

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens from the great community of Melville, and Bienfait and Estevan.

The prayer reads in the petition:

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.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petition has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) is hereby read and received.

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to establish a task force to aid in the fight against youth crime.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: (1) are there any Health department funds going towards capital construction of acute care facilities in the town of Ituna; if so, how much; (2) are there any plans for Health department funds going towards capital construction of acute care facilities in the town of Melville; if so, how much; (3) what other towns are currently receiving or will be receiving in the next fiscal year any Health department funds for capital construction of acute care facilities in the province of Saskatchewan; (4) in each case please specify if these funds will go towards existing facilities or if they're allocated to new facilities.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the Assembly, 29 students from St. Mary's School in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you may recall that a little earlier this winter we were at St. Mary's School with the hon. member from Regina Elphinstone and my colleague from Regina Coronation Park. And we have these students here today.

They're here for a tour of the building and I'll be meeting with them afterwards. Their teacher is Estelle d'Almeida and they're accompanied by their chaperon, Roland Bourgeois. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of the members here, I'd like you to welcome these students from St. Mary's School in my constituency.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery today are a group of 10 students who are part of the Interchange on Canadian Studies. This is a national organization which provides opportunities for grade 11 students from all across Canada to come together in a different province or territory each year.

This year it's in Prince Albert. The Prince Albert Comprehensive High School is hosting this conference, which is the 26th conference. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Dale Reed and Marlyn Keaschuk. I'll be meeting with them later and answering their questions, but for now I'd like all my colleagues in the legislature to make them feel welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Labour Party Wins in Britain

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the long night in Britain finally came to a close. After 18 years of Conservative rule, the people of Britain, the home of the parliamentary system we enjoy here in Saskatchewan, handed the Labour Party its largest majority ever.

Mr. Speaker, the 1980s were unhappy times for working people and middle-class families throughout the world. In the 1980s, neo-conservative economics reigned supreme. This theory, now widely discredited, preached if the powerful had a large enough slice of the cake, the rest of us would be able to subsist on the crumbs that fell from the table. Lady Thatcher was Britain's Conservative prime minister at this time. Republicans Ronald Reagan and George Bush reigned in the United States. Canadian prime minister, Brian Mulroney, also a Conservative, loved nothing better to rub shoulders with both of them. And right here in Saskatchewan the people of our province were subjected to Devine wisdom of our Conservative government.

Things began to change in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. As always, Saskatchewan led the way by defeating the Tories and returning

New Democrats to power in 1991. Our American friends followed by defeating the Republican president in 1992. Canadians followed by defeating the Ottawa Tories in 1993. Now, Mr. Speaker, the battle of Britain at last has been won, thanks to the efforts of Tony Blair and his new Labour Party. I know that they are more than up to the challenge of rebuilding the Britains. To . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time is expired. The members' statements will continue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Melfort Rotary Club 50th Anniversary

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow is the Melfort Rotary Club's celebration of its 50th anniversary of service in our community. The Rotarians continue to sponsor and promote our fine city, and continue to be very involved with many aspects of community life and volunteerism in our area.

I look forward to participating in this event tomorrow and I would like the hon. members to join with me in wishing the Rotarians, happy anniversary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chili for Children Dinner and Auction

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, child hunger is an unfortunate problem in our society that everyone must strive to overcome. Combating child hunger has been given priority by this government, and I want to say, by all members of the Legislative Assembly, and this is evident in our action plan for children.

Working in partnership with individuals, communities, and organizations, we are attempting to enhance the lives of our province's children. But the efforts of individuals and organizations that attempt to alleviate child hunger should not go unnoticed, Mr. Speaker. Twelve years ago Theresa Stevenson witnessed firsthand that aboriginal children in Regina's inner city were going hungry, and out of her own initiative and her own money, Ms. Stevenson started a hot lunch program for kids in that area of the city.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, is the fourth annual Chili for Children dinner to raise funds and assist the effort in operating the hot lunch program. This dinner tonight is more than just a fund-raising effort; its purpose is to honour the many volunteers and supporters who help make the program a success. Without these people, it would be difficult for the program to operate. And I would encourage all members of the Assembly to attend.

And I want to extend to Theresa Stevenson and her staff, on behalf of all members of the Assembly, a special congratulations and hope for a good event this evening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Party Wins in Britain

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the victory of Tony Blair and the Labour Party in yesterday's British election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — I understand the reason they won this election is because they adopted the Conservative agenda. They won by campaigning as Conservatives. One can only hope they will now govern as Conservatives.

However, if they return to their socialist roots, the words of British pollster, Anthony King, will probably prove to be prophetic, unfortunately. Mr. King said, "The election of the Labour Party is like an asteroid hitting the planet destroying practically all life on earth." Of course this is how many people in Saskatchewan feel when the NDP (New Democratic Party) wins an election here.

Nevertheless, congratulations to Prime Minister Blair, and let's hope he continues to carry through on his Conservative agenda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

District 1 Health Care Auxiliaries Association Anniversary

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to attend the celebration of the 60th anniversary and the 44th annual meeting of the District 1 Health Care Auxiliaries Association in Unity.

Health care auxiliaries play an important role in sustaining their health care centres throughout Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 100 auxiliaries in the province with over 4,000 men, women, and teen volunteers contributing hours of their time to raise over 1 million annually for health centres. Their contributions to our health care system are invaluable.

The Unity Health Care Auxiliary is no exception. Through various activities such as catering, holding teas, and collecting donations during the Christmas season, they raise money for their health care unit — money, Mr. Speaker, that is directed into purchasing equipment, bedding, nursing supplies, and many other needed items.

Since 1991, this district has raised and spent over 18,000 for various items that have been needed for the hospital. And since they first became affiliated in 1943, Mr. Speaker, they have spent over \$93,000 in our communities.

The importance of the health care auxiliary is tremendous. We all must remember that everything they accomplish is done through volunteers, and all the money they raise comes from the general public. Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be a part of their annual meeting. The health care auxiliary exemplifies what Saskatchewan people are all about. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower President's Travel Expenses

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last few weeks the president of SaskPower has gone on a flight of fancy over how to gloss over gouging millions of dollars out of Saskatchewan people through SaskPower's so-called reconstruction charge.

Mr. Speaker, Jack Messer's flights of fancy over how to gloss over taking this loot are not the only flights he's been taking. It's come to my attention that this political appointee has been taking quite a few flights out of the country. I have before me a copy of a freedom of information response which shows that Jack Messer spent a whopping \$7,705.71 in one year to travel abroad. Apparently, Mr. Speaker, this political appointee is himself pretty adept at making appointments or at least travel appointments at our expense — \$7,705.71, Mr. Speaker, could keep Jack Messer travelling for weeks.

Seeing as the minister has no plans on reining in this happy wanderer, I'll be sending him an envelope to give to Jack Messer. In the envelope Mr. Messer will find an assortment of travel brochures to study. If the minister won't stop him, hopefully we can at least get him to start bargain shopping and save the taxpayers some money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aboriginal Art Show

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, one of the privileges of working in this building is that we are surrounded by beauty — a scenic park and a magnificent building containing wonderful works of art — paintings, sculpture, the works. We can even, Mr. Speaker, rub Dief's nose for good luck.

I particularly enjoy the first nations gallery and the collection of paintings by first nations artists such as Allan Sapp, and Bob Boyer. I mention Bob Boyer because he is not only a nationally recognized Canadian artist, he's also Professor Boyer, head of the Indian art program at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the fourth annual aboriginal art show opened on the second floor of the Regina police station. This show features the works of Bob Boyer's students in the Indian art program, the artists whose works will soon be hanging in our gallery and in others across the country.

I congratulate the Regina Police Service and the Indian arts program under Bob Boyer and all of the contributing artists for this exhibit, which lasts until May 30, and I encourage all people to visit it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Book Launch

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was pleased to attend the launch of a new book on the North-West resistance written by two Saskatchewan historians. The book is entitled *Loyal Till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion*. It is written by Blair Stonechild of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, and Bill Waiser of the University of

Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Blair Stonechild is from the Muscowpetung First Nation. When I was teaching a school we used to focus in on battles, etc., in regards to history about Indians and of Indian people and, Mr. Speaker, very few books focused on peacemaking. And when I look at the new book by Stonechild and Waiser, this is where they're looking at the history of treaty signing and the peacemaking aspect of the history of Indian people. In this new book about the North-West resistance the focus is on loyalty.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the readers will find new facts, new concepts, and new, challenging interpretations and views about first nations and the resistance of 1885. While the historians and academics will take part in the usual debate on historiography, I simply ask people to go out, buy the book and enjoy it. And enjoy this integral part of Saskatchewan and Canadian history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Security Guard Legislation

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year a tragic murder in Saskatoon pointed up the necessity for regulation of the private investigators' industry and the need for the setting of minimum safety standards in that industry.

I and the people of Saskatchewan were initially quite pleased to see that the minister was bringing in legislation to deal with private investigators, but after I read through the Bill, I was extremely disappointed to find that what we have is a Bill that regulates companies. It really doesn't deal with the issue of safety and security at all. The minister then spoke on Wednesday — he didn't touch on the issue of safety and security.

Mr. Speaker, I will be introducing an amendment obliging the government within six months of the proclamation of this Bill, to regulate minimum standards of safety, security, and equipment for security officers. Will the minister commit to do something about this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, the subject which the hon. member refers to is the subject of a Bill before this House. It has been debated already; it will be debated in future sessions. The member himself indicates that he intends to introduce an amendment. No doubt that will be debated at the time. Positions can be exchanged, arguments exchanged, and in the usual manner, the House will come to some resolution of those questions. We certainly can't resolve them in question period.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Victims Compensation Fund

Mr. Hillson: — I don't know why they're applauding for bringing in a Bill that totally misses the point.

But there's another Bill from Justice that misses the point completely, Mr. Speaker. The victims of crime compensation fund, the government is worrying and sweating about the fact that it's collecting so much money — they've got millions of dollars they don't know how to invest. So they're bringing in an Act about investing the money that they're holding — about three and a half million dollars.

Now the position we take is that instead of getting all in a knot about how to invest these millions of dollars, why not take the simple solution of using the crime compensation fund to compensate victims? They are spending only about 300,000 a year compensating victims out of fund that collects close to 2 million a year.

So why are you bringing in legislation that misses the point completely? Instead of worrying about how you're going to invest it, just pay it to victims.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think the legislation misses the point at all, and it hardly lies in the mouth of members such as those in the Liberal opposition to start raising these questions, considering their track record in this House on occupational health and safety questions. They're the people who have criticized our efforts to make workplaces safer. We're trying to make these workplaces safer. It deserves their support and not their criticism.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Municipalities

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Communities across Saskatchewan are struggling to cope with the massive revenue-sharing cuts handed down by this NDP government. Many mayors are finding out that the cuts are much more drastic than the 25 per cent the minister originally announced.

The towns of Wadena and Kelvington . . . Watson and Kelvington are just two of the victims of this government's massive offloading. The mayor of Watson said his town will receive a 40 per cent reduction — that's almost \$26,000 — and he believes the only choice his town will have is to raise property taxes.

Will the minister tell us how many other communities she has heard from that are also being forced to hike their taxes because of the vicious cuts to revenue sharing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, when it comes to vicious cuts, the members in the Liberal opposition know all about that, and their cousins in Ottawa know all about that in the way they treat the provinces.

We are giving this year \$23 million of the infrastructure money to municipalities for their use. We announced a year ago the 25 per cent reduction in revenue sharing so that municipalities

would have a year or more to plan for that. They also have the tax room that was created when we eliminated the need for them to collect the health, social . . . public health and social assistance levies at the local tax base. They now have that municipal tax base to use exclusively to themselves.

So if the member does the analysis, she will find that the percentages are not nearly what some municipalities have made them out to be, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we all know what the percentage of cut-backs between the federal government and the provincial government were, and we know it's much, much larger when it comes to between the provincial government and municipal governments. The mayor of Watson states that pretty soon there'll be no more places to cut, and in fact you'll see the results of years and years of no capital spending.

When the NDP was in opposition, they called the downloading of funds to local governments, back-door taxation. Will the minister now admit that her government is also guilty of the same back-door taxation and it's directed at the Saskatchewan property owners?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, when we asked the people of Saskatchewan what their priorities are in spending, they identified health, education, social programs, highways; and we have in this year's budget more money for health, more money for education, more money for highways.

The communities in Saskatchewan are made up of people. They're not institutions. We have responded with more money for the needs that the people of Saskatchewan have identified as their priorities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the cut-backs that the minister did not speak about was the ones to agriculture and to municipal government — the ones that hit rural Saskatchewan people. This government has not only refused to implement policies to sustain rural Saskatchewan, every policy and cut-back they have is aimed at destroying our rural way of life.

Will the minister do something before the long . . . for the weekend and tell people what you're going to do? Do you have any plans to include rural Saskatchewan in the future of this province at all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I have been in the last 10 days or so in a number of Saskatchewan communities. I've been in Nipawin, in Tisdale, in Outlook, in Swift Current, in Prince Albert. The economy of this province, Mr. Speaker, is humming. The main streets are full of cars, full of people. The stores are full. The mood is good. The people in Saskatchewan haven't felt so good about their economy and their state for 20 years. The mood out there is very good.

The only doom and gloom in the province, Mr. Speaker, is in the Liberal benches.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Income Tax Surcharges

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reason there were so many people in towns last week is they're all trying to scramble to find ways of paying their income taxes, which in this province are the highest in the country for a family of four earning \$50,000.

Yesterday, Madam Minister, I asked you about how it would be possible for you to justify to the people of this province that you're taking a debt reduction surtax of \$58 million out of the people's pockets and justify to the people who think that's going to the debt, and instead dumping it into the General Revenue Fund.

Madam Minister, how can you justify that kind of an illusion that you're creating on the taxpayers' backs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. I've answered that question several times, but let me go at it again. What we said to the people of this province is, reducing the debt of the province is a priority and there's a tax, and it is dedicated to ensuring that that debt goes down. And the debt is going down. By the end of this cycle, the debt will be \$4 billion less than it was in 1994.

And the members opposite can't have it every way. They keep on defending the Provincial Auditor. They say . . . The auditor himself says you can't have dedicated taxes in this province. You can have something like the education and health tax, which you say is to support education and health, but you can't squirrel it aside.

What the members opposite have to ask the people of this province is: is the debt of the province coming down dramatically? The answer will be yes. What they have to ask the members opposite is, not only how confused they are on taxes, but how confused they are on debt. When we sold Cameco shares, one wanted to put it to debt, one wanted to spend it, and a third, I forget.

This government is clear in its priorities. I ask the same to the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, you're trying to have it both ways. Because if you really believe what you just said in terms you can't have dedicated taxes, then how in the world can you justify a dedicated surcharge in name only. Why don't you then get rid of the surcharges and actually put the provincial tax at 75 per cent of federal instead of the 50? What you're really doing is perpetrating a fraud on the taxpayers of this province.

Why don't you come clean with them and admit that if you did

it properly they'd understand what you're really doing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite, first of all I'm interested to see that they'd like to have an income tax at the rate of 75 per cent. Another tax . . . (inaudible) . . . But who they need to be talking to, who they need to be talking to is Mr. Martin. This is what the provinces have been saying to the federal government for years. Our tax system is too complicated. You have surtaxes at the top and you have tax credits at the bottom. This is what provinces are forced to do to ensure that our tax system is fair. It's the federal government that resists changing the system.

But let me go back to my main point. We are clear, the tax regime in this province is going down. Not only have we cut the sales tax from 9 to 7, in '95 and '96 we cut income taxes — which particularly benefited low income earners — and we've increased spending in priority areas.

What I say to the members opposite is, where do you stand? Where is your coherent position on taxes and on debt reduction?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Local Telephone Service Competition

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SaskTel.

Madam Minister, you now know that long . . . that local telephone competition is coming. You have until October of 1998 to get ready for it. Will you accept the ruling of the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) and start preparing for local competition by next year and withdraw your call for an extension of the moratorium?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, in spite of the fact that we have a moratorium from regulation from the CRTC, which gives us some time to adjust, we invited competition in. Resellers and rebillers came in over a year ago, last February '96. We invited the competition — the interconnectors — in last fall. We have a self-sufficient and competitive mobile telephone company which has always operated in the competitive arena. And we are preparing to harmonize our activities as though we were regulated by the CRTC; and we are preparing to invite local competition as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear that you're prepared to invite them in; unfortunately you didn't give a time frame nor suggest that you were going to withdraw your attempt to extend the moratorium. Because, Madam Minister, as you have said, competition is good. Long-distance competition has been good for consumers; it's been good for SaskTel.

Madam Minister, one way SaskTel could start getting ready for competition and give local consumers a break is by extending local coverage areas by providing larger exchanges. This would make SaskTel more competitive both as a local service provider and as a long-distance carrier. More importantly, it would give rural residents a break without dramatically affecting the local service rates that customers are paying.

Madam Minister, is this something you will consider as you get ready for local phone competition?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we have announced publicly and spoken to the people of Saskatchewan about the area in the long-distance area exchanges. We are . . . have it under active consideration and we think that the role of the Crown is to make sure that we have adequate and modern communications to every shareholder of that Crown company in the province, which includes the rural and remote customers.

And our rural and remote customers have better service than any other telephone company in North America, Mr. Speaker. And we are proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Taxes on Low Income Earners

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, we just saw your side of the House, the NDP, just wiggling with glee over what happened in Britain. Madam Minister, the NDP tries to characterize itself as helping poor people and low income earners. However, the facts say something completely different, and here will be your chance to wiggle — wiggle out of it if you can.

According to the Fraser Institute, low income earners in Saskatchewan pay 16 per cent of their income in tax, the highest of any province in Canada — the highest taxes in Canada for low income earners, Madam Minister. That's the NDP record — higher taxes on low income earners than the Filmon government, the Klein government, the Harris government.

Madam Minister, why are you taxing poor people more than any other province in Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I welcome that question. First of all, you shouldn't believe everything that you read coming out from the Fraser Institute, especially in the newspaper. That study you just . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If the member opposite would like to listen to the answer.

What that study assumes a family has as its income is the following: resource revenues are part of a family's income.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now hon. members will recognize that the minister is not that far from the Chair and the Chair is having difficulty hearing. I'm sure that the source of

the question would be interested in the answer and I'll ask for all hon. members to allow the minister to be heard.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I would say to the member opposite is, you've got to look at what they assume is part of family income in that study. They assume that family income includes resource revenues. They assume that family income has built into it what rent you would get from renting out your principal residence. The net income of the average person in Saskatchewan in that study comes out at \$80,000. It is a flawed study.

But I'm very happy that the member opposite has asked about taxes for low income people. This government is proud of its record when it comes to that issue. We reduced income taxes two years in a row. The main beneficiary of that tax cut were low income people — 6,000 taken right off the tax rolls.

We reduced the sales tax from 9 to 7. We tax fewer items that affect the families of this province than any province in Canada. We have a tax system that is fair, that does benefit low income people, and we're proud of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Credit Card Proposal

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The unfortunate part in that last answer is the Minister of Finance forgot about all the back-door taxation, like the utility rate increases.

But I have a question to the minister of SaskPower. Mr. Minister, Anderson-Fast Research is currently conducting a poll on behalf of SaskPower and they are asking in this poll whether SaskPower customers would support the idea of a SaskPower credit card. Mr. Minister, is SaskPower planning on developing a SaskPower credit card?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No. Mr. Speaker, I can say that there are a number of initiatives that the management and the board of SaskPower are looking at. We list and look at a number of things on a regular basis as our board meets.

I can say to the member opposite that when we — and if we — are to embark on any kind of a relationship with credit cards, we would be certainly letting the members opposite know. We would be outlining what the proposal would in fact be about, and I would be more than willing to share at an appropriate time information as it may or may not be pertinent to credit cards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister; according to the questions being asked in this survey, people would get points every time they made a purchase using their SaskPower credit card. The points would then be used as credit against their power bills. So people with a SaskPower credit card would get a bit of a break on their power bills, but no one else would.

Mr. Minister, there are a lot of people in the province who wouldn't qualify to get a credit card. There are a lot of other people who don't use credit cards, just simply wouldn't want a

SaskPower credit card.

Instead of coming up with gimmicks to cut the power bills of a few people, why don't you take some of the huge \$153 million profits and pass them on to all residents of Saskatchewan people? Why don't you use those profits to cut the rates rather than offering people specific ways of getting rates, just a few people?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess there you go again. It tells you exactly where the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan comes from.

The people of this province, the people of this country, the people of North America, and in fact the people of the world are becoming more and more aware, and I think it would be fair to say even Conservatives are starting to realize, that society is changing and we are looking at different ways of paying our bills; we're looking at different ways of doing transactions.

I think it's fair to say that if the member would enlighten himself, talk to some of his friends and his neighbours, talk to the some of the banking institutions, talk to some of the businesses around this province — he would find that what I'm saying is in fact true. People are becoming . . . And we're rapidly moving to much more of a cashless society.

Certainly the members, the Conservative Party of this province, and the members opposite are living back in perhaps the 1980s, the '60s, the '50s and the '40s. But I want to say that we as a government, and the Crown corporations, take a very progressive and a positive and a forward-looking view of what people's requirements are, the way people want to do business. And we'll continue to follow right along in step with the people of Saskatchewan even if that member won't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for City Governments

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I look across to friends opposite and I see a lot of MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Regina and Saskatoon — not one of whom has said peep about the 50 per cent cut in grants to municipalities, to those cities, that are putting such extreme pressure on property taxes to Regina and Saskatoon.

Now I know the minister of Municipal Affairs has her stock answer in her binder like everybody else, blaming everything in this world, all of her failures, on the federal government. But my question to her is, now that you have 65 million in new money from the federal government, will you revisit these devastating cuts you've given our cities? Will you quit your attack on municipal government and on ratepayers in this province and restore that funding to our municipal ratepayers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the \$65 million — the phantom \$65 million he's talking about that the federal government is waving around — that government is still adding \$20 billion a year to the national debt. They're not even close to

balancing their budget. There's no new money. What new money are you talking about?

And I want to keep this municipal thing in perspective. I'll give you for an example the city of Saskatoon. This city of Saskatoon last year, in 1996, derived 4 per cent of its revenue from the government through revenue sharing. This year the difference amounts to a cut of 4 per cent of that 4 per cent. Now that's hardly slashing; it's hardly noticeable — \$360,000, that's the cut. That's very, very moderate.

And they've managed to hold their mill rate. So they couldn't have done that if there had been severe cuts. Those municipalities know how to manage and everything is fine in municipal land; it's over there that there's a problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Okay, the minister says she wants to put this in perspective. Well let's put it in perspective then. Eight provinces pay grants in lieu of property taxes to their municipal governments. Ottawa pays grants in lieu to cities for property taxes for government buildings.

This province is the odd man out. This province does not pay grants in lieu or property taxes to the various cities. This is particularly a problem . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I know about the Crown corporations. So do you. I said Government of Saskatchewan office buildings pay no grants in lieu, no property taxes. This is particularly an issue for the city of Regina. This is putting extreme pressure on the mill rate in Regina. I don't see any Regina MLAs raising the issue, so I am.

Will you revisit that issue, bring Saskatchewan in line with the generosity of other provinces and of the federal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to answer this question on behalf of the government. First of all, we pay millions of dollars a year in taxes to other levels of government.

But just listen to what's happening in this question period. The other day we had four positions on taxes over there, four different positions from one party.

Today, as I pointed out, debt — they're not sure what they would have done with the money from Cameco shares. Some might have put it to debt, others were going to spend it, and there was a third position.

And listen to the spending. Just listen to what these people do. Any cause that walks through this door, they're going to put money to it. They're going to spend and spend and spend. They're not going to talk, as we do, about strategic investments in the areas that matter most to the people of Saskatchewan — strategic investments that prepare this province for the 21st century, strategic investments that enhance our quality of life. They're just going to spend and spend and spend.

And as long as they continue on like this, they're going to be in

opposition and in opposition and in opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aboriginal Taxation

Mr. Hillson: — Well the Minister of Finance claims to perceive some sort of differences of opinion over here. I don't know what they are. But I'll tell you the conflict, the contradiction I've noticed over there. When the issue of taxation on first nations reserves comes up, we see the Premier saying, well we're going to talk, we're going to negotiate; this is not a time to get heavy, this is not a time to be incendiary.

The Minister of Finance then is quoted in the newspaper as saying her officials are to do anything necessary to collect those taxes. It doesn't matter that the first nations say they're not liable for them. Do whatever you have to do. Send in the police. I don't care.

Now my question is: is this the good cop/bad cop routine between the Minister of Finance and the Premier, or is there a serious conflict on how we should deal with this sensitive issue between the Premier and the Minister of Finance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, the position is entirely coherent. There's two separate issues. One is enforcement of the existing tax regime. And everybody in this government on this side says it is the duty of the government to enforce the existing tax laws of the province whether on reserve or off reserve. The tax laws have to be enforced.

The other side of the issue is the changes in those tax laws, changes in those tax laws. We have said we want to discuss . . . or the first nations people have actually said to us, they want to talk to us about changes in those tax laws.

But let's look at what these people are saying. They're saying, let's just send the whole issue off to the courts and let the courts decide the issue.

We're saying we want to sit down and discuss with first nations people the future of the tax regime in this province. In the interim, we have to live up to our obligation to enforce the tax laws of this province, and that's exactly what we'll do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 59 — The Education Amendment Act, 1997/ Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of item no. 5, Bill 59, The Education Amendment Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 60 — The Teachers' Federation

Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 60, The Teachers' Federation Amendment Act, 1997 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Intergovernmental Affairs Vote 30

The Chair: — I would ask the minister, even though they were here yesterday with this same department, to reintroduce his officials, please.

I would ask the minister to please reintroduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Seated to my right is the deputy minister, Mr. Paul Osborne. Paul has been with our government for some time and worked in a number of different areas. Also seated, I guess not directly behind me but behind me and to my right, Bob Hersche; and also, straight behind me or directly behind me is Melinda Gorrill with the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Item 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the officials here this morning.

Yesterday afternoon I had mentioned that there was a considerable amount of additional monies allotted to trade policy. I was wondering if the minister might provide a little bit more detailed explanation as to what these monies would be for. And also, would you provide an explanation as to how this doesn't overlap with federal initiatives, and with initiatives by provincial agencies such as STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.), and . . . well in your own Department of Economic Development.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well there's two distinct parts to the trade initiative of any government, and that's true in Saskatchewan as well. And at one point not too long ago both aspects were in the Department of Economic Development as part of the trade unit.

When we set up Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, or STEP, as you call it, the portion of the trade operation that deals with trade missions and practical application of trade policy to businesses and trade missions and trade in general, that unit was transferred out of the Department of Economic Development to STEP. We have involvement because we have board of director positions on STEP, but basically the money was transferred

over and is appropriated through Finance and through estimates to STEP. So that's one portion of the trade organization that was moved out of the Department of Economic Development.

What we have here is that unit that had been in the Department of Economic Development that does the trade policy — that deals with NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), the free trade agreement, other areas of formal negotiations, both with the other provinces, with the federal government, or gives it advice and comments on trade arrangements.

So there's the practical side of trade that is now over in Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership and the policy side is now lodged in Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to turn now to what I'd mentioned yesterday as one of my greater concerns, and that's with the spending increases and with the overall direction which the government is taking on a daily basis. And this is with respect to the national unity question.

When I sit in this House and listen or read news reports, I see a concerted effort by the government to blame virtually everything on the federal government, which at the present and for the foreseeable time is a Liberal one. I've continually read news reports wherein Parti Québécois use similar tactics. They blame everything on the federal government to try and persuade Quebecers that the country doesn't work.

In this province, I can only suggest that the Premier and the government caucus does this so that they can persuade voters, well to vote New Democrat rather than Liberal. And that being at both federal and provincial levels.

Now you can call it my theory if you want, but I think that a good deal of people in this province know that there's a good deal of truth to it as well.

But in any event, I think that fanning the flames of regionalism for political gain, to get votes for New Democrats, is unhealthy not only for Saskatchewan, but it's unhealthy for the country.

Sure, not everything's perfect. But no government should try and play politics such that it poses a threat to national unity.

So given that this is overly apparent, that the government spends most of its time attacking the federal government, I'd like the minister to explain this strategy to us this morning.

I can see it might help the NDP, but why are you already attacking what is a fragile national unity just for your own political gain? Would you please explain that to us this morning.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think the member opposite is very, very misguided if he thinks there isn't a very close working relationship between the provincial government in Saskatchewan and the federal government in Ottawa.

I think if you look historically at the relationship between our province and the federal government, you will never see a time when there has been more collaboration between the federal

government in Ottawa and the provincial government. In fact some people argue that we're too close and there's too much collaboration.

And your colleague from Arm River says he agrees. And even within your own caucus, it's obvious that you have very differing opinions on whether or not we're attacking the Liberals or supporting them.

The member from Arm River again heckles from his chair that he doesn't like it that we're so close to the federal Liberals and not . . . we should be attacking them more.

And I think what you should do before you ask us for our opinion on our approach to national unity is get a cohesive approach within your own caucus. Because you can't very well have a position of saying we're attacking the government of Ottawa too much, and your friend and colleague and caucus member from Arm River saying that they're too close. And so this is, I think, at the provincial level.

Just a word of advice. I think at the federal level, the federal Liberals are doing quite well by all polls, and provincially you're doing very poorly. And one of the reasons at the provincial level you're doing so poorly is because you have no cohesive message on anything — very poorly. There are polls around that show you in third place behind the Tories even though you have more seats.

The fact of the matter is you're doing very poorly, especially . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from Arm River continues to heckle from his seat saying that they're doing very well. But I want to tell you that since your new leader, Melenchuk, was elected as leader of the Liberal Party, you have gone down continually in the polls. Now I think that's because of the disunity that exists in your party. That's my opinion.

But I want to say to the member opposite that when it comes to national unity, I want to get clear from you — as a provincial party — whether you believe as a party that there should be a closer relationship between the provincial and federal government? Is that the party position? Or is it, as the member from Arm River says, that there should be even more bickering and fighting between the provincial and federal government? Because that's very, very unclear.

I want to conclude my remarks by saying there is a close relationship, working relationship, between members of our government — our cabinet — and the federal cabinet. I meet on a regular basis with Mr. Goodale on issues of Economic Development. I have a good relationship with Lloyd Axworthy in Winnipeg, where we can phone each other on a very regular basis. Other members of the federal cabinet have great relationships with members of the Saskatchewan cabinet.

So I'm not sure where you come from with the fact that we're attacking the federal government all the time because it simply isn't accurate. In fact there's much less bickering and fighting between Ottawa and Saskatchewan than I have ever seen since coming to the Assembly in 1978.

Now I want to get to the point of why the federal government and Prime Minister are in trouble in Quebec — it's got nothing to do with Saskatchewan. The polls on the radio and TV this morning that showed that Prime Minister Chrétien is in a neck and neck race in his own seat personally, where he's tied and at risk of being defeated, cannot be blamed on the Saskatchewan government.

He won the seat last time with 6,000 votes. Polls this morning out of that same constituency showed that he's tied with the Bloc competitor.

But for you to say in this House that somehow that can be tagged to the provincial government in Saskatchewan is indeed drawing a very, very long bow.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't think it's such a long bow to draw given . . . The minister was in the House this morning, he was in the House this morning. He heard his Minister for Municipal Government with respect to federal transfer payments and cuts to federal transfer payments as being vicious. Well the sort of rhetoric that we're hearing in here all the time is not one that you would hear amongst colleagues federally and provincially that are getting along in a manner that's better than . . . that's unprecedented.

So certainly . . . and also too, in terms of taking out of context comments made by the member from Arm River in an aside conversation, I mean who . . . That sort of little trick isn't going to work either, Mr. Minister.

When I look over the spending, as I did yesterday and noted that there was a great increase in spending for constitutional relations, I don't see the point of that additional spending when at the same time this government is making the constitution and the very foundation of the country more fragile by fanning the flames of regionalism as we've just saw evidence of here again this morning during question period.

Only yesterday I heard John Solomon was attacking the federal government for what it did on social programs, saying that it's harming national unity. Believe it or not, it's harming national unity by the government attacking the deficit.

Well, Mr. Chair, in contrast I would say that getting the deficit under control in all the provinces and at the federal level will make it possible for the federal government to prove that Canada works. We'll be able to deal more effectively with national problems and strains upon national unity if that deficit problem is gone.

My question therefore is, why would you spend more on constitutional affairs while on the other hand you continue to attack a fragile national unity by fanning the flames of regionalism like Mr. Solomon? Particularly in light of the fact that the Liberal federal government is our only hope for a truly national government at this sensitive point in our history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — First of all I want to clarify one thing: that for the member opposite to say that in the middle of

a federal campaign that you're not going to have candidates debating and making points, political points, party to party, that somehow this is . . . that the constitution or the country is so fragile that you can't have a campaign where Tony Merchant, inadvertently I think, takes credit for saving the airbase in Moose Jaw, never having been there or having anything to do with it, some would say that that kind of politicking where the mayor of Moose Jaw and others have to say this, that, and the other thing, that's unfortunate. I agree with that.

But the fact of the matter is that in a campaign, politicians are going to campaign against the record of the government. I'm sure the member doesn't mean what he said when he says that candidates shouldn't be talking about the shortcomings of the government they're running against, or that the government shouldn't argue against the shortcomings of the opposition — surely that's not what you mean — and that the country can't survive that kind of a public and open debate during an election. It's the very thing that has made Canada and makes democracy work.

(1100)

So I totally disagree with you when you say that candidates of any political stripe, whether it's Reform, Conservative, Liberal, or NDP, can't make their statements during the election campaign. And for you to come here and say that John Solomon shouldn't be putting out his party platform during the campaign in a very forceful way, I just think that is not accurate.

I want to get back to where we have cooperation with the federal government. On economic development, in the area that I work in, I think I have had a good relationship with the various ministers who deal with economic development at the federal level. We have shared resources.

We have a common office in Saskatoon where my department staff and the federal government's department staff, in cooperation with Minister John Manley, decided that we were going to co-locate in the same office building. Our staff get along; we have a common library, use common computers. And this is happening in a number of areas in the province. And there's great cooperation that's going on.

And there are other areas where we have collaboration and support. On the issue of environment, you know that we have worked very diligently to cut back on the amount of red tape and duplication and we've signed some interesting agreements with the federal government as it would relate to the environment.

The one area where we have a great deal of difficulty though and is becoming an issue in the campaign is the whole issue of fiscal responsibility and how you get the debt under control — and how you get the debt under control. Some of you will argue that the Finance department in Ottawa is doing a great job and that they're solving the debt in a wonderful way by breaking their promise to get rid of the GST and keeping it, in order to solve the debt; to cut social programs, particularly health, to solve the federal debt.

We argue vehemently that it's being done in a ham-handed way,

some would argue in a vicious way. And we hear this from the public — these aren't words that we use; these are words we hear from our constituents. And so when those words come to the legislature on behalf of our constituents and you bring your words to the legislature where you attack our Minister of Finance or someone else for how they operate, this is common in the legislature. And I would say even at that level, the tone of this legislature, there's much more camaraderie than I have seen for many, many years.

And I don't think the debate that goes on in this Assembly has anything to do with the problems that we are having in Canada as a nation. I think if there's a failing, it's the failing of the federal government — failing of the federal government to deal with a very, very critical issue.

I think before the last referendum they were asleep at the switch as those who wanted to rip the country apart did their work and did their campaigning, and your federal counterparts, it's my view, were asleep at the switch and almost lost Canada because they didn't do the selling and the promoting that other Canadians were willing to help them with. And my fear is that they're asleep at the switch again, and that they should be rallying those forces that want to keep our country whole.

And I think there's a concern in Canada that we need stronger leadership on that issue. And those points we'll be making. That doesn't mean that we're opposed to Canada, as you might suggest; in fact it's absolutely the opposite. There is no stronger voice for national unity in the past 20 years in this country than our Premier, who sits in the next desk to me and speaks coherently on international platforms, national platforms, on the issue of the importance of Canadian unity. He does it at every opportunity. He has high regard, high respect for his intelligence and knowledge on the issue, and for anyone to come here and start saying that that isn't the case is absolute folly and nonsense.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Well, Mr. Chair, I find the minister's comments amusing, and when he mentions that the Premier is . . . And certainly we'll give him that — he's well versed on constitutional issues and he has been on national and international platforms. Well might I remind you that each and every one of you across there are on that same platform on a daily basis now. We're on the web. Every single vicious comment that you say is in *Hansard*. Everybody, not only in this nation but across this globe, can hear every comment that you make against national unity. So you're on a national platform and an international platform as well. So when the Municipal Government minister this morning referred to federal transfer cuts as being vicious — vicious — you're harming the whole national unity process.

So I would like to know, is any of the money that we see here before us today in these *Estimates* going to go towards trying to take and reprogram your back-bench MLAs and your ministers into toning down their rhetoric that does nothing but fan the flames of regionalism in this country?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to tell the member opposite

that he should not take our arguments to defeat the federal Liberals as an attack on Canada. Quite the reverse. We want to rid the Canadian public of federal Liberals because we believe they are destroying the very fabric of the country by the hacking and slashing of social programs that have been forced onto the national agenda by New Democrats across this country. That's why we're trying to defeat the Chrétien government.

We're trying to create a situation where the Saskatchewan way . . . the way of compromise and building partnerships the way we have here in the province of Saskatchewan in the last six years, by balancing the books of the province in a fair and equitable way, by running a surplus and using that surplus to enhance social programs, to pay down the debt, and to reduce taxes. We're doing that and we want to sell that program to Canadians so that we can rid Canada of Jean Chrétien and the Liberals. Because we think that their hacking and slashing of social programs is destroying the country and is bad for unity. That's why we're making the argument. And we'll continue to make that argument as hard as we can — I promise you that.

That if what you're attempting to do today in the middle of a federal campaign is to, in some sort of a phoney way, come here and say, lay off our federal counterparts in the middle of an election campaign because we're in fear and risk of losing the election, and somehow say that that then would mean that Canada would be destroyed, that's absolute garbage and nonsense. The quickest way to save Canada, in my humble view, is to rid Canadians of the Liberal government.

That's my view and I hold that very strongly. And I believe quite strongly if the New Democrats, with their platform based on what is going on in Saskatchewan, were to have the levers of power in Ottawa to balance the budget . . . and I want to challenge you today on the budget of the federal government. I challenge you to tell me how much debt was added to the total federal debt in the last four years. Do you know? — \$117 billion added to the debt in the last four years by the Liberal administration who broke their promise to get rid of the GST because they said they needed it to balance the books. They broke their promise to keep social programs because they said they were balancing the budget.

Do you know what the debt today is in Canada? — \$117 billion more than it was when they took over. That's a bigger increase than in any period in the history of Canada. A bigger increase in the debt in Canada — 117 billion — than in the last four years of Mulroney. Did you know that?

An Hon. Member: — Unbelievable.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — That is unbelievable; that this is the biggest falsehood that has been perpetrated on Canadians, that breaking their promise to keep the GST and breaking their promise to slash health care was being done to balance the books of Canada.

Challenge Paul Martin. Phone him and ask him. Say: Paul, is it true that in the last four years the debt of this country has gone up more than any other period in Canadian history? And do you know what he'll say? He'll say yes, and I have to . . . If he's clear about it, he'll say, I apologize to the Canadian people

because I have done a worse job on debt and debt management than the Mulroney government before me or any other government — the Trudeau government — or any other federal government in the history of Canada.

Check the numbers. Check the numbers. Not only haven't we solved the debt problem, it's gone up faster than any other period in Canadian history. You've kept the GST, which has taken thousands of dollars out of every Canadian family's pocket — which you'd promised to eliminate — and you've also hacked and slashed at federal programs, social programs.

So why is there an anti-Liberal sentiment across Canada among social groups, among poor people, among those who believe in trust and promises? It's because on the account of promising to balance the budget and get rid of debt. You've failed and failed miserably at the federal level — it's gone up faster than ever before in the history of Canada.

On the promise to eliminate the GST — those who voted for that — you've let them down, and 84 per cent of Canadians agree with that statement, 84 per cent. And on the issue of health care where you promised to keep health care at its same level it was, you've hacked and slashed. And I could go on with the Crow rate, where there were promises made.

But I say to you, if you think you can come here and stop the campaign, which is very effective, by the left wing of Canada against the cutting that was done in order, as they said, to solve the debt problem, which was false, we will not only continue to say those words about solving these problems, but we'll say them even louder. Because in terms of national unity, it's important that Canadians are able to trust their federal government and federal parties to deliver on what they say during federal elections.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well, Mr. Minister, gleaning from a little bit of the rhetoric I . . . Well I shouldn't be presumptuous. I guess I should ask you, because I heard in some of the comments that you've made that perhaps you and your government might be supportive of the Government of Canada in its attempts to wrestle the deficit to zero as a part of its overall strategy of trying to make Canadian federalism work.

So I would enjoy a comment from you. Are you supportive of the federal government in their efforts to wrestle the deficit to zero?

We've just heard a long statement about how they're cutting and they're slashing and that's disruptive to national unity of course, according to John Solomon. While then on the other hand, you've got the federal New Democratic leader talking about spending an extra \$20 billion a year — I think that was your platform that was unveiled yesterday, if I'm not mistaken. And you're talking about a federal government who over the last several years has in fact been wrestling with a deficit and yes, indeed the deficit and the debt has grown. The deficit has dropped, sorry. The debt has grown. But your own federal counterparts are proposing an additional \$20 billion every year.

And you talk about Mr. Solomon. And he has his rights as a candidate, certainly, to make his comments, inflammatory as they may be. But you neglected to make any comment about

your own ministers in this House and the inflammatory comments that they're making on a continual basis.

So I'd just like to know: does your government support the federal government in its attempt to wrestle the deficit to zero? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I'll just say this: that in Saskatchewan in our first term of office we balanced the budget. And we had bigger obstacles and credit rating problems than the federal government did. And we did it in a sensitive, balanced way.

If you're saying, do we support the federal government's approach to add a bigger chunk of debt to the Canadian debt than ever before in the history of Canada while breaking almost every promise that it made to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election, no we don't support that approach.

Do we support the approach of a balanced way of getting the books balanced and having tax cuts and enhancement to social programs the way we've been able to do? And I might add, with even the support of some opposition members in the last budget. I say that's the way that we should be going at the Canadian level.

(1115)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I believe under Intergovernmental Affairs . . . Well maybe first I should welcome your officials here today before I get too carried away here . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, no. I wouldn't want to get carried away because the member from Lloydminster is in a bad mood today, and I'm not sure why. But she was over here and didn't like some of the things that we had to say. She disagreed with them and now she's in a bad mood. So we will keep it fairly calm.

Mr. Minister, the protocol office is part of the Intergovernmental Affairs jurisdiction and I believe that part of the duties performed by the protocol office is to provide for small gifts when people from other jurisdictions come to visit, such as the premier of a Chinese province or that kind of a visit.

I wonder if you could give us any indication as to any of . . . if any of those gifts were of a value in excess of \$200, and if so, what they were and to whom they were given.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — At this point in time, it would be very unusual if there were any gifts over 200. I don't have that list here but I will get that information particularly for the member.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd also wonder if you could provide me with a list of gifts that were received by the province, if any of them had a value in excess of \$200; and if we did receive any, to whom were they given.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It's not . . . Intergovernmental Affairs does not keep track of gifts that individual members or people who go and receive gifts from international guests might give. There's no individual record that is kept in

Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Therefore you're saying that if gifts are received by a minister or the Premier or some other member of the legislature, given in the performance of their duties, that those are gifts that are then owned by that individual rather than the gift being given to the province or to the office?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I think on the question the member asks, if you were given a pen set or if you were given gifts from visiting dignitaries, I think it's an option for the ministers whether they keep it or use it in their office or whether it's donated to some organization. But as far as I know, the policy for ministers or members of the Legislative Assembly is that it's optional.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister.

Well we do have some concerns with this particular department, as we don't see that there is a lot of benefit, or at least a lot of activities that take place through this office, other than protocol. And yet it spends a significant amount of money overall.

I know that your department was involved last year in the development or the administration of Internet developments within the province that were funded both federally and provincially through the infrastructure works program. How many of those was your department involved with?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Last year, a year ago, the infrastructure program was transferred to Municipal Government. So we wouldn't have any of that money or any authority over that at the present time. So if you might just hold your questioning on that till Municipal Government comes, you would be able to find that out.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you. Mr. Minister, though unfortunately, I'm not sure how we would ask questions of Municipal Government when the monies under Schedule A are under Intergovernmental Affairs. I'm sure the minister would direct us to refer them to Intergovernmental Affairs. And some of that comes under this department.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I'm just having . . . The reason it's taking me a little time, I'm having trouble finding the line you're talking about because on the Schedule A that I have in front me, I don't have anything that would relate to the issue you're reading. Can you . . .

An Hon. Member: — Page 143.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Page 143.

An Hon. Member: — Information technology and communications (IA10).

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — There would be no infrastructure money in that vote.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So the information and technology and telecommunications vote does not relate in any way to Internet?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It's a policy area and didn't deal and spend any money on Internet out of that particular division.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Well perhaps you could explain then what that particular area does. They were budgeted for \$555,000. I see that they transferred \$405,000 to Economic and Co-operative Development, which is one of your departments, Mr. Minister. So perhaps you could explain what that area was doing.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The whole information technology unit and telecommunication unit which you see here, which 405,000 was transferred to Economic Development, was split into two parts. The provincial-federal negotiations on policy was maintained in Intergovernmental Affairs, and the 405,000 that went with 5.5 positions, went over to Economic Development but deals very directly in a practical and hands-on way with the information technology companies in building an information technology centre or nucleus in the province of Saskatchewan.

So they would deal with companies both large and small, liaise with SaskTel to build a bigger infrastructure from information technology in a very practical, in a very practical way, hands-on way, with companies. What's left in this department is the regulatory policy unit that would deal with the feds or with other provinces on a day-to-day or month-to-month basis.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the main mandates of your department is to facilitate discussions with other jurisdictions. What meetings have you helped to set up? Exactly what was your role in organizing the province's participation?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The kind of meetings that they would be involved in would be western premiers' meeting, or a fed/prov meeting, or annual premiers' meetings where this, on a regular basis in one way or another, comes up on the agenda either in a formal way or an indirect way. And this unit would be available to advise and recommend to cabinet, to the minister, and to the Premier and the Premier's office, on issues that would relate to technology and telecommunications.

And as we saw in question period today, with the drastic changes that are taking place very rapidly in telecommunications and announcements by the CRTC, we can see how important having this unit can be for a government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well would not this area also be covered by SaskTel? Because that is where your communications basically are dealt with in this province, is through SaskTel. Wouldn't the policy development come with the government and SaskTel in this area? So isn't there a duplication here?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It's a little bit like the trade organization. And I make the analogy because I think there is a close kind of forum that you can see here, where you could say that STEP, or the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, is really a duplication, because SaskPower has a trading unit and Flexi-coil has a trading unit, so what do you really need STEP for, and isn't that duplication? But on the other hand, it is

really, really important that a province have an umbrella under which all the forms of trade are done and negotiated.

And the same is true, we find, of telecommunications and technology — that there really is a need on the policy side to have one central unit that looks at the bigger picture. I mean SaskTel does have units that deal with telecommunications and telcos, and in their best interests, gives recommendations also, through this unit or directly to government on dealing with the private sector.

But really, in this age of information technology, it's really important. And I think I would be correct in saying that most provinces and most jurisdictions have gone to a system whereby they set up a very tight, concise unit of people who deal on the policy issue with other jurisdictions, and internally.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Since your department deals with advice to government related to telecommunications, what was their advice to the government, to SaskTel then, in relationship to the independent Internet providers that were in this province?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I don't want to go into all the detail and machinations of how the program worked. It's clear that after the discussions that went on — and the service providers were involved in a big way, SaskTel obviously involved as well, and this unit of information technology and communications also played a role on the policy side — that they were able to come to, I think, maybe not what was wanted by everyone but something that has resolved the issue.
(1130)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well the decisions, the policy advisement and the decisions made by SaskTel, certainly had a major impact on the service ... the small Internet service providers in this province because they took some very dramatic hits within their operations. I know that SaskTel did offer to purchase their equipment but they had invested considerable amount of time and efforts into those areas which was not provided for.

Now, Mr. Minister, while your Intergovernmental Affairs deals provincially between various areas ... (inaudible interjection) ... There's certainly a lot of competition there from the member from Regina South in the questioning. But I wonder if you could please indicate to me whether or not your department is involved internationally as far as advising.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — We're not involved in any general way at all, but there's one specific area where the World Trade Organization deals with this issue, and Canadians ... or Canada through the Canadian government is involved in the World Trade Organization.

We do advise on needs and aspirations, I guess to put it fairly, of this area of telecommunications and information technology on behalf of Saskatchewan people. But that would be the only bit that we do at the international level.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The reason I'm asking is I just wonder why are we doubling up? Couldn't we have fewer departments here to deal with a number of these

things? Shouldn't these world trade questions be dealt with through your department of economic trade and development and a number of the other areas? Shouldn't they just simply be wrapped up together and have fewer departments dealing with the very same issues?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, I would take the member's view that you can always improve. But having said that, I think we've gone a long way together — you and I and members of the opposition — in getting the per capita spending on infrastructure and programs down to a level that I think is very, very appropriate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — One last question, Mr. Minister. What services has the constitutional relations branch provided you in the past year? Have they provided you with any papers or recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Just let me ... I've just been handed a little note, but basically there's four main areas that we've been involved in: developing a strategy for a substantive response to the stresses on national unity following the Quebec referendum; advised government on how to respond to the post-referendum constitutional policy issues — that's government in general but the Premier and other ministers, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and others who may be involved; assist in the preparation of Saskatchewan's intervention, the federal reference case on Quebec's right to secede from Canada — you know the issue that I'm talking about; coordinate Saskatchewan's constitutional policy with that of other governments; and finally, to advise government on how to address a range of issues with constitutional policy implications. And that is a vast array of different constitutional applications that might apply to various departments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would there be any of those papers that could be tabled to the House?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Okay. There's no public documents that have been prepared. They would be briefing notes that would be done for ministers or for the Premier, so they're not documents that would tend to be tabled.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would like to thank you for your responses and for your officials for coming in and assisting you today.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Just in closing, I want to say first of all, a big thank you to the department — who has been very patient with the minister — for providing us with, I think good quality answers, and to the members opposite for the questions they asked.

And I just remind you if you have other issues on the constitution that you would like to get responses to, or if you want to use this area of government through the minister's office, we can make fact sheets on issues available to you.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 30 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 48 — The Highways and Transportation Consequential Amendment Act, 1997/ Loi de 1997 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill 46, The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997 contains several consequential amendments to other Acts. In preparing Bill 46, we determined we would have to make amendments to The Highway Traffic Act, 1996, and The Traffic Safety Court of Saskatchewan Act, 1988, which are on the list of laws to be translated into French. As The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997, is not being translated, we had to draft a separate Bill for these two laws.

Bill 48 contains two sections, both of which are consequential to Bill 46. Section 2 repeals those sections of The Highway Traffic Act, 1996 which are no longer needed, as the subject matter is covered in Bill 46. Section 3 changes a cross-reference in The Traffic Safety Court of Saskatchewan Act, 1988.

Should members have any questions, we would be pleased to answer them in committee. I now move second reading of The Highways and Transportation Consequential Amendment Act, 1997.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 44

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Calvert that **Bill No. 44 — The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the Wakamow Valley Authority is of course an Authority set up in the '70s to beautify the river park in Moose Jaw. And there were in the 1970s a number of river valley authorities set up in various communities around our province, and they have done good work.

I do have a problem with them, but I wish to first of all make it clear that I begrudge nothing to the city of Moose Jaw or Swift Current or Saskatoon. However, these beautification initiatives are of course paid for by taxpayers throughout the province, and what we have found in North Battleford and in the minister's riding in Prince Albert is that the problem is that basically the list was closed in the 1970s. Consequently if you didn't get on the list in the 1970s, you can't get on it now.

Now of course North Battleford and its sister community of

Battleford are on opposite sides of the North Saskatchewan River. They have a beautiful natural environment there at the forks of the Battle River, which was of course the initial capital of the Northwest Territories. It was where our capital was supposed to be, and we are trying to preserve the natural beauty and the history of that area. As I say, it would have been a marvellous place for this provincial legislature to be standing, but unfortunately history ruled otherwise.

But in looking through the *Public Accounts*, Mr. Speaker, I find that in 1995-96, in the last fiscal year, 740,000 — approximately three-quarters of a million — went to the Meewasin Valley Authority; Wakamow got 125,000; and Chinook Parkway in Swift Current got 78,000 — a total of just under a million dollars.

And as I say, this was money paid for by taxpayers all over the province. And my question is, why can this money not be shared for all cities attempting to beautify river valley development?

In the preceding fiscal year I find again, three-quarters of a million to Meewasin in Saskatoon; another 126 to Wakamow in Moose Jaw; and 78,000 to Chinook in Swift Current — a total again, just under a million dollars.

(1145)

In the preceding fiscal year of '93-94, we actually had 1.7 million which was divided between Meewasin, Wakamow, Wascana, and Chinook in Swift Current. And in '92-93, we had there 2 million divided again between Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina, and Swift Current. And in '91-92, just over 2 million, again divided between those four cities.

So at one time it was 2 million. Now it appears to be about 1 million that goes to river valley authorities set up in the days of the Blakeney government.

And as I say, I do not begrudge those cities that are on the list, and I know that the river valley authorities in those communities have done great work in beautifying their communities, and so I congratulate them. They're doing well, and I don't begrudge the provincial assistance they're receiving for them.

But I would say, Mr. Speaker, that it strikes me as unfair that provincial taxpayers continually pay for certain communities. Other communities which also have river valleys — Weyburn, Estevan, Kamsack, Nipawin, Prince Albert, and the Battlefords — we are left to fend for ourselves. And it only strikes me as fair that whatever funds are spent on urban beautification of river valleys ought to be more equitably distributed.

Now it might be responded that we don't have river valley authorities. Well we do, but we are told that we cannot get on the list even if we establish an authority. The Battlefords has not established an authority incidentally, Mr. Speaker, but the reason we haven't is that we have been told that the list is closed.

So basically if you had an authority in the 1970s, then you will continue getting assistance annually from the province and from

provincial taxpayers. If you were not on the list in the 1970s, then the local taxpayers of your municipality will have to bear 100 per cent of the cost.

Mr. Speaker, this seems to me inequitable. So while I congratulate the thrust of this Bill and I congratulate the people of Moose Jaw and the Wakamow Authority generally for the good work they have done in beautifying that community and the River Park in Moose Jaw, I do have to ask why some communities are favoured in being on the list and other communities are shut out in the cold. And I would ask that the minister consider that inequity in funding.

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. 41

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wiens that **Bill No. 41 — The Crown Corporations 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.

Bill No. 56

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 56 — The Trust and Loan Corporations 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.

Bill No. 5

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 5 — The Saskatchewan Pension Plan 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.

Bill No. 6

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 6 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) 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.

Bill No. 38

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 38 — The Municipal Employees' Pension 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. 14 — The Water Corporation Amendment Act, 1997

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and to the officials.

Mr. Minister, I understand that this Bill makes it a lot easier for Sask Water to expropriate the land for special projects. Can you tell me why this is necessary?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I answer the member's question, I'd like to introduce my officials. I have to my right, Wayne Dybvig, the vice-president of water resource management; and Micheal McDougall, general counsel to the Saskatchewan Water Corporation.

Mr. Chairman, The Water Corporation Act is in need of some amendments. There are four main areas with respect to the changes, and what we are trying to do is streamline the process by which decisions are made — eliminate red tape.

And certainly one of the issues that the member raises, with respect to the process of approval for expropriations, as it currently exists, it requires an order in council, which is inconsistent with any of the other Crowns, and right of way approval for any of the expansion to infrastructure here in Saskatchewan. So this would make it consistent whereby it would not require an order in council to expropriate an easement on land for a Sask Water project.

There are three other areas that I'm sure the member will want to question about. It deals . . . one is in section 54, an amendment which removes the regulatory involvement of Sask Water in approval for internal sewage collection and water distribution projects, which I think all municipal governments will be satisfied with, in that Sask Water does no longer have to get involved in another level of bureaucracy. SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) will still do the environmental review. And so I think it will streamline and make that system an awful lot easier.

The other deals with the sale of water beds as it relates to specific land entitlement claims. And the other is for domestic approvals. The provision to provide licences for domestic projects under The Water Rights Act would be changed to approvals under The Water Corporation Act and it would not then require inspections every time a landowner would sell to another landowner. It would be an automatic transfer as opposed to having to come back to the Water Corporation.

So this really is in tune with cleaning up some of the legislation to reduce the regulatory burden and the paperwork that needs to be done in terms of the corporation to fulfil its mandate.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I understand that this first change is to allow you to be consistent with other Crowns. And I guess philosophically you have to wonder whether, just because you're not consistent, doesn't mean the whole process is wrong. Not having to go to the government, to the elected people of the province in order to get approval for expropriation, seems to me to be wrong. People out there have to have one last chance to have their voices heard, so I guess I have difficulty with this idea.

Can you explain how much of a delay is faced by Sask Water in cases where expropriation now has to happen when they have to go through cabinet?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, as it would exist now, the Water Corporation would have to draft an order in council. An order in council is a document that would go to the cabinet, to the executive arm of this government.

I want to say to the member opposite that it is not a matter that is referred to this legislature, to this Chamber. When an expropriation is done now as it exists, Sask Water would go through all measure of due diligence to ensure that people had a voluntary . . . and understood the reasons that the infrastructure was going to go through. They offer a reasonable compensation for the imposition that they would pose on the landowner.

And for the most part, I would say it's fair to say that the vast majority of people understand that infrastructure has to go somewhere. And although there is an imposition, the fact of the matter is, their neighbours, their friends, their communities, need the infrastructure — water in the case of the Water Corporation — and that those facilities are required. There are some, for some reasons, where expropriation for legal reasons — estates being one example — an expropriation in some cases may be required.

The process is now that the Water Corporation would apply for an order in council, through their minister, to cabinet. Cabinet would then review the order in council. The order in council would then be either passed or rejected. I can't recall a request for an expropriation that has been rejected — certainly not in the time that I've been in cabinet — and then the normal course of action would take place.

(1200)

I want to say that it has been my experience that all of the corporations have done all measure of consultation with landowners in any project that I've seen. So basically what we're doing is eliminating the need for a whole pile of paperwork; a lot of people being involved in a process that certainly can be simplified. And I think that this amendment to section 18 would clearly allow that to happen.

So it's not just a matter of consistency with other Crowns, although it is consistent with what the other Crowns do. What it would do is eliminate a lot of time that public corporation officials spend in terms of putting the documentation together. And so for that reason we're recommending the change to section 18.

Ms. Draude: — Well I guess we'll just have to agree to disagree, because I don't think that two wrongs make a right.

But could you tell me how many expropriations Sask Water would normally give in a year?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I guess it would depend on the amount of capital construction that's done in a year. I guess, to give you some example of the number of expropriations that would be involved in a fairly major project, the Humboldt-Wakaw waterline involved 270 . . . 260 landowners and there was one expropriation that was required. That was done by order in council.

Ms. Draude: — So that's really not very many. Are the delays faced by Sask Water now, given that very low number, detrimental to the point that we should have to remove this check and balance for approval of these expropriations?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I think any time that we as a government and as elected people can streamline a process for decision making, it's our responsibility to do that. We made a commitment to business people and we make the commitment to landowners and all other people of this province that, where we identify areas that we can streamline a process, we will attempt to do that.

The fact of the matter is that there's all measure of due diligence done prior to an expropriation. That certainly would be the last resort, and I think you can understand that. It's not something that any corporation or any individual wants to do — to have to, through a process of expropriation, achieve the necessary results. Much better to be able to be done through an education process, through an understanding both by the corporation or the officials and by the landowners; sit down and discuss the issue.

And as I've indicated, for the vast majority of the cases an agreement can be reached. Farmers will want compensation for the imposition on their land, and I think that's fair and that's reasonable.

Ultimately the people who are going to be supplied through the infrastructure will be paying for the cost of all of this. And I think part of reducing the cost of doing business, internal to government, is streamlining the process.

So quite clearly that's what we're attempting to achieve here. I think that this is a reasoned approach to what is hopefully a last-resort type of an initiative. And I think really it is. And it's evidenced by the fact on Humboldt-Wakaw we've been able to satisfy all but one of the landowners, which required expropriation.

On the other hand, I think you will also understand that to be able to supply a good quality water to some of the rural communities in our province and to some of the cities, there has to be infrastructure. You can't hang a waterline from clouds. It has to go somewhere. And if it goes somewhere it goes over somebody's land or under somebody's land. There will be surface infrastructure that will be, I guess, a little bit more of an

imposition than a pipeline going under. There would be a disturbance of people's land.

But if we're going to serve the needs of rural communities, we really do need to do these kinds of processes in some cases.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, in clause 4 of the Bill you are removing the need for Sask Water's approval for certain projects that are within the boundaries of municipalities, urban municipalities. Basically that's because two government departments were regulating the same thing, I understand. Can you explain the exact nature of SERM's involvement compared to Sask Water's?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think to the member opposite, as in any project that would require environmental due diligence, SERM would be the body that would do that.

With respect to urban infrastructure, these are all designed and put together by professional engineers. And so it really makes for us little sense to have the Water Corporation involved in what is being done by professionals who are governed by certain standards. It's a self-regulated body. And the fact that they are professionals, and have in the past shown a history of doing very good quality work, to involve Sask Water in the process really made no sense to us.

So it's another way where we can streamline the decision-making process, and the approval process. And I think it will be well received both by the profession and by business.

Ms. Draude: — Are the regulations that are required under SERM different than the ones that were required under Sask Water?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. There are a number of areas where SERM will have to do their work, and where public safety will be a concern. And those are things that have been developed over the past number of years, and those will remain in place, and we'll still maintain there the required duties that they have, over the period, developed. The engineers will design the infrastructure. The only difference now is that Sask Water will not be involved in the process.

But I think that we can be rest assured that SERM will do their job, the professional engineers will do their job, and we can all be satisfied that we have eliminated yet another unnecessary step in the decision-making process.

Ms. Draude: — I guess I take that to mean that the public can be assured that there is as many safety concerns looked at now under this new Bill with the new amendment as before.

Mr. Minister, under section (5), we have a whole new section where Sask Water has powers in the areas of domestic uses of water, including watering of stock. Can you tell me how many licences are still being held under The Water Rights Act?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by my officials there are about 6,000 licences under this Act, and that would be the number that exists at this time.

Ms. Draude: — As I understand it, Sask Water has the right to cancel these licences and issue its own approval for domestic water usage? Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That's correct.

Ms. Draude: — So will all these licences currently just be automatically renewed?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by the officials that we will be notifying all of these water users and that they will have the right to accept the approval or reject, if they so choose, if they want to do away with the facility.

Ms. Draude: — What is the procedure Sask Water will then follow in giving approvals under the new section?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Really what we're doing is we're grandfathering. There were some areas where approval for transfer had not taken place and an ownership would transfer from one person to another. They hadn't applied for a licence — there's 6,000 of them and it's really an unnecessary situation, I would suggest. And what we are doing is just allowing for, I guess, grandfathering the process that was there in the past, and then allowing for an automatic transfer from the existing owner to a new owner if in fact a sale should take place.

So we'll be notifying all of the people who are licensed under the Act, indicating what the process will be and how it will work in the future. And I think basically it's a matter of housekeeping and cleaning up what was maybe at one point in time a necessary process. But certainly I think it would make little sense to me that the Water Corporation should be having to license a facility in a farmyard and then reissuing a licence just because of transfer. Really I think we're just eliminating a bunch of unnecessarily burdensome red tape for the people of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — So I take that to mean then it would be automatically renewed unless some red flag comes up somewhere.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That is correct. You know, it's just eliminating what is going to be an unnecessary process. But still, the corporation will have the responsibility and the authority to ensure that the, you know, the appropriate measure are taken.

Ms. Draude: — What kind of bureaucracy will be entailed in gaining these approvals? And how long will it take?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What it will entail really, is reducing the work load within the corporation about 75 per cent. I guess what would happen is the file would be reviewed upon request and the appropriate measure would be taken.

So I think it just really is a common sense approach. It's going to mean cost savings within the corporation; it's going to be less red tape for the farmers. And really, I think you would agree with me that that would be an ultimate goal in terms of

legislation. And any way where we can streamline, downsize the process by which a decision is made — as long as we can be assured the public safety is still in effect — certainly that would be the requirements. And that really is what the changes to this Act will do in that regard.

Ms. Draude: — So once these licences are cancelled and the new approvals are given, the projects will have to be registered by way of some sort of legal documentation against the certificate of the title of land. I would think a caveat or an easement and that type of thing. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told that what will happen is a notice will be put on the title so a new owner would be made aware that that kind of a facility is there. It's only a notice, an awareness that that is there and that would be, you know, a public document. And it would be part of the title and when a transfer would be required the new owner would know it's there.

Ms. Draude: — So then it's not a caveat, it's not an easement. Okay.

Obviously there are some concerns in the province about the settlement of land claims whether they're specific or not specific. So any changes to the Act that deal with the subject raises concerns for people in the province. Can you explain what changes this provision makes to the land claims?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What this does is just allows the authority to make the transfer, similar to a TLE (treaty land entitlements). It's not mandatory. It allows us the ability to do that with respect to a specific land claim.

(1215)

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question for the minister. But before I ask the question I just wanted to make comment on a couple of the comments that the minister has made. And the first one is regarding regulation and red tape, and of course that's what we want and of course that's what the people of the province want, is red tape.

But I wouldn't want the minister to be misleading the public in that each and every day as we deal with a piece of legislation in this House, we see less and less in the actual legislation and more and more in the regulations, which of course gives more and more control to Executive Council and the bureaucrats. So, Mr. Minister, let's not lead the public on in that regard.

And the second thing is you talked about communication as the way to stop expropriation and to talk to the people affected. It's a little hard to understand it, Mr. Minister, when SaskPower, an area that comes under your jurisdiction, has just gone out and expropriated land from dozens and dozens of farmers to proceed with the project that you want to proceed with.

So, Mr. Minister, let's not again lead the public on to believe that all is well and fine when we expropriate land.

However, Mr. Minister, my question is in regard to expropriation and as it relates to flooding, and I'm not sure this

comes under the jurisdiction of Sask Water but I'm sure you can enlighten us. For example, where you have massive flooding and land needs to be used to drain a large area of land and the landowner maybe isn't in agreement with the water crossing his land, does the expropriation come under your jurisdiction for that type of scenario?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Normally the circumstance that the member opposite speaks to would be under the jurisdiction of a CDA (conservation and development area authority) and they would be responsible for managing the control of that kind of a project, so it wouldn't be something that would impact on the Saskatchewan Water Corporation.

With respect to misleading the public, I want to say to the member opposite that he too should not mislead certain situations that in fact don't pertain to this piece of legislation, but I can understand the sensitivity, given that was one of the members who was subject to a SaskPower expropriation just recently, as I understand it. But we won't get into that, only to say that the CDAs in that kind of a project that you would speak to would be the ones that would be responsible for dealing with that kind of an issue.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Since you raised the issue of expropriation and SaskPower, in particular my piece of land, does the minister . . . can the minister provide for this House a list of the landowners that were involved in that project that they did indeed expropriate the land from.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well the member will know we're not dealing with any piece of legislation that relates to any other corporation other than the Sask Water Corporation. I haven't got any details here other than I brought the officials from the Water Corporation who are prepared to deal with the amendments to this Act.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can you tell us then, is it public policy or Sask Water policy to release the list of names that land has been expropriated from?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I don't think we see that it would be of any purpose to be posting in newspapers or other public places a list of people from whom land has been expropriated. That, for the most part, is an initiative between a landowner and the corporation, and I don't know of what public policy benefit it would be to buy ads either in newspapers or post them on telephone posts around the province.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, I wasn't advocating that you post them on telephone posts or . . . Of course that would be a little ridiculous, but coming from that side of the House I'm not surprised that you might consider that.

I'm not sure if that's Sask Water's policy; if SaskPower has a different policy, because you felt quite free to use this member's name in the media. It appeared in the newspaper; it . . . You raised it once again today. And so I can assure you, Mr. Minister, that I will be checking in to see if it's public policy that you release these names. And the next time that we're in the SaskPower Crown Corps or whatever, I think maybe we'll have a discussion about that. And that is the appropriate place

to have it.

However, back on the issue at hand and the water rights. I'm just wondering how . . . In my dealings over the last couple of weeks with some areas out in my constituency regarding flooding, there seems to be some concern by the taxpayers of the confusion in the Water Corp as well as through Municipal Government, that there's too many players involved; that things can't move quickly enough.

And I'm wondering what role you would play, as Sask Water, if there is a project that landowners want to see proceed that would mean draining of some water through maybe a landowner that is not agreeable to that. What is your role in all this and where should these landowners turn to then if it's not in your purview to do that?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — When in fact there is some kind of a facility put in place that would transfer water from one landowner to another, there would have to be Water Corporation approval; they could apply to the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. It would then become the responsibility of the landowner from whose land the water is flowing to manage that flow.

If in fact it became a larger project that Sask Water was involved in, all the engineering studies, the appropriate engineering studies would be done. A design of the appropriate facilities with respect to water management would be as well done, and that would be the process that would in fact take place.

In terms of water management, I think the member will agree with me that when there's an imposition on someone else's land, there has to be some discussion, and there has to be put in place something so you know you don't want to damage one person's ability to make a living and damage something that farmers certainly hold near and dear to them and that's their land. And so it does take some kind of an approval process and there needs to be some insurance that that flood water would be managed appropriately.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Minister. On this particular type of an issue, then who in Sask Water would a landowner or a group of landowners contact directly to ensure that the process would move on at . . . in a short a length of time as possible?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The appropriate place would be to contact the regional office and the officials there would certainly be able to assist the landowners.

Mr. McLane: — I think because they indicated a little earlier there is some concern by the landowners that the process is too lengthy, and I guess to use the terms of some rural councillors, that it appears that Sask Water is the den of skunks in the culvert — it stops the flow of the water.

If we go through the regional office, we go to head office, and it keeps . . . the buck keeps getting passed. Is there not . . . when people's houses are being flooded or people's Quonsets are being flooded, is there not someone a little higher up that can get the process rolling so that we don't have the

stumbling-block of going through three or four sets of bureaucracy?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — There could be a number of processes. One of the ways would be to contact the president of the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. I can say to the member opposite if there's any unnecessary delay in any request, I'm sure the president would be more than willing to look into it.

We have regional offices in different areas of the province to be able to give local control and local understanding. And certainly no one will deny that on certain occasions a system can break down and when that happens we do our best to ensure that that is corrected. So if you have a specific concern in any particular area, you can bring it to my attention at my office and I'd certainly be willing to look at it myself.

Mr. McLane: — Now thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman of committees. Mr. Minister, I'd like to welcome your officials here today.

I also have some concerns about the expropriation process. And I'm just wondering why Sask Water feels it's necessary — you already have the power to expropriate; it's just a matter of going through an OC (order in council) to do it — why you feel it's necessary to move away from that procedure.

Because what that does, it allows the general public . . . The member from Arm River said, well I hope that you will provide the names for those people under SaskPower that were expropriated. At least with Sask Water today if you expropriate some land, it's done by OC. It's open to the public to see whose land was expropriated.

Why do you feel it necessary to do away with that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think I've adequately explained why we felt it was unnecessary to do an order in council. The fact of the matter is it's worked and has worked over a number of years in many other utilities across the province. And we feel that where we can eliminate the cost to the people of Saskatchewan by eliminating yet more bureaucratic procedure, we would attempt to do that.

And I think this is a reasoned approach. This is an area where we can eliminate a process that I would suggest to you is unnecessary, and that's why we're proposing the amendments in this Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I think there was very little bureaucracy actually added there by going through the OCs and that it was a worthwhile effort because it did allow the public to know what was happening.

I'd like to ask you a little further though about the compensation. Do you support compensation payments for all expropriated property?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I can only speak to the expropriation with respect to those under my portfolio, and

today I'm prepared to speak to expropriation initiatives under the Sask Water Corporation's Act.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well under Sask Water do you support compensation payments for the properties which are expropriated?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The policy of the Water Corporation is that we do compensate for easements.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. At what level should those compensations be at? Fair market value? Below that or above that? Or what level should they be at?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by the officials that certainly the nature of the compensation would change from area to area depending on the value of the land, but sort of the rule of thumb is a fair evaluation plus 15 per cent.

If a landowner is not satisfied with that value, they have the right to appeal to the appeals . . . It's under The Expropriation Procedure Act that they have an opportunity to appeal if they're not satisfied with what is being offered.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. Should compensation be paid conditional on government receiving some sort of a financial benefit from the easement or a social benefit? Is there any requirement for government to receive a benefit in some manner?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I think what we would look at is the infrastructure that's put in place. And ultimately that is there to serve the general public, the people of Saskatchewan. So should there be some public benefit? One would certainly hope so.

The example of a waterline, an infrastructure to bring water from a source to people who need the supply, one would certainly think that enhancing the quality of water through the development of an infrastructure would be of some public benefit. I think any of those people who have been served by, you know, by a good source of water that's treated and ends up being top quality, certainly there is some benefit — and should be to some benefit. To the government *per se*, the answer is we have nothing to gain or to lose, because basically we facilitate the financing and in some cases the construction. The costs of such infrastructure is paid ultimately by the users.

So does government benefit? You know, I mean we're not . . . that's really not what this is about. We're a corporation that's here to provide a public service. We certainly don't want to be subsidizing where, you know, where it's unnecessary, any kind of an infrastructure. So in the case of an expropriation of easement, it would be ultimately to benefit the people who are using the resource.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I know you're kind of wondering where I'm going on this, and I'll explain to you where I was going. And I'm pleased with your answers because it shows a clear differentiation between what Saskatchewan does with expropriations of property and what the federal government does.

The federal government's belief seems to be that if they do not receive a financial reward for the expropriation then neither will the private owner receive any compensation for it. So I'm pleased to see that your statement says that the provincial government does not have to receive any financial reward when they expropriate a piece of property before they will provide any compensation to the landowner. So I'm pleased to see that, Mr. Minister. And I realize you were kind of wondering just where I was heading on that one.

Mr. Minister, when I look at the easements, the expropriations being carried out under the Sask Water Act, and now moving it away from having to do it from order in council, I do see a bit of irony here though — perhaps even you might call it hypocrisy — that you would proceed with this in light of what happened during the 1980s with the Alameda dam and the Tetzlaff farm.

(1230)

At that point in time your members, including yourself, who were sitting in the House at that time, fought tooth and nail against the expropriation by Sask Water of those lands, and fact is that fight still carries on today because those lands have not yet been expropriated, even though a portion of them are under water today; even though the two brothers whose land still remains there now hope to benefit from the water saved in that dam and use it for irrigation in that area.

And fact is now they're trying to hold up another pipeline going through the area, through their land — a natural gas pipeline — because they want to use water from the dam to irrigate it. And I have to wonder: without the dam, where were they going to get the water? And fact is, now they can keep their cattle in those particular pieces of land all summer long because they have water there, which they didn't have before. They had to move their cattle out the beginning of June because they had no water.

So it's a bit hypocritical, Mr. Minister, that you would now come forward with a Bill that allows for easier expropriations for Sask Water when years ago you fought it tooth and nail.

Now, Mr. Minister, under clause no. 4 of the Act, which exempts municipalities from submitting detailed plans on routine projects, we support the move. Unlike our Liberal colleagues, we support the move to less regulation and less red tape.

It seemed to me from the member from Arm River's comments that they were favouring more red tape, which I found surprising. But if you read the *Hansard* I believe that's exactly what he said: we favour red tape. It surprised me but, you know, perhaps he mis-spoke himself or didn't mean to say that, but that certainly seemed to be what was being said.

So, Mr. Minister, what assurances do we have though that with the elimination of some of this red tape that it won't affect the public or environmental safety of those projects?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The Department of Environment has regulations and they have a process that they will follow on

any project. And it will vary, certainly, from project to project. It is not the responsibility of the Water Corporation to enforce environmental regulations and/or laws. That is SERM, the Department of Environment and Resource Management. So any changes that we would make to this Act certainly wouldn't be pertinent with respect to environmental due diligence. That would be a process that's done entirely by another department.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The changes to this Act, Mr. Minister, wouldn't have any impact on the conservation development authorities that are in place?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No. The answer is no.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm also interested in the local flooding situations where one farmer may be blocking drainage, which impacts on his neighbours' lands. Is it possible for Sask Water to intervene in those cases and provide for some drainage if . . . the other landowners perhaps have to pay for it, but to allow access, if it has only minimal or no impact on the other landowners?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well if, for an example, one person is blocking culverts and it's backing up water onto another person's land, they can apply to the Sask Water Corporation for an investigation. And they'll do an investigation. And if in fact there is an infraction, they could order that the obstruction be removed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What if there was old drainage ditches, dating back decades, that have since blown in in the dry years, are now filled with blow dirt and are preventing drainage. Can Sask Water intervene in those particular cases?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told that the owners of the works, if an infrastructure over the course of time has naturally closed in and filled with silt or blow dirt, that they can take it back by themselves, without approval from the Water Corporation, to the state that it originally was. If there is new infrastructure or expanded activity in terms of an infrastructure, they would have to apply for approval from the corporation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would this be dependent on the original structures having been licensed?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, it would.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and your officials for coming in today. That's all the questions we have.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 9

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the minister's officials leave, I just want to thank them for being here today and helping the minister get through the question and answers; so thank you. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I also would like to say, Mr. Chairman, that thank heavens that the Conservative Party has no credibility in this province, let alone across Canada. And the comments by the member from Cannington today would indicate that; where he can't even sit in this House and get the facts straight when somebody is speaking and goes ahead and says something totally off cuff and actually no truth to, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — Order, order. We are on clause 9. I don't know if those remarks pertain to clause 9.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Clause 10 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 29 — The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. I'm pleased to have with me today from the Department of Justice, Terry Chinn, who is the Rentalsman; and Linda Ens, who is the senior policy analyst in legislative services; and from Social Services behind me is Phil Walsh, from the income security programs.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. There are a number of questions I wish to ask because it dealt with . . . of the amendments before us this afternoon. And first of all I'd ask . . . welcome the officials with the minister, and thank the minister and the officials for their attendance this date.

I understand that it is the intention in the case of those persons on social assistance, that instead of actually paying the damage deposit up front to be held in trust, that there will instead be a letter of commitment undertaking the minister's obligation for the amount of the damage deposit in the event that at the end of the tenancy it is forfeit.

And what I want to know is that my understanding is that this letter of commitment will come along sometime later after the tenancy agreement has been entered into. Are these letters of commitment automatic? Or will there be some discretion with the minister as to which recipients will qualify for a letter of commitment, and which recipients, for instance ones who may have a bad history in terms of damage deposits, will not be given this letter of commitment?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It is my understanding that the letter will be automatic as long as the person qualifies for social assistance.

Mr. Hillson: — So then the minister is saying that all recipients will in fact get this letter of commitment regardless of history, and that the only grounds under which the minister would refuse to give a letter of commitment would be say, if the

person actually isn't on assistance at all?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's correct.

Mr. Hillson: — In the legislation there is a provision for the prompt filing of an objection with the Rentalsman if the landlord wishes to retain a damage deposit — five calendar days. Now I understand and appreciate, and I'm sure tenants will appreciate that, and the process should move along quickly and not be unduly delayed. But five calendar days seems to me very, very short, particularly when we're dealing with weekends and holidays. I wonder if the minister could make some comments on that, and whether that issue has been addressed.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the practical answer to that question is that the type of information that needs to be filed is very minimal, and this can be filed electronically, by fax, or other arrangement. And so practically, we don't see that there will be any problem with the five-day limit.

(1245)

Mr. Hillson: — But, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that . . . Take the example of Christmas. If you have Christmas falling on a Monday, you have Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, all as holidays. Surely it would make more sense to say working days than calendar days.

I mean I appreciate that we want this process to move along quickly. But in situations of statutory holidays, especially where you've multiple statutory holidays, I mean is this a requirement that landlords spend their Christmas doing out this forms?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well it's my understanding of the landlord business that they do their business all the time. So practically, we know that they already will work on holidays or weekends or whatever to do the work. And it's my understanding from the industry that this won't be a major problem.

Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, what I am told is that if you're talking about holidays — like I said, I gave the example of Christmas being a four-day holiday — there has to be inspection of the premises and then preparation of the document, filing of the document. I'm told that what landlords may start doing is simply automatically filing on the basis that, you know, if they don't file, they're out. And if they do file, they can later advise the Rentalsman, oh I'm sorry, but I guess I don't have a claim after all.

So what I'm being told is that this actually may increase the number of files that the Rentalsman is being given, because landlords will not have adequate time and adequate notice in some situations to prepare and file their material. And would it not make more sense if we simply said, within five working days?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to that basically, is that we are working with the landlords to make this whole process as accessible as possible. We know that the way things work now that we'll be able to work with the limit that we've set out in the legislation. And practically, we're working with the

members of the residential tenancies industry to make sure that everything works in a smooth way. And so the consultation on that will be continuing.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I would ask then the minister: if you wish to work with everyone to make sure this Act runs as smoothly as possible — not biased in favour of one group or the other but just simply smooth functioning to the benefit of both tenants and their landlords — will you consider an amendment then to provide for five working days as opposed to five calendar days?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No.

Mr. Hillson: — Well, okay. So much for cooperation, Mr. Speaker. We have a very cooperative government when it may suit their purposes.

I'd like to return to your earlier comment that the letter of commitment for those persons on social assistance will be automatic. And I mentioned, you know, what happens in the situation where — and I'm not suggesting this is all of them — but where we have a tenant on assistance who's had a bad history of leaving a trail of forfeited damage deposits. What will be done in those circumstances? What does the department intend to put in place to give these people an extra little bit of incentive here?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Practically, there will be no advantage to a tenant who is also a Social Services client to somehow renege or cause a problem. Before there were some advantages there. And so practically, there won't be a maximum number of security deposits, but this security deposit that is paid on their behalf and there's an award made because of some damage, that amount will be recovered from future payments on social assistance.

The other thing I should clarify too is that with the automatic letter of commitment, if a person's in a residence right now on social assistance and a security deposit's been paid, there won't be an automatic letter on October 1 of this year because there's no necessity for that, because they'll be operating under the present scheme.

Mr. Hillson: — May I, Mr. Chairman, go to the other side of the equation. And perhaps I should have gone to the other side of the equation first.

What incentives will there be in place for those responsible tenants on assistance so that they get a bit of benefit, a bit of reward, for the fact that at the end of their tenancy agreement that they've been responsible and there are no damages. Would it not make sense, Mr. Minister, that we have in place proper incentives and disincentives so that we properly recognize those persons on assistance who've been responsible about the tenancy, and vice versa — that we also recognize those persons who have not been?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think that the way this legislation has been prepared provides the incentive, which recognizes that most tenants in Saskatchewan, whether they're on social assistance or not, don't end up having to pay off a security

deposit to the landlord because of damage. I mean it's a smaller number of people where that happens.

The incentive in the system is the fact that if a security deposit isn't paid based on the letter of commitment from the Department of Social Services, then there won't be a future reduction in a social assistance payment. Because practically, the people who are on social assistance will now have responsibility like any other citizen in Saskatchewan to ultimately pay for any damage that they might cause.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, is the minister saying that in all cases of forfeited damage deposits, that there will be recovery against future assistance payments?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The normal rule will be exactly that unless it's a situation beyond the tenant's control, such as a family violence situation, for example.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm satisfied with the minister's responses, and as far as I'm concerned the Bill may proceed.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not really going to take a lot of time on questions because I've been following the questioning that the member from North Battleford has given and he's basically covered a number of the areas.

The one concern I just want maybe a bit more clarification . . . But as I understand this piece of legislation, we've arrived at, if you will, a compromise between landlords and tenants regarding security deposits. I think it's been an area that's been under constant review and certainly contention for a number of years. And it's pleased to see . . . I guess I'm pleased to see and our caucus is pleased to see that we've come to some understanding.

Now I think it would be fair to say that maybe not everyone's totally in agreement with the legislation as we currently see it, but I think it is a move in the right direction. And hopefully that as this comes into play, if there are any areas that maybe we haven't foreseen, some things that could take place or maybe need to be addressed, is your department, or are you willing, Mr. Minister, to continue to work with tenants and landlords to work over any areas where there might be discrepancies, where there might be some controversy, to come to an agreement on that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I would say very clearly that the way this is set up, and part of the plan of having it start in October rather than immediately, is that we can work together with both tenant groups and also landlords' groups to make sure that all of the procedures that relate to some of the changes are fully understood by the public, and that they work in as clear and as efficient way as possible. And we will be constantly monitoring this both through the Rentalsman's office and through our policy people in our department.

And I would encourage you and all other MLAs, who often get these kinds of questions in their constituency office, to let us know immediately if some kind of a problem arises. Because our plan is to make this work for . . . so that there's fair

arrangements for tenants, but also that landlords aren't left holding the bag after some pretty terrible situations.

Mr. Toth: — And one further question that comes back to social assistance tenants, and that is in regard to Social Services paying for damage that may have been caused by a client.

As I understand, right now Social Services pays for the damages on a residence if damages have been committed against . . . or if there's damage to that residence, and then that residential tenant, social service assistance tenant, can move to another property and they just pay the same amount of funding to that client. Is that true, and how does the Bill then address damages in the future?

I think I heard you mention to the member from North Battleford that actually the tenant will then have some reduction in the amount of funding that they would receive under this new piece of legislation then, but Social Services would still continue to pay for any upgrading of damages to residences. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think under the present system the limit was \$125, and then practically there were other deposits paid, depending on the situation, but . . . and then an attempt to recover.

It's going to be very clear in the new system that the deposit will be up to one month's rent. It will be guaranteed by the department. If the Rentalsman orders that up to one month's rent should be paid to the landlord, it will be paid. Then that amount will be recovered from the Social Services client on a basis of making a deduction on future Social Services payments or some other way if there is a way for that client to pay.

Mr. Toth: — One final question, Mr. Minister, based on what you've just informed us and also the member from North Battleford. With the changes, will Social Services assistance or people on assistance be certainly informed — clearly informed — as to the changes, and what the implications are if there is damage to property, if they happen to be in that property and the security deposit is forfeited?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think clearly, the answer to the first part of your question is that yes, they will be clearly notified about this change. And that will be part of our public education campaign as well.

I think the other thing to clarify is that most of the time the allowance provided by the Department of Social Services is equivalent to the rent for the particular property. There may be some situations where a Social Services client will rent something that's slightly more and use some other part of their allowance to cover the rent. In that particular case, Social Services' commitment is only up to the housing allowance amount they've paid, and normally that's the full amount of the rent.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, thank you. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, I thank you for your responses and we trust that this certainly addresses a number of the concerns that have been out there for a long time and brings it up to speed. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. I would like to say thank you to the officials who are with me today plus all of the other officials in both the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Services who have been working to come up with a fair solution in a difficult area for a long time.

I'd also like to thank members opposite for their questions here but also over the last number of years that have focused attention on some particular problems. And I'd also like to thank all of the members of the tenants' associations and student groups and everybody who have helped us identify particular questions on the tenants' side and also the landlords and their various organizations who have provided advice in various ways over the last couple of years.

And with that thank you to everybody, I move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1300)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 14 — The Water Corporation Amendment Act, 1997

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 the third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 29 — The Residential Services Amendment Act, 1997

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 the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It now being past the normal time of adjournment, no . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I think members here have agreed to forego their lunch for another 15 minutes or half an hour so that we could proceed to Committee of Finance, and I respectfully ask that we go there now.

Leave granted.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Research Council Vote 35

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right, I have Ron Woodward who is the president of the Research Council, and to his right is Mike Wonnick, financial analyst with the Saskatchewan Research Council. I'll get my tongue going here yet.

Item 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and his officials. I very much look forward to reviewing the estimates and the past accomplishments of the SRC (Saskatchewan Research Council). I personally, and the Liberal caucus as a whole, recognize the vital role of the SRC in research and development in the province, as well as its well-deserved international recognition. We support the council and the government's funding of it, and commend it for its success in securing private contracts.

I believe that research is the lifeblood of human process and advancement. It could also of course, threaten and endanger mankind at some times — research must be carefully and securely conducted and ethically managed.

It's frequently a double-edged sword, and most recently, we had an example of the breakthrough in the cloning of sheep in Scotland. The cloning technique promises incalculable benefits in medical breakthroughs, productivity, and economic growth. It also possesses incalculable risks in the hands of unscrupulous people. I suspect that there are — there would be a number of things we wouldn't want to see cloned running around this province.

There's a disadvantage right now in pursuing the SRC estimates, because we don't have the most recent book. I'm just wondering if you could tell me when that will be available?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I am told by the officials that they're responsible to deliver it to my office by the end of June, and so I would assume it would be tabled in the legislature at the beginning of the next session; whether that be the fall or the spring, I'm not sure. We may be sitting and . . . I'm not sure if that would require tabling in June or in the next session, but it has to be reported to my office by the end of June.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Last year's grant to the SOC (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) was \$7.956 million, and there was actually an increase and there was orders in council. Could you explain that to me?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. As you will know, being somewhat familiar with the Saskatchewan Research Council in your past life, the corporation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well before politics — B.P. The corporation has undergone a major restructuring, and a number of employees are no longer with the corporation which would require severance costs.

The amount that you speak of was \$1.6 million for the special warrant and that was to deal with the cost of restructuring the cost of severance and those things. The total costs of that

initiative was \$1.7 million. So the Research Council used about \$100,000 of internal funds to accomplish that goal.

I think the end result, and what I'm hearing certainly from industry and from employees, is they certainly welcome the restructuring. It has developed the Research Council into a much more effective, I believe, corporation. And I think that we can certainly look at good things in the future . . . is the nature of all corporate structures.

There comes a time when you have to look internally and see how you can do business more efficiently, how you can do business better.

And I think since Mr. Woodward has been with the Research Council that was one of his primary goals. And that necessitated the restructuring and hence the special warrant for \$1.6 million to cover other than the 100,000 in terms of the restructuring.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, broadly speaking, research and development can be categorized as the basic research, applied research, and development of a product and process. I'm just wondering if there's going to be more emphasis placed on the actual development of processes in the SOC's future?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chair, I think it's fair to say that the corporation certainly is moving in that area. As the relationship with industry has been developed over the years, it's become clear that that is the direction that industry requires the Research Council to move. So certainly the development in that regard is the focus, and really is the primary focus of the corporation at this time. And it's based on industry's needs, industry's requirements.

Ms. Draude: — When we talk about industry's needs and requirements, part of the problems involved with manufacturing firms and firms that actually do have hands on R&D (research and development) is the problem we have when talking to financial institutions about cash flowing or allowing funding to allow R&D to actually go ahead.

At one time the Research Council was trying to be involved in working with banks to help them understand the importance of this whole issue and help them to decide if the project is something, they could actually go ahead.

Has there been any further work on the Research Council's part to ensure that financial institutions understand the importance of R&D, and to help them make a determination if this . . . of projects that could be considered feasible so that they could allow some of this work to go ahead?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, a lot of the work that the Research Council does is certainly not visible to the general public, as you will know. And one of the ways that success can be developed with respect to economic development, or a project, or a business is to build a working relationship — the Research Council — with the lending institutions and people who have the capital and have access to capital.

One of the things I am told by the officials that in the past year they have helped to develop diagnostic and technical evaluation tools so that banks can better understand specific businesses and projects. They work very closely with venture capital corporations. SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) has been involved in some of the work that has been done by the Saskatchewan Research Council.

So I think it's fair to say that they've taken a fairly broad look at where they can enhance and develop and help business develop opportunities and create a better understanding and do a better and a more, I guess, focused scrutiny of a business. And to develop those tools to be able to do that is part of the what the Research Council has been working on in the past.

(1315)

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, this is good to hear, although I guess I hope that we are looking beyond the very narrowly focused bounds of SOCO and government ventures like that. In the province of Ontario, I understand that there is a provincial R&D tax credit that's allowed to actually piggy bank with the federal tax credit, which actually encourages more R&D in places outside of . . . places like Innovation park in Saskatoon and Regina.

Has there been any thought given to the idea that the provincial government here could help with the R&D . . . (inaudible) . . . in Saskatchewan and encourage some businesses to be more active in R&D by allowing this type of tax credit?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think it's fair to say that that's one of the areas that we are most interested in. As we look through and develop our provincial budgets every year and since I've been involved in putting in place the overall budget for the province, it's been one of the areas that we see a need; we understand the need and the advantages to that kind of a, I guess, kick start.

Our difficulty has been to try and prioritize exactly where we should be spending government money. And thus far, I think it's fair to say that health care and education have taken a fairly high priority for us — highways as well.

But the member raises the work that's happening, or the incentive that's in place in Ontario, and I can only say I wish we had been able to find the funding thus far for that kind of an initiative. I think it's important, and it's certainly something that I'm going to keep in mind and bring to my colleagues as we go through future budget processes.

Ms. Draude: — That's probably the best news I've heard since I came here, so we're going to be holding you to that. Does the SRC hold patents for products or processes at this time?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm sorry. To the member: we didn't hear the question on this side. If you could repeat your question please?

Ms. Draude: — Does the SRC at this time hold any patents for products or processes?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I guess one of the recent successes in the Research Council's operation is that in November they recently received a patent that deals with converting vehicles from gas to natural gas.

So certainly if we talk about the environmental future of our country and our province, that would, if we can adapt that in an economic way, in a way that we could become and will become commercially viable, cannot only have economic benefits for us here in the province but can have environmental advantages for us here in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — Is there a consideration that there could be revenues earned through licensing agreements?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, to the member opposite, all of the intellectual property is transferred into TecMark And that is the body that is responsible for dealing with it from there.

And I'm told by the officials that they've just recently received their first royalty cheque. Not a large cheque, but it was in the amount of about \$3,000. So some of the past work and some of the past developments is manifesting itself economic benefits for the Research Council at this point.

Ms. Draude: — Who owns TecMark?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — TecMark was created in 1996 by the Saskatchewan Research Council. It's a subsidiary of the Research Council, so it's owned by the Research Council.

Ms. Draude: — I take it that means 100 per cent owned by the Research Council.

At one time I think the SRC had five vice-presidents, and I understand that this has actually been broke . . . there are fewer now. Could you tell me what the number is and what the divisions are that they represent?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — As part of the restructuring, the number of vice-presidents has decreased from five to two. The one vice-president is responsible for resources and environment; the other vice-president is responsible for ag-biotech and small industry services. So that's how it's structured. Very much streamlined from what was before.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I understand that with the recent dealings between CanOxy (Canadian Occidental Petroleum) and Wascana Energy that there is some . . . there was a million dollars of R&D promised to the province. I'm wondering what type of work the minister is doing to ensure that this million dollars is actually done in the province and that the Research Council will get more than its fair share of it.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I would want to say that certainly CanOxy has indicated in their prospectus that there is some financing available. And I think it's fair to assume that the Research Council will be beneficiaries of that R&D money from Canadian Occidental as well as the university campuses. I was just the other day pleased to be part of an announcement by the Research Council and the U of R (University of Regina) campus in terms of a partnership arrangement that's been put

together that I think can maximize and attract R&D dollars not only from CanOxy but from the oil and gas sector in general.

I've talked with a number of companies from Calgary who do business here in Saskatchewan who see the opportunity for technological development here in our province as it relates to heavy oil. And I think frankly we're very excited about working with the universities, with the Saskatchewan Research Council, in a partnership arrangement to put together the kind of technological advancement — and expand on that advancement — that has taken place here in Saskatchewan.

If you look at the blue book this year and last year, and what has happened in terms of that resource sector and its growth in our province, much of that work has been done because companies like Canadian Occidental have focused some of their technological developments on our heavy oil resource.

So I'm actually quite excited about it. I think that the Research Council, working with our universities here in Saskatchewan, can create a nucleus of knowledge that can attract people not only from other provinces and other jurisdictions, but I think internationally we've got an opportunity here that I think we dare not pass.

I've spoken with people from the universities. I've met with Dr. Wells just the other day at this announcement. Mr. Woodward has built and the corporation has built some very good contacts with both campuses, here and in Saskatoon. And I think we can look forward to attracting a lot of investment dollars, and a lot of high-paying and high-qualified people who will come to Saskatchewan, because I do believe that we will be a core for heavy oil research and development.

And the Research Council is certainly a very large part of making that happen thus far, and I think the opportunities in the future can grow exponentially.

So it's an area that I know you're very interested in, having spent some time working in the Research Council. And I'm thinking that you will agree with me that it's an area where we really do need to pursue with some vigour. And I can tell you that the Department of Energy and Mines has been working with the Research Council, with the universities, and we certainly see some very positive opportunities there in the very near future.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's not often that you and I agree on anything, so this is great. I am excited. It's great to be excited about it, but I think that we'd rather hear a commitment of the importance that your government is going to put on dealing with the universities, the relationship that we have a potential for, for increasing the Research Council. So I'm hoping that your government is going to commit to put in a lot of time and energy into working . . . developing this commitment.

I don't have any further questions.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A few questions for the minister on SRC.

Mr. Minister, just a moment ago — and I just thought I should

throw this one out — you talked about different areas of research and you mentioned about . . . brought up something about highways. I would think that if the Research Council ever came up with some kind — through their research — some kind of a durable surface for highways in this province that would have some longevity, that people of Saskatchewan would certainly really appreciate that. And they'd certainly get a lot of accolades — probably all the funding they ever need to operate. That might be an area that we can look at further research as well.

But be that aside, in the '95-96 annual report, it seems to bring out the impression that this was quite an abysmal year for the Research Council. We see a number of increases in funding from government, and they're continuing through the current year, while revenues dropped by about \$400,000 due to declines in contracts.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can indicate why there were those contractual declines; what has been done to offset that declining revenue? Has there been improvement this year and what can we expect in the future?

(1330)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think basically the corporation and the way the corporation sees development in the future is moving much more to a relationship — working relationship — with business and selling their expertise and their knowledge to business. The reduction in revenue that you indicate is primarily as a result of programs cut back by the federal government in their last rounds of budget cuts.

In terms of the increase in funding from the province, I think I explained that to the other member. Basically it was to do with restructuring, the fact that we reorganized the Research Council to make it much more focused on the kinds of things that we think can attract more business — the two areas that I've indicated in terms of the structure of the corporation — resource and environment.

And we've talked a little bit about heavy oil and what we think might be opportunities there. Ag-biotechnology — I think it's fairly clear to say that we are becoming here in Saskatchewan known internationally as a centre of excellence with respect to ag-biotechnology and certainly for us in this province it makes an awful lot of sense.

And the other part . . . and the other component of the vice-president for ag-biotechnology is small industry services, which can and will support a lot of small businesses here in Saskatchewan.

You made comment of the fact that one of the things that we certainly could use here is a new surface with respect to our highways. And I think it's fair to say, if in fact the Research Council could come up with a patent that would give us a durable and a cheap highway surface, we could fund all measure of R&D in this province.

And I think just to add to that, there's probably one more element that we could use if they could make a highway with a

good surface, at a reasonable cost and with longevity — if they could also make it portable, we'd have very few worries.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Minister, if I could just add one more comment to that. If indeed the Research Council is able to come up with something of that nature, I'd hope they hold off just a little bit until after the next election so the next government can really take the credit for it.

But, Mr. Minister, I note the council spent about 1.3 million more on supplies and services and spent about a million dollars more on the purchase of capital assets; I note these from pages 31 and 32 of the annual report. I'm wondering if you could explain exactly what these expenditures are in view of the reduced revenues?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the corporation employs in the neighbourhood of 250 people and they are all working on different projects. There are 15 different business areas that they're involved in those activities. And of course to support the work that they do, it's important that the Research Council have leading-edge equipment in terms of being able to do the work to supply the needs of the customers.

I am told of one contract as an example. The Research Council spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in terms of purchasing remote sensors for a contract that they were doing with PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration).

So it's just a matter of over the course of doing business, their normal business expenses, to help to support the people who are doing work for our client group.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, if I could ask, and I'm not asking you to give it today, but maybe if your officials wouldn't mind just taking a bit of time down the road in writing just to give us an idea of where some of those expenditures may have went and some of the costs. I mean the types of equipment that may have been purchased and what they were used for. But I'm going to go into another area and you can respond in a minute to that.

I was going to bring up the change in the financial position, but I think you kind of alluded to that on a previous question. So I won't discuss that because we note in '94-95, you had a \$600,000 surplus and then you went to this deficit. And you mentioned about some significant decreases in federal funding, which I can appreciate and those would certainly affect the bottom line.

But looking at the chart on planned versus actual results on page 35 of the annual report, we see there's a significant variance between the SRC's budget and its actual spending, about \$850,000. I'm wondering what's the reason for that variance, regarding actual and what was planned, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . if the member could share with us those figures and where he got them from again? Could you share with us the numbers and where you got them again? We're just looking them up here.

Mr. Chairman, I'll have to tell the member, we have not got an

annual report with us, but I can have one of my staff bring one in and we can come back to that question later, or we can review *Hansard* and . . . If you want we'll just review *Hansard* and send you the answer in writing.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, I can quickly send this over to the minister. It's under comparison of planned and actual results, annual report, and there's a budget of . . . in 1996, a loss of 111 million, but the actual result of 966, which is about 850. I can send you this report quickly just to take a quick look at it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You've got it. Okay.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, for the delay. If you look at the top of that page, under contracts, we had in 1996, budgeted in the neighbourhood of 15,536,100. The actual for '96 was 13,793,151. And that was primarily due to a loss of some contracts that we had anticipated from the federal government, but because of budgetary constraints federally, those contracts were not received.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One area I'd just like . . . one other question I'd like to bring to your attention, just ask about. I guess most of us would think that, and would feel . . . and view the Saskatchewan Research Council as being established to do primarily scientific research.

Yet in this report you describe a project that was done for the Saskatoon Credit Union that would sound more like a market research. On page 19 it talks about this project and to me it looks more like a phone survey of customers. I'm wondering why you would . . . what was the reasons for getting into this type of a project? And what areas of expertise does the council have in doing this type of research, and for what intended purpose was this research entered into?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We, Mr. Chairman, had one person on staff prior to the reorganization that primarily did market research. We are not doing that right now. But it was to assist companies in making technical and business decisions. And that, under the annual report, is what that is referring to. But we no longer have that person on staff, so that role cannot be completed for a client base.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That basically answers the other question. Because it would seem to me that there are a lot of companies out there that could do that type of market research, and possibly it may take away from some of the direct areas of research that the council would be involved in.

And so your comment about the fact that you don't have personnel current hired to conduct that type of research — if I understand you correctly, you are not involved in that type of research at the current time — and I would think that you're really not looking into branching off into that again.

You're looking at just keying in on the areas where the Saskatchewan Research Council is certainly getting its support and providing services that seem to be more beneficial and perceived as what the real role of the council is. Is that correct?

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

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

guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of my colleague from Regina Victoria, I would like to welcome a group of visitors who have joined us in the gallery today, a large group. They are part of the University of Regina's English as a second language program. They're here obviously to watch the proceedings of the Assembly today and hopefully learn a little bit more about how we do things.

I want to apologize in advance — I trust we won't be here very much longer so you'll probably only get a very brief look at the Assembly. But I hope you enjoy your visit today, and I want to welcome you to the Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Research Council Vote 35

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's more, I believe, a philosophical approach; that we want to work with business in areas — and certainly different areas — where we can assist technologically in business and in marketing. And sometimes it's pretty hard to define . . . it's difficult to define where one ends and where one begins. Sometimes it has to be part of an overall and encompassing package. But I think it's fair to say that we would be there to assist and facilitate business, doing business.

Mr. Chairman, if I could while I'm on my feet, I would like to introduce three guests in the west gallery, I believe. One of my officials, Mike Wonnick, financial analysis analyst with the Saskatchewan Research Council, has his parents here today, Brian and Joan Wonnick, and as well his brother, Adam. So I would ask all members to invite them warmly to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I thank you for your responses to our questions that we've raised. We certainly wish the Research Council well in their ongoing endeavours.

I guess I would certainly encourage them to look certainly outside of government as well and look at other agencies whereby you can start working . . . making agreements that can really give a real benefit and a positive influence in research in this province, regardless of the area of research that is entered into.

(1345)

I would like to certainly thank your officials for being here.

I would like to just take a moment as well to welcome our guests. And we're talking about English as a second language — considering the way trade is taking place in this world, maybe we should invite some of our guests to start teaching us some of the other languages that we have represented here so we can learn how to deal with people of other nations and nationalities. We thank you for being here.

And I would like to say, I think the member from Regina South should certainly thank us for our discussion. It gave him the opportunity to introduce a guest this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the members opposite for their questions. I think just by the line of the questionings, it's fairly obvious that they too see the opportunities in Saskatchewan and the work that the Research Council does in assisting business in their day-to-day operations. So I thank them very much for their questions.

And I want to wish all the folks in the gallery and the members opposite and my colleagues a good weekend. Let's go home. And not all of us should be on the election trail — let's spend a little time with our families.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I just wanted to thank the minister and your officials. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with them and look forward to hearing of great progress next year.

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 35 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Saskatchewan Research Council
Vote 35**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 35 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — Now it being past the hour of adjournment, and with my wishes that all members will have an enjoyable weekend in your constituencies with your families, this House now stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

The Assembly adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

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