

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise on behalf of concerned citizens from Bienfait, Melville, and Pilot Butte. And the prayer of the petition reads:

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

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also would like to present petitions today to do with the creation of regional telephone exchanges. The prayer reads:

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

The communities involved in the petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from Choiceland and Nipawin.

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

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to protect the Dore, Smoothstone lakes area by declaring it an accessible, protected wilderness area where sustainable, traditional cultural values and activities are maintained.

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

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Saskatoon. And I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise with a petition on the issue of northern housing. I'll read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to development a plan that will address the housing needs of northern residents in a timely manner.

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

This petition is mostly signed by residents of Uranium City, but also from other northern communities including Camsell Portage, and Fond-du-Lac. I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens in the northern part of our province, and their concern is that there is a need for housing that is not being met. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to development a plan that will address the housing needs of northern residents in a timely manner.

The petitioners on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, and Amyot Lake. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned with the inadequate housing in the northern part of Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to development a plan that will address the housing needs of northern residents in a timely manner.

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from the community of Green Lake. I so present.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions as well to present on behalf of Saskatchewan people. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatever action necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the law banning stripping and invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions come from my constituency of Kindersley; communities of Kindersley, Eatonia, Coleville, and Kerrobert, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a petition as well to present to the Assembly and I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatever action necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the existing law banning stripping, and

invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

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

The petitions I have are signed by individuals from the Kindersley, Coleville, Dodsland, Eatonia, and Plenty areas, communities in the province of Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present the following petition and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatever action necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the existing law banning stripping, and invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

And this comes from people in the communities of Meadow Lake, Kindersley, Brock, and Major. Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime in Saskatchewan;

Of citizens humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the rebuilding of Highway No. 155;

Of citizens praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to urge the government to stop contributing to rising farm input costs; finally

Of citizens humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the rest of the members of this House, a former member who served the people of Saskatchewan in a very honourable way — Mr. Wilf Gardiner — who is seated behind the bar behind the official opposition. I know that all members would want to join me in welcoming him to the Assembly today.

Also Mr. Gardiner's daughter and granddaughter are also sitting in the east gallery as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would ask that all the members of the Assembly welcome Mr. Gardiner and his family to the legislature this morning. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature, a school group that's travelled from Kindersley down to Regina in the last few days. They've been in the city touring all different kinds of venues in the city and I'm very pleased to introduce to you a group of 60 grade 7 students seated in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Their teachers are Tracy Walker and Dave Burkell. And their chaperons today are Gordon Grainger, Marilyn Helgason, Peggy Holton, Lorie Kuervers, Janice Kydd. And the bus drivers are Jim Baker and Werner Krahn.

And I'm very pleased to introduce to you and all members of the legislature and I'd ask everyone to please give them a warm welcome to the legislature here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have the honour of having two groups in the west gallery today.

Swanson Christian School from Delisle, Saskatchewan has 16 students from grade 7, 8 and 9 sitting in the west gallery, and their teacher, Ben Ginther; chaperons Ron Klassen, Walden Toews, Paul Regehr, and Ray Toews.

And I would ask you to welcome this group as I will be meeting with them later today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to also ask you to extend a welcome to Maymount School. There are 10 students from grade 11 and 12 also sitting in the west gallery with their teacher, Austin Harphan.

And I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming these two groups.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd also like to introduce to the Assembly today, to you and through you, 19 grade 8 students from Porcupine Plain, Saskatchewan. I'm delighted that they're here today with their teachers, Anthony Lau, Gwen Levick, and Helen Kwasney.

I'm going to be meeting with them between 11 and 11:30. And I look forward to answering any questions and we'll talk to you later.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join the member from Kelvington-Wadena in welcoming the students and teachers from Porcupine Plain.

I don't know if you know where Porcupine Plain is, Mr.

Speaker, but it's in the north-east part of the province. It's the home of Quilly Willy, the porcupine, and very close to Greenwater Provincial Park, a wonderful community.

Enjoy your stay in Regina and have a safe trip home.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce in the west gallery, Susan Saunders, who's the president of the Saskatchewan Dental Assistants' Association. Susan's from my constituency, from the town of Watrous. And I'd like all members to welcome her here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you along with our colleague from Watrous, I would as well like to welcome Susan Saunders here today. Hopefully we'll be able to get the issue on the table that she's here to address and we'll do everything we can to do that. And I'd ask the Assembly to welcome her again as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Institution of the Year Award

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with pleasure that I tell you that this evening in Charlottetown, P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island) our Education minister will be receiving, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, the Canadian Association for Community Education National Award for Institution of the Year.

She receives this national award with Gillian McCreary, executive director of planning and evaluation branch with Saskatchewan Education, in recognition of their contributions to community education through Saskatchewan's very successful community schools program.

Faye Stupnikoff from the Saskatchewan Community Schools Association made the nomination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our premier often says caring, compassion, and community values are the glue that bonds our country together. Community schools put these principles in action.

The community schools program has been in operation since 1980. Despite the constraints facing our government, we committed to a major expansion of the program in 1996, allowing us to reach more neighbourhoods, more schools, more children.

I'm also very proud of the recent announcement respecting the establishment of an early intervention pre-kindergarten program in our community schools. This program will allow us to address the child's needs during the critical early years.

Last November the Government of Saskatchewan was awarded the Champions for Children Award for our action plan for children. Once again, Saskatchewan is recognized nationally for another successful program. This award shows our commitment to the education and well-being of Saskatchewan's children . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order, The member's time has elapsed.

Ile-a-la-Crosse Fashion Show

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On Mother's Day the Ile-a-la-Crosse Friendship Centre held a fashion show for the community. Forty young people participated in this show and it was enjoyed by all spectators, including myself and the participants' parents.

The fashion show was an inspiration of a group of young people who meet on a regular weekly basis to learn important life skills and personal development techniques. A visionary woman at the friendship centre identified a need in the community and formed this group to fill that need.

Often, major department stores will conduct northern model searches but many youth did not have the necessary resources to acquire the professional photographs these companies are looking for. On June 7 the centre is bringing in a representative from She Modelling in Saskatoon to teach these young girls different modelling poses. At the same time a professional photographer will be there to take their pictures. Each girl will receive an eight-and-a-half by eleven photo to keep in her portfolio.

It is important for us to understand the impact that such groups have on northern youth. It is not only about modelling; it is about providing these young girls with the strengthened sense of self-worth and hope for the future.

This is a very healthy group that has a policy of zero tolerance of any kind of negative behaviour towards their peers. The friendship centre and these young people should be commended for the positive group they have formed. And I hope that similar initiatives are occurring and will be considered in other northern communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian National Institute for the Blind Letter of Acknowledgement

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A month ago I was pleased to stand in this Assembly and acknowledge a unique partnership between the Regina Public Library and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. I explained how this partnership would allow visually impaired and print-disabled individuals access to the information they want in the format they need.

I noted too that the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the

Blind) library is the largest producer of alternative formatted material: Braille, tactile, audio, and electronic text. And I congratulate the community focus of both organizations as an example of working together and cooperating together in the best interests of everyone.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently I received a letter of acknowledgement from Mr. Euclid Herie, president and chief executive officer of CNIB, who had received a copy of this statement.

In the letter, and I quote, he states:

This approach has attracted considerable attention from other public libraries, and it is therefore a credit to Regina and Saskatchewan. This partnership model will hopefully be repeated in other Canadian districts since blind people and others needing access to print live in all these communities.

The letter of acknowledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was typewritten and written in Braille. Since I'm sure this reply would be of interest to all of my colleagues in the Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to add this formal acknowledgement to the public record, and to table this letter here in the Assembly today. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Questionnaire to Farmers about Farm Marketing Board Changes

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier this week the official opposition raised concerns about a Bill before this House in which the government is threatening the democratic rights of farmers. If passed, the government will be given the authority of wiping out marketing boards without allowing producers the right to ultimately decide the issue through a democratic vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in an unusual turn of events, the Premier himself spoke on this issue and offered advice to those of us in the opposition benches. He stated that, and I quote:

You ask your constituents how you should be voting on this Bill. You want time to consult with your constituencies? We'll give you the time to consult with your constituencies . . . but make sure you consult with them in fact and in substance and in all honesty.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe this is good advice. And as a result I am immediately sending every farmer or rancher within my constituency a letter outlining the Premier's suggestion and promise of time to consult. I'm asking each producer to fill out a questionnaire answering whether they support the principle of maintaining the democratic right of farmers to vote, and ultimately decide whether their marketing board should be dissolved.

In closing, I await the responses and advice of my constituents, and it is my sincere hope that the Premier will make good on his promise. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dedication of Stuart Houston Ecology Centre

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday I took the Minister of Environment to Redberry Lake in my constituency where he dedicated the Stuart Houston Ecology Centre at the Redberry Lake migratory bird sanctuary.

The minister has come, now I invite all members of the Assembly and of the public to make a trip to this centre as part of their vacation plans. It will be worth your while. I have mentioned the sanctuary in the House before. It was established in 1915 and has long been known for its nesting colony of white pelicans and for its scoter population. The lake provides an excellent eco-tourism site for the observation of these two species, and other rare animals and plants such as the endangered piping plover.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the dedication of the Stuart Houston Ecology Centre gave us an opportunity to pay tribute to the life's work of Dr. Houston, a man of enough careers to satisfy any three other individuals. He is a doctor, a professor of medicine, a health activist, and on this day, pre-eminently a conservationist who has dedicated his life to the study and preservation of the birds of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, among his accomplishments was a study and a banding program of the pelicans at Redberry Lake. Dr. Houston has always shared his time and his knowledge with young naturalists . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Can-Am Bowl set for Porcupine Plain

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We often think of international football being played in a city; however this summer the town of Porcupine Plain will host the first Can-Am Bowl featuring a six-man football game between the best graduating players from Saskatchewan and the best from the United States.

The Saskatchewan team was picked at a one-day try-out at the Hilltops facility in Saskatoon. Coaches for this year will be Ollie Marciniuk of Hafford and Phil Guerbert of Outlook.

Terry Andrusiak, a teacher and football coach at Porcupine Plain High School, and Rocky Chysyk, teacher and football coach at Bjorkdale, participated in an exhibition game in Gordon, Texas and they're the co-organizers of this event.

Small town Saskatchewan once again proved that they can think big. The support from Porcupine Plain and Bjorkdale has been outstanding.

Once the players get to Porcupine Plain they'll be treated to small town hospitality with free accommodations which have

been booked for weeks and meals catered in the community hall. Many pre-game activities have been planned for the football players and their visitors.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this Assembly to join with me in congratulating the coaches for arranging this sporting event, the towns of Porcupine Plain and Bjorkdale for supporting the idea, and wish Saskatchewan the best of luck in the game.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Auto Skills Champs

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to take a moment today to acknowledge two residents from Nipawin who have just won the Saskatchewan Provincial CAA, the Canadian Automobile Association, and Ford Student Auto Skills Championship.

On May 2, Jay Connant and Steven Rommel, students from L.P. Miller High School in Nipawin, along with their instructor, Tim Paetkau, travelled to Yorkton and demonstrated their automotive diagnosis and repairing skills against seven other high school teams.

The team proved to be superior to the others as they quickly diagnosed the problem of their vehicle and then completed the appropriate repairs. The time limit for the contest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was 90 minutes. Jay and Steve completed repairing their vehicle in 35 minutes.

Their next challenge will come at the national competition to be held in Vancouver next weekend.

I want to congratulate both Jay and Steven for their efforts and wish them the best of luck as they prepare for the national championship.

I also want to acknowledge their industrial arts instructor, Tim Paetkau, for the enthusiasm and dedication he has shown in encouraging L.P. Miller School students to consider learning these skills. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Youth Suicide

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again this session we have been pointing out the fatal flaws of the NDP government's social policies. Today we have more evidence to show just how imperfect the system is.

The 1989-1994 report of *Child Injury in Saskatchewan* found that 25 per cent of young women in this province between the ages of 15 and 19 were hospitalized because of self-inflicted wounds — 25 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-five per cent of all young women in this province are trying to kill themselves.

Will the Minister of Health explain what he feels, and the reason why so many young people in this province, especially

the women, have lost the will to live?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, any time anyone attempts to take their life, it's a very tragic situation. And all of us in society have to do everything we can to prevent that from occurring.

We need policies at the governmental level that will encourage people to have good interaction with others and to have a happy life. We also have to be very kind to each other at the individual level. And we've got to have a lot of compassion in our society if we have these kinds of problems.

I don't know about the figures the member is citing, Mr. Speaker, but I have to say what we need to do at a societal level, in government, and in our own lives, is engender a lot of compassion and kindness to try to prevent people from being depressed and trying to take their own lives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the North, the situation is even more grave. And my question is for the Minister of Northern Affairs:

Forty-five per cent of young girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were hospitalized because of suicide attempts — 45 per cent, Mr. Speaker, almost double the provincial average. These young girls are trying to kill themselves because they have little hope for the future. This is not surprising considering this government's lack of commitment to social and economic justice for northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, time is running out for these young people, who often fall victim to drugs, solvent, and child abuse. If this government does not believe that these injuries are related to the lack of hope that these young women are obviously feeling, perhaps the Minister of Northern Affairs would like to share with us what he thinks is causing them to try and take their own lives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed always tragic when you deal with the issue of suicide, whether it's one or the number that the member quotes. I think it's very important to deal with this in a highly compassionate level.

In my experience, when I looked at the suicide levels — and this is not only for young women but also young men as well — I look at my experience in Cumberland House back in the early '80s, you know, with the situation there being pretty grave. But I notice that there was about 13 that had committed suicide over a three-year period. And what happened was that a lot of the people pulled together at the community level because it required a community-based approach.

And when we looked at it, there was a lot of families pulling together. And in that way, that is the approach that we try and take in working with the community to make sure that there is a compassionate process in dealing with this grave issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is time that this government face the consequences of its lack of action. The report indicates the leading cause of hospitalization amongst young, urban, northern, and treaty women in Saskatchewan is suicide attempts. In northern Saskatchewan, 45 per cent of hospital admissions is a result of this.

These young women are crying out for help and this NDP government remains deaf to their pleas and blind to their tears.

The author of the report hoped the information would be used to determine the area's greatest need in order to plan and deliver effective programing. And according to the Institute on Prevention of Handicaps, the report was to serve as a catalyst for injury control programing.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the figures revealed on the North is one of the areas of greatest need. What commitment can you make today that'll give these young people hope and a reason to believe in the future?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, there was three aspects, you know, to that question that I think I will deal with. One, the aspect of health, the other aspect of jobs, and the other aspect of community. I already touched on the community-based approach.

I think in the aspect of health, we had put in 7.3 per cent more money. We built a . . . we're starting with a hospital in La Loche. We are trying to as well, to get three more public health nurse positions in the North this year, another million to help a doctor stay in the North. And also teen parenting programs. We had a budget in the social services sector moving from 12 million to 25 million, which it will impact the North as well.

So we're doing approaches in that sense, and working with the community to try and help people. This week I was there with a member trying to get the student games in the North to try and get a sense of well-being for students, because people want hope for the future.

Our job strategy is in the mines — 1,000 new jobs in the mines gives a lot of positive feeling for people in the North.

Mr. Speaker, that's how we are dealing with it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chief Electoral Officer Report

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the past two days in this House the Liberal opposition has questioned why Justice department officials have interfered with the Chief Electoral Officer's release of a report into political fund-raising. The former Justice minister says he's not aware of any policy which would prevent Mr. Kuziak from releasing his report at this time. However, the current Justice minister says there is such a policy. But neither minister has yet explained why there are such differing views or why there has been interference.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer released two reports yesterday on provincial party spending during and after the 1995 provincial election. For all we know, the findings in the Kuziak report may not be any more or less controversial than the reports which were tabled yesterday.

Will the Minister of Justice or his designate explain why his department would not advise Mr. Kuziak to withhold reports detailing election spending results, but has advised against releasing his report on election fund-raising.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that he is not accurate when he says the minister hasn't responded to him. In fact from the *Hansard* from yesterday I believe, when the member that asked the question today was asking questions, and I want to quote, he said:

Thanks (Thank you), Mr. Minister. So I take it that there would be no discussion with your officials to see if they would reconsider the direction that they gave (to) the Chief Electoral Officer?

That's the question you asked in the House a few hours ago. And this was the response that the minister then gave. He said:

. . . I have to reiterate that my officials did not give a direction.

He said that to you yesterday — that they did not give a direction. And he went on to say:

And . . . (that) I think (is) the difficulty here, is that . . . (there are) some assumption that anybody can direct the Chief Electoral Officer.

As you're assuming we can do or should do. Now I know that's not the way it was back in the '60s when Ross Thatcher gerrymandered the boundaries, the electoral boundaries in this province . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here we go. We're living back in the past again. This is something that happened a year ago. There's been an investigation. We can't get this government to come up with a report that they should demand be released as well as us. What's wrong with it? For all we know all three Saskatchewan major political parties could be implicated in this report on fund-raising, and so too could the official agents who oversaw the fund-raising efforts of these parties during the years in question.

The Minister of Justice told this House last evening that a factor in advising Mr. Kuziak to withhold his report was the fact that, and I quote to the Deputy Premier:

... within the Department of Justice ... you look at whether the release of a report would affect an election ...

Will the minister explain if this might become an election issue because one of these official agents I have referred to and one who could possibly be implicated, is now a federal New Democratic candidate? Shouldn't people know if there's been any wrongdoing; and if there has been no wrongdoing, shouldn't the shadow of suspicion be lifted off the shoulders of our political parties and all our official agents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member opposite continues to insist that the Minister of Justice or someone should influence and make the release come today. The fact of the matter is that this is an independent position. And I want to go on to continue the quote of the minister last night, because I think it's important to realize that this question has been answered, and what you're doing now is trying to rev up for your political friends in the Liberal Party, who all the polling would indicate are doing very, very poorly in this election, and to try to get some of the Reform back for the Liberals.

And this goes on. Yesterday it was the Conservatives asking questions on behalf of the Reform. Today you're asking on behalf of the Liberal Party. I would argue that why don't we finish up the business of the House today and go out and legitimately campaign, instead of using the platform of the Assembly, of question period, to try to bolster the support for the Reform Party or for your failing Liberal efforts here in the province of Saskatchewan.

But the fact of the matter is that this is an independent position. The report will be released at his discretion, not at the political advantage of the Liberal Party.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Next question.

Health Care Worker Injuries

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday the 1996 annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board was released and it revealed some telling facts about what's happening in Saskatchewan's health care system.

Saskatchewan health care workers are overworked, and the burden caused by this government's wellness model has had a startling effect.

In 1992 the Workers' Compensation industry code for health care in Saskatchewan showed a \$3.3 million surplus. Last year, after the effects of this government's health care cuts had taken their toll on health care workers, the increased number of injury claims caused a \$14.8 million deficit in the health workers injury pool.

Mr. Minister, will you admit the wellness model is having a detrimental effect on our health care workers, and will you tell the Assembly what you're doing to reverse this alarming trend?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member should know that as a result of the recent budget, there is funding made available to the health districts to look into the problem of workplace injuries in the health sector, which are a problem that have not arisen this year as the member suggests. This is an ongoing, serious problem in the health care system. Any time there is an increase in workplace injuries we should take it very seriously and look into it very carefully.

That in fact, Mr. Speaker, is precisely what we're doing. We're working with the management and with the unions to try to find ways to combat workplace injury in the health care sector. We're going to continue to make every sincere effort to do that. This is a very serious issue. It's not an issue that we should play politics with, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that meant that he's actually going to do something not just look at doing something.

Mr. Speaker, the Workers' Compensation Board annual report also shows that hospital and nursing home care workers had the highest number of claims settled in 1996, while nursing aides and orderlies were the second highest of all occupations in terms of injuries suffered.

Mr. Speaker, the so-called wellness model imposed by this government is not only causing an increase in injury for health care workers, it's also leading to dangerous situations for patients because nurses are overworked.

Our office has had a call from a woman whose husband was a psychiatric patient at Regina General Hospital. Not once, but twice last week, this gentleman was discovered wandering around outside the hospital. His wife said the nurses told her there was simply too much work and not enough workers to provide adequate supervision for all patients.

Mr. Minister, is it going to take a tragedy before your policies are changed and before you stop endangering the residents of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I've answered the member's question and said that we are taking direct action at the present time.

But I want to say to the House that coming from the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, this is complete hypocrisy. Because what that party is doing in this province, Mr. Speaker, this year is cutting health care spending by \$53 million, which is being completely back-filled by this New Democratic Government. Which is why, Mr. Speaker, in the April, Canadian Medical Association *News* there's this headline. It says: "Ottawa fails to protect medicare".

Mr. Speaker, Liberals failed to fund medicare. New Democrats are properly funding medicare. We are dealing with the problems in the health care system that exist across the country

because of the federal Liberal government. It is complete hypocrisy for the Liberal opposition to get up and suggest that they're not the source of the problem, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Protection Services

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, your government's statements about the children who have died in your care aren't very reassuring. You say there is an internal review process going on, but for six of these children the cause of death is listed as undetermined.

What good is your internal review process when six children die and you can't even figure out why they died? Can you answer this question, Mr. Minister: how can six children die in your care and you don't even know why they died?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, because of the significance of this issue, when this government was elected in 1991, one of the first initiatives we undertook was to institute a review policy for child deaths in this province, well and years before other provinces have determined that they too must follow this course.

When a child dies in this province, there will be an investigation by the coroner. We share those results in the review with the child advocate. There are internal reviews conducted within the Department of Social Services.

In the last five years, Mr. Speaker, in the last five years in Saskatchewan, with children who have had some involvement — either directly or with their families — to the Department of Social Services, there have been 55 child deaths in five years, Mr. Speaker.

Of those, 15 were accidental, 28 were natural, 1 was a suicide, 5 were homicides, and 6 to date are undetermined. And we have had, of course, the medical expertise, the coroner and others involved, and they are not able, simply, to determine the cause in these six deaths.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A further question to the minister. Mr. Minister, how many of these 55 children have died as a result of neglect or abuse?

And one would see where you might have trouble answering that question if your review process is not working as well as you would like it to. And I would just ask you, Mr. Minister, if you could answer that simple question. Has there been anything that would show that a number of these children have died as a result of abuse or neglect?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in my absence from the House, as I was signing with the Beardsley's Reserve a child and family services agreement to even strengthen the process of dealing with children in the province, Mr. Speaker, a member of this legislature made accusation about abuse and neglect.

If members of this legislature are going to make such public accusations, I believe it is incumbent on members therefore to share the evidence they have — the evidence that they must have to make such accusations — with the senior officials of the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, that, I think, is incumbent upon each and every citizen of the province and particularly incumbent on public, elected officials who have platforms on which to speak from.

Mr. Speaker, we have considered each of these deaths over the last five years through the policy that has been put in place. There have not been charges of abuse or neglect, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Apology for Remarks about Reform Leader

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier or for his designate. Mr. Premier, your NDP members continue to be unrepentant and arrogant about your back-bencher's Nazi comments. You throw a stone in the dark and the dog yelps, you know you hit the dog. That's what the Minister of Agriculture said yesterday. Obviously the Agriculture minister thinks the member for Regina South hit the target when he compared Preston Manning to a Nazi.

What's wrong with you people? You just don't seem to get it. You don't seem to understand the line that you're crossing. Your members continue to cross it again and again — arrogant, intolerant, and offensive.

Mr. Premier, on Wednesday you made the member of Regina South apologize. On Thursday the Minister of Justice had to apologize. Are you today going to make the Minister of Agriculture apologize?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what comments the member's referring to. All I know is that the individual member from Regina South who made the initial comments here in the Assembly, on which the members of the Conservative Party continue to try to rev this up for some purpose, has apologized here in the Assembly — has apologized here in the Assembly.

I think if you're legitimately concerned about the issues that are being raised in the campaign and where the campaign is going, which is obviously what you're doing, you should be asking your friends in the Reform Party why they want to do in the Canadian Wheat Board and why they want to destroy medicare. That's the issue you should be raising here if you want to be out campaigning.

The member from Regina South has apologized. It's my understanding when members of the legislature apologize here in the House, the apology is to be accepted. I think that's the rule of the Assembly and I would urge you to do that.

Mr. Heppner: — To compare the Canadian Wheat Board concern with Nazi concerns is an insult to those individuals and you know it. We're talking about the last two on this issue, not

the first one, and you know that too.

Mr. Premier, it must make you very proud that it's the NDP, your NDP that is now known as a party of intolerance in this federal election. I know it makes me happy to see the NDP showing the voters their true colours at last time. Mr. Premier, at least the member for Regina South has the rightful spot in your government, in the very back bench with the rest of your NDP. Not exactly a Mensa convention back there is it, Mr. Premier?

Will you be asking the ministers of Justice and Agriculture to join him by removing them from the cabinet? Or are you simply going to condone this level of arrogance and intolerance within your NDP government?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think the Premier has dealt with the issue in saying that he didn't condone the comments but that he accepted the apology of the individual involved. And I would encourage that member to accept the apology as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Avon Brochures in Government Mailboxes

Mr. Boyd: — My question this morning is for the Deputy Premier. Mr. Deputy Premier, as you know, I've always liked to encourage people to start new business ventures here in Saskatchewan, but I don't think people should be running business out of the legislature on government time. This morning our office received an Avon catalogue in our mailbox. It came from the NDP caucus office administrator and it gives the NDP caucus office number as the business number.

Mr. Deputy Premier, your NDP caucus administrator is selling Avon products out of the NDP caucus office and she was good enough at least to put one of their catalogues in our mailbox this morning.

Mr. Premier, I know all of us probably could use some more personal grooming products, but do you think, but do you think it's appropriate for a government employee to be selling Avon products out of the NDP caucus office?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The old adage, "Avon calling." I don't know why they would send it to the Leader of the Third Party. I could understand if it were to some other members.

But seriously, I say to the member opposite I'll look into it. I have no idea how it ended up in his mailbox or if you picked it up somewhere else or how you got it. I want to apologize if you're insulted by the fact that an Avon brochure was sent to you. But on a serious note I will look into and get back to the member as to how it happened.

On the other hand, there are members who work in caucus office who are even on the payroll of government while they run political parties, i.e., Melenchuk, the Leader of the Liberal Party, collects a paycheque from the taxpayers at the same time as he's out campaigning in the election. And I noticed him on a number of podiums with federal candidates. One can argue that

he shouldn't be doing that while he's on the payroll.

But I will check into the issue for you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regional Park Funding

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan minister in charge of Environment and Resource Management issued a new release yesterday announcing the provincial park season has officially begun. The news release also notes, in addition to offering a recreation for the whole family, our parks provide an important economic stimulus to the province's hospitality industry. And I agree.

Mr. Speaker, the minister appears to recognize how important our provincial and regional parks are to tourism, but fails to recognize the need to properly fund our regional park system. Will the minister explain why a regional park budget of \$2 million only a few short years ago is now only \$75,000?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. We have been working with both the provincial park system and the regional park system for a number of years. The provincial park system we are able to maintain, along with fee increases.

Also a lot of the regional park funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was capital infrastructure work and this has been carried out. The funding has been completed for these projects. And as the capital infrastructure work projects have wound up they have not been renewed. No new capital structure funding has been provided.

I'll be meeting with the regional parks people very shortly to discuss ways that we can work together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 236 — The Chief Electoral Officer Accountability Act

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today and move that Bill No. 236, The Chief Electoral Officer Accountability Act be now introduced and read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 17 — The Dental Disciplines Act

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me is Drew Johnston, who is the senior health professions analyst with the policy and planning branch of the Department of Health.

Clause 1

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief comment on this Bill. Certainly all parties affected are very happy that this legislation is proceeding, and certainly all the groups have indicated that to me. However, they have also indicated that there is an amendment that they'd like to see brought forward to this Bill, Mr. Chairman. And at the appropriate time, which will be in clause 43, I will be introducing that amendment.

The Deputy Chair: — Before I recognize the minister I would ask all members to very much quieten down the hum of conversation. I know that . . . I think the point has been made. I hear one hon. member saying, I can't hear you, Mr. Chairman. Point made. And I ask all hon. members to allow the consideration of Bill No. 17 to carry on.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank the member from Arm River for his comments. I understand the member from Arm River will be proposing an amendment to section 43 of the Bill when we get to section 43, and we will not be supporting that amendment. I want to explain to the member and to the House our reason for not supporting it.

I understand and respect the member's point of view as well as some of the professionals' points of view, but I don't think that they're really the correct way to go, and the reason is the Bill as it's drafted, as other professional Bills are being drafted these days, says that if you are a person that takes part in the professional body then you cannot be sued for actions that you take where you may have made, you may have made a mistake, as long as you're acting in the best interest.

So that any individual member of the profession, whether they're a dental therapist or a dentist or whatever, cannot be sued; they're protected unless they do something in bad faith. But the legislation does not protect the association itself, that is, the professional body.

And I support that view and I'll tell you why. This is not unique to this dental profession statute; this occurs now in a number of professional statutes we have where the association can be held responsible. The only circumstance in which an association would be held responsible would be if it did something either maliciously, that is in bad faith, or negligently, that is in a manner that it shouldn't, and careless with respect to the individual member's rights, and it caused some member some damage.

And my argument in answer to those in the profession that would want protection for the professional association is that if any of their members are damaged and suffer loss because of

the negligence of the association, it is better and more fair that that loss be absorbed by the association than by the individual member. So I think that it is more fair to the member of the association.

It is only when an association itself is negligent or acts in bad faith that they might be responsible to the member, but in such a case we have to ask ourselves, who should suffer. Should it be the individual member who has been wronged or should the association, where appropriate, give some compensation to the individual member? I don't think it will arise that professional associations will act in bad faith or will be negligent. But if they are, I don't have any trouble with the concept that the individual member may have the right to seek some kind of redress and compensation from the association.

So I respect the opposition's point of view and I understand where the amendment comes from. At this point in time the policy of the government is that it is not a bad thing to allow individual members who have been wronged to seek redress against associations. We'll certainly continue to examine that policy, but I have to say to the member, for the reasons that I've tried to articulate in as fair a manner as I can, we won't be able to accept that amendment today.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. To the minister and to his official. Mr. Minister, I understand this Bill is just opening up the door for a method and means of providing additional services and certainly bringing the dental professions under one Act, if I understand correctly.

I think you've also talked about the fact that it will allow some dental services to be conducted in special care homes. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, in your consultations in regards to bringing forward this Bill, were there some concerns raised by the dental professions, the dentists themselves, regarding additional services, or are you looking of ways of allowing and giving dental assistants more of an opportunity to practise and where they practise? What was the process that was followed?

And when you talk about services in care homes, will this be under the supervision of a dentist as well, or will these dental technicians or assistants be operating on their own? I think that's maybe a concern out there.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised by the department, Mr. Chair, that there was consultation with all the professional groups, including the college of dental surgeons, the dentists, in particular. And they were not concerned about the provision which allows dental therapists, hygienists, and assistants to compete with dentists. Well not to compete with dentists, but to be . . . I should say specifically what they are allowed to do.

They're not allowed to compete with dentists, but they will be allowed to practice with various public health employers such as health districts' special care homes without having to be supervised by a dentist. This will permit the health employers interested in improving public access to dental services to provide some dental services with the therapists, hygienists, and assistants.

For example, a special care home operated by a health district

could arrange for a dental hygienist to come in occasionally to treat its residents since they may have difficulty getting out to visit the dentist. But I'm advised that this is supported by the dentists themselves.

(1100)

Mr. Toth: — You mentioned, Mr. Minister, that it's supported by the dentists. When you talk of . . . and I think you made a comment of dental assistants or hygienists being able to provide their services I take it, to a health district.

I'm taking from that that there may be a number of individuals, who may not be actually working in a specific dentist's office, that you would be recognizing as having a level of expertise, and that health districts, if they want, would be able to hire those persons to come and work, such as in the case of a special care home. On that basis, Mr. Minister, they really wouldn't be, say, working with a local dentist.

Who then is responsible for their actions or how they apply the expertise or the training that they have received? Who's held accountable? Is that individual held accountable at the end of the day, or the health board?

Or how do you address that concern if there's some complications may arise, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The therapists, hygienists, and assistants in the situation the member is talking about would not be directly supervised by a dentist. They, however, would be regulated by their own associations pursuant to this legislation.

The association would have to ensure that the person concerned was competent to perform the duties that we're talking about. And if the member performing the duties of the dental therapist, hygienist, or assistant went beyond that which that person was competent and licensed to do, then they would be subject to discipline by the professional body which is created by this legislation.

And of course they would also be accountable to the health district itself which would be employing the person. And if the person went beyond what would be proper for that person to do, that would be really a breach of his or her professional responsibility, which his or her colleagues would regulate by means of their council under this legislation.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, does this open up the door as well or broaden the base of providing services to . . . well you're talking about special care homes. With this legislation, does it then open up the door for possibly offering services like this back in local schools, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, this service could be provided by a school board as well, I'm advised.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying, it's like the health boards would have the ability to set up a service in a care home; a local school board could certainly take a look at if a request was made and if they felt it might be a benefit to their school division, that they could set up a program or indeed hire dental

assistants or some professionals to come in and provide the service directly in the school board. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, in fact by section 25 of the Act, the employers could be the Government of Saskatchewan; the federal government; a district health board; an association incorporated under The Mutual Medical and Hospital Benefit Associations Act; a municipality; an Indian band; an operator of a personal care home within the meaning of The Personal Care Homes Act that is approved by the minister — that would require ministerial approval; a board of education or a conseil scolaire or the conseil général under The Education Act; the University of Regina; the University of Saskatchewan; the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College; and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology).

So there's various public bodies and personal care homes approved by the minister, Indian bands, that would be allowed to employ one of those three professionals.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, who covers these services, the cost of the services? Would it be each of the individual groups? Or would the coverage be based on any level of support that may be already out there for dental work and services provided that's already available through your dentistry programs that are available? Or would the health boards or educational boards be forced to pick up the cost of this service at the end of the day, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That would vary from circumstance to circumstance. And it would be determined at the local level; it wouldn't be determined by the province. They could employ people and simply have them performing that service. They could contract with them to provide the service for a certain amount of money. They could have a fee that the person receiving the service would receive. So that the consumer might be paying the service as opposed to the health district, for example. Or it could be a combination. There could be some payment by the health board to the professional and also a co-payment by the individual to the professional, as occurs with chiropractic services.

And part of the difference of course, is these are not generally insured services under the Canada Health Act. As part of the medicare system, dental services have by and large not ever been a part of that, which is another issue.

So that there would be quite a bit of flexibility and I guess whatever would work for the local area would be provided.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I think and I believe that at the end of the day, by bringing all of the professionals in the dentistry profession under one Bill, you certainly . . . everyone I think will have a better understanding of what the rules are and the guidelines as far as them practising their profession. I think that's positive.

The fact that you're opening up the doors . . . or making allowances so that services can be provided or extended to patients who may not have direct access, I think is certainly positive.

And on that note I really don't have any further questions. And I want to thank you and your official for being here this morning and responding to these concerns.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 42 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 43

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I of course am disappointed to hear that the government opposite won't be supporting our amendment today on this Bill. It lends one to believe that maybe the government has an I-know-best attitude. And the reason I say that is it might be appropriate that I quote from a letter from the concerned groups that would indicate that.

This letter, this correspondence that I have received expressing the interest that we would bring forth this amendment, is of course supported by the Saskatchewan Dental Assistants' Association, the Saskatchewan Dental Hygienists' Association, the Saskatchewan Dental Therapists' Association, the Dental Technicians' Association of Saskatchewan, the Denturist Society of Saskatchewan, and the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan.

Now if this number of groups, including their membership, Mr. Speaker, that they represent, believe that this would be a worthwhile amendment to make to the Bill, I find it a little difficult that the government opposite would not accept it. Maybe as well as the reasons that they're asking for this I might just as well, Mr. Chairman, go ahead and quote from the letter as well that would indicate why they're asking for this, and I quote:

These Associations/Colleges represent all of the disciplines identified in The Dental Disciplines Act that is currently being introduced, and all of these Associations/Colleges support the recommendation that Section 43 of the Act be amended to include Associations in the "acting in good faith" . . .

I think that's where it lies, Mr. Chairman, when we're talking about acting in good faith. I go on to quote:

. . . (and) protection provided under this Section. It is the unanimous opinion of all the disciplines that this protection is required in order to properly fulfill their mandate to protect the public and actively investigate complaints against their members.

I think that kind of outlines, Mr. Chairman, the seriousness that these groups have identified as one of the problems with this Bill and that's why they have asked for this amendment. And I would just once again ask the government opposite to rethink their position on this amendment. I do believe that the government has already . . . has a problem, and it's in some other statutes, with some legal challenges and we certainly don't want to see that becoming a trend as opposed to the abnormal.

Mr. Chairman, therefore I would move that we:

Amend clause 43 of the printed Bill by adding immediately after the words "No action lies or shall be instituted against" where they occur therein the following words:

"an association or".

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I just want to say, Mr. Chair, that I've given the reasons why we don't accept the amendment already to the member and I won't repeat them. But I want to say that the House should be aware, and I'm sure most members are, that the professions have done a great deal of work with respect to this legislation. The professional groups the member identifies support this legislation.

It's true that in one particular matter, the professions would like the legislation to say something different than it does; however, this legislature has to decide what is the appropriate public policy. We've made a decision that in this one instance happens to be a different opinion than the professions, but it's our responsibility to pursue the appropriate public policy to protect not only the public but to protect the members of the various associations. That's what we're doing.

There's been a great deal of cooperation between the six professional groups and the government; we've been very receptive to the ideas of the professional associations. It's true that there's one particular area where we don't accept the idea of the association, but I just wanted to say that it shouldn't be thought that there hasn't been a lot of discussion and dialogue and indeed agreement with respect to most of these matters, because there really has been.

There's one minor matter that we have a different point of view on but there's been a very cooperative and open relationship with the professions and all are agreed that this legislation is an improvement over what we had before.

The division bells rang from 11:16 a.m. until 11:18 a.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 8

McLane	Gantefoer	Osika
Bjornerud	Hillson	Julé
Aldridge	Toth	

Nays — 18

Van Mulligen	Lingenfelter	Lautermilch
Crofford	Calvert	Bradley
Renaud	Scott	Cline
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Kasperski	Ward	Sonntag
Langford	Murrell	Thomson

Clause 43 agreed to.

Clauses 44 to 63 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the opposition for their cooperation and I'd like to thank Mr. Johnston for his assistance here today. And with that I move that we report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, to your official for being here today. We're disappointed the amendment didn't go through but thanks for your frank discussion.

The committee reported progress.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 17 — The Dental Disciplines Act

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

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 67

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 67 — The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have some comments to make about this Bill and I'd like to start off by saying that we should put The Agri-Food Amendment Act under the microscope and take a real, good, close look at clause no. 7 which introduces a new version of section 14 of The Agri-Food Act.

This new section will allow cabinet to pass a regulation discontinuing the operation of a number of marketing boards in the province. In essence the amendment will give this power-hungry cabinet even more power by giving it the right to close down operations of marketing boards without a vote.

The amendment will affect many marketing boards, including the Saskatchewan Pork International, the Sheep Development Board, the Vegetable Marketing and Development Board, the Canola Development Commission, the Broiler Hatching Egg Producers' Marketing Board, the Chicken Marketing Board, the Commercial Egg Producers' Marketing Board, and the Turkey Producers' Marketing Board.

The members opposite continue to reveal their Jekyll and Hyde tendencies with this amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On the one hand they crow about how open and accountable the government is, then they turn around and say they will deal with producers' futures, their livelihood, behind the closed doors.

Will the real NDP government please stand up? Is it for

openness and accountability or for secrets and dictatorship?

Talk about hypocrisy. Talk about an abuse of the very fundamental democracy under which the voters elected this government.

Even if the NDP government decides to allow producers a vote — and that's a big if — there does not appear to be any requirement to follow the wish of the producers in the event the vote favours preserving a marketing board.

This is a new low for democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as this amendment gives the NDP government the right to trample over producers and their legitimate wishes. Ironically this is supposed to be a social democratic government. Somewhere, sometime, the members opposite must have taken a wrong turn.

If cabinet decides to hold a vote, the parameters are also to be decided by order in council, including the minimum of producers who must cast a ballot in order for the vote to be valid. Secondly, the percentage of the total potential producers who must vote in order for the vote to be valid. And thirdly — and this last key point is very significant as it opens the door for a very low threshold vote to give the government justification to disband a marketing board.

The Bill also opens the door to major, fundamental changes to marketing plans operated by marketing boards and commissions. And the changes can be made — surprise, surprise — without votes by producers.

The portion of the Bill that I'm referring to is clause 7, the rewriting of sections 12 and 13 of The Agri-Food Act. The changes could be anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker — smaller quotas, new pricing structures, longer averaging, shorter averaging. Almost anything could be done to the plans by the minister acting alone through an order in council without any vote.

Major changes can occur as a result of a vote if — another big if — cabinet decides to hold a vote. Again it appears these rules are heavily weighted in favour of this government, with very little or no regard for the producers.

Of course this government has not solely shut out producers. They can indeed suggest changes to the operation of the marketing programs. They do this by taking them to the minister. That's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The producers who make their living in these industries have the right — just the right to make suggestions. They can make suggestions. The gratitude they must feel is overwhelming.

This arrogant government says we need the power to make arbitrary decisions, and the producers, the ones directly affected, just have the right to make suggestions. I'm surprised that their office has not yet been snowed under with thank-you cards from all the producers throughout the province.

(1130)

But I digress, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The minister can refer the suggestions to the Lieutenant Governor in Council immediately

or he can refer them to the Agri-Food Council. The council can study the changes and hold public hearings to seek further input. The council then reports back to the minister. The minister can then make recommendations to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as to whether the changes are a good idea or not. The Lieutenant Governor in Council then decides to either hold a vote among producers or simply enact changes through an order in council without a vote.

But — and this is a big but — the government does not have to follow the results of the vote. This is just another example of this government's arrogance and sheer contempt for the people of this province. If producers decide to put up a fight against the dismantling of a marketing agency, this government has taken steps to tie their hands.

Clause 9 of the Bill allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to pass an order in council stating that the minister can step in and exercise all powers of the marketing agency and that duly elected officials of the agency shall not carry out their usual powers during the time when the minister has stepped in.

This government is preparing itself very well to strong arm producers. In effect the minister could walk in the door, send the staff and board officials packing, and say to the producers, I don't care about your decisions and your office staff. Essentially the minister could say, hey look gang, it's my way or the highway. This is just another nail in the coffin for democracy in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Going on to clause 10, it permits the Lieutenant Governor in Council to impose levies on producers when he thinks the producers would benefit from the work of one of the agencies established under the federal Farm Products Agencies Act. This new provision will allow cabinet to order a vote to see if producers in any particular group wanted to be subject to these levies to support the work of these federal agencies. But once again this government can pass an order in council requiring payment without a vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the producers of this province have a right and deserve a government that will look out for their concerns and their interests. But this is obviously the last thing on this government's mind.

Any legislation that can wipe out marketing boards without a producer vote, with a single stroke of a pen, is not our idea of looking out for someone's best interest. In this case the government has again proven the old adage, the pen is mightier than the sword. And the swords we see in this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the swords stuck in the backs of Saskatchewan producers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in an unusual turn of events, the Premier himself spoke on this issue and offered advice to those of us in the opposition benches. He stated that, and I quote:

You ask your constituents how you should be voting on this Bill. You want time to consult with your constituencies? We'll give you the time to consult with your constituencies . . . but make sure you consult with them in fact and in substance and in all honesty.

Therefore at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move adjournment of this debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 69

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 69 — The Police Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to continue off where I left off when we adjourned the other day with a few more points.

I once again would like to reiterate that the intent of the Bill, from what we can see, we agree with.

Where the problem comes in . . . and from the number of municipalities that have contacted our office in the last couple of days, I think brings to light the same concerns that we talked about the other day.

And a number of the concerns brought to us this time are from the small towns of under 500 population and the RMs.(rural municipality), who are not all that pleased with what this Bill is doing, but are very displeased to not be able to look at the Bill and say this is what it's going to cost my municipality, this is what it's going to cost per capita. And the Bill itself does not have any numbers in it at all that we can, and they can, take a look at and see whether they agree or disagree.

I think where the small towns and the RMs are having a big problem with this is the \$29 million cut that we had this year, of which 17 was urban, 12 million was rural. But then on top of that, the cuts that have come from this government since 1991 when they have come to power have added to the problem now that these people are having to raise their mill rates, without the policing Bill. You dump this on top of it and there is just no way these people cannot be asking their local ratepayers for many, many more dollars just to function. And they're definitely not happy with that.

The towns of 500 and over and the bigger centres naturally want this Bill to pass, but they also would like to see the numbers because they're really worried that it'll be watered down. So yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a very controversial Bill here.

I would like to talk for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a task force that was set up. And actually it was municipal-provincial round table task force. And some of the comments in here, I think are somewhat interesting.

One of the comments is that SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) supports the principle of redistribution of policing costs. The principle is also supported by the provincial participants.

But SUMA I know for a fact has somewhat . . . many qualms about what will be in this Bill because I think they also would like to see the numbers before they pass judgement on it.

The report also goes on to say that the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) representatives are not yet prepared to accept this position. SARM has participated in the discussions for the purpose of obtaining the best position possible for its members.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is very understandable. I think I understand where SARM is coming from.

Naturally, number one, they do not agree with having to pay for policing. But on top of that, they go back to the same thing — the funding cuts that the SARM members have had to endure from this government, and now being asked to pick up the tab at the same time as we are having these large, large downloading cuts.

We have reassessment, which is confusing, causing a great distress for many administrators and councils out there, and now we're going to have to turn around, after realizing they had to raise their mill rate to counteract the downloading, they're going to have to raise their mill rate much higher to pay for policing. So you can understand where SARM is coming from.

I believe SARM also though, would be a lot more comfortable if they could take this Bill, look at the numbers, and judge it by its content, not by what is not in the Bill.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the points we are trying to make today, that it is really hard to support a Bill . . . Although we support the intent of the original Bill, it is really hard to judge this Bill unless we get numbers in.

Why would . . . This government seems to have to bring something forward like this and not include these numbers, but add later in regulation — and we have seen this in the last two years constantly, and before that even.

All the meat and potatoes of every Bill that we see in here is brought in after the fact. I would suggest this time there is a real reason for this though, being that it will be after session is over and after the federal election is over, not to create any waves out there for the government of the day.

On top of this, the cuts that the RMs and the towns and that really cannot handle. Number one, one of the reasons that they can't is because — and I think we'd brought this up earlier in question period — is the downloading of the regional park money onto the municipalities.

Where the government funded as high as \$2 million a year to regional parks, now they are down to \$75,000. There is no alternative for the RMs and towns but to dump more money on top of which they already are dumping to keep these parks alive, when really everyone, including the government of the day, is getting the benefits of tourism. Just another form of downloading that the local governments have to pick up. And to do this, they're also going to have to raise their mill rates to cover the regional park funding.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that's all I would have to say at this time and I'm willing to pass this on to committee because we will have many more questions at that point.

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

Bill No. 66

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 66 — The Health Care Directives and Substitute Health Care Decision Makers Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is certainly a gap in our law that I'm pleased to see that the minister has moved to fill. And in point of fact, this was going on in this province in any event and now there's an attempt to regulate and regularize it. And that is correct.

But this is, as I said last day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a very personal and sensitive matter which touches or at least potentially touches each and every resident of this province. In other provinces when it has been brought in, there have been broad public hearings and public consultations in order that all persons in the province, especially those working in the area of the terminally ill and in our health care facilities, have some input into how we deal with the terribly difficult issue of the rights of patients or their proxy to determine what medical care they receive in terminal and life-threatening situations, particularly for those persons who may no longer be capable of giving direction.

And of course the problem becomes more difficult when we consider that it is very difficult for us to give direction beforehand in the sense that you cannot know the full prognosis.

For example, if I was asked whether I wanted to be resuscitated following a crisis, a heart attack or something, frankly in my own personal case, that would depend entirely on the quality of life following resuscitation. If I could be back and up and around again, of course that's what I would want.

If in fact the resuscitation would mean that I would live 20 years totally debilitated, totally incapacitated, as a virtual vegetable, my personal answer would be, no thank you.

But it's very difficult to say this before the fact because we wouldn't really know what the prognosis is. And after the fact the patient may be in no condition to give those directives.

So I understand the reasons here. But I say I think this is an issue which really affects each and every person in the province, and I'm sorry that this legislation came up before us in the dying days of the session because I think it really deserves more care and attention than perhaps what it is receiving.

I think there should be more of an education component in this legislation. I think the people of this province have to clearly

understand that the medical treatment they receive is their decision. It is not the decision of the health care professionals. It is the patient's decision as to what care he or she wishes to receive and what measures he or she wishes to be undertaken on their behalf.

And I think that there needs to be a serious education component here so that people understand their rights and understand how their wishes can best be put into effect, if not by them themselves personally, then of course by their loved ones.

I have some specific questions I would like to put to the Minister of Health. For example, have they considered the impact of this on The Wills Act? It seems to me that The Wills Act should be looked at together with this legislation because the two of course do relate to one another. And other provinces have amended their Wills Act at the same time that they have brought in the health directives or the living wills Act, if I might call it that.

(1145)

We are somewhat concerned that the legislation says that in the event of disagreement between siblings, that the word of the elder sibling will prevail. That strikes us as somewhat arbitrary. Is there another way of dealing with the issue of when siblings don't agree as to what care a parent in crisis ought to receive?

How do we deal with the thorny issue of where someone may . . . some member of the family may have religious objections to, say a blood transfusion? How are we going to deal with that if the patient is unconscious? If the patient is unconscious and requires a blood transfusion on an urgent basis or some other medical treatment on an urgent basis, if it's the elder sibling who doesn't want the treatment to take place, there may well not be sufficient time to warrant legal intervention . . . or to allow a legal intervention, I mean.

So these are serious issues that I wish the minister would address and tell us if they have been anticipated in the drafting of this legislation.

I have also mentioned, and wish again to bring to the minister's attention, that the fine of \$1,000 for putting undue pressure on someone for changing their living will to prevent their survival, the \$1,000 fine strikes me as very inadequate given the size of most estates today. And obviously one of the issues we have to address when we look at living wills is the issue that the family who are the closest to the patient are also presumably the people who will inherit from an estate, and we can't close our mind to that obvious fact.

In the province of Alberta the fine is \$10,000 for putting undue pressure on a patient to sign a living will and to name oneself as a proxy. There's a fine of \$10,000; our fine is \$1,000. I wish to ask the minister why we settled on the figure of \$1,000, say one-tenth the figure we have in Alberta. It strikes me as simply too low and it should be higher, given the size of estates.

Also I'm concerned that undue pressure for a person making a living will, while it might disinherit the person making the

undue pressure, it does not disinherit that person's spouse. Under The Wills Act, undue pressure on someone to make a will disinherits not only that person but that person's spouse. So this leaves open the possibility that an in-law could place undue pressure in the making of the living will and if that in-law puts on that undue pressure to get what they want and to get at the estate early, that would not disinherit the in-law's spouse.

So I'm concerned with that. I say in this case the living will section now before us is in conflict with The Wills Act. And I personally think The Wills Act makes more sense than this living wills Act now before us, and I would like the minister to address that.

So the principle here we do not object to, but I think it has to be looked at with great care. I want to know from the minister what consultations have taken place. I think broad hearings and consultation are warranted in this case. It touches everybody; it touches all of us. And then there are the matters of the specific issues that I've brought before the minister that I would like him to consider.

Finally, I note that in the province of Alberta the public guardian has administration of living wills. It strikes me that makes a lot of sense because it is the public guardian who is ultimately responsible for the persons and estates of those who are incapacitated. So it strikes me that that's a sensible place to put it and again, in my view, more sensible than the drafting of this legislation. However these are all matters which may be considered more fully in Committee of the Whole, but I would ask the minister to have another look at these specific objections.

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

Bill No. 68

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 68 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation 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 FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

The Deputy Chair: — The Department of Health was last before this . . . or pardon me, was before this committee on April 7 and then last on May 8. I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Beside me is Mr. Steve Petz, who's the associate deputy minister of Health, and to his left is Ms. Cathy Langlois, who's the executive director of finance and management services. And behind Ms. Langlois is Ms. Carol Klassen, who is the executive director of acute and

emergency services. And behind Mr. Petz is Ms. Lois Borden, who is the executive director of the district support branch in the Department of Health.

Item 1

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm not sure where to start today, but I think maybe I would like to first ask you a couple of questions if I can in relationship to the provincial coroner and autopsies. And I think your department has received some concerns about the timeliness of autopsy reports, Mr. Minister. And I just wonder if we could address those today.

I too have received some calls from some constituents that have some concerns about the lengthiness of the time frame that it takes to get these autopsy reports back so — and to use I think some of the families affected words — is that so that they can put their loss to rest so to speak.

We've had some indication from within that office that there is a concern of staff shortages there, basically due to budget restraints imposed by your government. And I'm wondering if the minister could elaborate a bit today to us and tell us what he's doing to encourage these reports to come forth in a more timely manner.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I should advise the member, Mr. Chair, that the coroner's branch is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. So with respect to that matter, these questions would be better put to the Minister of Justice in the Justice estimates.

The Department of Health does not run the coroner's branch. We do pay pathologists, but in terms of autopsies performed under the jurisdiction of the coroner's branch, those would be under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. However, we were led to believe through your department that indeed you were looking into these concerns and had done some work on that. If that's not the case then I guess we need to clarify that, and certainly I'm most happy to talk to the appropriate minister about this. However, we were led to believe — and some contact with your department — that that was the case.

If not, we'll move onto another issue. And it's one to do with our health centres in the province, I guess, Mr. Minister. And it's an area of which I'm almost certain that you have jurisdiction over. And it's regards to the 24-hour time frame for evaluation that you placed on beds in these health centres.

Time and time again we've seen problems in the rural areas where we've got people that are best served and can be served in these health centres. And sometimes it's not possible to do that in the 24-hour time frame, in terms of keeping, in particular, elderly people in their home communities to receive the initial treatment that they need, which can be provided from these centres.

And I'm wondering why you've imposed such stringent

guidelines on these centres with a 24-hour period. And how many centres are actually following those guidelines?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The 24-hour rule applies to observation for assessment as opposed to palliative care or some other matter. Observation and assessment is used to determine whether a person requires acute intervention — in other words, whether they should go to a hospital. And the opinion of the people that work in clinical areas who advise the department and the districts with respect to this matter is that you should make a decision within 24 hours as to whether somebody requires admission to the hospital. Therefore the 24-hour rule exists.

Mr. McLane: — I guess maybe we need to . . . maybe your advisers should be talking to the actual people affected by these decisions. I'll give you an example — I guess maybe to clarify our point — is an elderly person that takes, as we know, takes a lot of medications. As we know, in today's society, that drugs are an integral part of recovery from illnesses and diseases. And quite often elderly people are on a lot of medications and sometimes they have adverse effects of these.

What happens in a lot of scenarios, Mr. Minister, in these health centres is that these people can come in. They're in their own community. They have a problem, first of all, getting out of the community to go to another area to receive the acute services that you're referring to, but can adequately be treated in these health centres and get their drugs stabilized in a safe and . . . a safe environment with the care of professional people.

And most often . . . And I'm sure that if you talked to many of our doctors in rural Saskatchewan they would tell you that this can't be done in 24 hours. Sometimes it takes two or three or maybe even four days to do this, to stabilize these people.

And what your 24-hour evaluation time does is causes these people to be booted out of their own community and their health centres and forced to either go home . . . most often it's back home, because they're reluctant to go to a neighbouring hospital which may be 40 or 50 miles away. And they want to be treated there and they can be treated there — and safely treated there — by professional staff, both doctors and nurses.

So I'm wondering why you've imposed this and again, you know, how many health centres are able to comply with this rule?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With respect to the situation that the member's describing, there is no such rule. That is not an observation assessment situation the member's describing. If somebody needed their medication to be adjusted and the district health board or the physician wanted to keep them in longer than 24 hours, there's no rule that the person couldn't be kept in longer than 24 hours.

(1200)

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, that's what I wanted to hear you say. Now is there, is there a time limit that those people can be kept in the health centres then?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. Is Long Lake Valley Integrated Facility, which still uses that name, is it a health centre?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Recently in the last couple of weeks, you've made a number of announcements regarding capital construction around the province and I'd just like to talk for a couple of minutes about those, and in particular the announcement that was made in Melville. Can you tell us, Mr. Minister, what your plans or what your department's plans are for capital construction in Melville?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — My plan is first of all to consult with the local community. Or to put it more properly, I think, to allow the district health board to consult with the local community. Because as the member will know, generally speaking for a capital project as may be contemplated in Melville, which is an integrated facility, to integrate the hospital services with the special care home, with other services in the community, 65 per cent of the funds are provided by the province, 35 per cent of the funds are provided at the local level. I want to . . . My understanding is that the people at the local level have been interested in having an integrated facility constructed in Melville. I want that to be confirmed now, as is the usual case, with the local municipalities, both the city of Melville and the surrounding RMs, any towns or villages that may be involved, to indicate whether they want this kind of project to go ahead; whether they see the funding for it as being a priority that they would have.

And I also would expect that the district health board would consult with the local governments to see what kind of facility they think should go ahead. Because obviously if the local people don't support it, they won't want to fund it and it won't go ahead.

The hope of local people — this is not a government plan or my plan; it's a plan by people that have got together in Melville and area — is for a new, integrated facility whereby the hospital would be replaced by a health centre that would be integrated with the special care home and perhaps some other services that are provided in the city of Melville.

But as I said, as far as I'm concerned that requires a plan to emerge from the local community itself, both the district health board and the local governments. And I will wait to see what they say. I will listen to them. And then the government will work with them to proceed in a fashion that the community supports.

Mr. McLane: — Have you set a time frame, Mr. Minister, when construction for this project would start?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, there is no time frame contemplated.

I would like to hear from people at the local level as to the type of facility they would like to see as to their ability to raise the local portion of the funds. And I would think that the district health board will be doing some planning, dialogue, and discussion, but very much involving people at the local level.

And when there's a consensus locally as to how we should proceed, I would expect that we'll all be marching down the same road together.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. You also made an announcement regarding La Loche? Can you tell us what is going to be built at La Loche? And I think you gave an indication in a press release of a time frame for the construction of that institution.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I should explain that the situation in northern Saskatchewan is slightly different than below the North, in that in northern Saskatchewan, like Saskatoon and Regina, the province provides basically 100 per cent of the funding with the exception of Health Canada's involvement in some instances with respect to their first nations jurisdiction.

And in La Loche I expect that the planning of the facility will be proceeding this year; so that the community will be consulted. The new district health board will be consulted. Other communities outside of La Loche will be consulted.

The plans, hopefully, will be drawn up this year. I would hope that construction would proceed in 1998 or 1999, and that the facility would be operational in the year 2000.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, it would seem to me that if you were going to make an announcement on a capital expenditure of a health project, the first thing that would happen is, of course what you've alluded to — your department in consultation with the health districts and the communities, and the municipalities . . . and all the people affected by it would be involved. And that's necessary and right.

However it would seem to me that you would go out and you would do this consulting and then you would decide what was going to be built. If it's indeed going to be an integrated facility in Melville, that's what it would be, and at that time is when you make your announcement.

I would think the same thing would apply in La Loche. That you would have the discussions, decide what the people want and need, and then go out and make your announcement. I'm wondering if the people in these communities are being misled a bit by your government, and that you're playing politics with these announcements, Mr. Minister.

As you're well aware of, we're in the midst of a federal election campaign in this province and across Canada. As well as when you talk about building these institutions in '98 or '99, it's going to be just previous to a provincial election, and I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if there's a lot of politics involved in this. You make the announcement now, the middle of the federal election; the project will then begin to proceed, if they indeed do, saying to the people of the province, okay vote for us, we're going to build you an institution in La Loche, in Melville, wherever it may be in Saskatchewan, and then away you go.

Seems to me you've got the process a little mixed up, and you're playing politics once again with health care and the lives of the people of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I'm afraid it's the member that doesn't understand the process, Mr. Chair. It is not in fact myself or the government directly in a political way that make decisions with respect to priorities for capital construction. There is a committee which is comprised of people from the health districts from around the province who are very sincere people, who in good faith look at the requests for capital construction — which come from the districts, not from me — and prioritize which ones they should do.

And when we make a list of capital construction, that list doesn't come from my office or from myself in the first instance — certainly the announcements do — but we consult the people at the local level. We involve people from the districts, in terms of what should be built.

And the Capital Evaluation Committee evaluates projects on the basis of health renewal direction and principles, district needs assessment, program requirements, and current facility status. In other words they look at what the community needs, which communities have the greatest needs, and then they proceed accordingly.

These are not decisions that are made by the Minister of Health; they're not decisions that are made on a political basis. They're decisions that are made by the local people themselves. The member should know that. It is not me who is playing politics with this process, Mr. Chair; unfortunately, it is the member.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Last fall, a few days before the North Battleford by-election, The Battlefords Health District announced that the Health department had approved the construction of a \$25 million nursing home in North Battleford. I realize that announcement came from the health district and not from your department, but I would like the minister to please tell me what he can about the status of that project.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well there is no such project at the moment. I am aware that representatives of The Battlefords District Health Board made an announcement that they had a plan to replace two special care home facilities with one new special care home facility, which I believe they said would cost 20 to \$25 million, something like that.

That has never been approved by the Capital Evaluation Committee which, as I said, is comprised of local people. It has not been approved by the Department of Health. It has not been approved by myself.

In the future, will we look at a request . . . Now in fairness to the district health board, I assume what they're saying is that this is what they would like to do down the road. They may be saying that. Somebody's saying it. The member's saying they're not saying that.

Well I didn't make the announcement; the district health board made the announcement. The member said that himself. Now I'm saying that may be their wish, and he's saying they didn't say it. So the member can get up and clarify himself.

But what I'm saying to the member is that there may be some desire at the local level that the special care homes be replaced. That request can come forward to the Capital Evaluation Committee and the people from around the province will look at that request.

I can also assure the member — who I think made some issue perhaps of the idea of a new special care home in The Battlefords in the by-election — if the member and others at the local level do not wish a new special care home in The Battlefords, that wish too will be respected.

This is the same as the Melville situation. Any request for capital construction has to come from the local area. The wishes of the local people have to be respected. They come up with 35 per cent of the money. And if the people wish to proceed with the new project, that will be looked at. And if the people don't wish to proceed with the new project, that will be looked at as well.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I can assure the minister that I'm sure everyone in the Battlefords would be pleased with the construction of a new facility. The issue became whether or not there would be a loss of beds as a result of the construction.

However, if I may come back to it —and I believe the minister has already made his position clear — the health district announcement was that the Department of Health had approved a \$25 million nursing home for North Battleford. Are you saying that never happened? No such approval has been given?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's correct. No such approval has been given.

Mr. Hillson: — Do I further understand from you that no such request has come before you from Battlefords Health District for approval of a \$25 million nursing home?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The local health board is part of a province-wide review of the regional health centres, which includes the Battlefords facilities; so that it wouldn't be fair to say that there's no such request, in the sense that at least there's been an expression of interest in rejuvenating or replacing the special care home facilities in the Battlefords.

So I don't know if there's been a formal request, but certainly there's been a lot of discussion around the issue and I think it's well-known that they'd like something to be done.

But in terms of whether there's been a decision as to anything specific to be done, what should be done, no, there's been no such decision. That's being studied at the present time and I would anticipate that somewhere over the next year we will come to a decision in conjunction with the local health board about what to do. But what will be done will be something that there is some community support for.

Mr. Hillson: — I thank the minister and I say, please understand that I take no objection to anything you have said. But the announcement was that the Department of Health had approved it; you have said definitely you had not approved it.

There may have been some informal discussions, but have you in fact had a formal application from The Battlefords Health District for construction of a \$25 million nursing facility, nursing home facility?

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that the local health board has requested approval of some kind of construction to replace the special care homes, but I'm not sure that the exact project is described.

I think what they want is . . . The first stage that occurs when something is approved is approval for planning, which of course implies that what you do is say: yes, go ahead and plan the facility, because when you come up with the plan, we're prepared to pay for it or pay our portion of it. And the first thing they would do is apply for approval in principle, and I think they have made their interest in some kind of approval to plan a new system or a new facility well-known to the Department of Health. So in that sense, they've made an application. But in the first instance, it's approval for planning that they have to receive.

Mr. Hillson: — And that approval has not been given?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's correct.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Minister, when it came to your attention that The Battlefords Health District was saying that you had approved a \$25 million nursing home for North Battleford, did you communicate with them that this was not the case, that you had given no such approval and they shouldn't be saying that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well it's not for me to tell people what they should or should not be saying at the local level. The situation as between the health district and the Department of Health and the Capital Evaluation Committee is well-known to the people at the local level and has been well-known to them throughout the entire process.

But as I said, they have indicated a desire to replace their care centre in North Battleford, and also they are involved in a committee which is looking at all of the regional care facilities in Battleford, Melfort, Swift Current, and Weyburn with respect to their long-term plans. So this is a matter that they've discussed at the local level. They obviously were expressing their long-term plans to build a new facility in Battleford or North Battleford, but as the member knows, that has not been formally approved — or informally approved, I suppose — by the Department of Health. We're certainly open to discussing that with the local health board and in fact are doing so on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Minister, though, my concern isn't that the health district would want approval for this. My concern is that the health district announced that you had granted approval for a \$25 million nursing home and you have stated flatly that is not true.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well if the member has concerns, Mr.

Chair, with any statements made by anyone in his local community or the health district, he should take those concerns up with the local people, with the Chair of the health board, with the health board itself. I invite him to do so. He's a resident, I believe, of North Battleford. He has a member for the area in which he resides who's on the local health board. It is not for me to answer for any statements that the member may be concerned about. I invite the member to communicate with people in his own community about any statements they may make with which the member may be concerned.

Mr. Hillson: — However . . . yes, thanks, Deputy Chairman. When I do communicate with these people, I take it that I can tell them that the minister flatly denies that he ever gave approval for a \$25 million nursing home for North Battleford.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The member will have a copy of *Hansard*, which is a record, as the member knows, of what was said in this House. The member is free to use *Hansard* in any manner that he deems appropriate.

Mr. Hillson: — But are you saying you never gave approval for a \$25 million nursing home in North Battleford?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I have answered that question more than once. My words will speak for themselves and the record will speak for itself. The member can make whatever use of the record that he wishes. That is his right.

Mr. Hillson: — We are concerned that the Rabbit Lake health centre is to close. That announcement was made prior to the announcement by the federal government of \$65 million additional funding for health care and CST (Canadian Health Social Transfer) transfer. Can that decision be revisited? Can something be done to save the Rabbit Lake health centre?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — First of all, there is no \$65 million money for health care from the federal government. There is this year a \$53 million cut in federal funding to health care in the province of Saskatchewan and Liberal cuts to health care funding in every province in this country.

What the Liberals have said, Mr. Chair, is that next year — not this year, next year — they will not cut health care as much as they said they were going to cut health care. However what the Liberals will do, as they have done each and every year, is cut our health care budget again next year, and the health care budget of every province in the country. But what they have announced, which the member somehow thinks is new money, is that they're not going to cut health care quite as much next year as they said they would.

So first of all we have to proceed on a common understanding about what the federal Liberals are doing to health care and not misrepresent what they're doing.

Secondly, with respect to Rabbit Lake, that is a local decision that has been made by the district health board. It has not been made by the district health board for purely financial reasons. It's been made by the district health board because they think it's the best decision in terms of how to deliver long-term care in the Parkland Health District.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the health district has clearly said this is a funding decision. They have very clearly said that it is strictly a monetary decision. We know from the population of Rabbit Lake, particularly the number of seniors, that there will be no problem filling the Rabbit Lake centre in the event it remains open; that these people do need care. The number of persons requiring care certainly justify the present facility, if not a larger one. And that in order to close down the facility, these seniors from Rabbit Lake are going to be parcelled out over a wide radius, and where they will be living now two hours from the community. So this is not a case that it's been decided that the demand isn't there; the health district says the money isn't there.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's not the information that has been provided to me, Mr. Speaker. The district conducted a needs assessment and following that, the district felt that the number of beds available for long-term care was higher than the number they required.

Often people's needs can be met without institutionalizing them. The district wants to improve their home care, their respite care, improve other options for people. The district has a different view of the world than the member does. And I appreciate that the member does not agree with the decision made by the local district health board. I respect the right of the district to make the decision that they made. And I will support them in that effort.

Mr. Hillson: — Does the Minister of Health not acknowledge that the issue facing our health district is not how much health care they want, how much health care they need, but rather how much health care they can afford within the financial constraints you have placed around them?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. The district had a surplus last year, Mr. Chair. There's no shortage of money. There is a different view than that member has. One view of taking care of older people is that we should put all our eggs in one basket and have lots of nursing home beds and institutionalize everybody. That's not a very progressive view. We need to have a range of options which includes home care, adult day care, respite care, as well as nursing home beds. And if we play our cards right, we're more likely to keep people active and independent in their own homes and require fewer nursing home beds.

That's the view that the district health board has. The member may disagree with the district health board. I think the board should be congratulated for doing a needs assessment, identifying the number of beds they need, and making decisions that they think are in the best interests of the district as a whole.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Minister, I've received communication from a number of seniors who tell me that the purchase of oxygen cylinders is becoming a real hardship for them. Now that was previously covered; it's no longer covered. Can the minister tell me anything about plans by the Department of Health to assist people who require regular oxygen?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the Department of Health, through the SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living) program,

assists hundreds of people in the province with respect to their oxygen needs. There used to be three methods of payment for oxygen, there is now one method of payment. The majority of people pay less for oxygen than they used to. Some people pay somewhat more.

If people need special support, then they get that through the SAIL program. And most people are telling us, and they're surveyed I believe by the lung association, that they're satisfied with the changes that have been made in the area of oxygen; and that they're satisfied with the oxygen program that is delivered through SAIL.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, welcome. Thank you for the opportunity to clarify some of the issues in health care. What my colleagues had alluded to with respect to certain announcements that are made, whenever the minister or Health department has mentioned, the optics of it for the general public is that, well if the Health department or the district health boards have made an announcement, it's with the approval and the support of the Health minister, the Health department.

And I guess those are the optics. And I guess we need to clarify a little more for people when these announcements are made that this is not a promise of a project, it's merely a blessing from the Department of Health for the local organizations and district health boards to start consultations on what they need and what they require. I believe that's what my colleagues were alluding to.

That the impression people get when the Minister of Health arrives on the scene and there's an announcement that there's discussion about a health facility in the near future, they take it as good, that Health minister is supporting the building of something for our community which we desperately need. Do you not agree with that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The announcement, Mr. Chair, that we make when we say a project is approved for planning is that we want you to plan this, we're willing to put up 65 per cent of the money; that's what we're saying. But now as in any project, the community puts up 35 per cent. So in terms of the details, we have an obligation to listen to the community in terms of what they think should go into the plans. Because when we say it's approved for planning, we want to include local consultation.

So I'll ask the member two questions. Number one, does he not think that we should ask the local rural municipalities and the city of Melville what their opinion is? Because all I'm saying is we should ask them for their views. Number one, does he agree with that or not? Number two, does he agree that there should be a new integrated facility built in the city of Melville? I think there should be.

I want to know from that member, does he think we should consult with the local people, number one; number two, does he agree with me that we should have a new, integrated facility in the city of Melville?

Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Chair, it's evident the minister has not been around very long or doesn't know my history or

background. I was on a committee that was raising funds to build facilities in Melville over the last decade.

So the answer to that is definitely yes, we need that. And the people there have been working hard towards that goal and they don't want to have just merely some optic saying, well yes, go ahead and plan. They've been doing that.

Anyway, I just want to shift gears here a little bit. And, Mr. Minister, there's a desperate need . . . there are people that have needs in the area of addictions counselling, as you're well aware — alcohol, drugs, smoking, and gambling, out-patient treatment, drinking while intoxicated screening, assessment treatments, counselling for . . . and on and on. You're well aware of that.

And, Mr. Minister, I was just wondering, there was a request made by the Saskatchewan Association of Boards of Addiction Services, there was a request made to you in 1996 and again in March of this year to recognize a number of these non-government organizations. And I have a whole list of them, and you have them as well because the documents were sent to you. What they want to be recognized as, is affiliated agencies to the health districts. And I was wondering if there was any move in the immediate future to do so?

These are people that operate as volunteers in a large number of cases. They're counsellors are such that are qualified, underfunded and . . . but those services are desperately needed in small communities throughout Saskatchewan. And I would just like to hear whether or not you will support their request to recognize them as affiliates.

(1230)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that their request is under review at the moment. It would be something that obviously we would want to talk to the health districts about, because these organizations would be affiliates of the health districts themselves as opposed to the Department of Health. And we certainly have an open mind about the issue and we'll continue to discuss it with the various groups.

I think the member will know that as a result of the recent provincial budget, there was some funding to begin correcting some of the inequities in salary on an incremental basis, which has been quite well received in terms of the feedback I've got.

So we're making some steps those organizations are happy with. There are some other steps they would probably like to be taken; those would have to be taken with the approval of the district health boards. And we'll review the matter along with the boards and arrive at a policy decision in due course.

But right now it's still under review.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It would be really encouraging if there was a time line, at least something in the immediate future to offer these people who continue to do everything they possibly can in their communities despite the fact that they are seriously underfunded. I mean . . . and I appreciate there needs to be consultation. But is there any way that you might be able to . . . since this originated way back in

1996, can this not be . . . can the process not be speeded up and at least give some hope that within a certain period of time there will be a decision made and give these people some encouragement and some hope?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to say to the member that these groups that provide counselling, generally speaking, have got more and more funding each and every year from this government through the districts. And it's a far cry from what we have got from the Liberal Party, because of course the member cries all these crocodile tears about people wanting to provide health services at the same time when the party which he is associating himself with is cutting health care funding across the country, trying to gut the system.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Liberals in Ottawa, we've provided more money each year for mental health counselling, for drug and addiction counselling. That's part of the health reform model which the member and his party have opposed all along. And we can always do more and we'll try to do more, notwithstanding the efforts of the member and his party.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just a little disappointed that the minister would bring into debate issues that are of a federal nature. This is a provincial problem we're talking about, and continuously during the entire session it's always laying the blame some place else. We could do that for ever.

We have the situation that needs to be dealt with here rather than pointing fingers of blame. Accept some responsibility and deal with the issues that are the responsibility of this government in this province. It's like people that you tax to death. They do the best they can with what they have and they have no place else to go and complain and stand up and grandstand and say, oh it's your federal cousins and on and on and on. I'm just disappointed that that's constantly brought into this House.

I believe that that's not becoming of a government of any province, to continue to lay the blame elsewhere when people who are in desperate straits as a result of being suppressed with . . . oppressed with taxes and difficulties in making their daily payments for utilities that are increased in price and on and on. And they have nobody else to cry to and lay the blame on. And the blame has to be accepted by the government opposite.

That doesn't give much encouragement for these people who are asking and pleading for some assistance to help folks that do have some problems and difficulties; but I have no further questions.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I just want to respond to that by saying that in terms of finger pointing and blame, we know where that comes from, Mr. Chair. It usually comes from the other side. But what I'd like the member to acknowledge is that this year this government put into health care \$56.3 million new money plus \$53 million to back-fill federal cuts.

Now the member may say that we're not supposed to talk about that. But when the member says we're not funding health care and we're not doing enough and I get up and say look, the federal government has cut back \$100 million out of health care

spending in Saskatchewan in the last two years, which everybody knows — everybody knows that, Mr. Chair — the member complains that we point it out.

If the member wants to get up and say we're not funding health care, I have to get up and inform the member that the Liberals are cutting back; we're back-filling it. It embarrasses the member. He's associated himself to the Liberal Party; he's embarrassed. I can't help that. But I'm going to keep telling the truth and putting the facts out to the public, Mr. Chair, about the record of the Liberal Party, which is a record that does not speak to the issues that the member continually gets up and says that the Liberals represent.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, I just . . . when I started out, I started out by outlining what the services . . . the addiction counselling for alcohol, drugs, smoking, and gambling — something that his government introduced into this province that involves some of these people that need that kind of help. You don't say anything about all the gambling money and the VLT (video lottery terminal) money that you've put into your general coffers and you don't return back to the communities to help the very people that have now become addicted to some of these problems that you are responsible for.

So you talk about back-filling but you never say anything about all this extra money that you've got from your gambling policies in this province. Give us a break. I mean let's talk about where all this extra money is going. Oh it's going into the General Revenue Fund and to all the communities in Saskatchewan. This is an issue that people who are dealing with some of the problems that you're responsible . . . your government's responsible for having created are begging and pleading for a little bit of help to address those and to help those people. That's the point I was making.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I thank the member for his point of view and for pointing out the money does go into the General Revenue Fund, which then goes into health and education in every community.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have a number of questions to the minister and I'll try to move my questions along. It all depends how long the minister wants to stand and debate. If he comes straightforward and responds, we'll move along. If he wants to debate, we can be here all afternoon.

First of all, in the area of capital projects I would like to know, Mr. Minister, how many capital projects is the Department of Health currently involved in? What's the cost of the projects? Where are the projects being undertaken at this time?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The capital projects recommended for approval in principle are as follows: the Bengough nursing home renovations; Carlyle nursing home addition; Cudworth Health Centre, addition to nursing home; Grenfell Health Centre renovations; Hafford Health Centre and nursing home addition to Care Centre; Hudson Bay Pioneer Lodge replacement with nursing home addition to Hudson Bay Hospital; Meadow Lake, replacement of Meadow Lake hospital; Moose Jaw Pioneer Lodge nursing home renovation to upgrade existing light care beds to heavy care standards; Moose

Jaw, urgent fire safety upgrade at Moose Jaw hospital; Pangman Health Centre renovations and ambulance garage; Shaunavon, nursing home addition to hospital.

Now those are approved in principle so those would be going ahead.

Then there are capital projects recommended for planning, and I think the member will be familiar with that process. And they are: Balcarres, replacement of Parkland Lodge and Balcarres Hospital with a combined long-term care and acute facility; Davidson health centre, addition to the nursing home; Kamsack hospital/nursing home link and nursing home bed addition; La Loche, replacement of St. Martin's Hospital; Leader, acute addition to nursing home; Melville, St. Peter's Hospital replacement with hospital addition to St. Paul's Lutheran Home; Unity, nursing home addition at hospital; Wynyard, replacing existing nursing home with project as part of existing hospital; and Yorkton, long-term care rationalization.

So those are approved for planning. There's some work to do in terms of the scope of the projects and so on in the normal course of invents.

The capital budget summary is . . . the proposed capital budget for this fiscal year is \$42.1 million. This includes 26.8 million for projects approved last year which are still in progress. And also \$12.9 million for projects to be approved in principle and for projects recommended for planning this year, and 2.4 million contingency funding for project developments yet to be determined.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When you mention that figure of 26.1 — and I take it there's construction certainly going on in Regina and Saskatoon; if I'm mistaken, maybe you could clarify that — but what amount of funding is involved in capital projects ongoing in the two major centres of the province?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Actually in the \$26.8 million, I don't think there's any construction going on in Saskatoon. But of that figure there would be 25,065,000 — so you might say 25.1 million — related to the Regina project; 640,000 related to the Athabasca health centre, which is in the far North; and 1.1 million related to the Fort Qu'Appelle health centre.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, could we have a copy of the projects that you mentioned? I can certainly go from that and get some of the other numbers that I had asked for.

I would take it then, Mr. Minister, of these projects that are approved, all of these projects were approved in conjunction with requests made by the district health boards, that there isn't any capital construction that can take place without the district health board suggesting and then coming to the department for final approval for a project, even if that district health board would have all of the necessary funds available at its own disposal before the construction of a project?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well generally speaking, yes, a capital project would proceed with the approval from the Department of Health on the recommendation of the local district health

board, but with the exception of the North, in the sense that there is no district health board and that's a slightly different situation.

I think that if the community had the money, the local district health board or the community could . . . they can build whatever they like. So they can always, if they have their own money, go ahead and build it. Where they would run into difficulties if they didn't have some kind of coordinated plan with the district or the province, would be that the facility would have to be licensed as a hospital, special care home; so some cooperation from the province would be required.

Plus, as the member will know, it isn't simply a matter of the construction of the facility, that is, the capital cost, but it's the operation. And the government and the district health board would have to come to some agreement with respect to operating the facility on a year-to-year basis, so that . . . I mean on one level, yes, people can build whatever they like if they've got the money; but on another level we have to cooperate with each other because of the licensing and the operating cost aspects.

Mr. Toth: — So based on your comments just a moment ago, if the district health board can see their way into providing a service, if it needs some capital construction and they do have the funding available, and if there's an opportunity even in the board to provide that service, what you're saying is they could certainly go ahead, in consultation . . . that you wouldn't interfere, or you wouldn't say no, simply because they may add another service to the district.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well that's correct. But I just want to be clear that we also would say to them, in terms of the year-to-year operation, if you want any additional money from the province to operate it, you have to come to an agreement with us. We have to approve it just because otherwise, you'd have people building things and then saying to the province, well now you have to pay for the annual operating funds. And obviously you can't do that.

But beyond that, if somebody wants to build something, they have the money to build it, and they've got . . . say they have the money to provide the service and operate it without any additional money, I think that they can go ahead and do that at the local level.

(1245)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, an issue that just came up a moment ago, and I called a local resident regarding another concern, and it comes back to the debate we had the other day, and the fact of providing elective services through local districts. And a question I would have relates to offering dialysis services in a local district, in a local hospital.

I understand in one of the communities in my constituency, there are currently I believe, five if not six individuals that must travel to either Yorkton, Regina, or Saskatoon for dialysis depending where they can get the service, where it's available at the time. Which, Mr. Minister, might be fine and dandy to say well they've got access to the service, but if they have to

stay over, it's at their own expense and cost. It's a cost incurred to them.

We do have, in one of the communities, we do have a facility that was . . . some work on it; the community does have a substantial budget to provide the equipment. We do have a number of professionals currently operating or working in the community, including a surgeon, a gynecologist, a couple of individuals who have their anesthesiologists services. And it would seem to me, Mr. Minister, if the district . . . I guess the question I would like ask, if the district feels they can provide that service and in consultation with other districts make that service available to other district or communities or other individuals, rather than . . . and it's closer for them — would the district be able to do that? Would your department, in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, give them a licence to provide that service?

And as I indicated earlier, Mr. Minister, it certainly wouldn't be a capital cost because a number of communities have done a lot of fund-raising and do have funds set aside for, certainly for equipment. Now is it possible for a district to provide that service and to indeed receive a licence to provide the service?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to preface this by saying to the member that as far as I'm concerned, and I want to be very clear about this, people that have to undergo kidney dialysis need all the support that they can get and that we can give them. And if there's any way that we can give them the dialysis service they need in their local community, that's what we want to do. There are 300 people in Saskatchewan that receive kidney dialysis and 100 of them are now on home dialysis. They can have their own machine and they can do the dialysis. And we want to encourage that. And we've been putting more money into that. And anybody that can have home dialysis, we want to get a machine to, so they can do the home dialysis.

The problem is not the machine, as has been represented by some people in this legislature — not the member — there are a hundred of these home dialysis machines and if we need more, we'll get more.

The problem is that the people that can't have home dialysis require the services of nephrologists, which we don't have in very many centres because they're highly specialized, and the renal dialysis nurses.

And so when somebody who isn't a candidate for home dialysis says well, they want to go to, you know, Yorkton, and have their dialysis, well they can have their dialysis in Yorkton if they don't need the nephrologist or the renal dialysis nurse. The problem is if we need the nephrologist and the renal dialysis nurse. And we only have them in Saskatoon, Regina, and perhaps some services in Prince Albert and Lloydminster; they're supervised in those centres.

It's a problem of personnel, not machines. And you can't send a nephrologist out to a community that might have, in a large area, five people that need renal dialysis because it wouldn't make sense.

So I'm sorry to be long-winded about the answer, but I'm trying

to say to the member, we will do anything we can do to assist people that need renal dialysis. The problem, when we say that you have to go to Regina or Saskatoon, Prince Albert or Lloydminster, is not one of money, it's not one of a lack of a machine, it is one of the fact that in a smaller centre, if they need the expert assistance of a nephrologist or renal dialysis nurse, we may not have it there.

Having said that, what we're trying to do, as I've indicated in the House and in the media, is to examine whether there are some other centres in the province in addition to the four centres where we've got the nephrologists and renal dialysis nurses that could have those services on a supervised basis. And we're trying to analyse the numbers and see if we can extend them.

But I have to say to the member that wouldn't necessarily mean that every community where somebody needs dialysis would ever get a dialysis centre right close to their home, because we're talking about numbers like this: in the north-eastern part of the province there's a potential of 10 people that need this kind of service. There would be more people that get home dialysis.

In North Battleford area, 9 people; Lestock, 8 people, Lloydminster, a potential of 11 people. Actually they are being served in Lloydminster, I believe. Yorkton, a potential of 6 people in the area that might not have to travel.

So I think the member — I hope — can understand that it isn't a matter of a lack of will, it isn't a matter of a lack of money, it's a matter of organization and personnel.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, that's basically what I was asking you. If a district . . . And I happened to use dialysis because that was something that was just brought to my attention just a few moments ago, Mr. Minister, and I just brought that . . . used that, but . . . that specific procedure.

But I think there are other procedures that certainly could be developed and could be enhanced and it would certainly take some of the pressure off the large urban centres, especially with the reduction in beds.

And I guess what I'm specifically looking for, Mr. Minister, is the fact that as people throughout the province of Saskatchewan, and district health boards working in conjunction with local communities and the taxpayers of their area, find innovative ways to provide procedures, if they can find qualified personnel who would like to practise in their area, practise in a community, maybe working together with another district and sharing some services, if they can do that and provide the personnel that are needed, the fact that the department would certainly take a serious look and the Saskatchewan Medical Association as well would acknowledge and would indeed grant a licence to provide . . .

And we're not talking of the very extensive procedures. But, Mr. Minister, every time you open up a bed, you allow for somebody with a highly more sensitive procedure to get into that bed quicker. Like one I'll just raise in a minute that just

came to my attention. But that's the question.

What I'm asking, Mr. Minister, if . . . (inaudible) . . . districts even . . . because some of these things, ideas that people have, one district can't do it alone. But have districts working together, and maybe sharing medical profession and staff, would be able to offer that in what they have, facilities already that certainly do have a fair bit of the equipment.

And just the assurances that that's something that certainly would be looked upon positively and that they would be able to offer that service based on the fact that it would work in conjunction with the funds that are already there or the fact that if the service isn't provided here, if they can provide it locally, that means . . . it doesn't necessarily . . . it's taken away from the funds, but it's just that you're finding areas of certainly utilizing the professional staff that are already out there. Is that . . .

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I think what the member says is correct — that we should explore ways to have the districts cooperate and to try to provide services maybe they don't provide now. And if those can be done on a sensible basis in the local area, that's what we should be doing.

And many districts actually are doing that kind of thing now so that they've . . . some of them have hired additional specialists that they didn't have before. I think we heard about the orthopedic surgery in North Battleford that they're going to have.

Some of them have a lot of itinerant surgery. They have the specialists coming out, and the local doctors are participating and cooperating in that. And to the extent we can do that, we definitely should. And I agree with the member in that regard.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, two specific cases that just came to my desk, so I haven't had the time to chat with you about them. But in one case, an individual who has been waiting since last fall for, it appears to be bypass surgery. How should I get back to this person as to the process they should follow? They understand now . . . Actually the wife had called me, quite concerned, because her husband's been told not to do anything. That within a year, unless something is done fairly quickly, there could be major, drastic circumstances. What process should they follow with this concern?

And I'll throw one other one at you that is a different related matter. It has to do with the use of syringes and insulin vials — needles, in regards to insulin, and the safe disposal of. Do we have places where individuals can certainly dispose of vials and insulin needles, rather than just throwing them in the waste-basket to be thrown out in the local dump, Mr. Minister? Is there a format that can be followed for safe disposal of this equipment?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With respect to the first question — the man waiting for bypass surgery — I would want . . . I know that people are actually getting bypass surgery on a very rapid basis, if they're classified as emergency or urgent. There are three categories that the physician and the specialists will categorize people as. They are emergency, urgent, and elective. And I don't know anything about the man's case or how he's been

classified.

But they should do two things. They should talk to the quality-of-care coordinator in the health district, who will look into the concern for them and see why it is that they're still waiting. And they should also talk to their physician about whether the case needs to be reclassified. Because usually we find that when somebody complains that they've been waiting for quite some time and we check into it, normally the physician and the specialists have classified them as an elective case. But if their condition has worsened, perhaps they should be reclassified as an urgent case or an emergency case. And people are sometimes reclassified and they receive their surgery faster. And of course, if it's urgent, they would receive it right away.

So I think they should do two things: talk to the quality-of-care coordinator, and also talk to the physician about how they are classified and on what list they are.

On the disposal issue, I don't believe the government or the health districts have any system for disposal of the things that the member has talked about. The pharmaceutical association has a project whereby at certain times they encourage people to bring items into the drugstore. They have these "clean out your medicine cabinet" days. And then they would, on a voluntary basis, take some of these things and dispose of them. I don't know whether that's an entirely satisfactory answer, but it's the only answer that I have at the moment with respect to safe disposal of some of these items.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I certainly will be getting a note off that will reach you the first of the week, just be a little more specific so you can respond to it. I just wanted to bring it to your attention this morning.

And on the question regarding the disposal of syringes and needles — the concern came from an individual who had moved from Alberta and apparently they did have a program in Alberta where you could take it to the hospital, take this equipment back to the hospital and they would safely dispose of it. And I guess I would ask if your department is looking at, down the road . . . or looking at some ways of making sure that there's safe disposal of this type of equipment.

The second thing, Mr. Minister, what is your department doing regarding syringes and test strips for individuals who must take insulin? Is there any coverage for that yet or is that totally the cost of the person who needs the service?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I think we should explore the member's suggestion of other ways to dispose of some of these items; so we'll follow up on that.

With respect to the test strips and syringes, the test strips are treated as any other drug. There may or may not be coverage under the drug plan, depending upon a person's income and the cost of their drugs. The syringes are not covered at all. That would be the expense of individuals, other than individuals on social assistance or who may get supplementary health coverage because they're very low income people.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. On another related matter, I just had a concern raised by an individual locally in my constituency as well. And this is actually a federally related concern but I'd like to get a response from you.

A number of people in our area have certainly, over the past number of years, looked more and more at natural herbs and medicines and found that in many cases, as they've used some of these medicines, they have found certainly a direct help in their lifestyle and in their lives in correcting some of the problems that they may be facing.

And specifically one individual that I talked to just recently has gone on some natural herbs and medicines and this individual happens to be a person suffering from multiple sclerosis. And he's informed me that, versus the drugs that he was prescribed with, he's found that his response and his ability for a more wholesome life has certainly been improved by it.

My understanding is that the federal government is proposing . . . or looking at proposals of taking these natural herbs and spices and moving them into the area of being administered just like any other drug. And I think that's the major concern. I believe that that's the question that's coming.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what the Department of Health has been doing; if this is something that you've had knowledge of, whether you're raising some concerns about it, and whether or not we should continue to allow these medications or these herbs to be available in their current format.

In many cases people are actually paying a lot, a fair bit, for some of the drugs and the natural herbs that they are taking, and it's coming out of their own pocket. But I'd be very concerned if all of a sudden we moved this and put it under the drug protection . . . or a drug law that basically says you must get a physician's prescription, because there are many physicians who do not agree with using natural herbs and medicines.

There are other physicians who are beginning to look at the broad spectrum and realizing that there may be a base . . . and in fact are starting to use it in their practice. And I think that's a concern that people have.

So I'm just asking what, if anything, your department has done, or some of the considerations that may be given in view of some of the changes that the federal government might be looking at.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We really haven't been taking any steps just because, as the member indicates, it's a matter of federal jurisdiction.

I think that it would be important to have some regulation with respect to anything that is harmful to people. There is an issue of public safety involved. But beyond that, beyond situations where the public safety would be jeopardized, I think we tend to think that there should be a lot of room for freedom of choice by the consumer.

So we want the federal government to pursue the matter with

respect to any legitimate issues of public safety. And if they have to regulate some naturally occurring substance in the interests of public safety, then we have to respect that.

But in terms of generally do we see a need to require prescription of naturally occurring substances, I think the answer would be that we would want to preserve a lot of freedom of choice on the part of the consumer beyond that category of things where a public safety issue concern may be identified.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I trust and I hope that certainly your department will keep tabs on this and follow it through.

And if it does become a major debate, if the federal government department of Health certainly decides it's going to really get involved and curb the use of this, that your department would make a presentation. So at least ask for the government to be very open in its consultation process and not just jump on the bandwagon, because say some drug companies would like to see this because maybe their drug sales are being affected by it. I think you would certainly acknowledge that there could be pressure coming from the drug companies to indeed put these types of drugs under a prescription mode.

So I'm asking you on behalf of these individuals to at least keep that in mind. And if the question is raised, to make sure that you stand and call for a real, open dialogue and consultation in regards to the concerns raised . . . that may be raised and no doubt will be raised. But if there's a broad, open process, I think we'll be able to determine what is justified and what isn't.

Another question I'd like to move to and that's, in regards to the Dorsey report, a number of former SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) on permanent disability have been told they will be cut off because the Dorsey report forces SGEU members to join CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees).

And, Mr. Minister, we raised this awhile back. We had asked you what will happen, transpire, with regards to individuals who are members of SGEU who are under permanent disability. As a result of the Dorsey report, their status as a union member changes.

But does that mean that their ability to receive compensation for an injury that had occurred awhile back, and they're, in some cases, taking rehabilitation . . . We brought the case of an individual from the Wascana Rehab Centre. I'd like to know what has happened to date, what your department is doing to address this problem that may arise and where a few people may fall between the cracks as a result of the report.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I am familiar with the issue the member is raising, and it has been raised before. There is no requirement *per se* as a result of the Dorsey report that SGEU, you know, cut the people off who are on disability. SGEU certainly has the ability to continue the coverage, and indeed that's what they're still doing.

But we recognize that we have to find a long-term solution whereby we determine who the payor should be, if it's SGEU or otherwise. And we're just presently involved in a process whereby we're trying to . . . well we're having discussions between SGEU and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) and the Department of Health, and I believe the Department of Labour have some involvement in that. We're trying to it bring to a resolution. There's been no resolution made as of yet.

But everybody has the same point of view, which is at the end of the day we have to ensure that the people that are entitled to coverage get coverage, and they're getting it now and we're going to work to make sure that they continue to get the coverage that they need to have.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. On that note, your last comment, that you're going to work towards it, I think it's imperative that initiatives be taken and that people don't lose it simply because there was a change in policy as a result of a report.

I think we certainly acknowledge that by working to cut down the number of bargaining units in the health districts certainly simplifies the process, and we agreed with you on that. It's just that it's imperative that we certainly protect people who as a result of changes may be left out in the dark, and we work towards certainly working through those situations.

Another concern we raised was the Sharon Schriener case — the woman in need of jaw implants. And you stated at the time that you would review that matter. Mr. Minister, where are we today in regards to Ms. Schriener?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It is still under review. I think, as I told the member from Rosthern, it was actually some weeks before we received any kind of medical information in that particular case. And that has been received. It is currently being reviewed by the Department of Health, but I was advised the other day that there was some other information that the Department of Health is currently asking for that it hasn't received yet. I'm not saying asking that particular individual, but asking other sources. And they're in the process of gathering information, looking at the policy, and then they will proceed accordingly.

But it hasn't been a case of simply delaying the matter. It's been a case of some time taking place to get the information to the department. And I was advised just two or three days ago when I made an inquiry, as I said to the member from Rosthern that I would, that the reason they hadn't made any recommendation to me was that they were asking some other parties for some other information, which presumably they're still waiting for.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. We look forward to further dialogue and certainly consultation and communication of any . . . how this has moved along and where we're at. And I'm sure the member from Rosthern would appreciate that as well.

Mr. Minister, we've raised on a number of occasions how district health boards report. And I notice the Provincial Auditor certainly raised some questions as well. One of the questions

we have . . . and I'll throw this out and I just want to know exactly where the department is coming from.

But as you know, you and I, as members, have full disclosure of everything that we're paid — from our travel and all the areas of remuneration that we're responsible for. Government departments have to list out who all is in the department and what they're paid as a salary, their cost and remuneration.

Unfortunately, in the district health boards we're getting broad . . . we're just getting a broad report of . . . the administration costs so much or the board costs were at such a level.

Mr. Minister, what is being done to make sure district health boards follow the same example that all other levels of department, including your department, in regards to each individual in an administrative level, their salary and the perks that they would receive such as travel and what have you, and certainly all board members, their individual per diems and travels and travel costs and all costs that would be associated? Is your department following up on this, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes we are. I want to say in a general way that our view is that matters which involve public finances should be reported as openly as is proper and possible.

And of course secondly, we want to comply with the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor, and the Provincial Auditor has said that the health districts are actually making quite a bit of progress in that regard.

In terms of the reports and specifically answering the question about what are we doing, we're trying to get a common format together that all district health boards will comply with in which they will list their suppliers and payees. And I'm working with the Health Districts Advisory Committee to come up with a format that some are already using, generally speaking, and others could use; so that all the information that should properly be made public is in fact published by the boards.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I recognize the Minister of Economic Development wants to get on the floor as well. There's a number of questions here, so I'll try to move through some of them quickly and allow you to respond either . . . in writing.

Mr. Minister, how many Saskatchewan seniors are on waiting-lists for nursing home spaces and how many are on waiting-lists for home care? How many long-term beds have been cut from government-run nursing homes since 1991?

And there's another question here in regards to gynecology services at the Regina General. Is the Regina General Hospital the only hospital in the city of Regina currently delivering babies, and are there enough delivery rooms available? We've had some individuals who have called concerned about the fact that in some cases they've ended up having to wait in hallways because of the fact that maybe at different times there's just been a lack of rooms available. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I think, Mr. Speaker, the answer in terms of the number of nursing home beds would be roughly this — not

necessarily exactly because these figures are the number of long-term care clients in '91-92 versus '95-96 — in '91-92 there were 10,162 long-term care clients; in 1995-96 there were 9,605. So that would be a difference of roughly 557. So we might assume that the number of beds has gone down by about 5 per cent.

And I won't go into a long-winded answer about other services, like home care, respite care, adult day care, and so on. I think the member knows the arguments.

(1315)

And we don't have figures about the number of people on waiting-lists. Those would be kept at the district level. But I can tell the member that as a result of some of the other things that are being done, the waiting-lists have generally got shorter.

And I can refer to Saskatoon, for example, where before they started actually reducing the number of beds and increasing home care, they had a list of about 400 people. And I believe that list is down to less than a hundred now, even though they have fewer beds, because they have more home care, respite care, adult day care. And the waiting time has gone down from several months to usually less than two months to get into a long-term care facility. So there's some improvement there.

In terms of the issue of gynecological surgery that the member also raises, I share the member's concern. I think there have been some problems with respect to waiting times in gynecological surgery. And the Regina Health District, the Saskatoon Health District, and the Department of Health are all working together to try to improve that. And they've taken some steps that should shorten the waiting times for gynecological surgery. But this is in fact a legitimate concern that the member has. I share it, and we've been trying to work with the districts to address the problem for, actually several months, I think.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One question that may have just alluded you as you were talking to your officials is the concern about the lack of maybe enough maternity beds at the General Hospital, as I believe the service has been certainly amalgamated into the one facility, and the fact that at times where patients have actually been on . . . just waiting in the hallways for delivery. And it's a concern that's been raised, and what's being done to address that question?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised by the officials that there was one-time period where there was no space available in the neonatal unit, but that that is no longer the case. And that in the obstetrical unit, this generally has not been a problem.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, without getting into a lot of details . . . and certainly an issue that I can raise with you — I've raised it with the Minister of Social Services — as a result of the development that took place in regards to a recent delivery in the General. And one of the big concerns that came, as far as the medical part of it, was there seemed to be a very real lack of communication between the staff at the General and the couple that had had this new arrival come into their lives.

And rather than getting into details, I'll certainly write you about it and get you to certainly look into it as well, and just check into what may have happened and why this couple may have felt, or are feeling that they really didn't have enough communication. There are certainly some tragic — I shouldn't say real tragic, but some real concerns that arose as a result of it.

Mr. Minister, we've had a number of private care homes and services through private care homes provided in the province of Saskatchewan. We brought in regulations to certainly set some guidelines, and to make sure that private care homes meet a certain standard. What is the department doing to follow up and make sure that indeed private care homes are providing the services that they have indicated that they would provide, in the fact that we are indeed . . . individuals are receiving the same type or close to the same quality of service that they would receive in a publicly funded care home?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The personal care homes are inspected each year and licensed each year. And I'm advised that our statutory and regulatory requirements are probably higher than the rest of the country. I think, as the member indicated, these homes were not licensed and regulated prior to the last small number of years.

And so we're taking some steps to make sure that they adhere to certain standards. And the standards have certainly improved quite considerably in the last short while. I know that on a few occasions unfortunately we have denied licences to personal care homes, and those have come to my attention. So I'm aware of the fact that where there have been deficiencies in care, that we've been prepared to take steps to . . . and actually shut a few of the personal care homes down.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, a while back you talked about certainly bringing in regulations that would allow midwifery into the province of Saskatchewan. I think there's been a push for quite awhile to allow that, midwifery to be available, and based on some of the changes that have taken place, where are we today with regards to midwifery in the province? Is it a procedure or a service that is available? Is this service . . . and what's the cost in relation to a normal process of delivery in a hospital with the services of an obstetrician?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — At the present time the status of midwifery in Saskatchewan is that it is not a licensed and regulated practice. And before we can have licensed and regulated midwifery, we would have to pass a law in this legislature making midwifery legal and providing for the licensing of midwives and regulation.

And so there is a transitional committee that is going to advise the government in terms of what the legislation should say, and I hope to bring the legislation before the House next year, or later this year if there is another legislative session. But realistically, it might take until next spring to develop the legislation, these things going as they do.

And then once we pass the legislation, we would have to wait awhile to proclaim it so that we could have the proper regulations in place, which of course we should start working

on now simultaneously with the legislation. And after that midwifery would become licensed and regulated in the province.

So you're likely looking at one or two years to complete that process. Obviously next spring being the first realistic time where you might get that kind of Bill through the House.

In terms of the system beyond that, we heard from a lot of people over the last few years. One of the things we heard was that most women were satisfied with the maternity services they were receiving, although they also felt people should have the option of having a licensed and regulated midwife if they wanted to.

In terms of the cost, that's a difficult question for me to answer. Because if you talked to the advocates for midwifery, they say the costs are a certain amount; if you talk to the obstetricians and the physicians, they say it's a different amount. And they seem to have different points of view about which one is more cost effective. And I can't give you a specific answer about the costs.

But I will say that we do want women to have the option of having midwives. They would now pay for that themselves. However, we will allow the health districts to employ midwives and provide that service if they feel that there's a need for that to be done.

Mr. Toth: — Well just one comment in response. I think a lot of people had anticipated that with the announcement you had made a while back that there was certainly aggressive movement in this area. And from what I understand, we really . . . while it was announced we'd be looking at it, we really haven't moved that far in regards to that service at the current time.

I have a question here; actually two questions that basically are funding questions. And if you want, Mr. Minister, you can certainly take the time to send me a response in writing.

What has been the total cost of renovations needed to be undertaken to the General and Pasqua hospitals in view of the imminent closure that it seems that your government is quite intent on doing with regards to the Plains health care centre?

And, Mr. Minister, we've also sent across a list of global questions. I'm wondering, are those global questions available? Do they include ministerial travel; who are your ministerial assistants and salaries over the past number of years? Where are the global questions today?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In answer to the question about the amount of money spent so far on the General and the Pasqua, I don't have those numbers in front of me, but I certainly will provide them to the member.

The global questions, our understanding is that the answers will be provided . . . we were under the impression they would be provided today. But they are being provided through out House business office, I believe. And certainly they're prepared and ready, and if not today then we would think early next week.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. As you can appreciate, the global questions are a series of questions that, based on what's taken place in the past, it can certainly be time consuming and we just want your assurances that we will have those questions.

Most times we'd certainly prefer that we had them prior to any wind-up of the session, and so I thank you for your assurances.

One more question I would like to ask, Mr. Minister. And this is a result of Carol Crame, a Saskatoon resident who has cerebral palsy, is a client of Saskatchewan Social Services, who lost her husband last year. And I believe she was looking for some help in contracting attendant care service so she can remain living in her own home.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if this is an area that your department has looked into, whether home care is able to provide a service to meet the need of this specific individual. And I won't get into a lot of details or questions about it, but maybe if you can give me your assurances that we've looked into it or that the department is indeed looking into it and where we are today with this specific concern.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We're in the process right now of examining the question of self-managed care. And there's a working group that involves some people from the department and from other agencies that are looking at the concept and I would hope that we would have something specific to say about it in the not-too-distant future.

In the meantime we would want to also work with the individual in terms of their home care needs and try to provide them with the level of support that they need, and I assume that some of that is going on.

These are issues that in the last number of years have almost exploded in terms of the things that we do in society that we didn't used to do, and in some ways I think we're still learning. Of course we should always be learning in these areas. And I think there is some improvement to be made, which is why we're currently examining the question of self-managed care.

Mr. Toth: — Well I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I think your comments are certainly true. And the unfortunate part in society with the changes, there are cases, and this happens to be one, where it's not totally Social Services nor is it Health; it's an in-between. And I think we need . . . departments certainly need to work together to address the issues in relation to a person's well-being and quality care.

I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I thank your officials for their attendance. I thank you for the responses and for any responses that we've asked that you've offered to give. We look forward to receiving those in the near future.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to the minister and his officials.

Mr. Minister, I have a few questions surrounding the Central Plains Health District and I would appreciate some answers for

you.

I had mentioned in this House before to you and through correspondence, that there were some pretty grave concerns expressed through the audit of the Central Plains District and also the Provincial Auditor regarding the internal control process of Central Plains Health District, and I guess I would refer to that as the management.

And I've asked you to respond, to personally investigate these problems. And I'd like to know if you've done this.

(1330)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The auditor's reports for the 1995-96 fiscal year do indicate that the Central Plains Health District does have reliable financial statements.

There's always room for improvement and that's one of the reasons why of course audits take place. The audit is a useful tool to point out any deficiencies, but it's sort of like the question of the glass being half empty or half full.

In the case of Central Plains, like the other health districts, the glass is mainly full in the sense that the auditor finds that they have reliable financial statements. But they have some deficiencies and it's good to point those out in the sense that that enables us to then make improvements.

And of course the auditor has said that over the last number of years the districts have been working to improve their financial situation, their financial accountability, and that's good. And certainly the issues that the member raises and the auditor raises, we have to take those issues very seriously. And I'm committed to, as I've indicated to the member, to ensuring that the district health board is aware of the issues and responds to them and makes a commitment to deal with any deficiencies that there are.

And I think we have to move forward in a very positive and proactive way to deal with any deficiencies identified in an audit. That's what an audit is for. And I certainly welcome all of the member's suggestions that she's made and I assure her that it will be my expectation that any deficiencies will continue to be corrected as time goes on.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I have some documentation here from the Provincial Auditor that tells me that there are some serious concerns regarding the amounts of money spent and how things are done. So my concern is with the management.

For instance, the Provincial Auditor mentions that the board did not approve board members' expenses amounting to \$10,029. The board did not approve executive directors' expenses amounting to \$5,106. The staff did not use receiving reports and purchase orders. The boards did not approve a severance payment amounting to \$42,757. Supervisors did not always approve employee time sheets. And the Provincial Auditor did recommend that the board should establish written rules and procedures to safeguard and control its assets and to ensure compliance with the law. My concern, Mr. Minister, is not that

there has not been proper policy guidelines given to the district, but that the district is not following policy guidelines laid out by Saskatchewan Health.

I could go on. The Provincial Auditor also speaks of written operating agreements, and he states that the board's written operating agreements with the affiliates that provide services for the board should be done, and there has been no written agreement at the time of this audit between the district health board and the affiliates.

I find that really something that needs to be looked at immediately by the minister who is responsible. The recommendations stated the boards should have written operating agreements with affiliated organizations that provide services for the board.

And then in complying with authorities, the Provincial Auditor states that the board paid directors \$69,372 during the year for pay and expenses without adequate authority. The Department of Health obtained an order in council appointing the directors, but the order did not specify the pay and expenses for the directors. In our opinion, an order in council must specify the pay and expenses.

That brings me also, Mr. Minister, to one other point that the audit had to do with and that's the accountability, not only by the management of Central Plains Health District, but by the cabinet of which you are a part. And this is surrounding the issue of remuneration and reimbursement rates paid to board members. It states that . . . it does state in government health policy that remuneration to district employees is to be approved by an order in council. And it also states that this was not done.

Now I'd like to know why not. It seems to me that you should have recognized that Central Plains Health District's statement of remuneration was absent from cabinet scrutiny. It must have been missing when you were reviewing this, and I presume that cabinet should be scrutinizing this carefully. If not, I would have to ask why they're not doing that and why they're not paying close enough attention to what comes across the cabinet table.

Can you please reply to those comments?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I think that the value of the audit, as I've said before, is to point out those things which are not being done correctly. That is what the auditor has done.

And of course what the district is doing and what we're doing is to take steps to rectify those things that aren't being done correctly; so that where the auditor said that approvals should be done in a certain way, the district is taking steps to do the things in the way that the auditor recommends. And where the auditor said that an order in council is necessary from the cabinet, such an order in council already was passed.

And of course in the future we want to try to make sure that there isn't any other situation where an expenditure isn't properly authorized.

So that the member's concerns are very valid. The concerns of

the Provincial Auditor are very valid. And it's my responsibility and that of the district health board to correct any deficiencies that are identified. And I thank the member for raising the matter, and I assure the member that what we want to do is to rectify these concerns. And that's what we're doing.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I just have another couple of questions surrounding St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt.

It was noted that the hospital was facing a shortfall of \$400,000 and it would have to be cutting about \$400,000 from its 1997-98 fiscal year. In view of the fact that there has been no accounting I guess, by the provincial government or the district, or whoever is responsible for inflation, etc., their budget has remained the same for the last two years. And that has put them in a very awkward position as far as being able to maintain funding for full servicing.

Now, Mr. Minister, you were talking at one point with the mayor of Humboldt, and you did make the comment that, as far as you could see, that that hospital should have full services considering the population around the area, and the services provided were necessary. So with your new budget that you've put forward this year, there is some money coming in; although it's not as much as last year.

And St. Elizabeth's still faces \$168,000 in shortfall even with this additional money. This \$168,000, where will it come from? If you in fact believe that that hospital is providing the services necessary for the area, will the provincial government back your feeling on this and help out that hospital with the \$168,000 that they will need to provide full services as are now in operation?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the funding from the hospital . . . or for the hospital will come from the district, and the district will receive its funding from the provincial government

I understand that there're discussions ongoing between the board and the hospital as to the level of funding. And as Minister of Health, I don't take the side of one or the other in terms of how much money one should have, and the other should give. This is a usual case of an institution wanting more money, and the board wanting to give less money. And neither is right, and neither is wrong. It's just a case of coming to a satisfactory agreement, which they're working on.

I think we . . . this isn't directed at the member, but generally I think it's always important to be accurate and careful about our language. And there have been some people in the community that have suggested, as a result of a funding dispute between the hospital and the board, that the future of the hospital is at risk or there won't be a hospital.

Well St. Elizabeth's Hospital is in fact, as the member knows, the largest facility in the health district. It will continue to provide a very important service to the people of Humboldt and area. I have every confidence about that. And I also have every confidence that the health board and the hospital are both comprised of people who are good people who want to serve the public and proceed in good faith.

And I've met with both representatives of the hospital and the

board, and I have every confidence that in a very positive and public-spirited way, they will achieve the resolution they need with respect to the amount of money that the hospital needs.

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member for Regina Sherwood on his feet?

Mr. Kasperski: — To request leave, Mr. Chairman, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure on behalf of my colleague, the hon. member for Regina Northeast this afternoon, to introduce to you and to my colleagues here in the legislature, 12 students of the adult basic education program here at SIAST in Regina. They're here for a tour which they are about to go on. I met with them for half an hour ago to handle a few questions and we had a very, very good discussion.

And I would just like all of my colleagues here this afternoon to recognize these students and the course they are representing.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Item 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have some questions surrounding the Central Plains Health District home care budget. Now in the House last week I believe, I brought up to you the concern I had regarding the cuts to home care service hours. At that time I mentioned to you that there is a problem with giving service to severely disabled people because of cut-backs. And other people are suffering from these cut-backs also.

It is my understanding that Saskatchewan Health and your government's policy is to improve home care. You and I had some discussion about this problem behind the bar here one day, and I noticed that you said more money was being given for home care. And in fact when we look at the budget for Central Plains, there is in fact \$61,000 more going into community-based, I believe it's stated, and home care.

So if there is that much more money going in, I have to ask you to sort of help to explain to the people in that district why there would be 6,000 service hours being cut. It doesn't seem to make sense to me. Somewhere there was something amiss, and this money is obviously not being utilized properly or something.

So if you could comment on this. Because I know when I spoke with you, you felt that this was not right in some way or other, that there should be the service hours provided, because there

was more money going in. And I agree with you. Could you please comment on what you think might be the problem? And I'd like to know if you have contacted Central Plains home care coordinator to get an explanation for this.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With respect to the individual's problem that the member raised in the legislature, I believe the district held a conference with the family and some other service providers to assist and support the family about the need for respite services. The member sent me a letter, which I don't have in front of me, but it dealt with numbers that were somewhat dated, in the sense that it dealt with last year's budget but not this year's budget.

And my understanding is that the district is in the process of finalizing their budget for this year — that is the '97-98 year. And the district is planning for an increase in services and budget. So that as a result of the budget of March 20, the district will be putting more money into home care, in terms of both the amount of dollars and the amount of services. I think the member will recall that she sent me a letter which dealt with, I think, what had happened in the '95-96 fiscal year — or was it '96-97?

But in any event, with respect to the current fiscal year, the district is planning for an increase in services and budget. But the district hasn't announced its budget yet. So this is no criticism of the member, because she can't know what the numbers are if she doesn't have them. They're still in the process of finalizing. But I can say that any new money going in through the most recent provincial budget will indeed, I'm told, result in an increase at the district level.

(1345)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like to just move to a different line of questioning here. If I could ask the minister and his officials, possibly within the next day or two, to give me a listing of all of the hospitals, stated as hospitals, in the province, and also all the health care facilities in the province.

Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you some questions surrounding St. Joseph's Hospital in Macklin. Is that hospital designated as a hospital right now? Or is it designated as a health care centre? Or what is it designated as?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'd be happy to provide the member with the list that she has asked for within the next few days or early next week.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, we have a problem with St. Joseph's Hospital in Macklin. On May 12, St. Joseph's Hospital administrator received a letter dated May 5, 1997 from Revenue Canada stating that they in fact were . . . Here's the letter. It says:

This refers to a letter that we received from Mr. Kevin Veitenheimer, financial consultant, Saskatchewan Health, on October 8, 1996, in which he requested that the Greenhead District Health Board be designated as a hospital authority pursuant to subsection 123 of the Excise

Tax Act for the purpose of the goods and services tax.

Now we have been advised by Saskatchewan Health that the St. Joseph's Hospital in Macklin, which is affiliated with the Greenhead District Health Board, is no longer recognized as a hospital effective October 1, 1993. Therefore the hospital status previously granted by the Department of National Health and Welfare to St. Joseph's Hospital in Macklin is hereby revoked effective October 1, 1993.

Mr. Minister, first of all I understand that Macklin, the St. Joseph's Hospital in Macklin, complied with The Hospital Standards Act.

They have put a great deal of money into building their new facility, I believe \$4 million, most of which was raised by the local people; 80 per cent was. The other 20 per cent came from infrastructure money. Due to this letter retroactive to October 1, 1993, they will have to pay around \$150,000 back in taxes.

Now I need some explanation of this because these people are asking about it. Could you please comment.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I think that we're in discussion with Revenue Canada. We don't agree with the approach Revenue Canada is taking in that whether somebody donates to a hospital or a health centre, shouldn't make any difference in terms of their ability to get a tax deduction. And we're also concerned about the way that this is being approached.

And we're having discussions with Revenue Canada to try to convince them that if people give money towards a health project generally, they should be able to get a deduction. And we think that the Revenue Canada rules haven't really kept up to date in terms of what people are doing, not just in Saskatchewan, but across the country. And so it's very much a concern to us as well.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess my question to you surrounds the provincial government's stand on this.

It was Saskatchewan Health that forwarded this letter to Revenue Canada stating that this was no longer a hospital or recognized as a hospital. And so that brought to the attention of Revenue Canada, steps that they had to take in accordance with what they do regarding GST (goods and services tax) rebates, etc.

Now St. Joseph's Hospital in Macklin exists by statute corporately as a hospital under its own corporation. And so I'm wondering, if they have complied with The Hospital Standards Act, if they exist as a hospital by statute, why would this letter go from Saskatchewan Health to the federal Revenue Canada?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — From the point of view of provincial law, the health centre can be considered a hospital, as far as we're concerned, for the purpose of taxation.

What occurred was, we think that the federal government required the province to advise them what were health centres and what were hospitals for the purpose of GST treatment.

Because if it was a hospital, they got a higher rebate than a health centre. That's why the information was given. The government was required to provide that information with respect to the GST.

And then, if the information was then interpreted for another purpose by Revenue Canada, that's what they did. But they did not do so at our suggestion or with our support. And as far as we're concerned, for taxation purposes, the health centre can be considered a hospital.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I just want to make note of the fact that St. Joseph's Hospital indeed does comply with every statute. They provide emergency services, short-term admissions, some acute care services, convalescent care, palliative care, observation beds.

Now if in fact this is happening to St. Elizabeth's in Macklin, it seems to me that the same problem is going to happen to all facilities that offer those same services in Saskatchewan.

And I think many of those facilities would like to know whether they're going to be subject to a cut in the rebate from GST — I think it was from about 83 per cent, now down to 50 per cent. This is going to put them all in very stressed financial straits. And so, can you please comment on that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I would comment by saying that this is of concern to us as well, and we would like to see consistent treatment by Revenue Canada of both the hospitals and the health centres. This isn't something that we're encouraging. We're providing information when we're required to. But as far as we're concerned, there should be consistent treatment as between the hospitals and the health centres.

Ms. Julé: — Just one more question, Mr. Minister. But isn't it the provincial government here who determines whether, by statute in one way or the other, whether or not a facility is classified as a health centre or a hospital? And if it is, it would be up to you then to inform Revenue Canada that this indeed is a hospital.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Health centres are still designated as hospitals under The Hospital Standards Act. That's the provincial law. Revenue Canada makes their own rules with respect to what they consider to be a hospital. We have not asked them to change their rules or suggest that they change the rules. They apparently are doing that.

Our policy is that we think they should treat the health facilities consistently. We have not made any change that has required Revenue Canada to do what they're doing. We'll continue to discuss with them our views, which I think are the same as the member's views — that we think there should be consistent treatment as between the health centres and the hospitals. The health centres are still designated as hospitals under The Hospital Standards Act. I can't put it any differently than that. We are in agreement with what the member is saying and in disagreement with what Revenue Canada is doing.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I just look at this as something that the Saskatchewan Health has

designated itself, because it is clear that Revenue Canada states:

We have been advised by Saskatchewan Health that St. Joseph's Hospital, Macklin, which is affiliated with the Greenhead District Health Board, is no longer recognized as a hospital, effective October 1, 1993.

Now why would . . . advised by Saskatchewan Health means that Saskatchewan Health told them that this is no longer a hospital. So it is in fact the province that is determining whether this is a hospital or a health centre.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That is the interpretation of Revenue Canada in what they say. I'm advised that what the department advises them in response to their request for information is that whether or not a health centre provides certain types of services, including in-patient acute care services, which as we know, they don't.

The Department of Health advised Revenue Canada in which facilities there were in-patient acute care services and in which there weren't. The Department of Health did not say these are no longer hospitals under The Hospital Standards Act because in fact, by provincial law, they still are recognized as hospitals.

The rules with respect to the taxation are made by the federal government. We do not agree with those rules. We did not suggest to the federal government that they not recognize the hospital in Macklin as a hospital. We answered their questions with respect to what services are provided, and then the federal government makes a decision as to whether they wish to recognize that as a hospital or not.

We don't agree with what they've done. We are in agreement with the member that this isn't the way they should approach it. We'll continue to express that point of view to the federal government — that there should be consistent treatment for tax matters whether it's a health centre or a hospital.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess . . . you know, I'm hoping that you will speak with the people at Macklin in that hospital — the administrators, etc. there — to encourage and to assure them, I guess I'd say, that you're going to do everything you can to back them and to hopefully have them retain their hospital status. Because without it, as we well know, that hospital may have to be given over to the provincial government and we will no longer have that hospital as is. And I think that's a pretty serious concern for many of the affiliates around the province right now.

I thank you, Mr. Minister. That's all, and I thank you and your officials for answering these questions.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you. Well we will continue to make representations to the federal government as the member suggests. And in fact we're doing that through the Department of Finance, I'm advised, and every province has the same point of view.

I want to thank the member and the opposition for their cooperation and also the officials for their assistance to the House today.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 32 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Health
Vote 32**

Items 1 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 32 agreed to.

(1400)

**General Revenue Fund
Economic and Co-operative Development
Vote 45**

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, if I could I'd like to invite three of my staff who are with me here sitting nearby, some are in the back. I will introduce only those who are sitting in the front, and as others join us if needed, I'll introduce those.

Clare Kirkland of course, is deputy minister. The committee will be aware of Clare's involvement as deputy. David McQuinn, acting executive director of policy, is sitting directly behind me now. And Donna Johnson, director, administrative services, is sitting behind me to my right.

And I invite questions from members of the opposition.

Item 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you and welcome to your officials. I'm delighted to see you here on this gorgeous afternoon. I imagine you prefer being in here than outside.

Maybe you could give me an idea, Mr. Minister . . . I was delighted to see that the cooperatives were given more money, but I guess my question to you is, the \$285,000 that was added to the budget this year, is it going to be aimed towards your traditional type of co-op or is it the new-age type of co-op like the Wheat Pool?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well the member raises a good point and that is that there is more money in our budget for cooperatives and cooperative development. I think almost more important to the cooperatives is the fact of the name change of the department from the Department of Economic Development to the Department of Economic and Co-operative Development.

This means that the role of co-ops in our province is going to be elevated within our government by changing the name and putting much higher emphasis on the role that the co-ops play in our economy. And the member will know that that is very,

very extensive.

But the extra money will be spent mostly on new-gen co-ops, new concept co-ops, some of course for traditional co-ops that are already existing. But we are working very hard and diligently, especially in rural Saskatchewan but not limited to rural, on the establishment of new co-ops, whether it be for the new hog barns that are springing up around the province, or other endeavours.

We think that there are more opportunities to work with co-ops in the creation of new co-ops.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, does that mean that there's going to be a change in some of the rules under the Securities Commission, making it easier to form a co-op, less cumbersome, less bureaucratic red tape?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well we have haven't heard a lot of complaints from people establishing co-ops about the regulatory structure, but of course the way the structure works, the Department of Justice is responsible for the co-op Act and those elements that apply to the regulations. And they are constantly under review, especially now with the Lynn Minja committee that is looking at regulations in general with our commitment in *Partnership for Growth* to remove 25 per cent of the regulations in the province over the next now nine years — because we've been working on this project for about a year.

So that will be reviewed and we'll see whether or not changes need to be made. But we have not seen or heard a lot of concerns being expressed about regulatory structure, within the department, of co-ops.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I'm sure your department must have heard some of the concerns about the bureaucratic run-around you get when it comes to starting a business, period. I'm just wondering if your committee that's working on the review of regulations, what number are you starting at when it comes to regulations? And have you actually started cutting back anything on the regulations?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member will know that the commitment was made in 1996 with the release of *Partnership for Growth*. So that's a starting point for the 25 per cent reduction. I can get for you some of the regulatory changes that have been made that have shown reductions already to this point. I don't have them here with me, but we're absolutely committed that that huge pile of regulations that we have in our province, that is probably no more and no less than there is in terms of Alberta or Manitoba, but we're going to be streamlining our government to remove those regulations that impede economic development and job growth to make it easier for businesses and easier for companies to invest and to create employment in our province.

Ms. Draude: — There are a number of different government departments and books out about starting businesses in Saskatchewan, and the calls I'm getting in my office are from people who are saying that they still find it very cumbersome and that they really don't have a . . . even the list of things that they do and do not have to do. I'm wondering if your

department is working on those items right now to make it easy for the smaller businesses, not somebody who can afford to have three corporate lawyers already on staff, to actually start a business.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I think it's fair to say that there's a new spirit of cooperation between the local communities and the provincial Department of Economic Development as well as the federal government's agencies as it would relate to economic development.

In Saskatoon, for example, we've collocated with your friends in the federal government where we run Economic Development out of one centre, for example, which helps have a one-stop shopping for federal and provincial programs, which is appreciated very much and is fed into very carefully by the Saskatoon Economic Development Authority.

So we're finding that one of the things driving small business and small business development is in fact the work, excellent work, being done by economic development authorities. And I think in that sense Saskatchewan's growth in jobs that we saw last month, where April over April we had an increase of 11,000 jobs, which is a record number for as far back as we can see between those two months, is largely due . . . at least in large part, due to the fact that the economic development authorities are really starting to kick in.

And if you look at new businesses incorporated in the province of Saskatchewan in 1995 and 1996, you'll find some interesting numbers. And I just want to go back over the short period since 1990; let's say 1990.

In 1990 there were 2,200 — and I'm rounding these off — 2,200 new businesses incorporated; 1991, 2,100; 1992, 2,000; 1993, 2,400; 1994, 2,700; 1995, 3,100; and 1996, 3,600, which is the highest number of new incorporations that we have in our records.

But it shows you the growth. And when you track the employment, interestingly enough the employment growth, the population growth, and the in-migration is directly affected and directly follows those same graphs that would show incorporations have a lot to do with new jobs being created.

So I think Saskatchewan is really making its mark on new business incorporations, new jobs being created, and turning around the outflow, which went as high as 14, 15,000 in 1987 and 1988, to having actually a net inflow of people into the province last year.

And I give the credit to the business people and the cooperatives who are out there creating jobs.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the number you forgot to mention is that there's also an increase in the number of business bankruptcies in this province and that percentage is also increasing to the highest rate in Canada. I'm wondering if you can relate that to the fact that we do have a tremendous number of business regulations and problems having a business here in this province.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I'm going to send the member a copy of this, businesses insolvencies by year, and probably from there you could . . .

The Deputy Chair: — Order, order. I just want to remind the minister that use of exhibits is not permitted. And though it is not likely that anybody would see what was on that graph, it was displayed in a manner fitting an exhibit and I just remind the minister not to use exhibits.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Not to challenge the Chair at all, but I was under the assumption that exhibits were not used in the House but I didn't realize that applied to committees . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It does? Because I know in other committees of the legislature we are allowed exhibits . . . Not Committee of the Whole.

Anyway the member . . . I'll send her a copy of this. But it will show that in terms of business insolvencies, it's quite the opposite of what she's indicating. And I'll read her the numbers and then I'll send you the actual numbers of business insolvencies.

But in 1990 the number of insolvencies reached a high of 600. In 1991, it dropped below 600. In 1992, it went down to 520. In 1993, it dropped below 400. In 1994 right on 400; 1995, about 400; 1996, the same. So it's gone from a high of 600 per year when we came into government to down around 400, which is a pretty significant reduction.

At the same time, you'd be interested to know that you can overlay the graph of new businesses being established. It's been actually going up by leaps and bounds, and as a result of that, the new jobs that are being created.

So I think it's a pretty positive story. And you might be interested as well, is that your area of the province is one of the areas that is doing very, very well. Probably you could take some credit for that but only a little bit.

Ms. Draude: — I'll take credit where credit is due, Mr. Minister. Actually I understand, I realize, how fortunate I am to be living in the part of the province where there is a tremendous amount of job creation done by the private sector; whereas the only sustainable jobs are . . . is by the private sector.

Mr. Minister, just a question on tourism. I'm sure that you are well aware of the fact that one of the officials from the tourism branch was upset with the fact that our highways are in such terrible shape that it's affecting tourism in this province. I'm wondering if you've had any influence on your new Minister of Highways to make sure that this problem is going to be alleviated. I know you're going to say \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years, but I'm not sure that's going to be something that's going to make these people feel a lot better when we've got the beginning of a long weekend and our first tourism weekend coming up.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think most of us when we get out of here are going to be so happy to be out of here, we won't even notice the roads as we sail home with the beautiful weather and all.

But quite seriously, the member indicates that our roads are in need of extra money and that's of course why in this year's budget, we've added an extra 40 million. And I know that won't solve all the problems, but I think it's a real good start.

(1415)

And it's also a fact that the books of the province are balanced. We're running a surplus. We have more revenue from oil and gas and some of our resources. We've been able to cut the PST (provincial sales tax).

So we see a big improvement in the road situation. And I say again, it won't happen overnight but I think the extra 40 million a year that we're plugging into roads is going to, over the next few years, make a big improvement to our highways.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the REDAs (regional economic development authority) that are being established and have actually been under way for a number of years — some of them are going into the second phase — I'm wondering if you can tell me if you have been doing any studies or any work to really understand what they are completing and what their . . . the process is that they're making a difference to the communities.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — We're doing some work on reviewing the REDAs. And I think it's an interesting story — and maybe not surprisingly, or maybe surprisingly — that some are doing very, very well; others need to get a boost. And it's my understanding that Bill Gaynor and the competitiveness review committee are looking a little bit at what REDAs are doing in Saskatchewan.

So hopefully, when that report is released sometime this summer, there will be a bit of an update on where REDAs are at, and maybe some comment.

But overall, in places like Saskatoon and Rosetown and Prince Albert, those areas where they're up and operating and have some experience, there certainly is a different attitude about economic development and business development.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The REDAs that are . . . I'm wondering if any of them have taken over the small business loans association in their area, and is there any intention to increase the level of funding that's allowed to that association up to, say, \$10,000?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, the organizations are eligible for a matching grant of 60,000 a year. And this is ongoing and is included in this year's budget. So that's the grant they're eligible for.

Ms. Draude: — Are they, or do any of the REDAs look after the small business loans association in the area?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes. Some of them do and we're encouraging more to get involved in that program.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, and to your officials: I just have a few questions. There's always an air

of excitement and expectation when there's a discussion about perhaps a major industry that has a potential to select Saskatchewan for their place of doing business.

I was wondering, Mr. Minister — I'm referring to Maple Leaf Meats in particular — can you give us any idea as to where this is at at this point in time and if our expectations can continue to be at a higher level?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well as you know, Maple Leaf is a company owned by the McCain family — or at least one side of the McCain family — that has purchased Maple Leaf Meats and are now looking at building a world-class facility somewhere in western Canada, particularly in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or Alberta. They have hired an organization out of Florida known as the Stellar Group to do site location in the western provinces.

I understand your area . . . and we met with the economic development people from Yorkton and Melville in a common group in Yorkton the other day and had an excellent meeting about the potential of the Melville-Yorkton area. And we're very excited about the potential of that kind of a business locating somewhere in Saskatchewan.

But at the end of the day, not unlike when Cargill was doing their site selection for the oil-crushing plant, that at the end of the day they chose a place near Saskatoon. We're helping the communities, all those communities that might be interested in putting together a proposal, as much as we can and in a fair and equitable way, to get information put together.

I'm not quite sure where your community is at but I understand that Stellar was supposed to be back in the province sometime this week meeting with your economic development people in that region, and I'm not sure whether that meeting was held or not. But I know they're putting together a proposal.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Yes, and this gives me an opportunity to congratulate the South Parkland Regional Economic Development Authority Corporation from Melville that has been working with the entire community to submit very detailed statistics and data and information that would be relative to this project.

I guess I would just want to ask for some assurance that the government will support the location, regardless of what area of the province it's in; that we will get the support of the government for that particular area.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well first of all you should know that the department is working very closely with all processors of meat in the province, whether it's Mitchell or whether it's the new Schneiders group or the Fletcher's group, with the Wheat Pool or Maple Leaf. We are actually in constant discussions with all of them about potential expansion. And of course with our jobs training program, that's a component that we would have available.

Also through other agencies of government, whether it's Sask Water or joint federal-provincial programs like PAWBED (Partnership Agreement on Water Based Economic Development) and PARD (Partnership Agreement on Rural

Development), we have a package put together that I think your folks will tell you is pretty impressive.

But I too want to congratulate all of those economic development authorities that are doing the research and development, trying to put this together. I only wish that every one of them could win this project because I know . . . I say again, like the Cargill plant or the uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan and the McArthur River that's doing the big, hundred millions of dollars expansion, these things really do vitalize a community.

So we're urging the communities to put together the best package they can and put their best foot forward. And I know your group is very active.

Mr. Osika: — Yes, thank you. Thank you for those comments. I know from an area, and it takes in about . . . within about 80 kilometres there are human resources to the extent of over 60,000 that can be drawn on for that area.

I guess again the other question that I would like to ask is . . . and I'm not sure whether there would be any difference. I don't see why there should be, was that the gas and power rates would be the same as for any other site locations that might be selected or looked at.

Would there be any variance? Are you aware of any reason that there might be a variance from one site to another?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Most of all, given the fact that these plants probably will be located outside of an urban centre . . . let's say they were at between Melville or Yorkton, let's just hypothetically take that it's going . . . it would be somewhere in there, or some place outside of Regina or some place outside of Saskatoon or some place outside of Lloydminster. Not likely they would locate a plant like this inside of an urban centre.

That being . . . if you take that as a hypothesis, then likely the power, gas, and all of that would be the same, although there might be small nuances. If you had to run a special power line a farther distance at one place or the other, that might be . . . might turn out to be a cost factor. But the actual charge for power likely wouldn't be different.

One of the things that we find that is a big advantage to communities now is if they have full-fledged water and sewer systems that are capable of handling the bigger projects. This is almost one of the biggest community issues, is whether or not a plant like this, that would . . . Maple Leaf's talking about a plant that would do as high as five, six million hogs a year. They need a tremendous amount of water and a huge capacity for disposal. If you're a community that already has that infrastructure built, you're at a number of steps ahead on the bid offer, on the financial side, than a community that would have to go out and redo their whole water system and sewage system.

So those are the kinds of things that actually I think would have a bigger impact.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. And I agree that we must also not

only be considering the best interest of the communities that may be involved, but also in order to attract that type of a major project, that their best interest as well with respect to costs for the supplies and the necessary facilities that they require.

So I thank you for that, Mr. Minister. And again I hope our feeling of excitement and anticipation can be maintained at a higher level; that one day we can say, well thank you, we've brought that major project to our province, which hopefully also will bring back some of our people back to the province that had to leave to find employment.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I would hope that the meat packing industry, and I say again whether it be Fletcher's with the Wheat Pool and their new configuration, or Maple Leaf, or even the existing Mitchell family in Saskatoon, that a big component of the packing industry comes to Saskatchewan.

Whether it's your community or someone else's community worries me less. I understand where you're coming from and I wish you the best in putting the best face on what we have to offer in the Yorkton-Melville area. But it's 1,500 jobs regardless who were to build a world-scale plant.

But I say again, as long as we have the packing industry here, all of the communities are going to benefit because there's even more jobs than that associated with the increase of hog production, which is absolutely crucial. Taking that number from where it's at now at 1 million to the needed 3 or 4 or 5 million, you would look at 3, 4, 5 thousand incremental jobs being created at the farm gate, in trucking, in feed processing.

And so in my mind it's exciting for the community that's getting the packing plant and no doubt because it's 1,500 extra jobs. But in the bigger picture, what's even more important in my mind is that Saskatchewan really would have a world-class industry based on hog production and, I think, a better, more efficient usage of the feed grain, lower quality grains that we tend to get from time to time in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Osika: — I guess that's why I feel that within the community of Yorkton and Melville, we put politics aside for something that's as important as this type of a major project, as you said, with the number of jobs involved. And just for your edification in excellent work that South Parkland has done, they've come up with some very specific figures related to the hog industry, and within 400 kilometres, 2.5 million hogs that are being produced in the area.

So again we're going to be as hopeful as other communities are. And I appreciate your assurance that your support for the location will be dependent on the facilities that are available. And I appreciate your assurance that the government will support whatever location and area, regardless of what constituency boundaries it may be in or cross over. It should not be a factor; it should be where's the best place to create all this economic activity. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, I wanted to ask, initially at least, some questions on the Tourism Authority. By removing the responsibilities of the former tourism branch to the arm's-length Tourism Authority,

you hope to increase input and financial support from the industry and cut out, I assume, cut out red tape from tourism projects.

Aside from your grant of \$6.9 million to the Authority, what is the total budget and what other sources of revenue, if any, does it have?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, you're right. Our budget transfers just under 7 million. Their total budget is about 10 million. So already in the short period that they've been in existence, they've been able to go out and raise almost a third of what their \$10 million budget is. So we're pretty impressed that they will over the coming years be able to hit 50 per cent, which I think would be a huge improvement over the system that we had in place before.

Obviously the joint partnership that we have between the industry across the province, bringing that together in one single focus along with the money that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan are willing to put in through the general revenue, has meant that we have established in Saskatchewan a Tourism Authority that is really being looked at by other jurisdictions across Canada. I know Alberta's looking to build a similar kind of organization.

But I think it is the way of the future for a number of government agencies. The Trade Development Corporation, or STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.), which you know about, is based along those same lines, coming into existence a little bit later but already they have sold memberships to a large number of trade corporations as well.

Mr. Boyd: —How many board members are appointed directly from the industry and how many are appointed by you?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, there are 15 board members in total and we appoint by order in council, 3 of those members.

(1430)

Mr. Boyd: — The recent amendments also make the province responsible for funding capital projects which previously were handled by the partners who make up the Authority. Why are you no longer willing to do this? Since the partners are no longer providing major funding for projects, doesn't this throw into question the original reason for establishing the Authority?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I just missed the, maybe, the nuance of your question, but I think you asked why the capital is not with the Tourism Authority. In fact it's just the reverse of that. Initially it was not with the Tourism Authority but in the last Act amendment we actually moved the capital portion over to the Tourism Authority as well.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, how many capital projects has the Authority funded over the past year and could you give us a breakdown of their costs?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I'll get that for you. I don't have the numbers here with me and we hadn't really thought of this in the past, but I do have to go back and get that number for you.

Mr. Boyd: — Could you also provide us with a list of the marketing and promotional activities undertaken by the Authority for the past year? How many employees of the Tourism Authority are former employees of the government's tourism branch? And does your department still maintain staff that supervise the area as well? For example, would you have staff to review and analyse tourism capital projects?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The only representative that we would have is Janis Rathwell, who has other supervisory areas, but she would look after the legislative portion and the budget portion. But as far as supervising day-to-day operation, we really don't have any role to play any more. And the other information you request I'll have to get for you.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. With regard to your cooperative branch, we understand it's going to have funding nearly doubling, nearly doubled in the coming year from 340,000 to 625,000. About two-thirds of this increase is going to be absorbed in increased salaries. Can you provide us with a list of whom you are hiring and what functions that they will be serving?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — As we go through the work and building up the department area of cooperative development, we are just in the process of beginning to seek out the three new positions that we will put into that area. So at this point in time I don't have the names and salaries. But I would expect if you were to call me in a couple of months, we would be able to get that for you or in next year's estimates.

But what the money is being used for on the staff side is three new employees we believe that will meet some of the new demand for cooperative development. And I say again by most estimations most . . . the largest percentage of that will be going on in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The business investment programs branch will be getting quite a large boost through the addition of \$6 million in the strategic initiatives fund. I wonder if you could explain this fund, and whether or not it is simply discretionary money for you and your department to put into various projects at your will. Or what is the purpose of that?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I have here — this is not an exhibit, Mr. Chairman — but I have here a little promotional piece that the department has put together on the issue of strategic initiative fund. And I think rather than read it out I'll just send it to the member opposite. And I think it lays it out probably more articulate than I could. And then if there are any questions, feel free to ask.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does it give detail on the guidelines of how the money is going to be disbursed? What sort of projects will this fund be considering? Are there any projects currently under consideration — currently under consideration by the fund? And your policy and coordination unit received another half million dollars a year. Virtually all this money is going towards additional salaries. If you could confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Just so the member knows, and when he gets . . . If he's got the document there, he'll look under criteria, he can see that there are five main bullets that say basically what the criteria is. From that, communities or community groups would make a general application, at which time we'd get into the actual looking at whether the project would be eligible under that criteria. But it's pretty straightforward.

The issue of the funding, I wasn't quite clear on what you were asking in your last part of your question.

Mr. Boyd: — I think it's explained. I asked what sort of projects will this fund? And I think it outlines them here. So that's acceptable.

The Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership also received an additional half million dollars in this budget. According to the original news release on this agency, the private sector partners were supposed to kick in one-third of the cost of running it. Can we assume then that the partners have agreed to put in an additional \$176,000 into this project in the coming year?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Most of that money is for a sub-office in Saskatoon, with the main office of course being in Regina. Saskatoon and Saskatoon area has developed a very, very large trade component to their economy. And we thought it proper and wise to have an office, as well, in Saskatoon. And that new money basically goes to fund the staff and operation of that office.

Mr. Boyd: — Since this is a grant, it doesn't list the expenses of the agency, STEP. Could you break down the expenses of STEP — salaries, accommodation, travel expenses, and the like?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Let me get for you what I can. I don't have the actual breakdown with me today, but I'll phone up Milt Fair, the executive director, and get that information as best I can for you.

Mr. Boyd: — Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation also got an additional million dollars in the budget. And this is somewhat disturbing since SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation), unlike SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation), is supposed to be more selective about projects and get a better return for the province. The ever-increasing grant for SOCO suggests that you are anticipating losses for this corporation. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — We're not anticipating losses; and as we go forward, one of the ongoing areas of demand of course, is money for equity positions in various community or commercial projects.

We're also involved very much in the research park in Saskatoon. And there is now work being done on a proposal to develop a research park adjacent to or with the University of Regina. Although that's not a completed project yet, there's very, very high level, serious negotiations going on between the university, the Government of Saskatchewan, the Economic

Development Authority here in Regina, and various other people, to establish that project.

But I think Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, where they've been involved in projects in Saskatchewan, has a very, very high degree of support from the public. And any of the new money certainly isn't intended to be lost. Although when you're involved in economic development, whether it's on your farm or in business or anywhere, if you were to make money on everything you did, we'd be pretty lucky folks. But having said that, I think the record of SOCO is very impressive at this point.

Mr. Boyd: — The Northern Affairs office received an additional \$500,000, but all of that went to the resource development branch. Presumably most of this was funnelled to mining projects in the North. While we certainly encourage the development of mining in the North, wouldn't it be more appropriately handled by the Department of Energy and Mines? And if you could provide us some detail as to what sort of projects are funded under this branch?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Now in northern Saskatchewan of course, we have . . . we don't refer to them as economic development authorities, but northern economic development units. And part of this money goes for three new staff to work on those economic development projects in northern Saskatchewan. And of course coming from rural Saskatchewan, you'll know how difficult it is to get economic development projects going in the southern part of the province. You can well imagine how difficult it is in northern communities where isolation is even magnified in distance or even further. Many of the communities don't even have roads. Everything comes in by air and goes out by air.

So economic development is a very, very unique challenge in that part of our province. And so it was thought that some extra money for looking at and helping communities with economic development would be in order. So this is where that new, extra money is going to.

Mr. Boyd: — With respect to the immigrant investor program, you recently announced that you were joining a lobby effort with other western provinces to stop federal changes to the immigrant investor program. The proposed changes would allow provinces to guarantee immigrant investments.

Obviously, as you pointed out, this favours provinces like Quebec that are prepared to put in significant subsidies and guarantees. And I wonder if you could detail all efforts, including meetings, that you have undertaken on this issue; what successes you've had; and did the proposed changes pass before the election call?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well we did a lot of work. In fact Saskatchewan, my staff, took a leadership role in western Canada in organizing the western provinces, including the Yukon and Territories, against the changes that were being posed by Minister Robillard. And we had a number of conversations with Mr. Goodale, and I called Lloyd Axworthy, who is very responsive to working on this project.

And at the end of the day there was a 30-day review period

once the new changes and regulations were set out — 30 days — at which time . . . during which time we could make application for changes or make our arguments.

And I think all the western provinces laid it pretty heavy on the federal government — these changes were discriminatory against western Canada and particularly favourable to provinces where subsidies and guarantees would be offered to foreign immigrant investors that would really put people off-shore at an advantage over Canadian investors or Saskatchewan investors, which we found to be not a proper way to do business. And we made that point very strongly in a number of letters and a number of joint press releases that we did from western ministers.

I think it's . . . We were pleased when about either . . . a week before the election, the Minister Robillard announced that these were not progressing at the present time. What we're going to be interested to see is whether that was something to get us through the election and then we're going to see them jammed at us; or whether there is going to be a sincere effort to make amendments that would favour the investment of the immigrant investor fund in western Canada, remains to be seen.

So at this point it's on hold, and I think the unified front that was presented by western Canadian ministers has, at least to this point, been successful.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If we could turn our attention to an outfit called SPUDCO that you people are involved in. You'll be familiar with Saskatchewan's . . . the program I'm sure, a subsidy program, SPUDCO, which invests in potato farm operations. SPUDCO has been criticized for unfairly subsidizing one set of farmers over another.

In fact the agency wrote directly to Lucky Lake area farmers and offered to finance up to 75 per cent of production and up to 49 per cent of storage. This directly benefits the Coteau Hills Potato Corporation, who have put in a proposal to build a packing plant for the constituency within the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) minister's constituencies.

Critics have suggested that the facility would be better placed between Kenaston and Outlook where it would be more central to producers. What has your involvement been in the establishment and direction of SPUDCO? Does your department provide any funding to this project and was your department consulted for advice on the project prior to its implementation?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — First, Mr. Chairman, I want to indicate to the member opposite this comes under the Sask Water Corporation, who have been negotiating and I think have some involvement both financially and in an advisory capacity. Our department has not been involved to the extent of putting in money or being involved in the actual negotiations.

There would have been advice given at some point. I'm just not sure to what extent. I can go back and track the meetings that staff would have had, but it is not under the purview of this budget item. I mean we can spend some time talking about it but this might be one that would be better left until Sask Water

comes before the committee.

(1445)

Mr. Boyd: — Will you confirm then, Mr. Minister, that your department has not put any money into this project?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, that's right. We haven't put any money in, but my understanding is that Sask Water does have investment in but I just would urge us to get back to that topic when we get to Sask Water.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, if we could turn our attention to the investment the taxpayers of Saskatchewan have in Intercon. Rumours have started to fly around once again about the financial health of Intercon and the taxpayers' involvement therein. Could you provide us with information about the status of the investment in Intercon and whether or not Intercon has approached you for further financial assistance?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I don't know where you're getting the information that there's any problem there because our reports are different than that — not to say that we're right and you're wrong, because you never know in these circumstances of a private company. But the impression that we have is that as a result of the problem with disease in the pork herd in Taiwan, that actually there have been very recent agreements signed between a Taiwanese company and the plant in Saskatoon that has actually greatly stabilized the project in Saskatoon.

So I'm a little surprised at the indication that you have that there's some weakness. In fact from our discussions, it's in a stronger position than it was six months ago or even three months ago. And as to whether any money has been requested to our department, no money has been requested from Intercon.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could submit a written report of meetings with respect to your ministerial travel and your department's travel, a written report of meetings held, deals signed, and benefits accrued from each and every trade trip that you went on last year. In particular, could you go through right now the meetings, benefits, and deals, etc. associated with your trip to South Africa? And any benefits that the public gained from that particular trip.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The trip to South Africa and to Africa in general, we attended and held meetings in Cape Town and Johannesburg and Durban in South Africa. And we met with government officials and companies in Zimbabwe and Nairobi, Kenya. I will get for you the itinerary of who we met with; although you probably have it already because I think it was included in press releases.

But there have been a number of arrangements made. Of course one of the key players who travelled with us on that trip were representatives of Flexi-coil. Flexi-coil is an interesting company in the sense that they export about half of all of the product they produce. They employ about 1,500 or 1,600 people in Saskatoon. And in a very, very far away place, for example in Australia, they provide 50 per cent of all the air seeders that are sold in Australia.

And they have air seeders now in South Africa and are very excited about the potential to export more into that area of the world because there are huge numbers of similarities between dry-land farming in large sections of South Africa, particularly in the Free State, which is the area of South Africa that we have direct relationships with.

And so Flexi-coil is very interested in opportunities, as well as Schulte, who are involved in mowing equipment used to mow sugar cane and other crops where they do direct seeding. Arrangements have been made there where their distributor has agreed to sell their product into the African market.

So I think in terms of deliverables from that trip, in some ways they were quicker than what we might have expected, because when we went on that trade mission it was exploratory in nature. And it was interesting that even before we got back, some of our companies were setting up arrangements for distribution of their product in Africa.

Mr. Boyd: — With respect to skills training, Mr. Minister, one of the most frequent complaints that we hear from employers or potential employers is that they have jobs available but they can't find people with the right skills in the province to fill them.

What sort of coordination do you have with the Post-Secondary Education minister to address this problem? And have you made efforts to consult with business, existing or potential, to see what sort of skilled employees that they will be needing prior to their setting up shop in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, this is a common question when we have companies, whether it's Cargill or call centres or now Maple Leaf, looking at setting up in Saskatchewan. And one of the first questions they want to know is, what is the supply of skilled labour; and if they are not available what programs you have to help train.

And so over the last four or five years there's been a lot of work done between Economic Development and the Department of Education to make our programs for skilled training much more responsive to the needs of industry. And to the point where today if a company is coming to our province and needs a hundred workers in a specific area, through our department of Continuing Education, we can actually develop a program for that company in very short order. And I know in some cases in a short period of time, in a matter of weeks, we can take a program for training workers onto the plant floor and actually set up the program to help skilled workers be trained for specific jobs.

And I think this is really the key to economic development in the next decade and the next millennium, is having our training programs that are very, very quick to train people who are moving out of an industry that is winding down and into some of the new industries. And it's not a matter of getting a life skill training once; in fact many of the studies now show that individuals graduating from university or from training schools will have to go through three or four different careers as they move through life.

So skill training is a big component of what Economic Development is all about and we've been very much involved with the Department of Education and Continuing Education.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. With respect to the film industry in Saskatchewan, how much has your department or its agency, such as SOCO, invested in the film and video agencies in the past year? And could you provide us with the information with respect to how many permanent jobs have been created from this investment, and how many new businesses, if any, have been created?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The industry in Saskatchewan has now grown from around \$5 million expenditures in the province in 1992 to around 25, between 25 and 30 million expected in 1997. So it is a very, very much a fast growth industry.

There are the equivalent of about 600 full-time jobs. I'm not sure how many of those would be part-time, how many full-time, but its considerable impact in the province is noticeable and is getting recognition as one of the fast growth areas of Canada right here in the province of Saskatchewan. So many hundreds of young people in particular who in the past would have had to go to Toronto or Vancouver in order to get involved in the film industry can now find successful jobs here in the province of Saskatchewan.

I will get for you the projects that we've invested in through SOCO. I don't have them right here, but we've invested in a number of . . . taken positions in a number of small investments as well as putting some money into the sound stage which has been developed here in Regina. So I can get those numbers for you.

Mr. Boyd: — Could you also provide us with a breakdown of your investment in the film industry — how much was in the form of loans; how much in the form of grants; how much in the form of equity investments; how much in the form of any guarantees of any sort; and if there are any tax credits or other incentives attached to them?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I'll undertake to get that for the member.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That concludes the questions that I have, and I thank you for your questions and the help from your officials.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — And to the members opposite, as we wind down the committee, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I appreciate their questions very much, the couple of times we've been here, the good questions. And I will just ask my deputy to make sure that all of the unanswered questions are attained as soon as possible.

Just in that, I'd like to say a happy weekend to everyone, because I think we get an extra day off when we leave here today.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 45 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Economic Development
Vote 45**

Items 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 45 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Loans, Advances and Investments
Economic Development
Vote 167**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 167 agreed to.

(1500)

**General Revenue Fund
Highways and Transportation
Vote 16**

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My officials with me this afternoon are Mr. Brian King, who is the deputy minister, seated to my right. To my left is Mr. Barry Martin, who is the executive director of engineering services division. To my far right is Mr. George Stamatinos, who is the executive director of preserve and operations, southern division. And seated behind Mr. King is Lynn Tulloch, who is the executive director of corporate affairs and information services.

Item 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. Welcome to you this afternoon and to your officials.

I just have a few questions, some concerns that have been expressed to us by the Saskatchewan road builders and heavy construction association. And particularly with respect to . . . Apparently two or two and a half years ago the government introduced its asset management program which identified which highways are in most need, categorized as major problems, medium problems, and minor problems.

Now what the road builders have indicated is that the scheduled construction projects for the last couple of years and the upcoming year have largely concentrated on smaller and medium problems and have left the major problems alone. This may very well lead to a situation where the major rebuilding projects are simply not addressed. Can you comment about those concerns, please?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you for the question, Mr. Member.

What we do of course, in Saskatchewan . . . and you're correct, about two and a half years ago we did introduce the asset management process. And what of course that really recognizes is that rather than taking the entire roadway and attempting to complete it all, what we would do is sustain pieces of the road that we would think would still be of benefit, or could sustain the kinds of traffic volumes that they would incur.

So we would take the areas of the road that require the most amount of work, and then concentrate our efforts into repairing that piece.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, the road builders as well are saying that they do in fact welcome the additional \$30 million that has been proposed in funding to address some of these problems. But when you look at the array of projects scheduled for this coming year, it seems like still quite a very limited amount.

We understand or we are told that the present list of scheduled projects will require only 3, 400,000 tonnes of hot mix. Even though the industry has scaled down drastically since this administration came to power, the industry could still easily handle 800,000 tonnes of this hot mix.

With the highways in such bad repair and with revenues better than expected, why don't you use the capacity of the industry? That's the question I wonder if you might address, please.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I appreciate the question. I think what the member is asking is that in the proportion of work that's being done across the province this year and into the future, what is the allocation that might be given to the area of, say, paving in terms of coarse base and the area of grading? And when you look to the allocations this year you'll see again that there's some disparities in the way in which those allocations are being made.

What we'll attempt to do, however, as we move on into the future over that period of time that we've talked about putting in the \$2.5 billion, you'll see a levelling off of where the revenue is going to be . . . or where the money is going to be directed. This year I think we're putting a bit more money in the area of base coarse and into the grading side than we are into the paving. And I think some of the paving fellows might be saying of course, that we're not putting enough into that category.

But as time passes we'll try to level that as we move along and that will certainly, I think, ensure some confidence in the industry so that we might be able to sustain those industries here in the province.

Mr. Osika: — We're also told by the industry that the quality of construction and rehabilitation is less than adequate which is being requested by your government. They tell us that almost all the projects that are up for rehabilitation this year are what are called granular base coarse projects where gravel is placed upon existing surfaces and then a sealing coat is placed over the top of the gravel. The gravel apparently is usually three-quarters of an inch minus aggregate, or 19 millimetre minus aggregate. Effectively just a small gravel top of asphalt and then a sealer

on top of that.

What the industry is concerned about is that this rehabilitation type of a program is very short term. They refer to it, as we might, a band-aid solution to the problems, short-term life span, maybe five years at the outer limit. Now this may lead to more work for the industry in the future, but the concern is the use of the taxpayers' dollars.

What do you have to say to that criticism, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think that a lot of the roadway that you're talking about here would be in the rural areas of the province and wouldn't have the same kind of consistent heavy haul on them. And I think you're correct in suggesting that in this particular year our allocation is certainly more significant to the granular base coarse base that you talk about.

And again, part of that is in respect to the amount of funding that we're putting in in the total rehabilitation program this year. And it corresponds to some degree with what you talked about earlier, which is, with the asset management process, where you'll find in sections of roadways this kind of base that we put in.

I think yesterday one of the questions that was asked when we talked briefly around the Bill was that how much of this work is currently being undertaken. And I guess this year it's about \$23 million in that entire . . . 23, or \$22.3 million in that entire pool. That will grow, as I've indicated to you earlier, into the future.

Now some of the Canadian ag program, that \$7.3 million that has been set aside this year — a lot of that will be for road construction similar to the one that you talked about here earlier.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the other concerns was the massive mobilization costs, particularly as it relates to the small projects.

Basic mobilization costs for any construction or rehabilitation projects are fixed, and that would include things such as the cost of transporting and setting up mobile crushing machinery which crushes the aggregate, plus the cost of transporting and setting up mobile placing operation which pug-mills and load the aggregate and places it on the roadway and compacts it in place.

Now these costs are similar regardless of the size of the project and the rehabilitation project. The small size of the project . . . smaller the sizes of the project means that the budget is used up for mobilization costs to an undue extent.

I just wondered what you might have to say with . . . to the taxpayers to address that concern.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think the issue of mobilization certainly an important one. And so when we're putting together a package in terms of the roadways that we want to do, we would try to ensure that they're grouped into areas of the province; so that when we actually get the construction folks moving into that area, that one move would suffice to do a fairly large

number of roadways in that particular area.

But the mobilization issue certainly is one that we give consideration to because we don't want to be spending most of our . . . a larger degree of our funding that's necessary for people to be travelling from one location to another to do the work, but rather spending that than on the roadway.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The primary road system in our province is one that everybody relies a great deal on for tourism and the well-being and the health of the economy of this province.

Highways 1, 2, 11, 16, 35, and 39, I believe are considered part of the primary system. And they play a particularly important part in the role of our economy of the province because they're used to ship products originating in Saskatchewan out of province and to attract tourists. Those seem to be in unusually bad repair. I wonder if you might just make a comment with respect to those primary roads.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I certainly agree with what the member has indicated, that there is . . . clearly the roadways in the province that transport the major part of our transportation of course, are on highways like, road systems like 1 and certainly 16, 11. And over the long run we've said that the \$2.5 billion that we're going to be spending in highways, a large part of that of course, will go towards making sure that the rehabilitation of those highways is improved, and also some completed work that needs to get done as it respects to the twinning project.

As the member knows, we don't have in this province, or in this country, a national highway transportation strategy, which is critical and important to the development and the sustaining of roadways across the country.

And what you're going to see of course, is you're going to see the province doing this on its own, unless over the next few years . . . and I know that you'll want to see additional revenues make their way into the highways system, and will be assisting us in our lobby efforts along with the Yellowhead Highway Association and certainly the No. 1 Highway Association to get more money into the road system.

But clearly we've said and you've heard, that in this province, you know 70 per cent of our traffic travels on 6 per cent of our roadways. And the large part of that roadways that carry the travelling public are on those roads that you identified here.

Our sense is that, you know, although they're maybe not in complete . . . as good as we'd like to see them, but when you stack them up and compare them to other roadways in other parts of Canada, they're in fairly decent shape. And we'll continue to work hard with the resources that we have today to improve on them and ensure that they provide safe motoring for the public.

(1515)

Mr. Osika: — I want to thank you, Mr. Minister, and to your officials for being here this afternoon to respond to our questions. I'd like to defer now to my hon. colleague from

Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Deputy Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and to your officials.

The other day I'd indicated there are a couple areas of concern that I wanted to raise with you. Number one is Wood Country. And just for the sake of the House, there were a number of petitions that were written and signed — I believe there are even more than this — that ended up in your department and never heard anything about.

I'd like to present these to the floor of the Assembly. And basically what the petitions are in support of, Mr. Grant Wilson's claim about an approach into his business — Wood Country. It's outside of McLean.

Now when I first came upon this, Mr. Minister, it had nothing to do with Mr. Wilson contacting me. It was travelling down No. 1 Highway and I see a group of highway tractors out . . . or highway equipment out working and I thought, well what in the world have we got going on here?

We've got so much highway that needs repair and all of a sudden we're spending money when an access . . . and actually we had access to the one . . . to the west lane of traffic was already available, and what we needed was a further access to the east lane of traffic. And what I see now, we probably spent a number of a hundred thousands of dollars more than we would have needed.

And I'm also aware of the fact that a lot of discussion had taken place with Mr. Martin out of Yorkton at the time. I believe Mr. Martin may have moved up in the department. But there's been a fair bit of debate on this question.

Now the concern . . . The fact is that a lot of money has already been expended and a service road has already been put in place, is almost at completion. Now, Mr. Minister, what's really in question here is an access, a direct link, from Wood Country to No. 1 Highway, a link or a road, an approach that was moved by Wood Country at their expense from an existing approach that was about 200 yards east of where it currently exists.

Now I'm not going to ask you to tear out that service road. I think that service road will serve a very valuable point. I think, Mr. Minister, what Mr. Wilson is saying, he paid for . . . it cost him money to move what was an existing approach over about 200 yards. He's asking specifically for that approach to continue to exist.

What it does is gives direct access out of his property onto the westbound lanes, so that traffic can move and begin to flow west immediately versus having to move to the east and come back west. As far as traffic going east, that traffic will go down the service road and will proceed across the approach and the median there and move into the traffic flow and move to the east.

Mr. Minister, there seems to be no give. According to Mr. Wilson, it appears then and after discussion that Mr. Wilson had with the former minister of Highways, the feeling was that

the minister was just all tied with the bureaucratic's view and wasn't willing to look at what a businessperson's view . . . and the concerns that might result and the loss of economic spin-off for his business.

So what I'm asking, Mr. Minister, is if you could have your department take another close look at this. I think, Mr. Minister, if you drove that, if you went into Wood Country, if you drove out of Wood Country and were coming west, I think you would have to admit there really isn't . . . and from what I've seen and having been there, been out, in and out a number of occasions — I don't believe there's any less of a traffic hazard turning onto Highway No. 1 and proceeding west on the current approach that's there than there is to go down the service road and then come west on the new approach that's being built.

So I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you would give some serious consideration to reviewing that, taking a close look at that, and getting back to Mr. Wilson in regards to that.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I appreciate the question again. I've had an opportunity only to look at the schematics and the diagrams of the way in which the roadway exits from Wood Country.

I have some understanding and appreciation that we want to ensure that we have a safety feature, the safety factor is in fact in place. And certainly my officials have outlined or indicated that when the initial construction of the property was first undertaken, that there was some, there was some discussion here around the placing of a temporary access. And of course we've done that.

The new service road, as you suggest, is nearly in place now and I think the value of that service road is about \$80,000 upon its completion.

I know that there's an access, I think, into the community just as you get to McLean and there's a roadway that could take you apparently, when I look at some of the hand-drawn diagrams, that will take you through the community to Wood Country. So the access from . . . or the egress from Wood Country could happen both, I believe, to the east or to the west. If you were to go east, then you'd get down the new highway access, or the new service road that we've put in, and then on to No. 1 and away you go.

If you're going west, if you wanted to go west out of Wood Country, you'd have to go through the town of McLean. And apparently there's been some concern there by the residents of McLean in respect to the traffic going right through their community to get to the roadway again onto No. 1.

But certainly I'll give the member the undertaking that I'll take another look at it. We'll get a chance when I'm travelling around Saskatchewan with the member from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, no. When I'm travelling around Saskatchewan with the member from, I forget where . . . Arm River, with the member from Arm River. Maybe when I get up to Moosomin we could take that same trip. It would be a saving on the provincial government's Highways budget. So we might do it . . . we'll take the opportunity to do that.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd be more than happy to join you in Regina at your expense to travel and check out the service road into Wood Country.

But you're absolutely true, Mr. Minister. The way you exit Wood Country, without having to follow the service road back if you were going west, you certainly would have to turn into a residential area. You'd be travelling through an area of the community that will have young children there involved in. And that's one of the big concerns, and the fact that some of the streets aren't actually all . . . I'm not sure if they're all oiled even. I think some of them are straight gravel roads, which creates a problem.

And so I think for the sake of this business and for the sake of the community, I would certainly appreciate it if you would take another look at it.

I know sometimes, Mr. Minister, we get into arguments and we get into departments, and department officials look at certain things. And there's a way that bureaucrats view issues; there's a way that business people view issues; there's a way that the general public view issues. And we don't always necessarily agree. And lots of times we choose to disagree. But if we can work together, I think, Mr. Minister . . . and if you can find a way that alleviates some of the concerns here.

The thing is, Mr. Wilson is also moving up, I believe, into the Tisdale area. And I hope he's not going to run into the same kind of scenario where he's building another property. I'm not sure if he's building on a highway access or not.

But I hope at the end of the day, Mr. Minister, that we can come up with something that maybe not everyone's totally agreeable with it, but it is workable and certainly can fall within the guidelines of your department.

Now, Mr. Minister, I have another one on construction. Now you may have just received this letter. You may or may not have. The town of Whitewood is undertaking to redo Railway Street, I believe it is. It's by the elevators and it comes in right along the Railway Avenue, right along the railways. And they have called me on their behalf to contact your department.

Now I'm not sure, Mr. Minister, if they've taken the time to contact you, but they're looking for some financial assistance, as while there isn't a lot of traffic, there is some traffic, especially when there is, say hindrances on No. 9 Highway between the entrance to Whitewood and No. 1 where there may be some blockages at the time or where there isn't . . . where there's a road tie-up or railway, that some of the traffic on No. 9 moves through the community along this Railway Avenue.

And I'm wondering if your department would mind taking a look at the request that they're putting in. They're looking at a project of . . . I believe they received funding so far for . . . well they've received partial funding for a \$250,000 project which consists of a major upgrade of the road in front of our grain elevators.

If your department hasn't seen anything from the town of Whitewood, I'd be more than happy to . . . In fact I will take a

moment later on to also send a covering note with this and send you a copy of this, so that you're aware of it, and see what the department can do to address this concern and see whether or not there isn't a place where some funding could be put into the upgrade of a major artery in the community of Whitewood, Mr. Minister.

I wonder if you'll give me some assurances that you'll at least look at it and see if . . . and also let me know whether your department's aware of it.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have just received that information and I have not had a chance to take a look at it in any detail and the department is just beginning its work on it.

But I think what's important here is that, as you've identified, there may be a couple of players who might also get involved in assisting us through some of our partnership programs of course, which we talked about yesterday to some degree.

We might be able to include the, certainly the elevator company that's there, certainly the town of Whitewood, maybe even the railroads, in how we might be able to improve that particular piece of road that you talk about.

If you could leave that with me sometime after we're done the estimates this evening, I wouldn't mind having a copy of that from you.

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member for North Battleford on his feet?

Mr. Hillson: — By leave, if I may introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the government gallery above me, I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members, some friends from Cochin who are accompanied this day by relatives from the Netherlands.

And if I may ask them to stand. First of all from Cochin we have Marie-Louise Ternier with her children, David, Daniel, and Rachelle. And they have accompanying them from the Netherlands, Peter van Overveld, Marie-Pascale van Overveld-Brizion, and Jeanne Brizion-Marissen. all from Holland. I'd ask you all to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and certainly a special welcome as well to our international guests. We're

pleased to have you here.

Mr. Minister, I'm getting a copy of that. I'll just scribble a quick note on it just to remind you of the discussion we've had and have you and your department officials take a look at it.

I think one of the major problems with that specific piece of roadway is that heavy traffic flow that flows through there and the truck traffic that comes on to that piece of road as well. I think that's what the town is looking to some help from the department.

They're not looking to the . . . I don't believe they're looking to the department to do all of the work or trying, or asking for a major . . . but they're asking for some assistance in it. And I'll certainly send it over and look forward to your response.

Mr. Minister, as well I have a question here that was phoned in, and I know I'm going to get asked about it if I don't raise it so I'd better raise it. It's a question about the types of vehicles your department is purchasing, and I'm not sure if it's the individual noted vehicles on the roadway. I understand by this concern or this question that came in that you're buying some Volvo units, Volvo trucks. Is that correct?

If it is, and this is what the question being is, are we supporting Canadian companies or out-of-country companies? And I guess what this person is saying, we should be certainly looking at supporting our Canadian industry. Now I don't know if they're . . . you do have those vehicles on the road but maybe you could respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — What we use of course, is the open tendering process, and of course we put out an RFP (request for proposal) for the types of vehicles that we would require. At the end of the day when the bids all come in, in the case that you talk about here, it's true that this year one of the awards that was won included a white Volvo. But we also purchased some GMCs and obviously some Fords and some Chevy trucks as well.

So in the RFP process, what we're going with by and large is the lowest bid, and that certainly reflects what happened with the Volvo vehicles.

(1530)

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you maybe should relay the way the Department of Highways is approaching the purchasing of vehicles and letting contracts to the Minister of Labour, and suggest that he should go with the lowest qualified bidder as well.

Mr. Minister, just before the former minister of Highways announced that he was stepping aside from his portfolio, he did acknowledge that there was an additional project in the area of the Fairlight area around the high through-put elevator that Sask Wheat Pool had put up, some construction on Highway No. 8 north and some work on Highway No. 48 to the west. I believe there's about 13.5 kilometres.

I did thank the minister as well for the fact of looking at that.

I'm hoping one day that we'll actually see No. 8 completed right through from 48 through to No. 1.

But there's also some work, I noticed in the original release, on 48 between No. 9 at Kennedy and Kipling, about 3.3 kilometres. I think it's called . . . I think they're calling it resurfacing.

Now I've seen some work already going on there. One of the concerns I have, Mr. Minister, and having . . . may not have had the privilege of driving down that stretch of highway, No. 48, from Kipling through to No. 9. But that is getting to be a fairly . . . it's getting to be a very narrow road. It's got a lot of rough spots on it. It breaks up very easily.

And I understand they're picking sections that are really giving a problem and they're resurfacing them a bit. The only problem as I see it, based on what I understand of the resurfacing, is to basically scrape it down, cut the shoulders a bit, we're making the highway much narrower.

In the long run, Mr. Minister, we're going to have to look seriously down the road at widening out that highway, straightening it out a bit. And we've got an old rail bed already that's sitting there we could certainly borrow dirt from, I think.

But I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, based on some of the resurfacing that's going on, it seems to me — and I don't believe there was a cost put to that or there may have been a small . . . a cost on that figure of, I forget what the number was, I saw a number there — but based on that, Mr. Minister, what concerns me is the fact that as we resurface and just keep working with what road structure that's already there and keep cutting the shoulders to repair them, we take away from the surface of the road and we make it narrower. And when you talk about safety, that is one I would consider to be a major safety feature.

What I would like to know, Mr. Minister, is what the department is doing in the long term to try and address some of these highways that are . . . Like 48 — this little section of highway has actually seen a fair bit of expenditures over the past few years because of some of the . . . a number of boils that have opened up, that you've had to dig out and repair. And it would seem to me, Mr. Minister, we should look at building that road, completing it through to No. 9.

It has . . . There are a number of aspects to it — the safety feature. Just a moment ago we had the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. There's a lot of traffic from Regina flows down No. 48 to Kenosee park and I was . . . I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what are the chances of actually having this highway upgraded to a fairly decent standard of roadway in the near future?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well certainly what the strategy is, the highway strategy is, or transportation strategy is, is to include as many partners and players in ensuring that we have good, solid roadways across the province.

I know that this particular road that you talk about, what we're doing here is providing the best effort that we can in ensuring

that we can maintain it as a safe thoroughfare over the . . . and an efficient thoroughfare over the next short period of time.

And then included in some of the work that's being done in the area planning or the area transportation planning authorities, we're going to be partnering with a number of folks of course in the municipal areas after some discussion with them, in respect to determining what their priorities for roadways are.

Clearly No. 48 might be one of those that in the interim what we do is we provide the kind of restructuring of it that it requires to maintain it as a safe access. But as we move into the future and we have some additional resources which we've included into our budget this year and into the future, this may be one of the roadways that will get the kind of retrofit or expansion that you talked about that it will require. But in the interim what we're doing with the resources that we have available to us is to make sure that we provide at least a safe, efficient roadway until we can do more with it.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have one further question and this one relates to possibly your other role as well. And I'm not sure. It's somewhat tied to Highways but it's over a question that I've talked to . . . and unfortunately when you're talking to . . . say you've talked to the Minister of Highways, with the recent transition, you may not . . . I may not have had a chance to touch base with you. But the town of Rocanville is looking at and would like to purchase or take over the Highway facility that's there. And I believe that's moved into SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). In fact I believe I've chatted with you on that issue because of the fact that now that Highways moved out, it becomes the property of SPMC.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can give me an idea if a decision has been made and whether the town has an opportunity to certainly look at purchasing that facility? They do have a . . . they do have an individual who is willing to take it over and turn it into an ongoing business. Which means, I think, if you look at small town Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, whenever you've got someone who's willing to set up a business, you've got a building in existence, it certainly keeps that town and community looking that much more vibrant.

And so I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if there's any further developments in this area?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you, Mr. Member. Just recently I received a notification that what the Department of Highways has decided of course to do now, is to relocate the building from Rocanville to the town of Churchbridge. That's the community in which we were giving consideration to constructing another facility for them.

And recently the decision has just been made that the cost saving I think, to the Department of Highways by taking that building from its current location in Rocanville, moving it to the Churchbridge, Saskatchewan, will be about \$100,000. And so as a result of that we're going to be moving that building from the community of Rocanville to Churchbridge.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, is it possible to have your officials

confirm that or just notify the community of Rocanville as quickly as possible so that they are aware of it.

I guess the other thing I would ask of you, is if consideration would be given to . . . and I'm not sure if the individual is willing to set up a business there, whether they'd be still be looking at the property with the building gone — if there is any way maybe working with the current foundation that's already there, or else would it just be broken up too much when another building is taken off, when the building is removed from it. Maybe this is something that certainly can be addressed. But if you could respond as quickly as possible, it would be appreciated.

And I thank you, Mr. Minister, and your officials for the time this afternoon.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to your officials, Mr. Minister. I just have a couple of questions on the move of your department to Innovation Place. Can you tell me how many different locales are moved into Saskatoon, into Innovation Place last year?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think that the member is asking, in the restructuring and redesign of the Department of Highways last year, how many of the regional offices might have found their way into the Innovation Place. And parts of four regional areas made their way into Innovation Place. So you have some folks there from Yorkton, and from Saskatoon themselves, some from Swift Current, and some people from North Battleford. So that's the consolidation from those four regions.

Ms. Draude: — The staff that moved into Innovation Place, are they administration? Are they engineers? Or who? What exactly . . . what professions are they?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The staff would be senior executive directors and engineers.

Ms. Draude: — Are any of the people that have been moved into Saskatoon still required to go out to their different localities like Yorkton or Swift Current to do their jobs on a daily or weekly basis?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — All but maybe a couple of technical people that would be . . . that are working currently in Innovation Place, and maybe a couple of folks involved with the gravel side, are the only ones that would be making their way out of Innovation Place to provide services outside of that particular facility.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I'd asked this question before and hadn't received an answer. Could you tell me what it costs to rent the premises at Innovation Place?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The current cost is about \$65,000 — that would be an annual cost.

Ms. Draude: — So is there a cost saving from moving, when it comes to the rental space, from moving these officials from their various departments? Are we saving any rent in the locations they move from?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The overall provincial savings that we're anticipating that we'll achieve in this past year would be about 450,000. What we're looking for, in terms of achieving over a longer period of time, would be about \$800,000, just in the accommodation side itself. And I believe that's what your question is.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have just one other — or a couple other quick questions. I gave you a note and asking about a specific approach at Margo. I'm wondering if you can give me . . . tell me when I'll be able to get some information. Maybe just to clarify, there was a business person at Margo had asked to have an approach put in to allow them to proceed with the business. They had been given verbal approval that it could be built, and now they're unsure if that can be built or not. Can you tell me about it?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well what we'll do, Madam Member, is we'll just review that. As I've just got the information early this afternoon, I'll check it with my officials over the next couple of days and we'll have a response for you in terms of what the possibilities or the abilities are for us to achieve what those people are asking for us to do.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yesterday I raised the subject of the junction of Highway 40 where it enters the Yellowhead. And I think your officials have long since agreed that it's a bad intersection, and one we have to get rid of. And that Highway 40 has to link into the Yellowhead at a 90 degree angle, and at a different spot than it presently does.

And I was asking the minister if you could give me some assurance as to when that project might be undertaken. I wonder if you're now in a position to be able to answer that, Mr. Minister?

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The discussions are currently ongoing with both the city of North Battleford and the city of Battleford to see how we might in fact solve the problem that the member from North Battleford is talking about. And I think the other part of your question was when do you think the analysis might be completed? We're suggesting that we think we'll have that done sometime by midsummer, real early fall, to be able to provide some kind of decision as to how that junction might look like, and configuration might look like in that particular part of the road.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Minister, as your officials will be aware — I'm not sure if you've been brought completely up to date on it — but the city of North Battleford has actually offered to assemble and donate the land to bring Highway 40 along the David Laird Campground, which would be just, I suppose, a couple of kilometres east of where it presently comes in. And that offer still stands from the city.

However, the additional element has now been brought about as a result of the announcement by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

of an \$11 million facility to be located a few kilometres further east on the Yellowhead. And I understand the Wheat Pool is taking the position that they would like Highway 40 to intersect with Highway 16 at or very near where their new facility would be.

I guess what I'm saying is I feel very strongly that the Highway 40 intersection should be moved. Exactly where it is put is not a big priority with me. But I'd ask you if you could comment on those two issues. It seemed to me we're talking about the Wheat Pool new terminal and the David Laird Campground.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think the announcement on the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool facility has just been made, I understand. And the Department of Highways and Transportation haven't had this discussion at all with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in terms of the kinds of configuration or needs that they require in terms of road.

But we certainly appreciate the kinds of work that I think's already begun with both the city of Prince Albert . . . or the city of North Battleford, I mean, and the Department of Highways.

Of course now that we have a new player, as you suggest, that's come forward, there'll need to be then a broader, I think, analysis, discussion with all of those players which includes now, as you suggest, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in attempt to try to come up with a solution that would ensure that we have good access, egress, and provide the kind of safety features that are necessary in development of roadways.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, I appreciate the minister's response. I'd just like to say that my understanding was that up until this spring the time frame in terms of re-routing Highway 40 was something like five years. Now we're going to have the terminal built probably within a year. And I would suggest that that makes this project more urgent, and I was hoping that this project will be bumped up to a much earlier time frame.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — If certainly the inclusion of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's facility there adds to the sort of the cost benefit analysis that we'll be doing on that particular project, that obviously will elevate the importance of the project significantly. Or if there are issues that relate to safety here that we need to be addressing as a department, that too will enhance the level of which the discussion will take place regarding this particular road.

Our anticipation is that those discussions will now need to begin at a different level, considering that we now have a new player as a part of that piece.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like now, if I may, to turn to the issue of the continuation of the twinning of the Yellowhead. Of course you're aware that we will be finished with the twinning from Saskatoon to North Battleford, and you have announced plans for North Battleford to the Alberta border.

Particularly I would like to ask you though, there is going to be another bridge put over the North Saskatchewan River at North Battleford, I understand. Are you able to tell us where that bridge will be?

And related to that, the present bridge, there is a curve as you proceed west from the river — a curve that has been the scene of several accidents — and that curve simply doesn't meet modern standards. I understand the real problem is that if people would abide by the speed limit posted there wouldn't be a problem.

But unfortunately because of highways elsewhere, truckers think they can go at highway speed on that curve, and the fact is they can't. If they go highway speed on that curve they will be in trouble, and oftentimes have been in trouble.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — My understanding in discussing this with my officials is that the new bridge will go somewhere upstream, just a bit upstream from where it is today.

Currently what's happened over the winter months, there have been a number of test holes that have been drilled to see where we might be able to solidify the best base for the new bridge when it goes in; because of course as I'm told, there's been some movement on the one that's currently there.

So by moving it to the new location upstream, what that will do of course is alleviate some of the concerns that you have and some of the casualties, fatalities that have occurred on that curve that you talked about earlier. We expect that that will alleviate some of those issues that you'd raised.

Mr. Hillson: — Well as I understand it, the new bridge that will go in will of course be one-way traffic. It'll be western bound traffic and the present bridge would continue to be the eastward bound traffic bridge. Would the curve then, the existing curve which would now be eastward bound traffic, would that be corrected as part of the twinning project?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The existing roads would be realigned of course, and what you would have here is an interchange of course that would be built as well on the west side, as I understand. That would assist with alleviating some of that problem.

Mr. Hillson: — Will the routing of the Yellowhead continue to be right through the Battlefords, or would it go north of North Battleford to be out of the city? Has your department come to a firm conclusion on that issue?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The answer is that it's staying on the existing location.

Mr. Hillson: — And is there therefore room in the existing location to have the twinned lanes?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'm told that there is sufficient room there to provide the four-laning without any difficulty.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Minister, there are what we call in the Battlefords the old bridges, and they are still part of the highway network. It was my understanding that your intention would be to remove them from the highway network on completion of the westward bound bridge. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — My understanding is that some of the old bridges form part of the old town park, or the city park complex and so some of our thinking here would be to have the discussions with the city of course and see whether or not we can relinquish some of our responsibilities to that particular piece of property to that of the city.

Mr. Hillson: — That is correct, Mr. Minister. The old bridges are the access to parks which are on islands in the river. So are you saying that they would then become a civic responsibility, or do you anticipate that the province would continue to assume some responsibility for those old bridges?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — What we would do is sit down with the city of North Battleford and try to negotiate with them what would be a suitable arrangement, both for them and for the Department of Highways and Transportation.

Mr. Hillson: — Can you give me any indication of the time frame for the second bridge, the westward bound traffic bridge? And can you tell, Mr. Minister, if the plans for proceeding on towards Lloydminster are contingent on federal support, or are they firm in any event?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Our estimate on the bridge is about, we're suggesting somewhere in the neighbourhood of four to seven years.

The other question that you had asked is in respect to what happens with the completion of the twinning of the Yellowhead. Of course it's a solid commitment on the part of this government over the next 15 years. Of course we all appreciate the fact and we know that you'll work hard with us to secure some of the federal funding. That certainly would expediate this process over that period of time.

Mr. Hillson: — So you're saying that the four to seven years on the bridge and the fifteen years to Lloydminster is an independent commitment by the province, that could hopefully be bumped up in time frame with assistance from Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's correct.

Mr. Hillson: — I'm sure we'll be pleased to see if there's any assistance we can give in that regard.

Mr. Minister, you may be aware, I'm sure your officials will be aware that there has periodically been some discussion of a bridge in the Highgate area which would be, I don't know, 20 kilometres further west than where we're talking about. Do I take it that, from your discussion of where you plan on placing the new bridge, that there would be no plans for a bridge at Highgate?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well what we need to do with this particular question is we need to have some discussion within our own department about it. Clearly your travels over these bridges and roads provide you with a great deal more familiarity than certainly I have with them. But in respect to the Highgate area, west of the area that we talked about earlier, we'll do some . . . we'll have some discussion about that within our own department and try to provide some response to you on it.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Minister. That completes my discussions on road plans for my home area.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your officials.

As you're probably aware, it's been probably some 10 years ago that I started having some interaction, as mayor of the town of Rosthern and a member of other communities in that area, with Department of Highways. So we've met on different occasions before, and I think I have to thank the Department of Highways for some of the work that's happened in the Rosthern constituency. There have been quite a number of very positive things that have taken place there.

And I would like to address the first number of questions from that section coming out of the constituency of Rosthern. And the one is the twinning of Highway No. 12 that's taking place near Martensville. And I'm just curious, what is the time line on the completion of that twinning?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Our plans are that we would do the grading on that roadway this year and we would do the paving on it next year, with the opening then in '98.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And the other highway that's had some twinning done on it is Highway 11. And I think the part that's been twinned is very much appreciated and was very necessary. As you're aware, there was a major safety concern with Highway 11 and this has alleviated some of that.

The twinning, as you're probably aware, ends exactly halfway essentially between Osler and Warman, and just stops right there and then we're back to one highway again. And I'm wondering what is the outlook for twinning that highway further on, possibly to the intersection of Highway 312?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'm told that this project is about 40th on the cost benefit list. And that would likely take us, based on the level of funding that we've budgeted over the 10-year period that we talked about, would be about four to five years.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, thank you. Because I've had a number of people who've expressed a lot of gratitude for the safety that's already provided by the twinning that takes place and saying that, you know, the traffic suddenly comes together between two communities. And now the concern is still from that other part on. So I'm glad that at least it's still in the mix there somewhere.

I do have one concern about the twinning of Highway 11. And there's an odd intersection that takes place when you come out of Saskatoon down Warman road and you want to access to Highway 11 going north. And just when you turn off the Warman road, that access is almost a 90-degree corner.

And I think it's turned out being quite a disaster because Warman road is a 90 kilometre stretch and you have to slow down quite drastically to get onto that other approach —

probably down to a speed of about 25 to 40 clicks. It's so bad, in fact, that there is a highway sign that's been set up numerous times right at that intersection. It gets knocked over on a regular basis. And at present, I believe it's the Department of Highways or some local neighbour who's trying to help the situation and has glued reflector tape on the light post that's left.

There are continually light and automotive body parts lying all over that part just from people who've hit that one sign and gone in the ditch there. And I'm wondering if they're looking at that particular intersection there because it is a rather strange one.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'm told that we're going to be . . . this may be an operational problem. That this is one of the pieces of road that we've just did some work on just recently and if there's an operational problem with this particular intersection — and it sounds by what you've described today that there may be some difficulty there — the answer obviously isn't to take the pole down but to do some work with the intersection. And so we're not aware of it at this point in time but our undertaking will be to examine that particular corner.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you very much, and I think it would be very much appreciated by all the people that have to make that access turn there. I'd like to move over to Highway 312 for awhile. Highway 312 is sort of an unfinished thing over there. It was more or less completed from Laird through to the Hepburn corner, but the rest of it through from Laird to Wakaw has not been completed.

With what's happening with grain movement, it seems that most of the grain movement is coming from the Waldheim-Laird-Carlton area to Rosthern. And also coming across from Wakaw, because they're losing their railway track. So that's putting a lot of pressure on 312 to the extent that there's been some definite safety concerns.

I called Department of Highways once or twice on some specific concerns through the previous minister of Highways and had those short-term, immediate concerns taken care of. And I want to thank Department of Highways for that quick action on those particular potholes. But on the long-term scale, Highway 312 is coming apart very rapidly.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The piece of road that you talk about on 312 looks like it's about 14th on our cost analysis list here. Our sense is that that's about two or three years away from getting the kind of work that it likely requires. I think what's important here is this might be one of the roadways though that could in fact be included under the Canada Ag infrastructure program.

And so as we work on over the next year or two we'll try to ensure that it's one that's given that kind of priority considering the kind of traffic that likely . . . grain traffic that it's presently carrying as you mentioned. Some of the rail line is coming out of that particular area which will obviously put more demand on the roadway which then I think would increase its priority under the Ag funding or the Canada Ag funding program.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and you may be aware that there is considerable discussion going on about a high through-put

elevator coming up some place between Hepburn and Duck Lake and there's one or two companies that are discussing that. And if that does take place the pressure on that particular highway will increase dramatically again.

Could you detail your department's criteria for making road improvements in general. Like what sorts of things do you take into consideration when you're looking at making road improvements?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — There are about six or seven components here that would be used as factors when we would be looking at what level a particular roadway would fit, and they would be these. The capital cost to construct or upgrade the roadway; what the annual maintenance and long-term preservation costs of the roadway would be; the change in traffic safety benefits to society; the change in cost of operating a vehicle on that roadway; the change in level of service as measured by improved traffic flow and reduced travel time; society's preference for travel on dust-free surfaces or on four-lane facilities; and I think the final one would be the economic growth in the provincial economy arising from highway improvements. Those would be the factors that we'll be using in determining the cost benefit analysis.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In the discussion on 312 you sort of mention that this may be . . . there may be an opportunity there for some of that infrastructure program. And I'm wondering if you could describe for me highway projects to be included with the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Works Program, which highways are presently sort of earmarked for that program?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — What's important to understand in the Canada Ag infrastructure program is that the decisions as to where the money goes or flows is really dependent upon the outcome of a committee of seven of which the province has only two representatives on it. The federal government I believe have three and the municipalities have two, so that's the compilation of the committee.

I have here, and we can provide a copy of this for you which I think would be more useful, and what it does show is the number of high through-put, by and large, facilities that are being created, designed around the province. And this is where in large part the money from this particular program makes its way to.

I think what I'd like to say here as well is that in our new transportation strategy, one of the important factors is that when we have a high through-put facility like these that are going to be designed, there's going to be some requirement now for those people to come and have a discussion with us.

There will be some requirements here for some licensing of that particular roadway and some partnership here ensuring what some of those costs are going to be, which then provides some other opportunities for the generation of revenue to ensure that we have these kinds of new structures participating in those projects.

Mr. Heppner: — Some of the projects that will fall underneath

this category of this joint infrastructure — are any of those projects that would have gone ahead had the infrastructure program not been announced? In other words, are all these projects new and sort of over and above what the Department of Highways would have done without that?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — What the Canada Agri structure program has really done is it's expedited the process in terms of getting the money to do these kinds of highway projects that likely would have been done over time only it's brought them to fruition a bit earlier than what we would have anticipated.

Mr. Heppner: — You mentioned in a question or two back the committee that's made up that puts this together, and I believe the partnerships that were involved in that. Since some of these projects depend on municipal application for projects in their area, is there any of the planning that the Department of Highways had done in the past that kind of gets thrown into disarray because of a new program that's suddenly provided for you?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think the best answer to that question might be that with the, certainly with the development of the high through-put facilities that we're seeing all around the province, this is clearly . . . and the deregulation of many of the railroads or rail lines, this has put a tremendous added pressure onto the highway network. And to compensate for some of those pressures of course we have the new program, the new federal program.

Through the partnership of course with the municipalities and the province and through that committee, what we're seeing here is hopefully an increased amount of dialogue through the area planning authorities or transportation planning authorities. We're going to see more dialogue both with the railroads and the grain companies to ensure that we can alleviate some of those additional pressures that are on the roadways today.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The mayor of Gull Lake has expressed considerable concern that Highway No. 37 is suffering pretty badly due to some of the commercial traffic that's there. With some of the new programs and funds that have sort of come through, with what we've just been talking about, I wonder if you could comment on the condition of Highway 37, and if there's any intentions to put some money into Highway 37 and do some upgrading on that particular roadway.

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well what we'll do with this particular project, it was submitted as a CAIP (Canada Agriculture Infrastructure Program) project. It wasn't approved however. There are two more years of the CAIP program and our hope, of course, is that it may get some approval over the next couple of years.

So what we'll do with this particular roadway is continue to provide the kind of maintenance that we can in the short term.

Mr. Heppner: — There's already been some questioning this afternoon on road crews and depots that have been cut. Having sort of gone through a year of those sorts of things and looking

at the situation now, is there any possibility of some those road crews and depots being reinstated?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well what we've just . . . we're just in the process of completing some of that consolidation that you talk about. That process was scheduled to take place over a period of two years. So we're into our second year of that consolidation.

We've had one . . . part of a summer of course and one winter season with the work crews as they've been left in the rural areas . . . or in the regional areas. And with the consolidation, we're continuing to examine what the outcomes are going to be into the future.

We have our joint study that's under . . . that we're currently undergoing with UMAC, which is the union membership side. And we'll monitor it over the next year. If there's some need for us to add some additional resources to areas where we're not providing the kinds of services that we believe we should be, then some of that of course can be undertaken.

But at this point in time, it's our sense that it's early in the day based on the restructuring process and would like to see . . . I'd like to have some time with it first.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Back in August of '92 the province began a process of trying to work itself into international registration plans for commercial vehicles to simplify the cost of commercial vehicles operating in Saskatchewan. And so it had basically two components to it.

Our target date on that plan was October 1, '93. Where are we at with that right now and how successful is it?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The member's right that those target dates were set, I believe, for '93. We don't . . . I believe the discussion that I had with the individual who has most of the information around this, we didn't bring with us today. But the answer to this I think is that now that we've expanded some of our work, in terms of looking at harmonization regulation across North America, which certainly expands broader the work with our U.S. (United States) friends, this target date is of course moved a bit.

We can provide you more detail on that into the future. But we don't know exactly when we hope to reach sort of full conclusion to those discussions that we're having.

Mr. Heppner: — I think probably both you and I have a study prepared by Canadian Automobile Association of Saskatchewan that shows that between '91 and '94 the ratio of budgeted dollars expended by Highways and Transportation versus the fuel tax collected has fallen from \$1.30 to 59 cents, a drop of approximately 50 per cent.

A study from last December, CAA (Canadian Automobile Association) determined that only 46 per cent of money collected from fuel tax and licence registration was being spent on roads. And I don't think much has changed in the last little while.

Do you feel this is fair to motorists of Saskatchewan that revenues that are collected under the guise of that kind of a tax are not being put back in development of roads which seems the logical thing because that's very much . . . The person who uses the roads would be the person that would be paying for it the most and the money would be going back into the roads.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I think what's important to recognize here is that government doesn't dedicate tax. And I know that you've had this discussion several times over.

In Saskatchewan what we're attempting to do of course is — with this budget — we're putting in an additional \$30 million this year into roads and transportation. We've made a commitment to the Saskatchewan people that over the next 10 years you're going to see a budget of somewhere . . . or a figure expended of somewhere within the neighbourhood of about \$2.5 billion.

I mean the question that you raise is, you know, do we have enough money today for roads? Well clearly the answer is, is that if we could get another 40 or \$50 million and dedicate it to our roadways across the province, we could enhance them significantly.

But when you have a limited budget that we work with and we have a tremendous number of priorities across the piece of government, then of course the Highways budget needs to take its portion of that and we attempt to do what we can with the resources that are dedicated to us.

But if there was certainly some way that we might see some additional revenue flow our way, we have lots of avenues where we could dedicate it to in the transportation system or in the highway network.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You will recall that over the last year the issue has come up of cheques being sent out by your department to people who sustain damages to their vehicles because of potholes or other road conditions that damage the vehicles.

Could you tell us the maximum amount that has been paid out to any single recipient of this kind of compensation this year?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — One that we know of offhand was around \$4,000. We don't have the verification of that with us here today, but our sense is that that would have been the highest one that we have paid out to any single recipient through the course of this particular year.

Mr. Heppner: — Last question for this afternoon, Mr. Minister. We've discussed to some extent where you get the revenue from for your highways and discussed the possibility of getting it from taxes, and some of it comes from infrastructure sharing program and this sort of thing.

I believe the province picked up what sounds like a major number of dollars — \$21 million — to compensate Saskatchewan for the loss of the Crow. I'd like to hear your comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well my sense of this of course is that this \$21 million is only one part of the pay-out of the 84 million I believe over a period of four years. And of that, I believe that \$7 million of that makes its way to the Department of Highways and Transportation. The other \$21 million . . . or \$14 million, excuse me, makes its way to the municipalities.

Is this a significant compensation for Saskatchewan in terms of the loss of the Crow benefit? Of course it's not anywhere near what we require here to maintain our roadways and sustain our roadways across the province.

Certainly part of that of course, is with the deregulation of railroads in this province and across Canada, we're going to see more and more pressure on our roadways. We talked a little bit about that earlier this afternoon. And we're going to need a substantive amount of revenue funding in the next while just to sustain some of that roadway for us as the road traffic becomes heavier and the truck traffic increases.

And that's part of why, as I said yesterday in some of my comments around the transportation strategy, we need to be a lot smarter in terms of how we spend our money into the future as it relates to transportation. We need to include much broader partnerships with the grain companies, with local authorities, to see how we might be able to manage that into the future.

So although the federal government has made a contribution in the amount of 84 million over that period of time, it doesn't touch the kinds of pressures that we have in the road system.

Mr. Heppner: — I would like to thank the minister and his officials for answering the questions this afternoon. Also a thank you to the Department of Highways and to the minister for the attention that you have paid to my constituency. It's one of the few areas in rural Saskatchewan that is growing very rapidly, and as such it puts a unique pressure on highways as far as safety is concerned. And we'll keep you up to date on other concerns that we have. Thank you.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just before we let the officials go this afternoon, could you provide us with a complete list of highways equipment that you intend to dispose of in the course of this fiscal year? And what would be the estimated cost to the department of its disposal?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — We're currently just comprising the list of assets that we would be disposing of in this current year. And if it would suit the member what we could do is provide that later on in this year, which would be . . . because we don't have that complete list yet. And if we were to provide it for you now, it wouldn't have all of the equipment on it that I think you'd want to know about.

So if we could do that later on in this year sometime, midsummer or so, that might be more advantageous to you.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the minister. Then if we have your undertaking that that listing in detail will be provided as available later in the summer, then that would be satisfactory for us here this afternoon.

I've already had opportunity in prior estimate sessions to state my case for the highways in my constituency; I won't get into that here this afternoon. I think we've made some of the conditions obvious to the department in that regard. And in fact I did receive some more pothole patrol forms at my constituency office again today in fact. So I do intend to present the balance of them to you next week in the spirit of cooperation.

So I would thank the officials who have been so diligent here this afternoon and I'll just take my place.

(1630)

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 16 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Highways and Transportation
Vote 16**

Items 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 16 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation
Vote 53**

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me today, to my right is Mr. John Law, president of the corporation. To my immediate left is Mr. Al Moffat, who is the vice-president of commercial services. Behind Mr. Moffat is Mr. Garth Rusconi, who's the vice-president of commercial services. Directly behind me is Ms. Deb Koshman, who's the vice-president of finance and corporate services. And behind Mr. Law is Mr. Rob Isbister, who is the director of financial planning, finance, and corporate services.

Item 1

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

Piggybacking somewhat on a question I put moments ago — to you in fact but with your officials of the Department of Highways — I understand now from the question that you won't be able to tell me exactly what equipment you intend to dispose of at this point in time anyway for the Department of Highways.

But could you explain for us this afternoon what will be the eventual tendering process for that equipment when it's turned over to you for disposal? Perhaps you could also outline for us

who traditionally has been buying this equipment? What traditionally have you been able to obtain in terms of percentage of what might have been the original purchase price — how many cents on the dollar perhaps would be another way of expressing it. And would you be able to advise us a little bit further in detail when I ask who traditionally is buying the equipment? Are there a lot of out-of-province firms that are actually purchasing this equipment that you're disposing of for the Department of Highways?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — As I'd mentioned earlier to the member under the Highways estimates, what's currently being undertaken is that the Department of Highways of course, would be putting together the inventory of equipment across the province that would be required for sale or that we'd be selling.

What would happen with that of course, is that those lists would then be provided to the Saskatchewan Property Management and would list on each of those sheets in which locations of the province that equipment would be located; if in fact some of the equipment may need to be moved to another department — or a depot, I mean — if you didn't have enough in one particular location. Then there would be an advertising process, a public advertising process, and then all of the equipment would go to a sealed open tender process.

Now the question that you asked is, who buys the equipment? This equipment of course, could be bid on by not only people from within the province but anyone who has an interest in a piece of equipment, if they were to read the ad and then come in and make a sealed open tender . . . or sealed bid on it.

I think just by way of information, last year the Saskatchewan Property Management handled one of the largest equipment tender sales on behalf of the Department of Highways. I think there were something like 3,000 bids that we had and they were from all over western Canada. And the net value of that sale last year was about \$1.9 million.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, would you be able to express that \$1.9 million in . . . being that's a disposal price, what sort of percentage of the original purchase cost of that equipment might you estimate that to be?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — We wouldn't . . . Saskatchewan Property Management wouldn't know what that percentage would be. That would be a better question I think that would need to be posed to the Department of Highways and they can provide you with some of that information.

Mr. Aldridge: — Whoops, I've let them go.

I'm going to switch to a different topic now and it concerns air ambulance services in the province. I had, earlier in this year, asked through freedom of information for information concerning air ambulance trip statistics, and I know at that time in the response you weren't able to advise us to the end of the '96-97 fiscal year as far as the number of trips by air ambulance.

I believe I'm looking . . . well I'm looking at the document in front of me here right now. As of January 31 the total trips for

the fiscal year had been 572. I wonder would you have the ending . . . year end figure now for us?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — We don't have that current information that you want to date. We're still getting that detail from the Department of Health. But we'll have that in the next bit and we can provide that for the member.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And to the minister, I would appreciate getting that information when you're able to. But regardless, I think the statistics themselves as I look at them on this document, are significant enough. Of 1991-92 there was only 398 air ambulance trips, and as of the of January 31 of '97 there have been 572, so there has been a significant increase in the air ambulance needs in the province.

So we were certainly welcoming the addition of the new aircraft to the air ambulance service. I was wondering if you might just briefly outline some of the attributes of this particular aircraft that make it most suited for the air ambulance service that it is now within.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I very much appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak a little bit about our air ambulance service. The demand of course on our air ambulance service has grown significantly, as you pointed out, in terms of numbers. But as important to that is that over the last couple of years there's been a huge demand to fly a number of our residents from Saskatchewan, for specialized services, outside of the province.

And I want to in particular talk about the child's . . . the Children's Hospital in Toronto, where we've probably in the past year had a number of trips there which have really been able to ensure that in two or three instances have in fact saved the lives of young people who we've taken to Toronto.

This new aircraft of course, will now be able to make that non-stop flight at a much quicker rate than we would have in the past. This new aircraft of course, can land on any of the airstrips across the province that we have. So accessibility to good quality health care, emergency transport service, is greatly improved across the province.

In 1996-97 alone, there's been a 25 per cent increase in air miles that are flown. We now have somewhere in the neighbourhood of over 300,000 miles that have been flown by this particular service.

We're just extremely pleased that we have this kind of a state-of-the-art service in our province, and we know that it will make a tremendous difference to the quality of health care in rural Saskatchewan in particular.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Concerning the other aircraft that I'm assuming will be retained in the air ambulance service . . . or *Lifeguard One*, I guess. Is that what it is referred to as? I understand that it is; although it's an older aircraft, I think it's pressurized and it's a relatively high-speed craft as well.

Given that there is such a significant increase in the number of

air ambulance trips that are required, and that I'm told that in the past, when you really only had *Lifeguard One* as a fully pressurized aircraft available for the air ambulance service, whenever it was out on a mission, I'm told that there either had to be an aircraft charter or else an unpressurized Navajo out of SPMC was put into service. And my understanding is those types of crafts are not very good in terms of transporting patients who have serious complications.

Could I get your undertaking here this afternoon that *Lifeguard One* will continue to be used for the air ambulance service — because I think it will be needed as well — rather than just transporting ministers around the province instead. Because I really do think that there is a need to have it on stand-by, another pressurized, relatively high-speed aircraft for air ambulance use. So could I just get that undertaking from you this afternoon?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The old non-pressurized Navajo is now out of service. And so what we're using, of course, is the old Cheyenne II, which is our backup. This aircraft is on duty now for 12 hours per day, and is currently located in Saskatoon. I think part of what you say is what we're examining as well, in that these are very, very . . . this is a very old aircraft. It has a tremendous number of air hours on it as well. It serves us well around the province to provide some of the backup services. But we expect that as the demand increases on our new aircraft, that they'll need to be consider — there will need to be additional considerations around what the backup services might be. We acknowledge your position on this.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And, Mr. Minister, I'm switching topics here again. Concerning the fire that occurred at the Kelsey Institute in Saskatoon, we had heard through the media, various estimates of the costs of damages. One example was \$5 million, and on another occasion it was quoted as less than 5 million, and then again at over 5 million. I'm wondering if you could provide a little bit more certainty for us this afternoon as to what the costs of damages may have been?

And also with respect to the fire and the extensive damage that it has caused, my understanding of the situation was that there was smoke being detected by officials on the site but they weren't able to determine exactly where it was coming from. And I think there was a little bit of confusion surrounding whether or not it might have been just some smell of smoke that might have related to some of the trades that occur, the training that occurs in the building.

And I'm just wondering, as well as providing this more accurate estimate to the cost of damages and what is going to be done to make repairs during this year, could you also advise us if there is anything undertaken by your department to try and prevent a similar situation from occurring in the future, where detection could be a more certain thing in an instance such as this.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The question that you raised is one that we've been having to respond to on a fair number of occasions

as well, and that is what is the actual cost of the damages to that particular building. Our estimate today is that that will be about \$5.5 million before we have all of the work completed.

What's important to note here is that work will all get completed within a period of about three months. So before the school year again in September, all of the students that will be returning, or new students that will be coming to the institute, will be nicely accommodated again.

Your question about how it is that there wasn't earlier detection on this, what we have done of course after the fire is had a number of people from the Fire Commissioner's office tour the building. And there seems to be no indication here at all that any of our sensor systems weren't working. In fact it supported that they were all in place, and should have detected that.

But apparently the fire was trapped between two levels — between the roof and a secondary level just below the roof line, which was constructed there I think, when the building was initially designed for future expansion upwards. And so this is where most of the fire occurred.

I think the other piece that I think is important here is that the fire . . . right after the fire, all of the students were accommodated in various locations around Saskatoon in a period of about 48 hours. So it was a tremendous undertaking; there was about 300,000 square feet of space that was required. Through the work of the staff at Saskatchewan Property Management and the diligent work of both employees and management at SIAST, all of the students were accommodated for classes within about a 48-hour period. So this was a tremendous undertaking by a great many people.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And, Mr. Minister, a final topic here this afternoon concerning the allocation of the \$8 million that we see in the *Estimates* for renewal of assets. I'm wondering how much of this is going towards the restoration of the legislature itself. And in terms of that restoration process, could you perhaps briefly outline what's going to take place here in the building — interior- and exterior-wise.

Also just if you could advise us how long your government has been aware that this work has been required on the building. And perhaps a comment as to how much money could have been saved by the government if this work had been undertaken a bit sooner than this current . . . than getting started in this current year.

Perhaps if you could also advise us if all the contracts related to the restoration work have been tendered, awarded; and if they have, could you provide us with a detailed list of that?

And with that I'll take my seat and let you respond.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The \$8 million . . . Of the \$8 million that's been identified for work this year, \$5 million of that is designated for work to be done on this building.

The majority of that work of course, will be done on the foundation of the building, to secure the base and the structure of the building. So there'll be a fair bit of activity around here

over the next little while. There will be excavation that will be undertaken to take out a fair bit of the soil underneath the building because it's wet and we need to put in a new enforced piling system under parts of it.

The question as to how long we've known about it — well we've been monitoring this since about 1982. Could we have begun the process a bit earlier? I suppose the answer to that is that we could have. We could have begun the process a bit earlier.

Is there any indication here that this is going to be a more expensive project today than it might have been, say five years ago? Well at this point in time we don't have anything that might be able to relate to us that that could be the case. Has the contracts . . . there hasn't been . . . the tender's gone out for work on the building. We've received them now. We've examined them at the corporation but we have not yet awarded any of the contractual work to date.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And to the minister, if you could at the time when the awards are made, if you could undertake to provide us with that information as well.

And having said that, that concludes my questioning for this afternoon and I would at this time just like to thank the minister's officials and the minister for your responses and also for the undertakings you provided to us in terms of additional informations that will be coming very soon. I'll take my place and just wish everybody a very nice long weekend.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2 agreed to.

Vote 53 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to take this occasion, Mr. Chairman, to thank the member for these questions this afternoon, and as well to wish the member and others in the House a good, safe weekend and to extend an appreciation to my officials who are here this afternoon for the excellent work that they've done in the preparation of this year's budget. So thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: — I want to wish members that they should have a good weekend. It's too late to have a good, long weekend, but a good weekend none the less. It being past the normal hour of adjournment, the committee will rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Deputy Speaker: — Before adjournment, I want to wish everyone a very happy and joyous Victoria Day weekend to all the members here and to everyone in Saskatchewan. Enjoy yourselves. Enjoy the good weather and all come back. Hopefully, God willing, we will all meet here again Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

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