed out to us by others. We know it ourselves. There's a wage gap and therefore we need to be looking at all of the positions in the public service to ensure that we have this universal evaluation based on the four points that I indicated.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I will admit that there is a wage difference, Mr. Speaker, on average between what females earn and what males earn. But that doesn't say that there is an inequity in equal value though, which is what your study is supposedly trying to determine.

Now where is the study, Mr. Minister, that says that there is inequity in the values of the work?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — If the member was listening to some of the earlier conversations we were having on the issue of equity, I pointed out that one of the areas we're trying to achieve more equity is, for instance, in the area of women in management. We have not reached the goals of having women in management. That's an indication.

I said before that there's an indication in the pay difference, in the equal pay for . . . that's one factor.

When we look at the education and the training that's provided to public service and the educational levels, we know there's some variances there. And when we look at sort of non-traditional responsibilities in the public service, we see differences there.

As we create the universal evaluation based on the four categories, we will discover precisely where the needs are and that process itself will identify, and at the same time, begin to change the circumstance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, your example of women in management has nothing to do with equal value for work. It simply has to do with the number of people employed in that particular sector and what their gender is. It's got nothing to do with the pay scales in those areas, Mr. Minister. Unless you're planning on hiring all new people into the management level and paying them deputy minister wages even though they're at the bottom because they're female, Mr. Minister, they're in management and you can pay them a deputy minister's wage and say now it's all equal.

But your example has nothing to do with equal value, Mr. Minister; it has to do with the number of people in the position — nothing to do with value.

Now what do you have that has to do with value, Mr. Minister? What studies do you have that determines that there is an inequity in the value of the work and the pay scales related to those?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here are the criteria. I'll read them one more time: skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. That's what defines the career, the job

within the public service. On the basis of those four, we believe that the appropriate remuneration should be paid. That's what we're trying to achieve.

We also know that within government we have less representation of women in management than we should. We know that we have less representation of women in non-traditional positions than we should.

But it is, I repeat again, the process of finding this universal evaluation that will at the same time define precisely where the problems are and begin to level the problem.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, I have to disagree with you, because what you're talking about is a quota system and not about equal pay for work of equal value . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh I understand perfectly clear the minister responsible for Women's Secretariat, and I disagree with it. And I . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh the minister for Women's Secretariat says you just don't want women to have any jobs.

An Hon. Member: — Or get paid.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Or get paid. I totally disagree, Madam Minister, with your comments. Madam Minister, I am more than pleased to have an equal number of women in this Assembly or any other job. I would be more than pleased to have equal numbers of women in cabinet. I wonder why that's not the case? There are women sitting in your caucus, Madam Minister, who are not in cabinet and you do not have an equity position in cabinet. Why aren't you practising your own policies?

An Hon. Member: — Think about what you're saying. Take a look around.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I won't comment on what my colleagues in the Liberal caucus had to say.

But, Mr. Minister, you're talking apples and oranges. In one word you say equal pay for work of equal value and the next breath you use quotas within a structure, and those are two totally different items, Mr. Minister.

Now I have to assume, because you won't answer the question, that you do not have any studies that show that there is inequity in the system within the public service that is not paying people for work of equal value.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . One of my colleagues observes that it would be difficult for the third party caucus to have equity in their front bench.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure . . . The member has suggested he's not getting an answer to the question. I'm not sure that he's, one, either not hearing the answer or listening to the answer; or two, doesn't like the answer or comes to this debate with some other point of view.

The point of view that we come to this debate about is that

those who provide the service within the public sector should receive equal pay for work of equal value — that's the principle. Now how do we achieve this principle?

What we know in our society generally is that women have been provided less in remuneration. We know that. How are we dealing with this in government? Well the first thing we're doing is through a classification plan — a job evaluation plan — where we evaluate on a universal basis every position within the public service based on the four criteria which I've said before — skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.

Then, with that assessment done, we set the value — the remuneration — for that particular position within the public sector. In that process we identify where the problems are and at the very same time we begin to move to a much more equitable system.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Osika	1245
Bjornerud	1245
Belanger	1245

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	1245
-------------	------

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

Clerk	1245
Johnson	1245

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Belanger	1246
----------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Kasperski	1246
McLane	1246
Crofford	1246
Stanger	1267

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Maintenance Payments Improve

Pringle	1246
---------------	------

Street Proofing Our Kids

Julé	1246
------------	------

Vancouver Port Corporation Conference

Jess	1247
------------	------

Accomplishments of Battlefords Athletes

Hillson	1247
---------------	------

Preservation of Swainson's Hawk

Koenker	1247
---------------	------

Prairie West Terminal in Dodsland-Plenty Area

Wiens	1248
-------------	------

Moose Jaw Dance Festival May 2 to 10

Calvert	1248
---------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cellular Phone Service Fraud

McLane	1248
Teichrob	1248

Income Tax Surcharges

Gantefoer	1249
MacKinnon	1250

Shand Accident Lawsuit

Draude	1250
Cline	1250

Income Tax Surcharges

Boyd	1250
MacKinnon	1250

Voting Hours in Saskatchewan

Boyd	1251
------------	------

Disaster Assistance for Manitoba

Heppner	1251
Romanow	1252

Health Care Reform

McLane	1252
Cline	1252

Out-of-province Medical Expenses

McLane	1253
Cline	1253

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Kowalsky	1253
----------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 50 — The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, 1997

Nilson	1253
Osika	1254
Hillson	1255
Van Mulligen	1257
Toth	1257

Bill No. 56 — The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997

Nilson	1258
Belanger	1259
Toth	1260

Bill No. 52 — The Community Bonds Amendment Act, 1997

Upshall	1260
Draude	1261

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 8 — The Tourism Authority Amendment Act, 1997

Draude	1262
--------------	------

Bill No. 22 — The Justices of the Peace Amendment Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les juges de paix

1262

Bill No. 30 — The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 1997

1263

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 20 — The Small Claims Act, 1997

Nilson	1263
Hillson	1263
Osika	1266

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 20 — The Small Claims Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 sur les petites créances

Nilson	1268
--------------	------

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Public Service Commission — Vote 33

Calvert	1268
Aldridge	1268
D'Autremont	1272