

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present petitions today on behalf of people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

These petitions come from the people of Redvers, Carnduff, Alameda, Alida, Carievale, and Bienfait. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present petitions. Reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the communities of Radville, Lake Alma, and Ceylon. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Stoughton and Creelman. I so present.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition signed from people from mainly the Gainsborough area. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

I so present.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Kisbey, Stoughton, Creelman, and Weyburn, Mr. Speaker.

**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 put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wawota.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased as well this afternoon to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents dealing with the issue of the moratorium on the closure of the Plains hospital. The petitioners come from the Wawota area of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a 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.

The petition is signed, Mr. Speaker, by the good people from Ituna and Jedburgh and Goodeve. I so present.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I rise with petitions. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

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

Your petitioners this afternoon come from the communities of

Ponteix and Hafford.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues today in bringing forth petitions:

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 essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are from Ponteix. I so present.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the closure of the Plains hospital. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Carlyle and Redvers. I so present.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition and the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains health care 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, Mr. Speaker, the people who have signed the petition are from Ituna, Hubbard, and all throughout the land, and I so present.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise again today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to present a petition through this following prayer:

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 signatures on it from the city of Moose Jaw.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm most pleased today, Mr. Speaker, to present petitions on behalf of the people from Cabri, Saskatchewan as well as from Medicine Hat, Alberta. The prayer for relief, of course, is continuing to ask for the double-laning of the No. 1 Highway, and I'm happy to present these requests on behalf of the people today.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise once again on behalf of citizens who are seeking justice for men and women who have lost spouses in work-related accidents:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended for the disenfranchised widows, widowers of Saskatchewan whereby their pensions are reinstated and the revoked pensions reimbursed to them retroactively and with interest, as requested by the statement of entitlement presented to the Workers' Compensation Board on October 27, 1997.

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

Those who have signed these petitions today, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon, Dalmeny, and Delisle.

#### 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.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters: the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; saving the Plains Health Centre; putting a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre; and having the Workers' Compensation Board reinstate pensions for disenfranchised widows.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The young and restless, when they're looking for excitement, are attracted to the legislature. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to introduce through you to the Assembly, my son, Alan MacKinnon, who's just finished first year university and has come to the legislature looking for some excitement.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to reserve comment. It seemed like a very, very good opening, but I'm not going to pick up on it.

I'm so delighted that a school in my constituency has finally come to visit us at the legislature. We have a group of 40 students — they are in grade 6 at Greystone Heights School — in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Accompanying them today are Mr. Mantyka, Ms. Sikorski, and chaperon Jodi Brown.

And I'd like everyone to please give them a very warm welcome. I had some wonderful meetings with many students at Greystone Heights School and they'll have some great

questions for me I'm sure this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, seated in the west gallery, 21 grade 6 students from the wonderful town of Watson in our province.

They are accompanied by their teacher, Bernice Gerspacher, and chaperons Chris Hancock, Nora Mills, and Jan LeGars.

I'm going to be meeting with them about 2:30 I think, for drinks and pictures and to discuss . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Hamburgers.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Not hamburgers. No. And no Dairy Queen. To discuss what happens in the legislature.

I want to have all members give them a nice warm welcome to the Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, an important Canadian who's in the Speaker's gallery, and I would just ask him to stand when he's introduced.

Mr. Speaker, John Kim Bell is the founder and president of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation of Canada and is one of Canada's most prominent first nations ambassadors of aboriginal empowerment. And, John, if you would just stand up while we're doing the introduction.

It's John's vision and his reality to have aboriginal people in Canada celebrated for their achievements and enable them, through education, to reach important goals. And, John, I just want to say thank you very much for that work.

Now the reason that this is an important announcement or introduction, Mr. Speaker, is because in 1999 Regina has been chosen to be the host of the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards on March 12. And I want to say a big thank you to you and your organization for choosing our capital city.

With John also we have his director of development, Deborah Miller. And Deborah, if you would stand up and be recognized as well. And also Ron Clark, the CEO (chief executive officer) of SaskEnergy and TransGas. Ron, thank you very much for your cooperation as well.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the legislature, a couple of very important guests that have come to be with us in Saskatchewan today and tomorrow. And I'm talking about the men sitting in your gallery in the front row, His Excellency John Alexander Thomoglou, who's the ambassador of Greece to Canada, and the consul general of Greece in Vancouver, Mr. Nicholas Plexidas. Welcome to Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join my colleague from across the way in welcoming Mr. John Kim Bell and his entourage. I think . . . you know I can recall that the work that he's doing has had a tremendous impact and effect on many aboriginal people's lives including myself. And I can recall the early years, seeing a poster of him in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and certainly has inspired myself and many other aboriginal people across the country.

So on behalf of the Liberal caucus I welcome him, and we do hope you have a pleasant visit. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, I too would like to recognize John Kim Bell. And since introductions have been made, you know, by others I would like to, with due respect to all languages, and Iroquoian languages and Mohawk people, I would like to say in Cree . . .

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

. . . You're very welcome.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

You are doing outstanding achievement you know for the people and for all Canadians.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join with my colleague from Watrous and welcome the group here from Watson today. Watson is my home town even though it's not in my constituency, so welcome, everyone. And remember that he usually buys everybody hamburgers.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Health Care Crisis in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day we received a letter from a Regina woman extremely upset about this government's ill-conceived decision to close the Plains hospital, its absolute decimation of the health care system, and its total disregard for democracy and the wishes of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, right now the members opposite are asking themselves what's unique about that? We've received thousands of such letters ourselves. We haven't read them, mind you, but we know they're rolling in.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is unique about this letter is that the envelope was decorated with a Tommy Douglas 45-cent stamp.

Isn't it ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the very man this government constantly uses to minimize public criticism of their health reforms was the very man who delivered this letter to the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP (New Democratic Party) say to the people of Saskatchewan: trust us with our health system; after all, wasn't Tommy one of ours? Well, Mr. Speaker, you can rest assured that if Tommy were in this government today, and if the Premier had the fortitude to allow a free vote on this issue, Tommy would be voting with his constituents to save the Plains.

But does it make you wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP have finally realized that their tired old excuses aren't working any more. One would have thought that this new stamp to commemorate Tommy Douglas would have been cause for much NDP celebration and hoopla. Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite know exactly what Tommy Douglas would have said about their careless disregard for the system he spent his life creating and that they are secretly more than a little ashamed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### House of Prairie Memories

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to bring a piece of Saskatchewan history to the attention of the House. Located in the town of Belle Plaine is the House of Prairie Memories. I just want to read a few excerpts from their brochure.

The House of Prairie Memories was an Aladdin built prefab home ordered from the Eaton's catalogue plan book in 1918 by the Palmquist family. Mr. Palmquist paid \$10,000 for the package. The materials were delivered to Belle Plaine by rail and transported to the farm site one-half mile north of Belle Plaine. The farm was sold to Jim and Bertie Brentnall in 1972. The house was rented out for many years but sat empty for 10 years before being moved into Belle Plaine on July 4, 1996, where it was renovated to retain the original features.

That little farm house is now the House of Prairie Memories and features antiques, collectibles, and gifts from yesteryear. Small group tours are available, as is afternoon tea and a gift registry for all occasions.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan prairies have many stories to tell and some of them can be seen and heard and shared with gifts from the Prairie House of Memories. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Party Politics

**Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier has warned members of this Assembly on many occasions not to play politics with health care. But yesterday we saw politics at its absolute lowest and worst from the Minister of Finance.

The minister suggested that Darlene Sterling and the Liberal

opposition are waiting for someone to die to further our cause to save the Plains hospital — nothing short of a malicious attack.

And what about the Tories? Well this group heckled and ridiculed our efforts at the beginning of this session to heighten debate on the pending closure of the Plains. They have been riding our coat-tails and those of Ms. Sterling, and when things get heated they yell across the floor that they don't share the podium with Darlene, they're not associated with her. The Tories didn't even give her the benefit of the doubt before hanging her out to dry.

So this is how it goes, Mr. Speaker. A member of the public has legitimate concerns about an issue; she attempts to fight for what is right and is subjected to this kind of treatment.

Mr. Speaker, we will not be party to actions which are not acceptable by any measure of decency. A message must be sent that enough is enough. We cannot in good conscience sit in this Assembly today and leave it to you, Mr. Speaker, to carry on the business of the House without the Liberal opposition.

#### Accreditation to BTC Indian Health Services

**Ms. Murrell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Battlefords Tribal Council Indian Health Services has recently been awarded national accreditation standing with the Canadian Council of Health Service Accreditation. The Canadian Council of Health Service Accreditation is a non-government agency that helps health care organizations across Canada examine and improve the quality of the care and services they provide to their clients.

The achievement of BTC Health Services is a result of hard work on the part of the staff, the board, and the management. BTC Indian Health Services has been working towards the planning and delivery of reserve health care since the early 1980s. BTC Indian Health Services now include a community health program, home care, a school-based dental program, a health promotion and planning program, and a community addictions prevention program.

BTC Indian Health Services has also instituted a plan to continuously improve their health care services and delivery.

I would like to congratulate board members, Wayne Standinghorn, Chief Thomas Mooswa, Chief Charles Stone, Chief Larry Wuttunee, Chief Ted Antoine, Chief Maryanne Stoney, Chief Rod King, and Janice Kennedy on this major achievement along the road to self-government. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Rosetown Student Wins National Literary Contest

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate a very special girl with a remarkable gift. Today Carlyn McCulloch, a grade 5 student at Walter Aseltine School in Rosetown, is being honoured for her achievement as first place winner in the Royal Canadian Legion national literary contest in the junior poem category, having won in every other category on the way, for her poem "Thank You".

While I regret I'm unable to attend her ceremony, I'd like not only to congratulate but thank Carlyn for sharing her special talent with so many people. The success of Saskatchewan is built upon the unselfish sharing of the gifts of our people, and young people like Carlyn are an inspiration and a role model for all of us, young and old.

I want to share her poem, which was written for Remembrance Day, with you:

I'm a little girl, I'm only ten,  
So I really can't remember when,  
Our soldiers were off to fight the war,  
And our world was changed forever more;  
So I look at my poppy with petals so red,  
And I try to think of the injured and the dead.  
Whether his name was Tom, Jim or Frank.  
All of these soldiers I'd like to thank;  
You gave me a land that's peaceful and free,  
To live in and play in, to swim in and ski,  
We can share our ideas. We don't have to agree,  
I don't have to worry. I'm allowed to be me;  
I have never met you. I never will,  
But the gift that you gave me, is with me still,  
So thank you, thank you for your gift of love,  
May we meet someday in the land above.

I know we'll be hearing more from this talented young lady and I wish her every success.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Band Festival and ParkArt in Moose Jaw**

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, this weekend Moose Jaw will play host to two very special events: the 49th annual Kinsmen International Band and Choral Festival, and ParkArt.

Mr. Speaker, concert bands, ensembles, soloists, choirs, and more jazz than ever will be in Moose Jaw to celebrate the festival events this weekend, including an all-day concert in the Crescent Park Amphitheatre on Saturday. Bands from Manitoba, Alberta, Montana, North Dakota, and world-class pianist Shelly Berg from Los Angeles will entertain the thousands of visitors who will be in Moose Jaw this weekend.

ParkArt is also happening this weekend, bringing crafters and artists from across western Canada to the city of Moose Jaw.

So I just want to say to my colleagues in the House today, if you're available this weekend, I invite you to come to Moose Jaw.

You can tour the tunnels, you can view the murals, you can relax in the spa, you can tour the WDM (Western Development Museum), you can tour the Speaker's backyard, and you can take in some very fine art and some very fine music.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Indian Head Goes Hollywood**

**Ms. Murray:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Minds Eye, a Regina film company, has just finished filming *Bad Prospect*, a \$3 million made-for-TV movie, shot in 12 locations in Regina, Indian Head, and the Qu'Appelle Valley.

For the film, the town of Indian Head was transformed into the fictional setting of Elm Creek. Many of the town's Grand Avenue businesses were given a facelift for the movie. The Royal Bank received a sign change and the Elks Hall became the Elm Creek police station.

In the Qu'Appelle Valley a 19th century stone farmhouse served as the backdrop for a murder, while the hills above were transformed into a realistic go-cart race track. Producer Rob King was thrilled with the level of local support and cooperation for the filming of the movie.

*Bad Prospect* may well demonstrate how good the prospects are for the Saskatchewan film industry, as the partners in financing include some major U.S. (United States) and Canadian companies. Financing partners for the film include Hallmark Entertainment, Showtime, A-Channel, Canadian film or video tax credit program, SaskFILM, Saskatchewan employment tax credit, Minds Eye Pictures, and Evergreen Releasing.

I know we all hope that Saskatchewan's film industry continues to grow and develop, both to highlight the natural beauty of our province and to contribute to our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Metis Hunting Rights**

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment and Resource Management. Mr. Minister, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has delivered a rather weak-kneed decision on Metis hunting rights. They have decided not to decide anything right now. They have ordered a new trial.

So, Mr. Minister, it's still unclear whether Metis can hunt without a licence or not. The original law, Mr. Minister, is still on the books, but some Metis leaders are suggesting they will ignore that law and continue to hunt without licences.

Mr. Minister, what is your department going to do, and are you going to uphold the existing law requiring Metis hunters to buy a hunting licence?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member indicated, the Court of Appeal did rule today, and the ruling was that there would be a new trial with reference to the Grumbo case.

The court ruled that the decision by Mr. Justice MacLeod

recognizing Metis rights has been overturned . . . (inaudible) . . . the province is no longer obligated to recognize these rights. So today's court decision means that all applicable hunting and fishing laws will apply to Metis and non-Metis residents . . . or non-Metis in Saskatchewan, and enforcement of these laws will take effect immediately.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **SaskPower Computer System Project**

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, what is the SaskPower project code-named the Delta Project, and how much is it going to cost?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, what I will do for the member is I will get him a detailed report on the project. It deals with the operation of . . . within the Power Corporation. I'll get him the detailed report and bring it back to the Assembly. So I'll take notice.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we have been informed that the executive of SaskPower, the same business geniuses that brought us Guyana and Channel Lake, SaskPower's executive is recommending the purchase of a new SAP computer system at a cost to taxpayers of nearly \$100 million. Apparently this is what is known as the Delta Project.

Has this proposal gone to SaskPower's board of directors? Is SaskPower planning to spend almost \$100 million on a new computer system?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, one will have to remember that this is the same member that indicated that DEML (Direct Energy Marketing Limited) was in a potential issue of fraud, a few days ago. And then of course when the members from DEML came before the committee, came before the committee, he asked no questions, made no accusations, and this is what he does.

What he does is he comes to the Assembly, waves papers around — which he's doing now from his seat — makes accusations and then gets all excited, gets a headline in the newspaper, and then nothing, then nothing. And I can understand why the people of your constituency . . . maybe it wasn't you leaving the Liberal Party, maybe it was them pushing you a little bit out.

But I say to you, sir, wait for the answer. I'll bring you a full report. Don't get all excited, because probably the facts as you are stating them today aren't accurate, just as in the past they haven't been accurate.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Minister, since it's obvious you're unaware of the answer or refuse to give it, I sent over to you the information on the Delta Project so you can make yourself informed about what's going on in your own department.

Mr. Minister, we have a potential massive computer contract worth up to \$100 million. This raises a lot of questions. Did you

read the contract? Are you going to read all drafts of the contract? Do you even understand the contract? Or perhaps you're going to let Lawrence Portugal read it for you.

Mr. Minister, why are we spending \$100 million on a new computer system, and are Saskatchewan residents going to end up paying through the nose for it?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's easy for the member here to again malign Mr. Portugal in the confines of the Assembly. I didn't see any of that bravado when Mr. Portugal was before the committee. This is an interesting guy. Big, strong guy, comes here in the confines of the Assembly with projections and again starts to malign people. When he gets to the committee he's a pussy-cat, calm, quiet, no accusations, and away he goes.

But I say to you, sir, if what you're saying is that the men and women who run the Power Corporation are not competent, if that's what you're saying, that's your opinion. But I can tell you that the management and the board of directors of SaskPower are doing an excellent job of providing power to the communities of Saskatchewan at a reasonable price. That's the mandate of SaskPower.

We've dealt with Channel Lake and are dealing within the committee . . . and are dealing with it in the committee, but for you to try to accuse the corporation of not acting in good faith, I think is immature and speaks a lot about what you and your party are all about.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Minister, I suspect that you wouldn't understand . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Now I know the hon. member is a seasoned veteran of the Assembly and he'll want to — order, order — and he'll want to acknowledge the Chair before he puts his question.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the minister would not understand the difference between being a cold pussy-cat or simply being a courteous, nice individual. I happen to choose to be the latter, except when issues of you not answering any kind of questions and instead of answering questions about a department that you are supposedly responsible for, you launch on some kind of a personal attack.

And, Mr. Minister, I don't mind that, but the people out there watching this know you for what you're answering to, and that is complete incompetence in SaskPower.

Mr. Minister, are you going to allow SaskPower to spend a hundred million dollars on a computer system? What do you need it for? And are the taxpayers, the customers, going to get stuck with the bill?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, obviously the SaskPower Corporation, which is worth

several billion dollars, is carrying on the management and operation of the Power Corporation. That may surprise you but that's how it works.

They're out there making arrangements, buying power from Husky and TransAlta to the tune of 200 megawatts of power, to provide power to farms. And yes, it's costing tens of millions of dollars to buy the coal that runs the Power Corporation. They are spending tens of millions of dollars, you're absolutely right. Because that's how power corporations are managed and operated.

And for you to try to make it sound like there's something wrong with the management and board of directors to manage the Power Corporation, you just don't make sense. Obviously that's what's going on.

There's no devious plot when tens of millions of dollars are being spent to buy gas and coal to manage the Power Corporation. They have to buy the coal because the Tory government under Devine sold the coalmines. How else can we run the Power Corporation? So I say to you, obviously decisions are being made. And the Power Corporation is well run.

And, Mr. Speaker, I understand why they yell from their seats, because they don't like the answer.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Inquiry into Channel Lake**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation.

Mr. Minister, the Channel Lake investigation has finally generated something I think we can all agree on. SaskPower officials have alleged that pages in the final Channel Lake sale agreement were removed and replaced with other pages, and after the agreement was signed by SaskPower, but before it was signed by DEML officials.

Yesterday Lawrence Portigal said that he was the one that switched the pages. He says he told Jack Messer about it but Jack Messer says that that isn't true. Ken Christensen says it's news to him. Larry Kram pleaded ignorance on the issue as well.

Mr. Minister, your own SaskPower officials allege a potentially fraudulent act in the sale of Channel Lake Petroleum. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) is saying that they would definitely launch an investigation if the inquiry turns up evidence of wrongdoing.

Mr. Minister, will you immediately turn over the evidence that you have before you now to the RCMP for investigation?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, quite contrary to what the member from Kindersley says about what the RCMP is saying, the RCMP is saying, and in the newspaper is quoted as

saying, that the committee work is going very well. That's what they say.

And they said you should quit making accusations. This is what the committee is telling you and the advisers to the committee. Mr. Priel said don't jump to conclusions as to the results of the hearing before you hear all the evidence.

And so I say to the member opposite, just continue on. Allow your members to do their work in the committee. Recommendations will come forward. But obviously to come to conclusions today, you've got off the point that even the member from Melfort was saying yesterday in scrums, that you have to wait until the hearing's over. Even he has got to that point. So you should have a chat with him. He will urge you to also be patient and wait until the work of the committee is completed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the people from the RCMP said if there's evidence of wrongdoing they'd be prepared to investigate. They've also said that if SaskPower or officials from government come forward, they'd be prepared to investigate.

What we are saying to you today, sir, is the SaskPower board of directors has a fiduciary responsibility to protect the interests of the shareholders of SaskPower. Those are the people of Saskatchewan.

If the board has evidence of fraud in the Channel Lake sale, then it is their legal responsibility to go to the RCMP and to initiate legal action to recover the assets. In other words, Mr. Minister, the SaskPower board should be turning over the Channel Lake file to the RCMP and they should be taking legal action to void the Channel Lake contract.

SaskPower has the right to recover the ownership of Channel Lake in the event the sale was tainted by a fraudulent act. Mr. Minister, you have and your officials have had discussions either for . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Order. Now the hon. member has been extremely lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to go directly to his question and put it now.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Minister, you, along with the SaskPower board, should be acting in this regard. Will you recommend legal action to recover the Channel Lake account?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to two months ago when I released in the Assembly the document reported on by Deloitte Touche, the Gerrand report which has been tabled in the committee, the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) report which has now been worked on, the thousand documents that were delivered to the committee.

When asked by Mr. Truscott of the taxpayers' association whether or not the police should be involved, the RCMP indicated that . . . what did they say? They said that the

committee is working well. And I think that's a compliment to all of the committee members and to the legislature, that the RCMP, the most credible police force in the world, is saying this committee has credibility. Has credibility. That's the RCMP. That's an important comment. And what he is saying is, complete the work before you come to the conclusion — indirectly that's what the RCMP is telling you, sir.

And I would urge you to take the advice of Mr. Priel, the RCMP, and everyone, including many people now in the public — even some members of the press who say yes, legislators do have the credibility to carry out the work of the legislature — complete the work; do the report.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, what you are saying to the people of Saskatchewan is that you and your government refuse to come clean on this issue unless you are hauled before the legislative inquiry and forced to give testimony under oath. Do you hold this legislature in such contempt that you refuse to answer legitimate questions? — questions that are being asked in the living rooms and coffee shops all across this province.

Mr. Minister, you have strong evidence to suggest fraud in the Channel Lake affair. Have you or your officials discussed legal action to recover the Channel Lake assets? Has the SaskPower board considered legal action to recover the Channel Lake assets? And will you immediately take action to protect the interests of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan and turn over the evidence, that is very clear now, to the RCMP for investigation?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I say again I find it interesting indeed that in the Assembly the member from Melfort last week made accusations of fraud against . . . potential fraud against individuals and companies. Today you're doing it again, from the member from Kindersley. But it's interesting that not once in the committee where the work is being done, has the issue of fraud been raised when the individuals appear before the committee. What is this? Some sort of a game that you play with individuals and companies for your political benefit?

Now I have here the appointment of . . . the Canadian taxpayers' appointment of Richard Truscott as the provincial director of Saskatchewan for the taxpayers association, and he is the other one calling for the investigation. Now who is he? It says here, until the last federal election he was executive assistant to Mr. Elwin Hermanson — Elwin Hermanson.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Now the Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear because of shouting coming from both sides of the House. And I'll give the minister a few more seconds to wrap up his comments.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I just want to say that there's two groups calling for an immediate investigation, and it's not the RCMP. They're saying, wait until the committee does its work; he says it's a credible group doing the work. Mr. Priel says, continue to do the work and don't jump to conclusions. Who's calling for an immediate inquiry? The Tories and the taxpayers'

association under the guidance of Richard Truscott, former EA (executive assistant) to Mr. Elwin Hermanson. Now you talk about creditability — you talk about creditability. You come . . .

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### University Tuition Fees

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order! Order. Order, order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order, order. All hon. members will want to come to order, I'm sure . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I think so.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that everyone here is interested in post-secondary education as well today. And my questions are for the minister in charge.

The Government of Ontario has granted Ontario universities the opportunity to deregulate tuition fees. And my question to the hon. minister this afternoon is, is your government considering a similar move?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No we're not contemplating any such measures.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — I'm sure that many, many students in the province of Saskatchewan will be pleased to hear that, Mr. Speaker. I have another question. And that is that I'm wondering, Madam Minister, is there an intention on the part of your government then to freeze tuition fees as the Government of British Columbia has done?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would share with the member that I've said to the students and to the universities that we respect their autonomy, and we certainly wouldn't want to put in motion a chain of events that would cause them to cut programs because we had frozen their tuition.

So instead what we try to do is work together to limit any increases. And certainly we feel in this recent budget we gave them enough money to allow them to do that. One university was planning a 7 per cent increase and instead they only had a 2 per cent increase, so they were able to reduce that by 5 per cent. And we think this shows their good intent to keep it within affordability for the students.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, I'm wondering if you would tell people today what your plan is to protect space for Saskatchewan students at our universities given the potential for influx of students from those provinces who in all likelihood will have a significant increase in tuition fees.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well that's a complex question, Mr.



Speaker, because so many things affect space requirements. For example, we now have a number of regional colleges that are delivering first and second year university and it certainly takes some of the pressure off the universities.

As well we're seeing more workplace-based training, more Internet training, more SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) distance ed training; so those factors affect it. And as well, as we move towards a more harmonized system with the federal government of student loans, I think we may find that that will affect student mobility patterns across Canada too.

So I think although we'd want to keep our eye on that, it's too early to worry about it at this point.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Pay Equity

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Mr. Speaker, my question now is to the Premier. One of the many disappointments experienced since this government came to power is its inaction on the issue of pay equity. And a report commissioned by the federal, provincial, territorial ministers responsible for the Status of Women shows that Saskatchewan is the only — and I underline only — jurisdiction in the country, Mr. Speaker, where the wage gap is worsening.

At the 1997 Saskatchewan Federation of Labour annual meeting, Mr. Premier, you promised that there would be pay equity legislation before, and I quote, "you retired." So my obvious questions are, Mr. Premier: how do you explain the widening gap, and will you be retiring soon so that women can have a greater sense of promise that some fairness will indeed be forthcoming?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the wage gap we have to look at a lot of circumstances in that, and we certainly are tackling that. We are working towards a pay equity framework agreement that is working within our departments of government, within our Crown corporations, and by the end of 1998 we will see a significant number of pay equity settlements, which will certainly be a very positive approach to this.

But the other pieces to a wage gap in which we are making positive steps towards, is based in education and training. Those are a major part in which has contributed to some of the wage gap here, and some of the things that we've just done recently in our budget is very, very positive in that, and for post-secondary and for training. We also have to look at other issues with pension plans and other aspects which we are certainly lobbying the federal government for.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Funding for Women's Emergency Shelter

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, a few weeks ago I asked you about the future of the Prince Albert Emergency Shelter for Women. The centre was on the verge of closing due to lack of support from your government. However, you assured

this House that the funding situation was being addressed and the centre would remain open. We've been informed that the funding crisis has not been addressed and the board has pulled out of running the centre as of May 1.

Mr. Minister, why hasn't this issue been resolved and what are you doing to ensure the future of the Prince Albert Emergency Shelter for Women?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to answer this question, and as the minister stated earlier in the House in answer to a similar question, the home, the facility will remain open, the facility will be funded, and negotiations are going on at the current time with an interim board in place to see that that happens.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### SaskPower Commercial and Freedom of Information

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, why do you refuse to put SaskPower Commercial under the freedom of information Act? That means we're not allowed to make freedom of information requests about SaskPower Commercial's hare-brained schemes in Guyana.

Yesterday your colleague, the Minister of Justice, said that in his opinion SaskPower Commercial is a subsidiary of SaskPower and therefore should be included under the freedom of information laws.

Mr. Minister, are you going to listen to the Minister of Justice and will you lift the cone of silence and include SaskPower Commercial under the freedom of information?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This question was asked yesterday when we were in committee looking at some of the issues around . . . the estimates around the freedom of information Act, and there was an acknowledgement dealing with some of the SaskPower Commercial things, that these should be considered, and we agreed that we would consider those and I would raise those. And we will do that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we're just asking for a simple change. It can be done through an order in council within a matter of days, and the Minister of Justice said it could be done.

Will you immediately bring in an order in council including SaskPower within the freedom of information legislation? And while you're at it, would you include SaskTel International so we can find out what's going on in places like New Zealand?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I'm having a bit of difficulty with this whole matter because there hasn't been a question. It may be that we each could assist the opposition today. They didn't expect the fact that their colleagues next to them would be leaving, so obviously they've run out of questions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They went out on strike; well that's true. But practically, what I may suggest is that some of our

colleagues over here would be happy to help draft some questions for them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Investment in Youth Crime Prevention Programs

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Government of Saskatchewan will invest \$250,000 in crime prevention programs for children and youth in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This funding will go to community-based organizations in Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon. Keeping communities safe is a top priority of this government. Last month I announced programs funded by Saskatchewan Justice that focus on curtailing the criminal activities of serious, repeat, and violent young offenders. However we know that reducing criminal activity also depends on providing youth with opportunities to lead positive and productive lives.

The funding I am announcing today is for programs that will enhance existing services for youth in our communities so that they will have positive choices rather than turning to lives marked by conflict with the law. These programs are targeted to children and youth between the ages of 7 and 18, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of aboriginal youth in our communities.

In consultations around the province, aboriginal people have told us about the need for cultural sensitivity and that there should be more aboriginal people involved in responding to the needs of aboriginal people. And we were told that without greater aboriginal involvement, it was difficult to see that the Justice system and its programs were constructive instruments for building stronger and safer aboriginal communities.

Earlier this year, community groups in Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon were approached to identify the needs in their communities and asked to suggest the best way to utilize this important funding.

As is so typical of the cooperative spirit of our Saskatchewan communities, we were given a wealth of ideas on how to prevent crime among our youth. These ideas included street-proofing kids, parent patrols, keeping young people in school, and teaching youth about their cultural and spiritual traditions. These programs are focused on keeping youth out of the criminal justice system. I want to state very clearly that our government is proud of Saskatchewan's young people. There are 94,000 youth in this province and the vast majority of them are well on their way to becoming good, solid citizens.

We know that less than half of one per cent of Saskatchewan youth are in custody in the young offender facilities. The people of Saskatchewan expect us to protect society from repeat and violent young offenders, but the people of Saskatchewan also expect us to maintain our common sense and compassion for children and youth who do thoughtless things, that are willing

to learn from their mistakes.

Therefore in order to prevent crime, it is important to look at why young people commit crimes. Poverty, hunger, unemployment, racism, family dysfunction, and addictions are all problems in our society that affect the options that young people have and the decisions that they make.

Funding provided by Saskatchewan Justice also buttresses the work done in the Saskatchewan action plan for children, and this Saskatchewan action plan is a partnership of seven government departments, the secretariat, and hundreds of Saskatchewan communities, agencies, and organizations.

Our government has committed 29 million in new funding to strengthen early childhood development, support at-risk children and youth, invest in communities, and address child and family poverty.

Our \$250,000 investment in crime prevention programs is part of this funding, which includes 80,000 for the Prince Albert Race Relations and Social Issues Committee. I was pleased to join that committee this morning. And they are going to use the funds to hire two full-time outreach workers in Prince Albert to teach life skills and conflict resolution. I thank the work of the Prince Albert community and I look forward to other announcements around the province as we work to keep our community safe.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take some time to respond to the statement. And I guess part of the concern is that we're getting the whole proposal in dribs and drabs as it probably suits the, as it suits the media program that the government has for that. It's a bit like cutting out one little picture out of another picture and sending it over and we're supposed to get the whole scene. It would be nice to have had it all at the same time.

However I think having made numerous statements on Young Offenders Act and justice in Saskatchewan, there is one key word in the second line that I think is very important. And I think it's an exciting line — how it will turn out I'm not sure — this is prevention programs. And I think if we can work on prevention programs, Mr. Speaker, and keep the people from becoming solid, hardened criminals, it'll do a lot for the concerns that all of us across Saskatchewan have. So that is definitely a plus that we're going to do some work with prevention.

I have some of the same concerns I had on the previous announcement. Again, it only deals with Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon. It does nothing for Unity, it does nothing for Lloydminster, it does nothing for my town of Rosthern. It does nothing for any of those other areas — just these three particular places. And so that is not much security and comfort that anyone in Saskatchewan can find from that particular report.

The ages that are targeted by this venture are ages 7 ...

between the ages of 7 and 18, and I think that's good. I don't think we can start too soon. I think the justice meetings that have been held across Saskatchewan, four of which that I've attended, in many cases said that many people in our schools can identify potential problems in grades 1, 2, and 3. So starting at age 7 is probably, Mr. Speaker, a good place to start; in fact this keeps youth out of the justice system, that that's good.

There's another line in here that I think needs a comment on. It says the people of Saskatchewan expect us to protect society from repeat and violent young offenders. Admittedly, this government has done that very poorly.

That's why, as I've said earlier, we've had break-in capitals in Canada, car thief capitals in Canada; we've had some of the most violent crimes that have taken place in Canada have taken place in this province. And that's not as it should be, Mr. Speaker, and it's not what the people in this province expect.

So this province has done a very poor job of protecting the public from offenders — repeat offenders, young offenders, violent offenders.

I guess one question I have, and it relates to all the programs, and this one as well, and that is, how is this going to be evaluated? So at the end of the time, how do we look at this program and say this is money well spent. It could be good, and it could just be a buy-off. And we'll have to wait and see what it is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(1430)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 49 — The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1998

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure for all of us there are occasions that we know that we will remember of our years in public office and our time in this legislature. And I think as today I am privileged to provide the second reading remarks to The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, this will be a day that I will remember as an important day not only for myself but for the department which I am pleased to serve as minister and indeed for this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to be rising to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1998.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation which currently guides the delivery of social assistance in Saskatchewan today is legislation which is more than 30 years old, passed in 1966. And of course as we all know, much has changed since 1966, and the needs of those people who find themselves turning to the Department of Social Services for financial assistance have likewise changed

dramatically since 1966.

When the Act was developed, this Act, it was intended to meet the needs of individuals and families who were experiencing a financial emergency due to a short-term job loss, a disability, a family crisis, or a sudden illness. It was never expected to provide for long-term support for people who were able to work. The Act as we've known it was designed to provide short-term relief for short-term needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Act as we know it effectively meets that circumstance and those needs. But things have changed dramatically in 30 years. Over these years, Mr. Speaker, both the economic and the social environment have undergone significant change. And this change has in many cases been very rapid.

The result, Mr. Speaker, is that many people, particularly young people, have found themselves forced to turn to social assistance because they are unable to successfully compete for jobs in a market-place which demands that even many entry level, low income jobs require now a high school education. This comes as no surprise when we consider that 74 per cent of social assistance clients between the ages of 18 and 21 have not graduated from high school.

Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action to address this particular situation. The provincial training allowance is now a monthly payment for students enrolled in adult basic education or related courses. The allowance assists lower income individuals and families to access this much needed training and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert we have the pilot project of what we describe as Youth Futures. Youth Futures links youth aged 18 to 21 to education and skill training programs, and the workforce. Mr. Speaker, I can report that Youth Futures is receiving rave reviews from the young people who are participating. This pilot project in Prince Albert is developed and managed through a very successful . . .

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

**Mr. Johnson:** — Sorry . . .

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to think that the member is giving me a standing ovation for these remarks.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, in reference to the Youth Futures program in Prince Albert, this program is so successful because it is a strong and successful match between the community and the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, many of those who today are receiving welfare, social assistance, expect to need that help only temporarily. Others however, Mr. Speaker, are finding it increasingly difficult to move back into the workforce. And for those whose families have become long-term recipients, the barriers that exist to break the grip of welfare dependence — what we sometimes call the welfare wall — is in some cases almost

insurmountable. The system today that we utilize presents numerous barriers from those who seek financial independence, who seek to become independent of welfare.

The amendments, Mr. Speaker, that we are introducing today will remove many of those barriers and at least make the climb over the welfare wall a little bit easier. Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan the vast majority of people who today are receiving welfare benefits do not want to be on social assistance — they do not want to be there.

Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity as minister to meet with literally hundreds of people who will be receiving social assistance benefits, and I report to the House the vast majority of those people do not want to be on welfare. They want, as best they can, the opportunity to participate in the community, to contribute to the community. They want to work, Mr. Speaker. They want to be independent. And parents in our province who have to rely on social assistance, particularly single moms, they want to be able to support their children to the very best of their ability.

What I have concluded, Mr. Speaker, in speaking with families and parents and children who are today receiving welfare in our province can be summed up in this way. They say to us, we don't want a hand-out, we just want a hand-up; not a hand-out — they want a hand-up.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we are creating by virtue of this legislation and amendments to the social assistance Act, some very, very important, innovative, creative, and in some ways unique, programs to turn this around.

One of them, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan employment supplement. The Saskatchewan employment supplement we believe is one way of providing that hand-up that I spoke of. Monthly payments under the program will supplement the income earned by lower income parents — either income earned from wages or from self-employment — as well as the income that may accrue to that household through child or spousal maintenance payments.

The supplement will assist parents with child-related costs of going to work. And as they gain experience in job skills, many will finally enjoy the satisfaction that comes from making the leap from dependence on social assistance to independence for themselves and their families.

For low income working families, the supplement will mean they are, and will always remain, better off working than on social assistance. The employment supplement will guarantee that families in our province will be better off working than they would be on welfare.

The social assistance clients today who apply for assistance have every dollar that they might receive through maintenance payments considered as income. Mr. Speaker, we've changed the rules so that custodial parents are no longer penalized for pursuing child support.

Mr. Speaker, through these programs we're working to improve the quality of life for low income families with children. To ensure that these resources go towards meeting basic needs, and

to reduce further hardship on low income families, we are introducing an amendment that will prevent the Saskatchewan employment supplement from being subject to garnishment or some other legal process.

Mr. Speaker, clients will receive notice of how their monthly benefit was calculated. If in the circumstance it is, why their application for the employment supplement was turned down, or that they have incurred an overpayment. There are a number of ways in which clients can and will be provided with this information, and how clients are notified will vary depending on the nature of the information.

In order to ensure the flexibility required to meet the needs of our clients, Mr. Speaker, we will repeal section 29.4 of The Saskatchewan Assistance Act which deals with notices of decisions. We will add a clause in section 14 which will permit the program regulations to specify how notices of decisions will be communicated to those receiving benefits under the Saskatchewan employment supplement.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes, as I'm sure the vast majority of Saskatchewan people do and the vast majority of Canadians, we believe that in a country as rich as ours no child should be forced to grow up in poverty. It is based on this fundamental belief, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan has taken a strong leadership role in the development of a National Child Benefit for Canadian children. It was in fact, Mr. Speaker, our Premier, the Premier of Saskatchewan, who first proposed this initiative as far back as 1995.

The Saskatchewan Child Benefit, again a creation of this legislation, will assist lower income families with the cost of raising their children. The monthly benefit will be paid to eligible families on behalf of each child under 18 years of age. It will assist lower income working families, parents in receipt of social assistance, and those who are attending school.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, the Child Benefit and the employment supplement programs will be available not just to families . . . (inaudible) . . . they are receiving social assistance, but to thousands of families who are of a low income who may not be receiving social assistance but who may be of . . . we may describe as the working poor. And so there will be literally thousands of families who benefit from these programs.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the amount of money that a family will receive is based on the number of children in the family and that family's income as reported to Revenue Canada for the previous tax year. The eligible families for the Child Benefit will be identified automatically by Revenue Canada and thus eliminate the need for the bureaucratic and formal application process.

Mr. Speaker, one of the often heard criticisms of government programs these days is the cost of administration, and we are constantly and at all levels looking for ways to reduce duplication of administration and costs. And so in a move which will greatly reduce the costs to Saskatchewan of implementing and delivering the Child Benefit, we will be amending the Act here today to allow the Minister of Social

Services to enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada which authorizes the federal government to integrate payments under the Saskatchewan Child Benefit program with the Canadian Child Tax Benefit.

Because the Child Benefit will be administered by the federal government, all notices to clients and decisions regarding their Saskatchewan Child Benefit will be determined in accordance with the requirements of the federal government. We will be taking notices for the Saskatchewan employment supplement out of the Act and placing them in the regulation to provide the department more flexibility in making additions or changes or notices.

Mr. Speaker, these programs will take effect in July of this year, over the month of July, and at August 1. We've attempted as we can, to address as many of the situations of which we see may arise and answer as many of the questions as we can.

However, Mr. Speaker, it is possible that some completely unforeseen issue could present itself and need resolution, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will also amend the assistance Act to allow the Department of Social Services to make retroactive to July 1, 1998 any regulations developed to resolve situations which were not previously identified or anticipated in the program regulation.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, we believe that the amendments to the Act, representing as they do the initiation of new, creative, and unique programing in Saskatchewan to provide independence for Saskatchewan families, we believe these will clear the path for many Saskatchewan families to enter the workforce, to become independent where they may today be dependent.

And we believe they will open as well the window of opportunity for literally thousands of Saskatchewan children and their parents by providing them with a clear and reasonable choice between work and welfare so that you will always be better off working in our province than being on welfare.

Mr. Speaker, this government believes, again I say, the Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan children deserve more than just a hand out, they do deserve a hand-up. This legislation will do that.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1988.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's quite obvious that government members needed something to lift their spirits a little bit in view of the number of situations they've had to deal with over the past number of days and weeks. Certainly when you look at health care, when you look at SaskPower and the Channel Lake fiasco, Mr. Minister, or Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the fact that government members feel quite strongly about a piece of legislation which in many cases and in many ways as well, Mr. Speaker, addresses a number of areas that I have had the privilege of talking about in this Assembly over the past number of years.

(1445)

As I was listening to the minister give the reasons for the changes to the Saskatchewan assistance amendment, that it will be brought forward in The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, I can appreciate what the minister is saying.

And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, as well, there are many people across this province are looking at this piece of legislation, will look at the legislation, and will be asking themselves, what does it really mean to me at the end of the day. Does it, as the minister indicated . . . will it give me that opportunity to work, to find work or accept the work that's available and still give me an affordable way of life, Mr. Speaker? And I think that's what's going to be very important.

Certainly as the minister indicated, I believe there are many residents of this province who today are drawing upon social assistance, and in many cases through no fault of their own, situations where individuals would have an opportunity for, or job opportunity, would like to take the job, but under the current stipulations find themselves actually losing . . . or less money in their pocket, having less money in their pocket as a result of attempting to work because a job just doesn't meet the requirements of providing for all the needs. And every dollar they make over a certain level is taken away from them by social assistance.

And so, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of changes that are being brought forward under this Act. A number of changes that will dramatically change the way, I believe, we've used social assistance and how welfare recipients are dealt with, how we say to individuals that we're going to give you every opportunity to find gameable employment, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's certainly appropriate, as we look at this piece of legislation, that we indeed address and assess what the minister has indicated, the reasons behind the legislation that's in front of us, and why we should look at it very carefully and make sure that indeed the amendments that are being brought forward at the end of the day will achieve the goals that I believe the government is setting out in this piece of legislation.

As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, certainly I believe that there are some very positive moves that are being sought with this piece of legislation. And I can only commend the minister and the government for finally recognizing that there were needs, there was a need for change. That there was a need to help people feel more positive about themselves. And to give people the opportunity to indeed become part of the workforce rather than always receiving via the taxpayer. And I think that's . . . there isn't a person in our community or in our society who doesn't feel that they want to be a contributor rather than always a taker from society and from the taxpayer.

So in light of that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that our caucus certainly is pleased to see the number of the amendments coming forward. However, this is a large piece of legislation. There are a number of issues to be addressed in this piece of legislation and I don't think it would be proper for us just to move this through real quickly and we're just off the order paper that quickly.

I believe we need to look at it very carefully because it will have some very serious implications once it is totally introduced. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I now move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 48 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 1998**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move second reading of a Bill to amend The Income Tax Act. This Bill continues our government's commitment to lowering taxes as affordable and it introduces two new planks in the government's job creation strategy.

This Bill also implements a major component of our government's efforts to help low income, working families to achieve financial independence as the Minister of Social Services was just outlining. The Bill also contains several technical amendments to The Income Tax Act which are necessary to ensure effective administration of our income taxes by the federal government.

When we took office in 1991, the province of Saskatchewan was facing an annual budget deficit of \$960 million and outstanding debt of over \$14 billion. In addressing this difficult fiscal situation, our government made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan to lower taxes on an affordable and sustainable basis.

Since balancing the budget in 1994, we have been able to reduce taxes every year. In 1995 and 1996 we implemented a reduction in personal income taxes that saves Saskatchewan taxpayers \$55 million a year. In 1997 we reduced the rate of the provincial sales tax, that is the education and health tax, from 9 per cent to 7 per cent, saving all Saskatchewan residents over \$180 million a year.

Saskatchewan families now pay less in sales taxes than families in any other province with a sales tax. These tax cuts are responsible and sustainable. The budget remains balanced and our government is committed to ensuring that these tax cuts are here to stay and that they will be followed by further tax reductions.

As I announced in March in the 1998 budget, we are continuing to lower taxes for Saskatchewan families. This Bill implements a reduction in the Saskatchewan basic personal income tax rate from 50 per cent to 48 per cent of basic federal tax commencing July 1 of this year.

This reduction comes on top of the personal income tax measures announced in the recent federal budget. The most significant of those measures is the \$500 increase in the basic personal credits for low income taxpayers, which will reduce both federal and Saskatchewan income taxes. Together, these income tax reductions will save Saskatchewan taxpayers over \$57 million per year in provincial income taxes.

Since 1992 our government has followed a strategy of using targeted tax incentives for key sectors of the Saskatchewan economy to stimulate growth and job creation. For example, we strengthened our small businesses by reducing their income

taxes by 20 per cent. We fostered the growth of our manufacturing and processing sector with a variety of tax incentives. We encouraged agricultural diversification with a sales tax rebate for investment in livestock and horticultural facilities. We attracted call centres by removing the sales tax on 1-800 numbers, and we improved the tax treatment of Saskatchewan-based truckers.

The primary focus of our targeted tax incentives has been to improve the competitiveness of key sectors of the provincial economy. This strategy is working to attract investment and jobs to Saskatchewan. And yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the investment dealers of Canada released a report that said Saskatchewan leads the country in investment growth at more than double the national average.

This Bill introduces legislation that will expand the targeted tax incentive strategy to knowledge-based industries and to the film and video industry.

Firstly, with respect to the knowledge-based industries, to attract research and development activity to Saskatchewan and help companies right across the industrial spectrum to invest in the future, this Bill implements a new income tax credit for R&D (research and development) activities.

The 15 per cent tax credit will be available to all corporations making R&D expenditures in Saskatchewan and will reduce Saskatchewan corporate income taxes payable. This tax credit will benefit many Saskatchewan industries, including engineering, biotechnology, and information technology. It will also benefit Saskatchewan's universities where much of this research will take place.

To create an opportunity for Saskatchewan's film and video industry to grow and compete with other parts of the world, this Bill also implements a new film and video employment tax credit. This refundable tax credit, equal to 35 per cent of the eligible Saskatchewan labour costs of the Saskatchewan film production, provides the impetus for the film and video industry to expand and offer new employment opportunities to Saskatchewan people, especially young people involved in this industry.

My colleague, the Minister of Municipal Government, will have more to say about this tax credit when she introduces the enabling legislation.

The fourth budget measure to be implemented through The Income Tax Act is the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. As has just been described to the legislature by the Minister of Social Services in his introduction to the proposed amendments of The Saskatchewan Assistance Act, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit is part of a comprehensive strategy to help families get off and stay off welfare.

The Saskatchewan Child Benefit will provide a monthly, non-taxable allowance to assist lower income families with the costs of raising children. The benefit will be integrated into a single payment with the federal tax benefit to improve coordination and efficiency in the delivery of federal and provincial child benefits.

Finally, this Bill also implements several technical amendments which will assist Revenue Canada in its administration of the Saskatchewan income tax system.

I will be pleased to answer questions concerning the amendments when discussing this Bill at Committee of the Whole. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Income Tax Act.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly wish to say a few brief remarks about this Bill, which I regard as a technical Bill following the budget and I don't think it would be appropriate to re-engage in a week of budget debate, Mr. Speaker. And so I think that it's appropriate that I just make some very brief comments before we allow this to go to committee, at which time I think it is very appropriate that more of the technical questions that we will have, to ask at that time.

I think while the government takes a great deal of time patting itself on the back about how fast we're moving forward with tax relief, the plain and simple truth is that Saskatchewan is the highest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. Our tax freedom day is later than any other jurisdiction in Canada, with the exception of Newfoundland who has the dubious distinction of beating us by a day or two.

And while we certainly do agree that tax relief is certainly needed and definitely important, we believe that this personal tax reduction is really not all that significant to the average resident of Saskatchewan. It amounts, if you calculate it out, to approximately the price of a half a cup of coffee a day, no cream, no sugar, and that's kind of fortunate because it matches the other half a cup of coffee we got from the federal government sometime before.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that one of the things that we continue to ignore is what I've called in the budget debate, the demographic deficit, in that we are increasingly following behind particularly the province to the west of us, in terms of our competitiveness. And it makes it difficult for us to continue to attract young, professional workers and people that will come to this province to broaden the taxpayers of the province instead of continuing to rely on the same few to be continued to be burdened with the full impact of tax measures in this province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to reiterate the whole budget debate. There are questions we will want to address in committee and we will certainly prepare to do that. And at this time then we have no objection to the Bill moving to committee.

(1500)

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to take a few moments in the second reading debate to congratulate the Minister of Finance, and indeed the entire cabinet, on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of the people of Prince Albert, and this will probably apply, Mr. Speaker, to all of the constituents of every MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in Saskatchewan.

And that is to congratulate them on this — on the fact that over the last two, three years, this government has reduced income tax twice, and the fact that this government has reduced the sales tax and the fact that this government has created more employment by reducing corporate taxes in targeted places. And, Mr. Speaker, as a general result, we are all better off — certainly much better off than we were five, six years ago in this province. And what's perhaps even more important is the direction is continuing and we are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just take issue with the one comment that was mentioned by the speaker previous, and that is with the remarks with respect to tax freedom day. I think that if the member was to check specifically, he would find that Saskatchewan is not at the bottom of the barrel on that but falls somewhere well in the middle.

However, there are many ways, there are many ways of calculating taxes and tax benefits, Mr. Speaker. And I think if you look and take in total . . . if you include items such as cars, how much it costs to operate a vehicle here in Saskatchewan and to license a vehicle; if you include the health premiums that we pay none of, that those people espouse, and if you include housing, if you take the overall package of the cost of living in Saskatchewan, you will find that what we get is far, far better than what people get in other provinces.

But my main purpose, Mr. Speaker, for rising for this moment or two was simply to say congratulations to the Minister of Finance and cabinet, and thank you from the people of Saskatchewan for moving our taxes in the proper and the right direction. And good luck in the future.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 40

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 40 — The SaskTel Pension Implementation Act** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Bill before us disestablishes the legislative SaskTel superannuation plan and enables the establishment of a strictly internal SaskTel pension plan. We understand that this arrangement has proceeded from the negotiations following the 1996 SaskTel strike.

Our caucus recognizes that the conditions of the Bill arose out of a legitimate collective bargaining agreement. Although we do not want to unduly delay this Bill, we have some concerns that we will want to have addressed before it's passed.

As with any agreement negotiated with one set of Crown employees, there is always the concern that this will set a precedent for future negotiations with the employees of other

Crowns. It is not clear from the Bill or its executive summary how this new pension will compare with the pensions of other Crowns. If it is significantly higher than the others, we can naturally expect that the other Crown employees will begin clamouring for a similar one. This will of course drive up the costs of the Crowns, which will ultimately be borne by the taxpayers and ratepayers.

Indeed, even leaving other Crowns aside, we have to question how this will affect the competitiveness of SaskTel. Already the public phone company's value is slipping as greater levels of competition enter the market-place. In order to ensure the health of this public asset, we as its managers and shareholders need to ensure that it doesn't incur any undue costs.

We also need to examine how this Bill will affect current claims on existing pension plans. There have been a number of claims against the current plan from groups such as remarried widows. It would clearly be unfair if the transfer of this new plan was used as a way of dismissing such disputes.

We also need to be concerned about the loss of public oversight that is involved in this Bill. No longer will we in this Assembly be able to review negotiated arrangements. We have seen throughout the Channel Lake affair what happens when Crown assets are managed without proper oversight. This concern needs to be considered before we extend further management freedoms to the Crowns.

Our caucus is also unclear about how this new plan will affect the pensions of existing beneficiaries. Will those already receiving pensions have their plans unilaterally changed? This again would be unfair and the Bill is not completely clear on how this would be handled.

Mr. Speaker, at this time we have no problem with seeing this Bill pass second reading. However we will want to see these and other concerns addressed in committee before we are willing to pass this Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Bill No. 35

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 35 — The On-farm Quality Assurance Programs Act** be now read a second time.

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

#### Bill No. 37

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 37 — The Noxious Weeds Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very interesting piece of legislation that comes before the legislature; it deals with the commercial production of industrial hemp.

Hemp in many people's mind is synonymous with marijuana, but of course members of the legislature, members of the legislature would know that when it comes to this piece of legislation, that that is not accurate.

Although they come from the same species of plant — cannabis — hemp and pot have very different characteristics and uses.

The marijuana that is used for a narcotic refers to a mixture of leaves and flowers that have a high content of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) of 3 to 5 per cent. Industrial hemp refers to the fibre-producing strains of cannabis. It has very low THC levels and cannot be used as a narcotic.

The dried stalk of the plant is what is used for manufacturing products such as paper, rope, etc. Hemp contains a high content of proteins — it can be used in soups, cereals, cakes, etc.

Again, hemp seed oil can be used in paints, varnishes, cooking, and has some cosmetic and medical uses, I understand.

The federal government has implemented regulations that will enable commercial production of industrial hemp under licence. Because interest in hemp has been shown here, it has been removed from the noxious weeds list and will make it legal for growth here in the province.

Other parts of the Bill removing the list of noxious weeds from the Act and put in regulations to make it easier to amend in the future, provides municipalities with the authority to appoint inspectors to inspect properties for noxious weeds and require the destruction of these weeds.

This piece of legislation in its entirety . . . this Act, I should say, The Noxious Weeds Act, is an important component of good husbandry in the agriculture communities and makes up an important part of regulations dealing with noxious weeds, which are . . . can have significant negative economic impact on one's farming operation. So it's a very important Act for agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's important that we recognize that.

This Bill . . . We don't want to . . . This Bill dealing with the industrial production of hemp, I think is important and can be a further economic benefit to the province of Saskatchewan. Farmers all over this province are looking for ways to diversify their farming operations and perhaps this will present opportunities for agriculture producers all across this province.

We do not want to raise the alarm bell that somehow or another this is going to promote the illegal growing of marijuana plants. That is not what this piece of legislation is about. We don't want to create any kind of hysteria in that area.

This is an important product and an important potential, as I said, diversification opportunity for Saskatchewan producers.

We have perhaps a few questions that we'll be asking but we feel that it's appropriate that this Bill now move to committee.

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



## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Evidence  
Amendment Act, 1998**

**The Deputy Chair:** — Before we begin, I'll invite the minister to introduce his official.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Yes, I am pleased to have with me today, Andrea Seale from the Department of Justice.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your official as well. I have just a few questions on this first one, The Evidence Act, and dealing with particularly the part about individuals that can appear on video tape, closed circuit television, or have another person with them in a witness box. That's a rather new idea to Saskatchewan. I think it's probably a valid idea but it is new.

And I guess the one question on that, how much discretion will a judge have in determining which people and in what cases that will apply?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — It will be in the absolute discretion of the judge. The judge will maintain control of the court and decide who would use this new method.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And one other question, because like I said, this is new to Saskatchewan and is probably both interesting and positive. And the question that I have, on creating this Act, Bill No. 4, what did the government do in terms of consultation with the public or the legal community before creating this piece of legislation?

(1515)

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — We had extensive consultation around this, as this legislation comes out of the work of the steering committee on the abuse of adults in vulnerable circumstances.

And the following groups were included in this committee: the Disabled Women's Network of Saskatchewan or DAWN; the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living; the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan; the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services; the Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service; the Saskatoon Committee on the Abuse of Older Persons; the Provincial Partnership Committee on Family Violence; the inner-hospital domestic violence committee; the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan; Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism; Regina Police Service; Sherwood Credit Union; Department of Justice; Department of Social Services; Department of Health; Department of Labour; Department of Municipal Government; and as well then, further consultations with the legal profession as well.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And as I said, this is a rather unique Act and quite different, to us, happening in Saskatchewan. So I'm glad to see that list that you just gave to us was quite lengthy. And I think those take care of the questions that we had on Bill 4.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 22 — The Electronic Filing of Information Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** — Before I call clause 1, I invite the minister to introduce his new officials.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me today Mr. Phil Flory, who is the director of corporations with the Department of Justice; and Darcy McGovern from the Department of Justice.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you and welcome again, Mr. Minister, and to your new officials. I think in the fact that we're running to the end of this century and just about ready to start a new one, doing some electronic filing is something that we would expect government to do and so I have a few questions on this.

Which departments from government are probably going to be the first ones to get on-line with this project?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I think I can say clearly that the Department of Justice is ready to proceed with this. And we're working on a project with a one-stop registration relating to the corporations branch, which also ties into the Department of Finance. And we're working together also with the Department of Economic Development. And so those are the initial ones. But I think we know that as we show how this works, other departments will be ready to come and participate as well.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. I think especially as we get into some of the areas of land titles and registrations, that will speed that up and be welcomed by everybody in Saskatchewan.

Obviously there's an expenditure involved in setting up electronic filing of information. Are the monies coming out of existing budgets? Is there a separate budget that's around to go ahead and take care of this new system in all departments? Or how is that going to be financed?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — As we proceed with our initial plans that I've told you about with the Department of Justice, we have that funding in place already.

But practically, there will not be a separate line of funding. It will be used in each department as they move forward as part of the work that they do in that particular area. But we anticipate, in the same way that you do, that as we do more of this it will just mean that the budget requests are less.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. Another question on this. Are there certain types of information that are readily able to be filed electronically and are there some which are not able to be filed electronically, either for practical means or legal means, and . . .

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well I think practically, it's a question of

what kind of data can go in, and practically most anything can. The only area where we are having to look at separately really is the issue of signatures, and we are working and looking at what's being used in other jurisdictions around that. But otherwise, virtually any kind of data can be used in electronic filing format, as we know from the use of fax and other Internet applications.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. I think that answer was exactly where I was hoping that that particular question would go.

And I'd like to thank your guests for coming out and giving us the information on these numbers of questions and that concludes the information we're looking for on Bill No. 22.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

### **Bill No. 2 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 1998**

**The Deputy Chair:** — Before I call clause 1, I'd like the minister to introduce his new officials.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me today, Madeleine Robertson from the Department of Justice; Don Head, who is the new executive director of correctional services for the province of Saskatchewan; and Jan Turner, who is the director of community services.

#### **Clause 1**

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your new officials. I don't know if the fact that we keep getting more officials means that we're going to get better answers or just the questions get tougher.

In Bill No. 2, I don't see the word, sentencing circles in there, and yet I believe through quite a large part of it, that's exactly what we're dealing with. And I'm wondering why the specific reference isn't used in the legislation because it's what we all understand.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — No, we're not talking about sentencing circles in this legislation. We're talking about some of the alternative measures in the community justice committees, which are in place, before the matters actually go to the court. And it's not sentencing circles, which happen after a judge is trying to decide a sentence.

**Mr. Heppner:** — You mention that . . . the other things that are taking place. I'm wondering if you could just elaborate fairly briefly on what those sorts of things are that you say are in operation out there.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — What we're doing in Saskatchewan . . . and I know that you've been part of some of the discussion and debate around what options are available within the community. And community justice committees are similar to the youth justice committees that are used under the Young Offenders

Act. We haven't formally established the community justice committees which would be seen throughout Saskatchewan until we pass this legislation, because we don't want to get into any difficulties.

But effectively what they will be is allow, for example, the police to refer matters to them or prosecutors and have them dealt with at the front end of the whole criminal justice system as opposed to after charges have been laid and the trial held and then a judge trying to make a decision.

So they're going to some of the things that I know you heard the Member of Parliament from the Camrose area in Alberta talk about. It's those kinds of initiatives, and I guess we're wanting to make sure that we have the legislative framework all in place before we do that.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And as you mentioned, I was in attendance at a number of those meetings and I think some of the ideas that are out there are very positive. And if we can use those in our Saskatchewan system to help youth particularly, I think that's going to be a good move.

There's an interesting little phrase or a line in this Bill that says that no action will be taken against a minister, or can be taken against a minister, a minister's delegate, or community justice committee for, and here I quote, "neglect or default." And I'm wondering if maybe this shouldn't be exact and maybe the only cases where action should be allowed, when there's a blatant neglect of duties.

I think we know on the one side we don't want community people who are volunteering feeling that they're going to get hung out for an error they make. But when the word neglect and default is there, it seems a little larger than just, you know, being a bit of a novice at what they're trying to work with.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well I think the simple answer is that if people are acting in good faith and reasonably, they don't have to worry about liability at all and this further protects them. But if they're acting in a way where they're neglecting their duty and where they're just not doing the job . . . and that includes the minister as well. If in fact I was doing something where I was negligent, this wouldn't exempt me either.

So it's basically setting out that people acting reasonably and in good faith are protected but there still is a . . . there are situations where people could be intentionally doing something wrong and they would be bound or be liable for whatever damage they caused.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, and I appreciate the direction of that answer because I think that's a concern that we have, as I said, that the people who are volunteering aren't going to be liable for not always being the most professional people in that area but that people that should know what they're doing can't be devoid of taking or holding any responsibility.

As far as youth criminals, are the programs in place for them totally outside your mandate? Because I think that they work in Social Services. Are the programs totally outside the mandate of your department, or do you have some say in how Social Services handles them? Like when they go there, are they no

longer any of yours — like how does that work through?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I think that is the simple answer, that once the courts have dealt with them they go into the Social Services responsibility under the Young Offenders Act. Now we provide advice and consultation on issues that relate to sort of overall corrections policy. But practically, once they are into a young offender facility, that's under the Department of Social Services.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, and I think you probably know my opinion on that because there's a tendency that when we have people moving from one department to another, there's always a possibility of people falling in the cracks. And the second thing is, as I mentioned earlier on in other cases, that Social Services' mandate is not a mandate for public security, whereas yours is.

But having received that answer, I think that takes care of all the questions we have on Bill No. 2. Thank you.

(1530)

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 31 — The Enforcement of Judgments Conventions Act/Loi sur les conventions sur l'exécution de jugements**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I invite the minister to introduce his official before I call clause 1.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I'm pleased to have with me again Darcy McGovern from the Department of Justice.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, and welcome again, Mr. Minister, and to your official. I believe we saw Bills similar to this last year in terms of enforcement of judgements between provinces, and I'm wondering, is this very similar to one that came through a year ago?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — It deals with the whole issue of enforcement, which is similar, but the one last year dealt with enforcement between provinces. This one deals with conventions that the country of Canada would enter into with other countries, which then in turn allows us as a province to tie into the international convention arranged between Canada and another country. So it's on a different level and it includes the whole world, depending on the numbers of conventions that are signed.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And I don't know if people in this province very often think that we're dealing legally on an international basis. So this next question relates to that. How many international civil judgements would have to be retired in Saskatchewan in a given year?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — That's a question that's not possible to

answer because under our present system, if you have a judgement in another country and you want to enforce it in Saskatchewan, the person in the other country has to hire a lawyer here and start all over again.

And so we'll be able to give you those numbers in a few years after this legislation is in place, for example with France, which is the first country that we think that we'll be tied into. And then what we'll then know is the numbers of foreign judgements that are actually registered pursuant to the convention and pursuant to this Act in Saskatchewan.

But at this time they have to restart every time, which basically means double litigating. And if a person moves again, well then they litigate again in another place or another country.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Okay, and you just led into my next question when you said if they move again, there's new litigation begins.

How many provinces in Canada are going to be onside with this type of a program, let's say by the end of this year?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This legislation has been developed and passed by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, which meets every summer, usually in August, and looks at the kinds of laws which should be similar or were the same in every province.

So we know that this, within a few years, will be passed in every jurisdiction. But I can't predict exactly how many will be done this year. But we anticipate, because it's basically good news for Canadian citizens, that it will be passed everywhere within the next couple of years.

**Mr. Heppner:** — And I think to the extent that this means that you don't have to go through a whole new legal procedure in every jurisdiction every time something happens is probably good. But it creates a rather interesting one probably here in Saskatchewan with the possibility that Guyana may decide to sue SaskPower.

Would this make any judgement against SaskPower more readily enforceable here in Saskatchewan than it would have been before this legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This particular legislation refers to bilateral conventions between countries. So right now we know that there is a convention between Canada and France. And so that's sort of the first one that's there.

If there is negotiated at some point a bilateral convention between Guyana and Canada, then this legislation would be used in that situation.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. So I would imagine that if we were somewhat prudent, we'll make sure we don't negotiate that with Guyana for some time.

And thank you again to your official, and that takes care of the questions that I have on Bill No. 31.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

### THIRD READINGS

#### Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 1998

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

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

#### Bill No. 22 — The Electronic Filing of Information Act

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

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

#### Bill No. 2 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 1998

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

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

#### Bill No. 31 — The Enforcement of Judgments Conventions Act/Loi sur les conventions sur l'exécution de jugements

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

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

### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

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

**The Deputy Chair:** — Before we begin, I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce deputy minister Ray McKay to my left; and also Donna Dumont, business manager.

#### Subvote (EC10)

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and welcome, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials.

As I understand, you came down today from the North to talk to us about it. I would imagine that coming to Regina probably isn't . . . when you left the North, I would think that Regina doesn't even look that good. You're probably looking forward

to going back north again.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me first of all, this department is really just one part, just given a small page in Economic Development, and I think that with the northern people having very many specific concerns that it seems like it should be sitting by itself somehow or given more recognition. Why is it just sitting here under Economic Development?

(1545)

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Chair, the number one issue in regards to our northern development has been economic development. And we thought that there would be a strategic focus when the Office of Northern Affairs was created, and as such that has been the major focus.

And as well, we look at the Office of Northern Affairs to do major, coordinated work with other departments such as tying in Economic Development and Education; so there's an important need for coordination with Education. There's new developments, as we've done in facilities on Health; we then have coordinated work with Health and so on.

So basically the reasons are, strategic economic development focus combined with coordination with other departments.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, the biggest single jump in this budget when I look at the different programs in the different areas is in resource policy and program coordination. Are there any new programs or issues in this area that justifies that increase?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, we have been looking at the base reason on the economic development side. We have moved in from approximately 500 people, for example, working in the mining area in 1992 to 1,085 this past year. So we've seen 600 people extra working in the field of mining just since 1992.

And so that's been a tremendous success story wherein the department, with its focused strategy on economic development, works with the mining companies and the communities to focus in on the economic side. And we have moved in there as well from around 20 to \$30 million worth of contracts and salaries to approximately 150 in this past year.

So we're looking at that strategic type of success in regards to the North. So we base most of our activities that way, as well as on the training side.

I must say that when I was growing up in the North, we used to have maybe a dozen people going to schools. Our coordinated partnerships with the Department of Education, both at the K-12 side and at the post-secondary side, we now have about 1,600 people in the field of education. Just in teacher education alone we have graduated 200 people. So what we're seeing is — with the strategic, coordinated focus — we are seeing success, successful partnerships with industry, successful partnerships with the community.

And I might add that for those people who are concerned about the environmental side, we also have environmental quality committees in 29 communities. It's really the first of its kind all

across Canada. We're really innovators in this area.

And in that sense we have three major environmental quality committees that we work with in regards to the North. And that is also another example of the partnership that we do have with the communities and also to the mining industry in this case.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, that was a long answer to a really short question and I'm not really sure if I got the answer that I wanted.

I'm wondering — this extra \$124,000 — is there something . . . You talked about the number, the job increases from 500 to 1,085 I think the numbers were, and is there something that you're doing that's directly . . . that you believe is directly affecting the job numbers there through this program and with the extra money?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, we're basically maintaining 350 jobs right now through the . . . and this past year we've had 290 new ones.

**Ms. Draude:** — So there's people working in a department up there that . . . directly involving resources that's going to encourage new jobs or encouraging further development of the resources up there and there's actually that many people employed through your department then, is there?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — On those 350 jobs that we maintain, plus the 290 new ones this past year, they range in many areas. Some of them are in the mining sector, some of them are in the forestry sector, some of them are in the community services sector; and also we support the traditional resource users in the areas of trapping, fishing, and outfitting. So I think that in that sense we are having a broad-based approach in regards to the budget of the North.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, I notice in the budget that all funding has been dropped for Cumberland House. Why is that?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — There was an historic agreement with Cumberland House and this past year was a final payment on the Cumberland House agreement that was 3.8 million. And so when you're looking at it being dropped, it isn't being dropped, it's because the payment was completed — the agreement was actually fulfilled. And that was the reason why you see the idea of a . . . which is not really a drop on the Cumberland dollars, it's just a completion of the agreement that was signed in 1988 — the Cumberland agreement.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, under economic development division, could you tell me how many loans were given out last year and what the total value of those loans were?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — On the loans, we had commercial loans, we had 42 commercial loans. And the value of those loans was 2,251,700. We had, on the primary loans, we had 56 at 246,542 for a total of, of course, on the commercial and primary being \$2,498,242.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, were there any loans from past years that were written off this year?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — I can provide you with that detail in regards to the loan write-offs. I'll just take notice of your question.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, can you tell us how many jobs that these loans created and how many of these jobs have been maintained as well?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — The question for the maintenance was 350 and we had 290 new ones this past year.

**Ms. Draude:** — Were there any marketing and research grants given out last year?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — On the market and research side, we had 33 and the amount was 232,504.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, did the labour standards that companies in, what I guess we'd call southern Saskatchewan, or the ones that are not in northern Saskatchewan anyway, are there the same labour standards or are there some that we don't have to adhere to in the North?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — At this point, there is a difference and those labour standards are under review. As you know, in most of the major agreements — for example, on the mines — the standards are reflected through the union agreement and so on, but there is a difference in regards to the standards and that's under review at the present time.

**Ms. Draude:** — Does the marketing research areas . . . pardon me, the business skills grants — how many of them were given out this year?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Just on the . . . In the similar fashion as the CREDO (community regional economic development organization), the REDAs (regional economic development authority) are now . . . (inaudible) . . . what we call CREDOs. And we had eight grants there for 273,570. But we also had, along with that, organizational skill development grants that were given out for a total of 10 — \$18,423.

**Ms. Draude:** — Can you tell me how much funding was given to the community-based regional economic development organizations?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, that's 273,570.

**Ms. Draude:** — The wild rice crop renewal program was instituted in '96-97 to assist with crop failures when there was unusually high water levels. Is that program still in operation, and if so, was there any expenditures under it last year?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, on the seeding, the crop renewal program is about 20; we'll give you a more exact figure later on. There's also help in regards to the machinery that is utilized in regards to the harvesting.

**Ms. Draude:** — Can you tell me what expenditures were made under the commercial fishing freight subsidy and price support program this year, and how many fishermen received subsidies?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — On the fishing aside, we had 49 of the

loans approved for 216,997.

There is also a transportation subsidy, when we're dealing with freshwater fish marketing, and that's a . . . the total budget in there is 345,000. Part of it goes to administration in regards . . . in support of the fishers and the rest goes into the subsidy of the transportation because of the huge cost of going up into the north country and the flying in of fish assessment.

**Ms. Draude:** — As a price support program, does this program conflict with any international trade agreements in any way?

(1600)

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — As far as we know it doesn't. A similar agreement exists in Manitoba. There is approximately . . . in our case we help the fishers with about 345,000; in Manitoba it's about 200,000. And as well we have a bit . . . maybe about 10 to 20,000 in Alberta. And we, out of that 345, we have 25,000 going to the commercial fishermen's cooperative federation.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, under the resource development division, this branch is charged with coordinating the mineral surface lease agreements in conjunction with the Environment and Resource Management. Can you tell me how well this works and if it's not just adding another layer of bureaucracy?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, in regards to the EQCs, (environment quality committee) we look upon it as a strong partnership with SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management). And we are agents, administrators for SERM in regards to the environmental quality committees.

We administer the programs and the 29 communities that are involved then participate in their regional meetings. There's three of them — three EQCs in the North — and in that sense therefore, over the years our partnership has created probably a new level of real involvement by people in the environmental issue — more so than any place else that I can see in Canada.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, what mineral leases did this branch negotiate over the past year?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Basically, right now in terms of administration, there is five gold mines, one copper, zinc, and eight uranium mine surface leases.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, can you tell me what the status of the uranium review panel is and has it delivered its report yet?

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — The panel has done its final report already.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

**General Revenue Fund  
Justice  
Vote 3**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I'm going to invite the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me today John Whyte, the deputy minister of Justice; Doug Moen, who is the executive director of public law and community justice; Elizabeth Smith, who's the director of administration services branch; Keith Laxdal, the associate deputy minister of finance and administration; Ron Hewitt, who's the assistant deputy minister of registry services division; Richard Quinney, the executive director of public prosecutions division; John Baker, executive director of law enforcement services; and Don Head, who is the executive director of corrections.

**Subvote (JU01)**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials. There are, as you know, many issues surrounding justice these days. Your department is, I'm sure, well-acquainted with all of them and we wanted to touch on some of them here this afternoon.

My colleague has raised some of them in the legislature here in the last few days and the concerns that we are hearing from people all across Saskatchewan relate to what many describe as a revolving door justice system that we have here in Saskatchewan. The concerns of people here in this province are that justice is breaking down; that we don't seem to have the levels of concern coming from you and your department that can handle these types of issues.

And you just look at the kinds of actions that have taken place in recent days where you see families coming to the legislature and saying that the system in their view has let them down. We've seen circumstances where people with very, very serious charges that have been levelled against them have been basically released with, I understand, no bail on their own recognizance, that kind of thing. We feel that there is concern certainly in this area.

The most recent incident that you're aware of, I'm sure, is the circumstances where after this individual was released on bail — or without bail, pardon me — we have a situation where there is another alleged incident that happened just over this weekend here. And I think people in Saskatchewan are extremely concerned about that. This gentleman was accused, first and foremost, of murder and attempted murder. So we have an individual that has been charged with five potential murders, four of them in an attempted fashion, one of them in actual fact. And so now we have a circumstance that the justice system allows this individual to be released without any bail with the supposedly . . . some elders making sure that he's going to behave himself.

Now what happens? From there we understand this individual goes out and has committed . . . at least has alleged to have committed a very, very serious offence, attacking someone with a baseball bat if — I believe that's the circumstances — has been likely, and if he hasn't been already likely will be charged with further offences.

Mr. Minister, these are concerns that I think people all across Saskatchewan share. What in the world was the justice system thinking about when this individual was released? What kind of system do we have in Saskatchewan where these kinds of

incidents happen? I think, Mr. Minister, that the people of Saskatchewan would be very interested in your comments on these types of situations. I don't think it's good enough for the people of Saskatchewan to just say that we're going to do our best and that we are working hard in these areas.

There are circumstances and many, many different incidents that we can point to that demonstrate that the system is not working. And I would ask you, Mr. Minister, what are you doing and what are your department officials doing to correct it?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you. As the member knows, I can't comment on specific cases. I'd also remind the member opposite that the judges of the court are independent, and they make their decisions based on all the evidence that's placed before them as well as the law. And that there are various times when they will look at all of the factors and deal with the matter.

But I think more directly, we in Saskatchewan have a justice system which deals with many, many difficult cases on a daily basis. And many of these matters are dealt with by the police, prosecutors, the courts, the adjunct services that we have, and victim services, and all of the other related services that will provide help when there is a major catastrophe or difficulty that involves a crime.

And we are working together with all of these parts of the justice system to make sure that the capable people who work within the system can do the job to the best of their ability. And for example this year, I've already told this House about the extra money that we've been able to provide for policing, whether it's in the serious crime initiative and the aboriginal resource officer area that we've been working in; whether it's the extra money into the prosecutions that will enable us to develop the SHOCAP (serious and habitual youth offender comprehensive action program) or the serious habitual youth offender programs; or all of the other things that we are doing around family violence and crime prevention, which I've mentioned previously today — all of these things relate to how people interact with the justice system.

And it's not something where the system is monolithic; it involves many, many people, including those of us here in the legislature who work on creating whatever laws there are and whatever programs there are that we can to help these people.

So I think that our goal is to have a fair, just system that treats people in a way that upholds our constitution and all the rights under the constitution, as well as meeting some of the individual needs when there are some great difficulties.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Johnson):** — Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Ward:** — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Ward:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce to

you and to the Assembly, a good friend of mine sitting in the Speaker's gallery here, an IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) worker in town for some union training. His wife is a part-time CA (chartered accountant) of mine, and I'd like to introduce Mr. Darcy Wright from Estevan to you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(1615)

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund

##### Justice

##### Vote 3

##### Subvote (JU01)

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, with your little speech you gave us a few minutes ago I think what the people in this province want to tell you is that we need some teeth in the law. We need to feel that the victims are the people that have rights as well and we have to . . . everyone knows that Saskatchewan has problems; so does every other province. I don't think that we have anything that's terribly different from the rest of Canada, and our system is failing our people.

Mr. Minister, the people that we've been telling us . . . been working with us are saying that the RCMP are doing a terrific job, the police are doing a terrific job, and we're getting the people to the system and that's where the breakdown is. I think that the people of this province are asking that you look at the system and make the changes that they require so that they feel safe in their own homes.

Mr. Minister, one of the other issues that were brought forward last year was a case around Martensville, or somewhere in the area around Saskatoon, where a young person was murdered and we found out that that person who was later charged had actually had a warrant out for his arrest. And we found out at that time that warrants were actually sent out on a weekly basis. I understand that there has been some changes in that policy now. Can you tell me how often warrants are sent out and to where?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — All of the warrants are sent out by fax the same day.

**Ms. Draude:** — So starting from last year, now every warrant that comes across the desk of the prosecutors are sent out immediately that same day by fax, out to the police in each area, is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — There was a change in the Criminal Code that allowed us to do that. And since the change in the Criminal Code then we've done that.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, there's one area I'd like to discuss briefly. And that is something that I think is referred to here in Regina as the aboriginal co-op. Can you give us an idea of when it was established and how much money was spent in that aboriginal co-op?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — If the specific question is about our alternative measures program that is funded by the Department of Justice at the Aboriginal Human Services Co-op, then we spend through the Department of Justice, about \$218,000 a year. But that co-op, such as it's organized, provides many other services that are funded both federally, and other departments in the provincial government, and I think the city also puts some money in there. And then I think that there are some funds that they also get from foundations and other places.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, one of the issues that we're hearing a lot about now are the number of gang-related offences that are happening in this province, not only just the native kids but also other gangs that have been coming into the province. Have you been specifically looking at policy that will relate . . . and deal with the gangs and actually send a message out that Saskatchewan isn't going to be standing for that, for the gang offences that we've seen in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — On this particular issue, I announced on March 30 of this year that the government will be spending a million dollars over the next two years to assist police with serious crime.

And we have serious crime units being established in Regina and Saskatoon city police services to address organized criminal activity with a particular focus on the drug trafficking, prostitution, and criminal gangs. This allows for extra police officers. We've also added extra money into the prosecutions, which is in addition to this money, which allows for a focused attention on serious crime.

These units will use the latest methods and technology to gather criminal intelligence and share it with each other and with the RCMP, and through the RCMP internationally, and will be using the evidence gathered to prosecute organized criminal activity within this province; also cooperate in dealing with organized criminal activity across the country.

I'd also add that the federal Minister of Justice and the federal Solicitor General are very much interested and involved in the whole question of dealing with serious crime. And we have been working together with some of their initiatives along with the initiatives of all the other provinces.

So in that way it's especially helpful for us on the prairie region where we cooperate with Alberta and Manitoba and the Northwest Territories because we're now part of the north-west region of the RCMP.

But practically, I think we can say we have a special interest and concern in this area and we're actually putting extra money to deal with this. And we'd be happy to look at any other ideas and suggestions that you have, but we have some very good initiatives in this area that we're working on.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, the victims of crime, I know that they do work with people like the family that we had in here yesterday, and there was high praise for those people. I think they're doing a very good job.

I'm wondering if you can tell me how much money was spent

in that department or program last year and how many people are actually working in that area.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I was able to find the information for you. The budget in this area, or the estimated expenditures in this area, for 1998-99 is \$2.438 million. And the number of people that are working in that area, full-time equivalent, is 15.

What I would also say is that this program provides funding to victims services programs throughout the whole province. And these programs cover approximately 800,000 out of the million people in Saskatchewan. And they're provided . . . and if you wish I can go through and name all the communities where they are. But I can give you the details.

But practically, we don't have that many people actually hired in the Department of Justice to do the work because it's work done throughout the province on contract or with other groups.

**Ms. Draude:** — I am glad you clarified that because it would seem that \$2 million for 15 people sounded like somebody was going to get a lot of money. But I guess that's probably not the way it's working.

Mr. Minister, I know that this fund is in part at least served by the surcharges on fines. And I know that there was actually an increase to those surcharges last year. Can you tell me how much money more was brought into that fund through the surcharges.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The increases that were announced will raise about another \$400,000. Last year the revenue was about 1.6 million; this year it will be about 2 million. And if you set that over against our estimated expenditures you'll see that it's about \$438,000 less than what we're actually going to spend.

And so what we're doing is we're using some of the money that we accumulated earlier before we set up all the programs. And our plan is eventually, basically, just to have enough money to run the programs for one year in the fund that we carry over from year to year, which would be about 2.4 million.

**Ms. Draude:** — So, Mr. Minister, some of the money that's spent, is it actually used for compensating for damages for people? Or is it all involving individuals and going out and talking to them, contracts to actually deal with people . . . or to pay people that are out dealing with people who have been victimized by crime?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The money that's spent is spent on quite a number of programs, but you asked specifically about the straight cash compensation to individuals, and the amount that we have budgeted there is about 300,000 out of that 2.4 million goes directly to individuals.

We have made some choices within government that, providing the broader based services throughout the whole province, would have equal or higher priority than just giving cash to individuals. But we still retain that compensation part of the program.

But practically the kinds of things that the whole program provides are — and I'll just give you headings and if you have



questions you can ask about specific ones — crisis intervention services, sort of immediately; specialized victim services programs, and these include things like the children's justice centre in Regina and the Saskatoon child centre which we supported as pilots before, and some of those are going on to different sources of funding. We also have interview rooms throughout the province where especially children can be interviewed in a room that's not sort of the police officer's regular interview room.

We have sort of victim and witness support programs which include sort of being with the person through the whole process. We have as well some education and training programs, coordination. We continue to do research and evaluation around the programs to make sure we're getting what we actually intended to get. I can give you some of this information.

And also we're working on various programs that relate to sort of prevention of victimization which is also prevention of crime. I mean if you prevent crimes you also prevent there being victims of those crimes.

But I can give you some more detailed information on this if you wish.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I do appreciate that. Mr. Minister, when it comes to policing on reserves I know that . . . at least I believe that the RCMP is actually paid for federally. Is that correct? Or is there money that's spent by your department to police reserves, and if so, can you tell us how much money is spent policing reserves and how many officers are actually assigned to do reserve work?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — We spend about \$10 million a year in the province in policing under the tripartite policing agreements on reserves. And that cost is shared 48 per cent paid by the province, 52 per cent by the federal government. So our share would be about 4.8 million and there are 89 officers that are part of that program.

But the way we have set it up in Saskatchewan is that because every one of these tripartite agreements involves the federal Solicitor General, or through . . . with the RCMP and then us in the province, and then the first nation, we also then have very good support from the RCMP throughout Saskatchewan. And so most of these policing arrangements are integrated very closely with the first nation police stations and police detachments that are around the reserve. So it basically is a network of policing right across the province that includes the first nations.

(1630)

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, how many times have sentencing circles been used this year by the Justice department?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This is not easy to get an exact number but we're fairly certain that for the year 1997, there were 31 sentencing circles held in the province. In the previous year, there were 55.

Now basically there's a decline in the number of sentencing circles, and it relates to the answer that I gave you previously on

some other things we were talking about earlier this afternoon, because we're dealing with more community-based justice activities which allows for police and prosecutors to direct cases away from the criminal justice system.

Sentencing circles are held after you've had a charge, you've had the trial, and then the judge is trying to figure out the sentence. We're trying to move some of the alternative measures programs earlier on so that we won't have to go through the whole trial and sentencing process.

But that's the number for last year. We don't know for 1998 yet.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister. I also want to welcome your officials here. I just have a couple or three questions on, and it's been a concern that's been brought to me by a couple of my constituents, Mr. Minister, and it's to do with the .04 reading with the Bill that we passed in the legislature here in the last couple of years.

And the concern, I guess, is that . . . Maybe first of all I could get you to go through the steps of if you were stopped and blew over .04 once, but if you turned around and say within the next month you blew again over .04, what the steps are and what the penalties, how they increase for, say, up to three, four times.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I'd like to be able to do that from memory but I can't. And practically, it's in the SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) legislation. It's actually not in Justice department. It's managed through the Government Insurance and it relates to the regulation of vehicles.

**An Hon. Member:** — What is in your department?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — You name it, it's usually there. But this one, this one is practically . . . I mean I can try to answer some of your specific questions around how the courts might respond to it. But to actually deal with the administration of the program, well that's all handled through SGI.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Now when those estimates come up I'll ask those questions. I just wondered though one of the concerns, too, that came up — and I'm not sure if this maybe also falls under there — it's to do with when someone blows on a roadside test. Is there any obligation on behalf of the officer involved to show the person that's blowing what they blew? Because the feeling that we got out there that a number of people feel that if it's only the RCMP officer that gets to look at what the reading is, should there be a bit of problem between the RCMP member and the person out there, it could add up to be quite a problem.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — My understanding is that the roadside test — if that's what you're talking about — is just pass or fail, and as far as we know there's no reason why the person couldn't look at it and see that they either passed or failed.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Yes, I understand that, Mr. Minister, but is there any obligation on behalf of the RCMP to show that if he doesn't want to. Like if he decides that there's no way he's showing that person that, it just seems to me that if you're

blowing and you're blowing over .04 you should have the right to see at least what you blew.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well as my officials advised me, there appears to be no obligation to show that, but the fact of it is it doesn't seem to be any reason why they wouldn't show.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, and to your officials again. We talked earlier on in the day dealing with some of the issues around Justice and the Justice meetings that have taken place around the province. And one of the statements that I've made there or I've asked — and I couldn't answer and no one else did — I think now I'm going to ask of the people that should probably know.

That we just have to look briefly at the kind of province that we are, which is basically a province that's made up of volunteers and people who help — neighbourliness. Those are all key characteristics of this province. We haven't had multitudes of people coming in from elsewhere in the world bringing with them the good and the bad. We're not an industrial, you know, province that has the blight of industries that industrial towns apparently have.

And yet in spite of all of these good characteristics that we're famous for and that we're proud of and justifiably so, I guess the question I have is how in the world did we ever get to have one of our cities be the break-in capital of the world? And because that fits into justice, I think we need to know why that happened here.

I would have expected that to have been Vancouver as a coastal city with the problems that has. We expected it to have been some place maybe in Ontario and some industrial cities that have really seen some decline in the industry and things really fallen apart there.

How do we get this in a province that we're all proud of for the reasons I just mentioned? How could that have happened here?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I recognize that the hon. member has asked this question a number of ways and we ask the same question because it is a troubling situation. We know that, unfortunately, in Saskatchewan we have a high number of people who are in that at-risk situation. And these are people who are highly mobile. They don't have ties to the communities. They lack education. They don't necessarily have as much employment. Family stability is lacking.

There are many health issues whether it's addictions or sometimes fetal alcohol syndrome issues, and there are many complex issues that revolve around this. We have been working to develop a number of ways to respond to some of these things. As you know, I've been announcing various things regularly that will attempt to deal with some of those things including what was announced today about crime prevention for young people, which includes street workers, people who can work with some of these at-risk kids.

We also are working very closely with other departments of government and municipalities, federal government, to look at issues like housing. We're looking at issues like the community schools, or now some of the pre-kindergarten programs,

because we know that if we can deal with many of these people when they're at an early age, we can hopefully head them off from lives that are in conflict with the law.

What we need to do as a province is to work together with all of the people that are concerned, which I think are all the people of the province, and attempt to deal with why some of these things happen.

But at the same time we also have developed a series of very clear responses that hold those who commit these offences accountable. And that includes some of the issues around the serious habitual offender program which looks at those 50 kids in Saskatoon, 50 kids in Regina, and maybe a lesser number, 20 or 30, in Prince Albert that actually cause an inordinate number of the car thefts and break-ins that you're talking about. And as a result, we are providing some resources for the police and the prosecutors in that area.

But there's no question that we have to deal with the whole broad array of the causes of crime as well as respond to specific incidents that happen. And it's a difficult question but we're attempting to deal with that.

I think another thing that I would say is that the Department of Justice is often the catch at the bottom that catches those people that maybe haven't done so well in school, or that the health system ends up not dealing with in a whole way, or whether there's housing problems, some of these other things.

And so we in the Department of Justice have to work very closely with all of our colleagues in the provincial government, the federal government, and the municipalities and the community organizations.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Okay. I guess that leads me back to some extent exactly where we started off at. You mentioned a term part way through your answer about the number of at-risk people in Saskatchewan. Because if we follow that logic through, it's the at-risk people that end up being the ones who commit the crimes who get us to be the, you know, car thief capital of Canada or the break-in capital of Canada.

Now we continually hear how job situation is so good in Saskatchewan and you, sir, sitting on that side of the House probably can hear it louder than we can all the good things that are happening in Saskatchewan; and there are good things happening here.

You put those things together with what I mentioned at the start — the history and the reputation and the pride that we have and the kind of a helping province that we are. I guess I'm going to repeat a very similar question. Why in the face of all those things do we in Saskatchewan have that many avarice people? Why do we have a larger percentage that gives us those unwanted capital cities than Edmonton, Vancouver, Halifax?

I guess that . . . if we don't . . . if we can't address that question and if we can't answer that question, then as we go around spending money in the Department of Justice we, sir, I submit, are just spinning our wheels. Because we're not quite sure why those things are happening.

Why do we have more avarice people. Our unemployment scene is supposed to be good. I think we need a fairly comprehensive answer to make sure that our money is spent comprehensively, carefully, and successfully.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well I appreciate your questions. As you know, our goal as a government is to make sure that there are safe communities for everybody in the province, including those avarice people. Unfortunately those avarice people are often a greater proportion of victims because it often involves the people that are caught.

We know from the demographics of Saskatchewan that, and also from the demographics of the people who are caught in the criminal justice system, that a much higher proportion of those people are aboriginal. We also know from the demographics of the total province that we have higher proportion of young people in Saskatchewan than some other provinces, and many of those people are aboriginal people.

And part of our challenge as the people of Saskatchewan is how do we make sure all of these young, capable people can lead lives as contributing members of our society, participate in the economy, so that all of these other activities which are disruptive to society are not their activity.

(1645)

And we're doing those things through many programs that relate to economic development that we have to do in conjunction with our first nation and Metis friends. We also are doing them with, as I said before, many of the kinds of initiatives that we are able to work with the communities throughout Saskatchewan.

The research that we are doing and are continuing to do helps us focus what the programs that we're creating do. And a good example of that is the program that was announced this morning in Prince Albert, where we went to the community there in Prince Albert, and I think there were about 35 different organizations that came together last fall and this January and said, we need some extra help in establishing our youth centre downtown because we think that that's a good way to prevent crime among youth in our city, the city of Prince Albert.

And so when we were able to provide some funding to that through some of our crime prevention initiatives, there was a consensus in the community that this is the way that it should be done. We're continuing to do that right across the province.

Often the work we're doing with the 7- or 8- or 9- or 10-year-olds we may not see how well that's benefiting the whole community for another 10 years. But we do become involved continually in evaluation and try to spend our money in the most effective and efficient way we can.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And I think the part that you mentioned earlier this afternoon, and this part again where you mentioned you got involved with members of different groups, I think that is definitely the key one so that just one group doesn't go off and say we want the money, or we have a program and no one else is involved in it.

Speaking of the program that was announced today and I think the one you announced a number of weeks back, I'm wondering if you could break the money that has been allotted on that program in total — between Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon — break that up into how much each one of those cities is getting from that program.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I think the three programs you're asking about, the one today was a crime prevention program where we had \$250,000 and that was roughly split between the cities equally so each city got about 80,000 or a little more.

On the serious crime initiatives for this year's budget, the Regina Police Service gets 125,000, Saskatoon Police Service gets 125,000. On the SHOCAP, or the serious habitual offender program, Regina Police Service gets 80,000; Saskatoon Police Service gets 80,000; and the Prince Albert Police Service gets 40,000.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Okay, and I guess the question that I've asked to some extent in different ways on this situation — and you mentioned in your answer that the aboriginal community is part of that and they've been involved in the planning of some of the programs — what happens to all the rest of the communities in this province that have needs and may also have that component in their community, including my community of Rosthern which gets nothing. What do we go home and tell our people that Justice is doing for them?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This question about the rest of the province I think is an important question. And part of it was answered earlier when we were talking about the first nations policing throughout the province. All of the tripartite funding which was the \$10 million, that goes for policing throughout the province because none of those funds go to any of the cities, and any of the initiatives that we have with the police are there.

In addition to the 250,000 that the province is putting in on crime prevention, there's also another \$750,000 that's coming from the federal government on crime prevention which has not been allocated and we're actually receiving applications from communities throughout the whole province to deal with that money. We wanted to go ahead with the money that we already had and put that into Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina, but the other 750,000 is available for the whole province.

We also have money that's going into the aboriginal initiatives. And one of the areas that makes it I guess interesting, if I can put it that way, in dealing with the federal government around aboriginal issues is that the federal government has effectively not . . . or said that they don't want to fund any initiatives within the cities. They'll do it on the first nations but not in the cities.

And we have been able to, through some shared funding arrangements, get aboriginal funding where the federal government will come in and help with some initiatives in the urban setting. And so often what happens is the federal government is providing other funds for aboriginals out on the first nations and then doing some sharing within the cities.

The total policing of the whole province outside of the cities is done through the RCMP. And our contract and the amount we

pay to the RCMP is \$64 million, and as you know none of that money goes to Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Estevan. That's money that is effectively a third of the budget of the Department of Justice, and it goes to places other than the city.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Two more questions. My next one has a short answer I believe. You mentioned there was some money around sort of looking for a home. Does that mean my community which I know is at present wondering what they can do with youth crime particularly in our community, if they come up with a plan can they contact someone? Who do they contact? And is there any money available for that if they need some? They haven't even talked about that.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The answer is yes, and the person to contact is Jan Turner in the Department of Justice or you can direct it through my office and it will get there. But that's in the community services program. Jan was here earlier when we were talking about The Correctional Services Act.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Okay, and the last question from myself this afternoon. Earlier on in some of the discussion that took place, we talked about the kinds of sentences that are given and what happens when people end up in the courts. And I believe you made the statement that judges were independent and therefore it wasn't something we could deal with.

I'm wondering if you've given any thought to making judges a little different sort of a person, a person that feels a little more responsible to society instead of sort of being given a chair, a bar, a job, and said there you are, do what you choose. Hopefully it'll be the best but no one can sort of say you are totally out of sync with the rest of society. What's happening? It is not what society wants. Can we make them somewhat more responsible? Are you giving any thought to that?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — This can have a very long answer or short answer and I know you want the short answer. But practically, when judges are out of line with society, their decisions are usually appealed and there are levels of appeal that can deal with some of these concerns.

The other thing is that there are formats whereby we can share our concerns with the judiciary through various kinds of seminars and things that they have. In addition I think that the response of the public to various decisions doesn't go unnoticed by the judiciary.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of committees. Before I . . . Well I should welcome the minister and his officials here first. Before I get into my questions I thought I would give the latest weather report. There's been tornadoes reported down in the south-west in the Vanguard area and perhaps heading towards Gravelbourg. So for those people who happen to be listening from that area, just keep an eye out for them. And lots of rain.

Mr. Minister, some of the questions I would like to ask deal with the firearms issue as I'm sure you expected when I stood up. I wonder if you could give us a progress report on the court case in Alberta — where it's at at the present time, and where you expect it to be in the near future.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — There has been no decision yet. We I think expected one in February, March. We've been expecting one any day actually. And practically until that decision has been made, we're not quite sure what the next step is but we are watching carefully what's happening nationally.

And we've been following some of the concerns around the evidence that was presented to the court. And it's our understanding that the issues that have been raised around the evidence from the Department of Justice and the RCMP have been raised by Alberta counsel to the court in Alberta so that they're aware of the concerns that the public has.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could perhaps outline for us the arguments that Saskatchewan presented, without going through two weeks worth of transcripts or whatever it is, but give us sort of a thumbnail sketch of the arguments that Saskatchewan presented.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — A very short summary form is that the provision in this legislation, Bill C-68, are beyond the powers of the parliament under the Constitution Act, 1867. Because the provisions regulate the use of firearms without any requirement for criminal activity, we argue in Saskatchewan that they're not truly criminal law.

The provisions are an attempt by parliament to use the criminal law power to support an extensive regulatory scheme without any requirement on the federal government to show that the gun owner has committed a criminal act, or poses a threat to public safety. The province of Saskatchewan submits that a law of this type is a regulatory scheme that can only be enacted by the provincial government. It's not supported under the criminal law of power that the federal government argues that it should be.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would it be safe to characterize the federal government's initiative as trying to make firearm ownership a criminal activity unless you have a permit which abrogates that criminal activity?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Yes.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — I like those short answers, thank you. The arguments that Saskatchewan put forward, were they similar to the arguments presented by Alberta and I believe it was the Yukon was also an intervenor on this, and perhaps the Northwest Territories, I'm not sure about that. Did those other jurisdictions provide any other arguments?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — We argued similar arguments to the province of Ontario, province of Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and then Alberta as the main presenter. I would argue that our presentations were more effective than some of the other provinces. But other than that, well they were similar.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Since I don't have the opportunity to rise in *Estimates* in any other provinces, I can't ask their ministers to give a comparison.

From Saskatchewan's perspective, how many lawyers did we

have working on this particular issue, and who were they?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Our lead lawyer on the matter was Graeme Mitchell and he was assisted by Tom Irvine. And we also had further assistance with Darcy McGovern, who you see regularly here; Doug Moen, who is here; John Whyte. I've had my chance to throw in a few ideas and questions, as well as my ministerial assistant Heather Nord. So those were the main ones involved.

We also had an advisory committee of various organizations throughout the province that provided assistance. And I would have to say that your party, and you particularly, were helpful as we went through the process of trying to figure out what our next strategy should be. And we're obviously getting ready to move into the next one, but we want to see what the court says.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, as you say, perhaps getting ready to move into the next step. Are we at the situation I believe where the court is no longer sitting but we're waiting for the judge's decision? Is that accurate, the hearings are over?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The reference was heard over five days last September — September 8 to September 12 — and all of the members of the Bench, from the reports we have from our council, had familiarized themselves with sort of vast amounts of materials that were filed. And it's very clear the full court is taking this matter very seriously.

We had anticipated the decision sooner than now because it's been approximately eight months since the decision was argued, and we're looking forward with anticipation. We don't know whether it will be an unanimous decision, a split decision, and we don't know which way that they're going to go. There's obviously a good chance that whoever is successful, or not successful, may take a good look at appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada as well.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I would expect that if the federal government lost at this particular junction, they would take it to the Supreme Court.

I guess my question to you is, are you prepared to take it to the Supreme Court if the unfortunate was to happen and the provinces were to lose their court case?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Our position is yes, but Alberta would be the one that's the lead on this. But I think practically, they're in the same position as we are.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. If, let's say Alberta was not prepared to move forward, could some other party such as Saskatchewan, or Ontario, Manitoba, the Yukon, Northwest Territories — could they move it forward to the Supreme Court?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — We're not absolutely certain of the answer to that one, in that Alberta is the appellant in the matter and we're all approved as interveners in the case. But we'll obviously be checking that out and be ready for that possibility as well and I'll share the information with you when I know for sure.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Okay, thank you very much. What action is happening at the current stage through the RCMP and through federal initiatives to implement parts of the Act that are already in place. I know that the new regulations have just come forward within the last month, perhaps two weeks. I haven't got a copy of them yet but I know that they are becoming available. So what is happening in that area as far as implementation of C-68?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The latest developments as of just a few weeks ago, are that on March 26 of 1998 the federal minister announced the final steps of regulations. He said they would come into effect on October 1. The Department of Justice, the federal Department of Justice, has selected the RCMP as the agency responsible for the administration of the gun control program in those provinces where the provincial people have withdrawn; so that includes understanding ... or includes Saskatchewan.

There's a memorandum of understanding between the RCMP and the federal Department of Justice that sets out how they're going to work together. We understand that it's not totally resolved because the RCMP are having some questions about how the costs are to be dealt with. We are watching very carefully to make sure that none of our money that we pay for the RCMP in Saskatchewan goes towards this program, and they know that and are quite cooperative in explaining what's happening.

We're expecting that the existing work that we're doing under Bill C-17 will be transferred over to the federal government within the next while. I'm not sure of the exact date. It appears it will probably be in June sometime that that responsibility will be transferred over to the federal government. But at this point we're still continuing the present system under Bill C-17.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You answered one of my questions there about the costs from the provincial side of things if the RCMP are going to administer it and carry it forward.

What will happen to the Bill and to the regulations on October 2 if the court case has still not been decided? Will that have an impact on it? Will it not allow the federal government and the RCMP to carry that forward? Or will they simply say it's the law of the land and a court decision has not yet been made on it?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well we've taken as a province a strong political position, which I know you support that — well we're all together on this, I think is the best way to put it — but that this matter won't proceed until the court case has been dealt with. So it's extremely unlikely that the decision won't be out before October 1. But as we get closer to that date, we may be seeking your wise counsel as to what our next step is as we look at the various points.

But practically, we think there'd be a great deal of political difficulty for the federal government if they proceeded when the court case has not been decided.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know listening to various media reports that have already been talking

about registration starting on October 1, the expectation is being built in the public that you're going to have to start registering on October 1 because of what the reports that are coming down, because the regulations take effect at that particular point in time.

And I think it's going to be extremely important for people to recognize or to understand that the law is being challenged, that these regulations may very well be thrown out, and that you may not yet have to register on October 1. So I think it's going to be very necessary for the government to make it clear in the people of Saskatchewan's mind exactly what happens on October 2 if this court case has not yet been decided.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I think that's practically the point I was making, which is that as we get closer to October 1 we'll have to develop a strategy around that.

But I think the other side of it is that there's no requirement I think, to file immediately on October 1. There's a time period. And probably the recommendation is that you wouldn't go down there on October 2.

But we need to wait and see whether the decision is released from the Alberta Court of Appeal. I anticipate that it will actually be coming fairly shortly.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — For people who already have firearms, it may not be necessary for them to register on October 1 or 2. But let's say somebody goes to buy a firearm on October 2. What position does that put them in? The law I believe says that you're supposed to register at that point in time. That firearm is supposed to be registered.

So do you register it; do you not register it? If you don't register it, are you breaking the law? That leaves people in limbo. So I think there needs to be some clarifications here.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Dealing with some hypotheticals, that it's hard to answer from this position or I think as federal Justice lawyers. But you very clearly set out a number of the practical problems.

In addition to the what we know, is the huge practical problem of running the kind of computer system that they've envisioned. And so you add that on to sort of just the day-to-day problems that will arise, and I think we'll all be very surprised if this ever comes to fruition the way that Mr. Rock initially described it.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you. I believe Mr. Rock and Mr. Chrétien seem to be bound and determined to drive this through no matter what the cost is. Since you mentioned cost, how much has Saskatchewan spent in fighting this court case up till now?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — We have not spent any money outside of our own government lawyers. So practically, I guess it's the time spent in Edmonton, you know, and I mean the cost of having our lawyers be in Edmonton, that would be extra costs. And then also I guess them working on this particular case.

But we've got a good team of constitutional lawyers because, as you know, we're very involved in many kinds of constitutional issues and they've done a good job for us in the court in

Edmonton. They also did a very good job for us in the Supreme Court involving the Quebec reference case. Both of these cases we handled internally.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Part of the argument that you presented . . . I'm glad to see we're dealing with the constitution and the fact that property is the jurisdiction of the province, and that that's part of the arguments that are being put forward. Because that is . . . was the original arguments that I presented to this House back in — what was it? — '94, I guess. We've been at this for so long one tends to forget just how long we've been doing it.

Well, Mr. Minister, I'd like to thank you and your officials for coming in and I wish you success in this court case because that's success for all of us. And I'll be there to make sure that the fight is carried on if the Alberta court case proves not to be successful, that we do push it through to the Supreme Court. Thank you.

Subvote (JU01) agreed to.

Subvotes (JU02), (JU04), (JU03), (JU06), (JU05), (JU07), (JU08) agreed to.

Vote 3 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1997-98**  
**General Revenue Fund**  
**Budgetary Expense**  
**Justice**  
**Vote 3**

Subvotes (JU03), (JU04), (JU05), (JU06), (JU07), (JU08), (JU09) agreed to.

Vote 3 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

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