

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the community of Rhein.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

This petition comes from the Gravelbourg and Bateman area of the south-west, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have petitions to present to the Assembly. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

And these petitions are signed by individuals from the Moosomin, Fleming, Langbank areas.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Langenburg, Spy

Hill, and Saltcoats. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

And these come from the community of Govan. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

Everyone who signed this petition is from Saltcoats.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have a petition to present this afternoon on behalf of Saskatchewan taxpayers. This petition surrounds the issue of Jack Messer and the Channel Lake fiasco and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

And the signatures are primarily from Weyburn. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the Plains Health Centre closure. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who have signed this petition are predominantly from the Health minister's constituency. I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina here, they're from Lumsden, they're from Assiniboia, and all throughout the land. And I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today to present on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the people from Coronach and from Big Beaver. And I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and I'll read the prayer.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, have been coming all the way from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and today more specifically they come from the communities of Cabri, Success, and Hazlet. I'm happy to present them today.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Petitions with respect to the following matters: funding the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; policies to deal with the problem of youth crime; saving the Plains Health Centre; banning the practice of night hunting; and ending severance payments to Jack Messer, and for an independent inquiry into Channel Lake.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: in 1995, an Alberta group known as the Fort McMurray Youth Outreach Centre operated a vacation resort for business people in north-western Saskatchewan, attempted to access public funds by claiming to be operating a camp for underprivileged youth. A criminal investigation was started because of allegations that the group fraudulently claimed to be a charitable organization when in fact it was a business. Has there been any successful prosecutions arising from this case; what steps have been taken to ensure that this type of operation will not be attempted again; what happened to the assets of this operation; and how were they dispersed?

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

Given that the proposed new review section 50.1 of The Education Act regulations states that, and I quote: "an allegation of discrimination pursuant to the Human Rights Code or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms" cannot be a basis for the placement of a pupil, where do parents and children go who have legitimate human rights and Canadian charter rights issues?

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question of the Minister of Justice:

How many applications for assistance and/or board hearings are presently in the possession of the Surface Rights Arbitration Board; how many applications have been dealt with in each of the past five years; how many applications have been on the books unsettled for more than one year; what is the average length of time between the receipt of an application and the resolution (a) by private, negotiated settlement; or (b) by board hearings?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a kind of an in-house statement of particular interest to members, legislative staff, and visitors, and of general interest to all Saskatchewan people who like to see one of our own excel.

Those of us who dine in the legislative cafeteria no doubt have noticed . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. It's introduction of guests. Was the Provincial Secretary wishing to be recognized for introduction of guests? Yes, recognize the Provincial Secretary for introduction of guests.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you. I was on the members'

statements, which I'll get to in a moment . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, one at a time.

I want to introduce Trent Brears and Pam Poitras, and as I think many members of the House will not be unaware, I'll have more to say on these two later on under members' statements.

But now I know the House will want to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House, two individuals from the community of Waldheim in my constituency, Russell Willems and Corey Adrian. I'd ask them to stand. They're both avid watchers of political events throughout this province. Let's give them a good welcome to this legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also ask the Assembly to help me welcome 12 grade 12's from White Calf Collegiate in the beautiful community of Lebret, who are here seated in your gallery; and they're accompanied by their teacher, Darlyne Hoberg. And they're here to watch the proceedings and I'll be meeting with them shortly after question period. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alongside my colleague from Melville I also want to take the opportunity to welcome the aboriginal students that are here today. I think it's very important to take advantage of opportunities such as this to see how the Assembly works. And being an aboriginal person myself, I'm quite pleased to see that. And I eventually hope that many of you come along and occupy some of these seats in the near future because that's certainly part of our effort to establish ourselves as an aboriginal people in this province. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased today to welcome 14 students from SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), the Wascana Institute, enrolled in employability skills training program. They're accompanied by their teacher Jack Mitchell, and I'll look forward to meeting with these people at 2:30 in 218. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Precipitators added to Boundary Dam

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Environment and Resource Management announced on behalf of the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), a \$66 million investment to reduce

particulate emissions at Boundary dam station, power station, through the installation of electrostatic precipitators.

A memorandum of understanding between SaskPower and the Department of the Environment and Resource Management has put in place long-term initiatives as part of an action plan which commits to the goal of a sustainable environment. The electrostatic precipitators will remove up to 99 per cent of particulate emissions from the stacks of the coal-fired plant.

Through a competitive tender, ABB Power has been awarded the contract to design, manufacture, install, and commission the first of five precipitators. The remaining four will be added at a rate of one per year, providing further job creation and additional economic benefits.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister responsible for Environment and Resource Management said:

This agreement and the lead initiative will go a long way towards creating economic benefits while helping to pass on a clean, safe and sustainable environment to future generations.

This government is committed to environmental issues and we will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Cadet Biathlon Champions

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and recognize No. 2815 Naicam Legion Army Cadet Corps, which has represented the province at the National Cadet Biathlon competition for the past four years.

To reach this level of competition, these cadets qualified as one of the top six teams at the Saskatchewan Army Cadet Corps biathlon, and then competed at the Tri-service biathlon where top teams from the Army, Navy, and Air Cadet Corps competed and advanced to the nationals.

This year the ladies' teams of cadets Louise Weber, Helen Meekins, and Jackie Kellington brought home gold medals for the aggregate, which is the combined times in sprint and individual races; gold in relay; gold in the overall aggregate team awards, which is the combined times of each member in the 5-kilometre sprint, 6-kilometre individual relay, and 6-kilometre team patrol competition. Cadet Weber also won a bronze medal for the Individual.

Also competing at this competition was a composite team of two males and two females consisting of cadets Tracy Brechbuel from La Ronge, Jennifer Griffith from Naicam, Colty Reschny from Saskatoon, and Allan Knights from Moose Jaw. They finished fourth in the relay.

The male team was represented by 889 La Ronge Air Cadets.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to extend congratulations to these cadets as well as to their coaches, Capt. Scott Ponath and Cadet Leader Maria Leonard, for their hard

work and success at the Nationals.

Lloydminster School Construction Project

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In last Thursday's wonderful budget, which the members of the Tory Party are afraid to debate, the Minister of Finance announced a 43 per cent increase in school capital funding. The Minister of Education has agreed to spend a portion of it in Lloydminster.

As the minister said, we are committed to securing the future of the province by investing in Saskatchewan children and youth. The minister also said, and here I am quoting, Mr. Speaker, I am quoting the minister, so I can't be accused of being partisan:

“. . . over the past few years the vibrant community of Lloydminster has experienced economic growth and corresponding enrolment growth in both school systems.

That's my town, Mr. Speaker, growing and vibrant.

Three new projects have been announced. A new public elementary school, construction to begin this year; a new gym, additional classrooms, science and music areas for Father Gorman Elementary School, also to be done this year; the approval for the planning design of a new high school for the separate school system, construction to begin in '99 — just in time for the new century.

We, Mr. Speaker, are committed to providing all our students with safe and well-equipped learning environments. These announcements are a good start. No wonder the Tories don't want to talk about the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dene High School Hosts Regional Wrestling Competition

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to the Assembly today that the Dene High School in La Loche hosted a successful regional wrestling tournament for the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association. Dene High School welcomed 17 schools and approximately 170 participants and coaches from places all around Saskatchewan.

Half of the participants came the day before to take part in the Dene High School's Culture Day. Culture Day is an important part of the year for the Dene students, and as always it was a great success. The day was full of activities ranging from ice fishing to snowshoeing, and concluded with Dene songs and old-time dances.

Mr. Speaker, this day is especially important for promoting the uniqueness of the Dene culture to the tournament's visitors. Saturday's tournament was an excellent display of skill, training, and sportsmanship by the athletes and their coaches. The crowd was treated to a fine show of competition. Dene High School athletes were very successful in their matches and they will be sending eight wrestlers to the provincial competition on March 27, 28 here in Regina.

I would like to congratulate the eight Dene High School athletes who were successful, as well as all the participants who made the weekend tournament a success. I know that Dene High School and La Loche did an excellent job in representing northern Saskatchewan, and it's just one more example of the many good happenings in the North. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Culinary Team Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I began to say with such enthusiasm, if not an exquisite sense of timing, those of us who dine in the legislative cafeteria have noticed a delicious difference in the menu of late. We've gone from having meals which one might say are befitting for MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) to meals befitting a king and a queen.

In no small measure, this culinary change is the responsibility of Mr. Trent Brears, who's now the chef for the legislative food services. I think I speak for all of us when I say we're delighted to have him here. And I think we're delighted as well that the world outside the Legislative Building is beginning to learn of his talent, although all of us may have reason to fear the results.

Trent was the team captain of Culinary Team Saskatchewan at the Eighth Annual Inter-provincial Culinary Arts Competition held in Saskatoon the weekend before last. Teams from western Canada and from Quebec were competing for the top prize, with the ultimate goal of winning a spot on the Canadian Olympic team. I'm happy to report that Team Saskatchewan won silver in the hot kitchen competitions and gold in the cold. No one here will be surprised to hear that Trent himself had the highest score for his cold platter.

I ask all members to join with me in congratulating Mr. Trent Brears.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and University of Saskatchewan Collaborate On New Atlas

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a collaboration between a division of Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and the University of Saskatchewan that will benefit the scientific and educational community — a small, specific, technical example of how this government is cooperating with any number of groups to advance our province.

The geomatics division of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) has entered into an agreement with the University of Saskatchewan to develop a new atlas of Saskatchewan — a book of maps, charts, that will assist any number of students and researchers in a number of different ways.

SPMC is providing the university, at no cost, access to certain digital products to be used in the production of the atlas. On completion, the atlas will be jointly owned by both partners. Both will have the distribution rights and both will share in any

revenue, with most of that going to the university.

The project is progressing on schedule and publication expected in 1999. I congratulate all those involved. Mr. Speaker, in matters great and small, the people of Saskatchewan and their agencies are cooperating to bring us into the new century well equipped and knowledgeable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

New Bed and Breakfast in Historic Unity House

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 1, some friends of mine purchased a family heirloom of sorts. Murray and Joan Haughian bought the Leeson house in Unity. The house was ordered out of an Eaton's catalogue and built by Murray's great-grandfather in 1917.

Murray's grandparents moved from their farm in the '20s or '30s and the house was left vacant. In 1946 it was purchased and moved into Unity. In the 1950s the Leeson house became the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) barracks for the Unity detachment, which it remained until 1967. Murray says there is still a bomb shelter in the basement from the Diefenbaker days. The house has changed hands at least four times since then. And in 1991, Murray and Joan bought the house Murray's great-grandfather built.

With all the history of the house, Murray and Joan thought it would make an ideal bed and breakfast. Family members decided to call the new venture with an old history, the Leeson House Bed and Breakfast.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Murray and Joan Haughian and others like them for finding new ways to enhance Saskatchewan's heritage and economy. Mr. Speaker, if you go to Unity this fall to speak to students, may I suggest you call the Leeson House Bed and Breakfast. The hospitality will be gracious.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the minister responsible for CIC. Mr. Minister, the calls for a public inquiry are getting louder every day. We want a public inquiry; Morris Bodnar wants a public inquiry, Jack Messer wants a public inquiry, 87 per cent of the *Leader-Post* readers want a public inquiry. Even the Liberal member from North Battleford is warming up to the idea of a public inquiry.

Mr. Minister, the only people who don't seem to want a public inquiry around here are you. Why not? What are you protecting here? What are you hiding? Mr. Minister, will you do the right thing and call a public inquiry into this whole fiasco surrounding Jack Messer and Channel Lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the member opposite has asked the question

because in fact we are going to have a public inquiry and it's going to happen right here in the legislature as soon as you want to go to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that . . . Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite that two of the main witnesses who we want to come to the committee, and I know members from the Liberal caucus would like to interview, and I'm sure that if you have the courage you would want to interview . . . Mr. Messer said last week, and I quote, "I will willingly be there," referring to the legislative committee, about the inquiry. He says there is no reason to force, or by any way that he would need to be subpoenaed to come. He's ready to go.

But even more interesting, I have here a letter to the Chair of the committee, your desk mate, that I want to read into the record if I could, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — What's the date on it?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The date is March 20. It's addressed to the Chair of the committee. It says:

Dear Ms. Draude: I represent Lawrence . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. The time has expired. And the hon. member knows that we're not, the hon. member knows that we're not to use proper names of members, but they must be referred to, when in debate in the House, in the context of their positions they hold.

Next question.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, did SaskPower, Mr. Minister, did SaskPower, CIC, or your department, or Channel Lake ever hire your old buddy, Reg Gross, to do any consulting work during that period that Channel Lake was owned by SaskPower? Was Reg Gross involved in any way in the sales transaction with DEML (Direct Energy Marketing Limited)?

Will you table a list of all persons and companies who had consulting contracts or any other contracts to do with Channel Lake or with SaskPower in regards to the management of Channel Lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to you and through you to the members opposite, obviously these kind of questions are the very questions that should and will be asked in the committee when you have the courage to call Public Accounts.

But I want to say again, and go back to the letter that was sent to the Chair of Public Accounts dealing with the inquiry that we want to have into this issue. And I want to quote:

"Dear Chair," (and I put in quotes) "Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts:"

I represent Lawrence Portigal, who has been mentioned as a prospective witness before your committee on hearings into the disposition by SaskPower of Channel Lake Petroleum Ltd.

I am instructed to advise that Mr. Portigal will make himself available to your committee upon request. Mr. Portigal resides in Calgary and will appreciate if he can receive as much notice as possible.

So I say to you, sir, you should ask your desk mate to call the committee, and the public inquiry in fact will start.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we have been informed that Reg Gross did do work for DEML related to the purchase of Channel Lake from SaskPower. If he was also working for SaskPower then he's playing both sides of the fence, as he's famous for.

This is the kind of information we need to conduct a full investigation of Channel Lake. And by withholding that information you are showing that the Public Accounts Committee just simply cannot work. But you won't give us the information because you know we need it to do the work on this project.

Mr. Minister, will you table a list of every person or company, including Reg Gross, who have had a consulting contract or any other contract with Channel Lake or with SaskPower, CIC, or your department. And if you won't provide that information, who are you protecting here?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, as the Liberals were saying earlier today, the Tory Party is not coming clean with the people of Saskatchewan, and is not only holding up the business of the House at great expense to the taxpayers, but is refusing to call the committee that these very questions could be asked — to whom? Could be asked to Mr. Portigal, who is ready to appear before the committee.

Did Reg Gross work for Mr. Portigal? I'm interested in knowing that. Let's get the committee going so we can find out the answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Legal Opinions on Channel Lake

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, yesterday the Minister for CIC admitted that CIC got a legal opinion from your department with regards to Channel Lake. What was that legal opinion about, what kind of advice did CIC ask for, and will you release that legal opinion today?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite who yelled . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order, order. Now I'll ask

for the cooperation from all members of the House, on both sides of the House. It is getting a bit difficult to hear both the question being put and the answer being provided. Order, order. And the question was able to clearly be put in an uninterrupted way and I'll for cooperation to permit the minister to respond in the same fashion.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite that the questions they are asking here will all be answered in great detail at the public inquiry that will be held by a committee of this legislature. There will be an inquiry, and it will start on March 31 as soon as we get confirmation from the Chair of the committee that in fact the committee can go to work.

But I say to the member opposite, the people that are calling my office are saying, when will the Conservatives go back to work? They're on strike in the House, they're on strike as it relates to the committees. And they're asking me, when will they go back to work? That's the question the people of Saskatchewan are asking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is again for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, you had all the legal opinions — you had the Gerrand opinion, you had the Justice opinion, yet you had to get another one from MLT (MacPherson Leslie & Tyerman). Why? What was wrong with the first two? Don't you trust your own Department of Justice?

Mr. Minister, the Justice opinion said one of two things. Either it said you have to pay Jack Messer severance, which means you don't need another opinion from MLT; or it said you don't have to pay Jack Messer. Which means you went out and shopped around until you found a lawyer who would fix Jack up for you. Which one is it, Mr. Minister? Why won't you release the Justice opinion, and what are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — To the member opposite, in his question he asks about the opinion, why we required an opinion from McPherson Leslie & Tyerman on the issue, the Rob Garden opinion. Let me tell you this again because obviously you haven't listened in the days leading up to this, where I said Milt Fair was given the file as it related to the severance of Mr. Messer. He engaged MLT to do an opinion, and that's the opinion that you're referring to.

But the real question again is a Bill that is being considered by the member for Regina South, which is a back-to-work legislation for the Conservatives in your caucus so we can get on with the work of the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the other day the Finance minister made about the only honest statement we've had from the NDP (New Democratic Party) in the last two weeks. The statement went as follows: if you asked 100 different lawyers you'd get 100 different opinions. That's just about what you did, Mr. Minister. You went and shopped around to lawyer after lawyer until you finally found one who gave you the opinion you wanted. And it turns out he's the

attorney of record for DEML, the same company that bought Channel Lake. Now isn't that just a cosy little arrangement.

Mr. Minister, you keep telling us this is a legal issue. Then why won't you release the legal opinions? What are you hiding? Mr. Minister, will you stop hiding behind your lame excuses and release all the legal opinions today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite there's only one group in this Assembly hiding and that's the Conservative caucus hiding from a committee which they chair. Now that's, that's . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — This is an interesting, an interesting opposition — an interesting opposition that hides in the seats here ringing the bells to hide from a committee that they chair. Does that make any sense? That's why the public is very confused about why you call yourselves the official opposition.

Now I know how you like doing things in the dark of the night, in secret, when you're putting together this so-called new party, but I'll tell you Channel Lake will be dealt with in a full and public inquiry here in the Assembly as soon as you screw up your courage to come and chair the committee meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Funding in Regina

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Regina District Health Board held an emergency meeting yesterday and guess what, Mr. Speaker, what the meeting was about? That's right, it was to discuss the problem that they've got of a \$5 million deficit this coming fiscal year — \$5 million.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has already cut millions out of the health care budget. This NDP government has closed 400 hospital beds in Regina. This NDP government has forced the decision to close the Plains hospital, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Health should read my lips. Mr. Minister, you don't seem to understand. There is a health care crisis in Regina; when will you wake up and listen? And what are you going to do to prevent this crisis from further escalating?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I am astounded by the comment that the member from Arm River makes because he says today that in this province there isn't enough health care funding to deliver the health services across the piece.

This member needs to know that in Saskatchewan today we spend \$1.72 billion on health care; the largest financial contribution to health care in the history of this province — the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — At the same time, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we back-filled every penny that the federal government has cut across the health piece across the country. And all you need to do, Mr. Speaker, is have a discussion with his . . . he needs to have a discussion with his friends in the Maritimes who today have again said the federal government is not putting enough money into the budgets of health care in all of the provinces across the nation, and in fact have created a huge, huge disparity in health care because of their underfunding, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The results of the NDP cuts to the health care system in Regina should be obvious for the government members to see. We have patients and stretchers in the hallways of our hospitals; we have a hospital bed crisis; and we have waiting-lists that are three times as long as was acceptable to the Blakeney government.

Just yesterday the minister told the Assembly, and I quote: "There will be no further bed reductions." The former minister of Health, the Minister of Finance, has also said that there will be no more bed closures or cuts to the front-line care workers.

Mr. Minister, tell this House, how is the district supposed to deal with this massive shortfall of money? And will you step in and do whatever you need to do to prevent this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know where the member opposite gets his information from. I know that a couple of days ago his colleague and bench mate had indicated that there were no beds available in the city of Regina. Today the member opposite tells me that the district health boards are hugely underfunded and don't have any new money.

I want to say to the, I want to say to the member opposite that this year the district health boards received 30 million more new dollars to do their work across the province. Every health care district across the province will get an injection of new funding — every health care district.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, there will be additional funding for the MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) in Regina. There will be additional funding for positions across the country . . . or across the province, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of \$26 million. There will be additional funding to ensure that we have the rural, on-call emergency services. There is more money going into health, Saskatchewan health funding, in this province than ever in the history, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been raising Channel Lake for four months. One member from the Saskatchewan Party was good enough to support me. He said, and I quote, on February 16:

The issues that Mr. Hillson has raised are exactly the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Now the hon. member will recognize as well that when referring to other members in the House he should be referring to them, not by their proper name, but by positions they hold in the House.

Mr. Hillson: — I was reading a direct quote from *Hansard*.

Unfortunately that same member then turned around and voted against adding Channel Lake to the Public Accounts agenda. Of course that was the member for Melfort-Tisdale. Then the NDP stonewalled me. Now the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee calls her own committee a kangaroo court, so I don't know what she's doing as the Chair of it.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee has to be a real process. And by real process I mean Jack Messer has to be the first witness, Portigal, Ben Drummond have to be right after, the TV and radio have to have access, solicitor-client privilege has to be waived, documents have to be filed.

Will the Premier commit to no more stonewalling, no more cover-ups; this is a real process determined to get to the bottom.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the government has tabled two reports by Deloitte Touche and CIC in what I think has been full revelation of the substantial facts surrounding the circumstance.

We've also said, the minister in charge, on the first available day when the House was reconvened, that we're prepared to refer this to Public Accounts. I have answered already and I'll repeat again, there will be a public inquiry. The list of names of people that you have suggested should be listed as evidence . . . giving evidence and testimony. We will have no objection. All members of this side of the House are prepared to cooperate in a full and complete inquiry.

Individual decisions on individual issues which may have a legal implication will have to be made by the committee based on the legal considerations that are before it. But this is going to be a full inquiry, a full public disclosure in the Assembly. It is our job. Public Accounts Committee cannot run away with it. And for the life of me, I don't know what the Tories are running away from.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the Nerland inquiry of course took two years and 2 million bucks. The Liberal opposition not only wants to get to the bottom of Channel Lake, we want to get to the bottom now, next week. We want to know: why was Jack Messer, the old NDP bagman, so in thick with Lawrence Portigal, the old Tory bagman? Why was it that after Portigal got his \$300,000-plus severance, he turned up working for Messer? What do these two have in common besides the fact they both got over 300 grand from the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

What is the missing link, Mr. Deputy Premier, between these two? Why are they so close? Will we be able to review that in Public Accounts?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite again, as I indicated to the Conservative questions about the issue of a public inquiry, which we will have, I guarantee you we will have here in the Assembly on March 31. It's going to happen and I give you our commitment that everything we can do in our power — we will have both Mr. Messer and Mr. Portigal here to be interviewed and answer the very questions you put.

Why do I know they will be here? Because both of them have indicated directly to the Chair of Public Accounts that they're willing to come. The question you raise is a good one. What are the Conservatives afraid of from this public inquiry that will be held here in the Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — I have raised in this House before and haven't gotten an answer before, we have the Deloitte Touche version of what SaskPower's auditors were saying clear back to 1994, that Channel Lake was a problem. It's off the rails. We've got their version of what the auditor said. We do not have the auditor's report and letter to management.

The Deputy Premier says we can deal with second-hand documents. I say we need primary information. Will the Deputy Premier say we can get at the primary information or do we just need second-hand information to deal with it?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite that your request at the surface sounds reasonable. My point here is, let's get the committee up and running on March 31 and every one of those issues will be dealt with in an expedient manner. I say to the members opposite, especially the Conservatives, I say again, why do you refer to your committee as a kangaroo court? What are you planning to do if in fact you do get it going?

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time in my 20 years in the Assembly that I have ever seen the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and their caucus afraid to come to the committee. What's up? What are you doing? What are you afraid of?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Information on SaskPower Commercial

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every action and every calculating word the government uses proves that the Public Accounts Committee process can't work because you won't give us the information that we require. And here's one other example.

We recently sent a freedom of information request to SaskPower Commercial about Guyana and this is the response we got back:

SaskPower Commercial is not a government institution as prescribed by the freedom of information regulations and is therefore not subject to freedom of information Act.

And guess who signed it? Larry Kram.

Mr. Minister, SaskPower Commercial is spending millions of dollars all over the world — taxpayers' dollars, not your dollars. You're saying that this is not a government . . . that you're not a government institution and you don't have to answer freedom of information requests. That's NDP accountability.

Mr. Minister, will you lift the gag order on SaskPower Commercial by immediately putting it under the freedom of information Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to be very careful in answering this question because it's a hugely important question.

The member opposite, who chairs the Public Accounts Committee, says here in the Assembly that the committee doesn't work and it's a kangaroo court. What does she say about the workings of the legislature and its committees? What is she saying about the working of a democratic process here in the Assembly?

I say to the member opposite, the reason the committee isn't working is because you refuse to call the committee to do its work. Mr. Portugal has written to you saying he wants to come and give answers, to give evidence. Jack Messer . . . no, Jack Messer has said here on Thursday that he . . . "I am willing to be there." The witnesses want to come. The witnesses want to come.

Why do you want to hide from the working of a committee that you chair. This is an amazing process when you're talking about being open and forthcoming, that you sit in the Assembly ringing the bells and hide from the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — SaskPower Commercial isn't the only Crown that's exempt from freedom of information. So is SaskTel International.

Mr. Minister, this is taxpayers' money you are playing with. And all we see is how the NDP captains of industry handle the sale of Channel Lake and others. You lost \$5 million because someone forgot to read a contract.

But you don't have to give the taxpayers even one bit of information about how SaskPower Commercial or SaskTel International is spending our money in a foreign country. Mr. Minister, it's disgusting. And so much for an open and accountable government.

Will you immediately put SaskPower Commercial and SaskTel International under freedom of information?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite, if they want to change the date of the committee to today or tomorrow to speed the process up, if you're saying you want the answers today we will make very special arrangements to make it happen tonight, tomorrow morning, the next morning.

But at latest, at latest we're going to get to the bottom of the issue on March 31 and start the process of a public inquiry here in the Assembly. You'll be able to stall until then. But on March 31 we're going to be allowing Mr. Messer and Mr. Portugal to come and ask and answer questions.

What I want to ask is why are you hiding from the committee, and why were you hiding the letter from Mr. Portugal? Why is that? Answer that question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'll ask all hon. members to come to order. Order. I'll ask the members of the government and the official opposition caucus to come to order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 298 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Buena Vista)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 298, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Buena Vista).

The division bells rang from 2:22 p.m. until 2:32 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 6

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Draude	Heppner

Nays — 19

Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Kowalsky	Crofford	Koenker
Trew	Serby	Stanger
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Murray	Jess	Murrell
Thomson		

Bill No. 299 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Northern Village of Buffalo Narrows)

Ms. Draude: — I move that Bill No. 299, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Northern Village of Buffalo Narrows) be introduced and read for the first time.

The division bells rang from 2:34 p.m. until 2:44 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Bjornerud	Toth	D'Autremont
Draude	Haverstock	

Nays — 20

Flavel	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
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Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore	The division bells rang from 3:10 p.m. until 3:20 p.m.
Kowalsky	Crofford	Koenker	
Trew	Renaud	Hamilton	Motion negated on the following recorded division.
Stanger	Wall	Ward	
Murray	Jess	Murrell	
Thomson	McPherson		

Yeas — 4

Krawetz	D'Autremont	Draude
Heppner		

Nays — 18

**Bill No. 400 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
(Village of Bulyea)**

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 400, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Bulyea) be introduced and read the first time.

The division bells rang from 2:46 p.m. until 2:56 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 4

Krawetz	Toth	D'Autremont
Draude		

Nays — 19

Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Koenker	Trew	Renaud
Lorje	Serby	Hamilton
Stanger	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Murray	Jess
Thomson		

**Bill No. 401 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
(Town of Burstall)**

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move Bill No. 401, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Town of Burstall) be introduced and read the first time.

The division bells rang from 2:58 p.m. until 3:08 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 4

Krawetz	Toth	D'Autremont
Draude		

Nays — 15

Van Mulligen	Lingenfelter	Tchorzewski
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Hamilton	Stanger	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Murray
Jess	Murrell	Thomson

**Bill No. 402 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
(Town of Cabri)**

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill No. 402, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Town of Cabri) be introduced and read the first time.

Van Mulligen	Lingenfelter	Tchorzewski
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Koenker	Trew	Renaud
Hamilton	Stanger	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Murray
Jess	Murrell	Thomson

**Bill No. 403 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
(Village of Cadillac)**

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill 403, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Cadillac) be introduced and read the first time.

The division bells rang from 3:23 p.m. until 3:33 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 4

Krawetz	D'Autremont	Draude
Heppner		

Nays — 20

Van Mulligen	Lingenfelter	Tchorzewski
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Koenker	Trew	Renaud
Lorje	Hamilton	Stanger
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Murray	Jess	Murrell
Thomson	Hillson	

**Bill No. 404 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
(Village of Calder)**

Mr. Heppner: — I move a Bill, the first reading of Bill No. 404, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Calder) be now introduced and read for the first time.

The division bells rang from 3:35 p.m. until 3:45 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Krawetz	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
Draude	Heppner	

Nays — 18

Van Mulligen	Tchorzewski	Johnson
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Whitmore Kowalsky Koenker
 Trew Renaud Lorje
 Hamilton Stanger Wall
 Kasperski Ward Murray
 Jess Murrell Thomson

The division bells rang from 4:12 p.m. until 4:22 p.m.
 Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 3

**Bill No. 405 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
 (Resort Village of Candle Lake)**

Boyd Draude Heppner

Nays — 21

Mr. Heppner: — I move a Bill, No. 405, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Resort Village of Candle Lake) be now introduced and read the first time.

Flavel Van Mulligen MacKinnon
 Shillington Tchorzewski Johnson
 Whitmore Upshall Kowalsky
 Koenker Renaud Lorje
 Hamilton Stanger Wall
 Kasperski Ward Murray
 Jess Murrell Thomson

The division bells rang from 3:47 p.m. until 3:57 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 3

Krawetz Draude Heppner

Nays — 20

Van Mulligen Shillington Tchorzewski
 Johnson Whitmore Upshall
 Kowalsky Koenker Trew
 Renaud Lorje Hamilton
 Stanger Wall Kasperski
 Ward Murray Jess
 Murrell Thomson

**Bill No. 408 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
 (Village of Canwood)**

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move first reading of Bill No. 408, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Canwood) be now introduced and read the first time.

The division bells rang from 4:24 p.m. until 4:34 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 4

**Bill No. 406 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
 (Village of Cando)**

Krawetz Boyd Draude
 Heppner

Mr. Heppner: — I move a Bill, Bill No. 406, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Cando) be now read and introduced the first time.

The division bells rang from 3:59 p.m. until 4:09 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 4

Krawetz Boyd Draude
 Heppner

Nays — 19

Flavel Van Mulligen MacKinnon
 Shillington Tchorzewski Johnson
 Upshall Kowalsky Calvert
 Koenker Lorje Hamilton
 Stanger Wall Kasperski
 Murray Jess Murrell
 Thomson

Nays — 19

Van Mulligen Shillington Tchorzewski
 Johnson Whitmore Upshall
 Koenker Trew Renaud
 Lorje Hamilton Stanger
 Wall Kasperski Ward
 Murray Jess Murrell
 Thomson

**Bill No. 409 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
 (Village of Carievale)**

Mr. Heppner: — I move a Bill, Bill No. 409, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Village of Carievale) be now introduced and read the first time.

The division bells rang from 4:36 p.m. until 4:46 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

**Bill No. 407 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
 (Town of Canora)**

Krawetz Toth Boyd
 Draude Heppner

Mr. Heppner: — I move a Bill, Bill No. 407, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Town of Canora) be now introduced and read the first time.

Nays — 17

Flavel	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
Johnson	Upshall	Kowalsky
Koenker	Trew	Lorje
Hamilton	Stanger	Wall
Kasperski	Murray	Jess
Murrell	Thomson	

**Bill No. 410 — The Channel Lake Indemnification Act
(Town of Carlyle)**

Mr. Heppner: — I move a Bill, Bill No. 410, The Channel Lake Indemnification Act (Town of Carlyle) be now introduced and read the first time.

The division bells rang from 4:48 p.m. until 4:58 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
Draude	Heppner	

Nays — 18

Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Tchorzewski
Johnson	Upshall	Kowalsky
Koenker	Trew	Lorje
Nilson	Hamilton	Stanger
Wall	Kasperski	Murray
Jess	Murrell	Thomson

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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