

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the community of Radville. I so present.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today. 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, Mr. Speaker, all come from the people of Regina. I so present.

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

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

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

The community involved, Mr. Speaker, from the community of Arcola and Midale. I so present.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition and these are signed by the good people from Arborfield, and they're concerned about the severance payment to Jack Messer. And their statement basically is, tell Jack we want it back.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Now the hon. member from Rosthern will recognize of course that he's not to enter into debate while presenting petitions, and I think he'll recognize his final comments fall into that category. And I'm sure that he'll want to avoid doing that in the future.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to

present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the payment of the severance package to Jack Messer. The petitioners on this . . . signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Arcola and Saskatoon. I so present.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People that have signed this petition are all from Arcola.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud again today to rise on behalf of people of Saskatchewan to present a petition. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition has signatures on from Briercrest and the city of Moose Jaw, and I so present.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition in reference to some of the challenges of northern Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take immediate action to allow the North to join the rest of Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are primarily from Ile-a-la-Crosse, and we also have our MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) signing this petition. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens of the province. These ones are 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 have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Frontier. I so present.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues today in bringing forward petitions that come from the Saskatchewan people in their efforts to stop the closure of the Plains hospital. 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are all from the Aneroid area. I so present.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions from residents of Pinehouse in northern Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to address the issue of reducing the high costs of power rates in the North.

I so present.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of Saskatchewan 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 their 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 these signatures today are from Balgonie, Regina, Indian Head, and Saskatoon. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today also on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned that people permanently injured through auto-related injuries covered by SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) no-fault insurance are being denied or having benefits suspended at the taxpayers' expense. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to acknowledge the concerns of taxpaying citizens by causing the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that absolute fairness and equitable treatment be given to those injured and disabled people and their families and be diligent in this most urgent matter.

This petition has been signed by citizens of North Battleford, Carlyle, and Saskatoon. I so present.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the people from the communities of Consul, Robsart, and Maple Creek, I present the following petition. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach the necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And I'm happy to present these today, Mr. Speaker.

### 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: to reduce the high costs of power rates in the North; to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; to save the Plains Health Centre; to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre; and to have the Workers' Compensation Board reinstate pensions for disenfranchised widows and widowers.

### PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

#### Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

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

Your committee has considered the following Bill and has agreed to report the same without amendment, Bill No. 301 — The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Act.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, the education accountability Act.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 54 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Environment and Resource Management: what studies of the change in the fish population of Doré Lake over the past year has the minister conducted, and will he table such studies?

The second part is to the Minister of the Environment and Resource Management as well: what studies of the water levels at Doré Lake has the minister undertaken during the past year, and will the minister table such studies?

And the third notice of written question, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 54 ask the Minister of the Environment and Resource Management:

What consultation had the minister undertaken with the fishermen who take part in the commercial fishery at Doré Lake to address the problems of: (1) declining water level in Doré Lake; (2) the blockage of the rivers running into Doré Lake, particularly the Sled River; (3) the declining fish population in Doré Lake. And what strategies has the minister put forward to address these problems?

I so present.

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

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Jess:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce in your gallery the former member of parliament for the riding of Battlefords-Meadow Lake, Mr. Len Taylor. And I would ask everyone here to welcome him. I hope that your presence in the chamber here, Len, doesn't make the temporary member from North Battleford too nervous, but I appreciate that you're here and I ask everyone to welcome you.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you I'd like to introduce to the Assembly two groups of people in fact. In your gallery we have 10 students from the public administration and health administration program of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology. They are here to visit the Assembly and tour the Assembly, and they're here with their chaperon instructor, Leslie.

And I wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, that these individuals have made a tremendous effort in education in terms of management, and that it's all part and parcel of their efforts of supporting and working towards aboriginal self-government, and certainly accountability and professionalism is something that they are striving for. And I want to make sure that the Assembly appreciates that and certainly advise them that we appreciate their effort in furthering their education.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, we also have a gentleman from my home-town of Ile-a-la-Crosse, who lives now in Beauval and is studying in Winnipeg, and is planning on moving here; so we're not sure where he is from. But what I do want to say is that Michael Durocher is also visiting the

Assembly, and he's also a student at law and I think he's got one more year to go before he gets his degree. And it just goes to show you that the aboriginal folks are striving and working very hard to achieve a high level of education, and certainly as a result of the commitment of these individuals the best is yet to come. And we'll certainly see evidence of that over the next several 10, 15 years.

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

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I note in the west gallery, and I'd like to introduce to everyone through you, some individuals who have been visiting our legislative grounds to bring their plight to our attention. These are men and women, some of whom represent the Blue Rose Advocacy group, others who are part of the disenfranchised widows and widowers of Saskatchewan.

I'd like everyone here to give them a very warm welcome this afternoon.

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

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to join in welcoming to the House this afternoon my friend Len Taylor.

And to say to my colleague from Redberry Lake, the answer to his question is no.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Greystone in welcoming the individuals here today from — not only in this gallery but in your gallery as well — representatives from the Blue Rose Advocacy group.

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

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Mill Improves Feed Quality

**Mr. Jess:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently leaders from the Saskatchewan hog industry met in Blaine Lake to discuss Saskatchewan's role in the pork industry.

Currently Saskatchewan hog farmers produce 1 million pigs annually. Part of the reason for this success is low feed costs, room for expansion in terms of available land, and a favourable climate.

A feed mill is currently under construction in North Battleford and this will help hog farmers in the province to build upon their competitive advantage. To put this all in perspective, one feed mill along with four hog projects would provide 93 full-time jobs plus a trucking fleet.

Mr. Speaker, with our national competitive advantages, the industry's growth potential, and its ability to create sustainable full-time employment, the hog industry in Saskatchewan has become a very viable and lucrative one which should contribute greatly to our economy in the coming years. Thank you, Mr.

Speaker.

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

#### **Honorary Fellowship Recipient**

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Lionel Lavoie of Melfort is the sole recipient in Saskatchewan of the honorary distinction of fellowship in the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Dr. Lionel Lavoie has made great contributions to health care. He was born and raised in St. Brieux, Saskatchewan. He graduated from the university in Ottawa with a Doctor of Medicine degree and then began to practice in Melfort in 1965.

At present, Mr. Lavoie is chief of medical staff of the North Central Health District and associate clinical professor of family medicine with the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan.

He has served as the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association and currently serves on the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) joint professional review committee. He has also served as the president of the Canadian Medical Association.

Lionel has always taken an active role in the community since having moved to Melfort. He has served as the club physician for the Melfort Mustangs since 1990, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Board, an active member of the Catholic church and Melfort Jaycees and the Melfort Rotarians. Lionel and his wife, Mary, have four children.

Mr. Speaker, the list of accomplishments go on and on. But I do want to mention that Dr. Lavoie has also been the recipient of the Canada 125 Medal.

Would the Assembly please join me in congratulating Dr. Lionel Lavoie.

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

#### **SaskEnergy Customer Financing Announcement**

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning a significant announcement was made in the resort village of Lac Pelletier, which is just south of Swift Current. This announcement by the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) on behalf of SaskEnergy will not only benefit Lac Pelletier but up to 6,000 new customers and up to 15 other small communities.

SaskEnergy has launched a new customer financing program designed to give new customers options in connecting to the existing gas network. This will allow families and businesses to take advantage of the efficiencies of natural gas and allow them to operate more competitively. Of course, Mr. Speaker, more lines and more hook-ups means economic activity and jobs, and in our more remote areas.

The new plan is this: people who receive the new lines will be able to pay for them in convenient instalments. They'll be able to pay over a period of up to five years and they can make the

payments on their monthly gas bills. Most importantly, no down payment will be required for installations of \$1,000 or less. This will give more Saskatchewan people the ability to choose natural gas. Already 15 people in Lac Pelletier have taken advantage of the program and thus are taking advantage of a fuel that is about one-third the price of others.

Mr. Speaker, this is a small program but a valuable one, especially to those in the agriculture and food industries — another way SaskEnergy is finding helpful and innovative ways to help its customers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Inequitable Treatment Concerns Raised**

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I detect a disturbing trend in the growing numbers of complaints at my constituency office lodged by Saskatchewan citizens about inhumane treatment inflicted upon them by various government departments and agencies.

One recent example is the Health department's inequitable treatment of medical interns at the University of Saskatchewan. Another is the disenfranchised widows and widowers who have been strung along with too many broken promises and have experienced unkind and incompassionate treatment from some people at the Workers' Compensation Board.

Injured workers have now had to set up camp on the legislative grounds to draw attention to their concerns which has been compounded by their mistreatment with Workers' Compensation. SGI no-fault insurance tramples on accident victims' basic legal and human rights and subjects complainants to degrading and nerve-racking surveillance. More and more patients complain that overworked health providers cannot give the service that is required.

Mr. Speaker, while there are many dedicated, many compassionate employees at these agencies, there is enough evidence of uncaring behaviour to warrant these operations being subjected to close scrutiny. And I think we all here should follow the golden rule. Let's not forget that we will be judged by the care and compassion we show those less fortunate.

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

#### **Prince Albert Pulp and Paper Mill**

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Mr. Speaker, there's good news being discussed around the coffee shops, living rooms, and kitchen tables in Prince Albert. This is good news for Saskatchewan and good news about jobs in Saskatchewan.

Weyerhaeuser Canada has just announced a \$315 million upgrade to the P.A. (Prince Albert) pulp and paper mill. George Weyerhaeuser, the CEO (chief executive officer) for Canada called the investment a sign of confidence in the timber supply, confidence in the provincial government, and confidence in his company's environmental competitiveness.

The upgrade will involve converting the existing boiler so that wood waste can be used to generate electricity, thus saving on

natural gas and reducing waste products, and the upgrade will also benefit the environment.

It will create jobs, Mr. Speaker, good paying jobs. Construction has already begun. There'll be 300 new jobs by the end of the year. And by the time the job is completed in the year 2000, construction is expected to peak at 700 new jobs. That's some announcement for the new millennium, Mr. Speaker.

Weyerhaeuser and Saskatchewan Environment have been working together for five years to come to an arrangement that will meet both environmental and competitive needs in this highly competitive industry. The fact that they have done so is an excellent sign of far-sightedness and cooperation between government and industry. There's going to be more efficient utilization of wood harvested in Saskatchewan and it will grow the wood-related and value added industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Health Care Cuts

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too often this government accuses us of dwelling on the past instead of focusing on the future when it comes to health care. Too often the NDP (New Democratic Party) members claim the Liberals have their heads stuck in the sand when we raise issues of grave concern to the people of this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it appears what goes around comes around in political life. The members opposite had their heads stuck in the sand when they eliminated 579 nurses from the health system. Now only under tremendous public pressure do they start trying to undo some of the damage they've created.

The time for the NDP to rely on past glories related to health care has passed. Their attempts to revive memories of the medicare debates of the 1960s is not working. Mr. Speaker, I say to the government members opposite, welcome to the 1990s before we pass into the new millennium.

I don't see Ross Thatcher sitting amongst us here today, but when will this government acknowledge that there's no one who could hold a candle to T.C. Douglas among them?

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

### Norwegian Constitution Day Celebrations

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, on May 17, last Sunday, there was a large gathering of people in Regina Lakeview at the Wascana band shell to celebrate the 184th anniversary of the Norwegian constitution. These people gathered together to sing and dance and give speeches and have a children's parade. At the same time there was also a gathering at Kinsmen Park in Saskatoon which had a similar children's parade.

But the really important part was that in Weldon, Saskatchewan there were over 500 people who gathered together to celebrate Norwegian Constitution Day or Syttende Mai. And these people were such a large crowd in that town that one of the old-timers

was heard to remark that he hadn't seen a traffic jam in Weldon for about 80 years.

Let's all wish all of the Norwegian descendants in Saskatchewan a great Syttende Mai and Hurra for Syttende Mai!

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

### Grant for Renovation Construction at Humboldt

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to commend the government, and especially the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, on their recent announcement to provide \$750,000 in funding to assist in the renovation construction of the first phase of a new, shared facility between the Humboldt Collegiate and the Carlton Trail Regional College.

The new facility will become home for a multipurpose shop and classrooms used for instructing a variety of trade programs and basic education, as well as new office space. And the shared facility is an opportunity for the college, the school division, and the community to work together to provide more up-to-date facilities and equipment for learners and instructors.

The Carlton Trail Regional College saw an increase of 400 students this year and plans to offer increased course selections. And the Humboldt Collegiate Institute will also see another increase in its students this year to approximately 400.

While this funding is very much appreciated, it is only a small portion of the \$12 to \$14 million necessary for the joint facility to serve the community of Humboldt and area and it is my hope that the government will commit to further funding as the next phase of this project is implemented. Thank you.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Saskatoon School Board's Proposed New Building

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, as you are well aware, the Saskatoon Public School Board is planning to build a new \$14 million administration building on prime river bank property. Many Saskatoon taxpayers oppose this decision, suggesting the school board could save millions of dollars by buying or leasing existing office space in Saskatoon. In fact a poll released yesterday shows that 85 per cent of Saskatoon taxpayers oppose the construction of a new building.

Madam Minister, have you discussed this proposal with the Saskatoon Public School Board? Are they considering reversing this decision in light of overwhelming public opposition?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member will know, decisions as to whether or not to construct an educational centre, whether or not to close a

school, whether or not to go forward with a number of educational initiatives are determined by those locally elected school trustees.

As the member may know, this is a decision that has been left, through The Education Act, to the locally elected trustees of the Saskatoon Public School Board. As the member may not know, we have indicated to the public school board in Saskatoon that any decision regarding the school bank will need the approval of the city of Saskatoon and the Meewasin Valley Authority, and it will be up to those two organizations to determine what kind of development will go forward on the river bank overlooking the Saskatchewan River.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Madam Minister, you and I both agree on the need for school boards to have autonomy from government, but the ultimate authority should always lie in the hands of taxpayers — the people who pay the bill.

The Urban Municipality Act gives taxpayers the right to petition urban councils to force a binding referendum, and ultimately to overturn council decisions if those decisions don't have the support of the public. This provision was used a few years ago in Saskatoon to block the construction of an unwanted casino.

The Saskatchewan Party believes taxpayers should have the same right to reverse the decisions of school boards if they do not have the support of the public.

Earlier today I gave notice of a private members' Bill that would allow voters to force a binding referendum on a school board decision by gathering enough names on a petition. Madam Minister, will you support this legislation?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, obviously I'm not in a position to indicate whether or not I'd support the legislation because I've not yet seen the contents of the Bill and it would be irresponsible to say yes that I would support the contents without first having seen it. As I said, the department has placed a condition on the sale of this property — that any construction on this site must have the approval of the city of Saskatoon and the Meewasin Valley Authority. The Saskatoon Public School Board is a locally elected board of education; they've acted within the contents of The Education Act; and they're responsible to their electors.

I understand that this is a controversial issue in the city of Saskatoon and I would presume that the trustees that are on the locally elected school board will listen very carefully to what their electors have to say on this matter.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, 85 per cent of Saskatoon residents oppose the construction of a new \$14 million education building but there's nothing that they can do about it, even though it is the taxpayers who pay the bill. If the city were building a new office building that the

public opposed, taxpayers could gather names on a petition, force a binding referendum, and vote it down.

All we're saying is that taxpayers should have the same authority over school board decisions. After all, school boards collect as much or more in taxes as municipalities. Madam Minister, will you support our education accountability Act, or will you at least agree with the concept that would allow taxpayers the same opportunity to deal with municipal councils and boards of education?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member that The Education Act is very clear that there are a number of matters that are within the prerogative of a locally elected school division board. This is an issue that is determined by that locally elected board. I assume that they will listen very carefully to what their local electors have to say on this matter.

I would also like to remind the member that it was his forerunner, the former minister of Education, Lorne Hepworth, who in December of 1988 gave approval of the disposition of that particular property where the proceeds of that sale could be used for the construction of an administrative facility which the department normally does not fund.

So I would say to the member, one needs to be very careful on trying to enter into a debate at the local level that will be determined by locally elected trustees. We have been reprimanded in the past for getting involved in issues that have nothing to do with this Legislative Assembly and I would say to the member that this is a decision that will be guided and made by those locally elected trustees.

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

#### Potential Sale of Crown Life

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for CIC. Mr. Minister, *The Financial Post* is reporting that your government is interfering in the sale of Crown Life. It says that Canada Life is interested in buying Crown Life but it is running into interference and red tape from your government. Mr. Minister, what does that mean exactly?

If you are taking steps to keep Crown Life jobs in Saskatchewan, we support that. However, if the government can make a good return on its investment in Crown Life and keep those jobs in Regina, we see no reason why you would be stalling a deal. Mr. Minister, is Crown Life up for sale and why are you interfering with the process?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — As I have indicated to the member on a number of occasions, here in the House and outside of the Assembly, obviously any speculation on the position of Crown Life vis-a-vis sale or not is simply at this point speculation.

In terms of the process though, in terms of sale of assets, what I

can say is that when you recommended to us that we sell our shares in Husky Oil at 7 cents on the dollar, we told your political party, the Liberals and the Conservatives — I'm not sure which party you want to be in at the time you made the statement — but we said to you that selling our shares at 7 cents on the dollar was not the right thing to do. And our officials at CIC told us to hold. We did and we sold the assets not for 25 million but 310 million.

The same is true of our Cameco shares, which your party and the party that you represent, the Conservative Party, said we should be selling the shares of Cameco when they were far below \$75 a share. Our officials at CIC said to hold them until they got to \$75. We then sold.

As it relates to Crown Life, I will take the opinion of my officials at CIC long before I will yours, sir, with the greatest of respect.

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

#### Investment in Canamino

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Madam Minister, it appears the NDP's usual ineptitude at doing business is coming home to roost.

Mr. Speaker, two months ago the Saskatchewan government took voting control of the Canamino oat processing plant in Saskatoon at the time when other investors said the company was just about to turn a profit. However after the government's take-over, share values in the company crashed to 37 cents a share from \$1.30. Now the government's plan to do a quick sale to Sask Wheat Pool has fallen through. Can-Oat Milling has withdrawn from taking over Canamino, leaving you in control over a business you know nothing about.

Madam Minister, Saskatchewan people have their savings invested in this company, yet it appears the government doesn't have a clue what it's doing. My question is simple: what are you going to do?

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I welcome an opportunity to talk about the economy and the fact that there are more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before in our history.

Now to get to some of the facts that the member's alluding to. First of all, there are no taxpayers' dollars involved in SGGF (Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund Management Corporation). It is not a government-run agency; it is money from foreigners invested in Saskatchewan. There is no reason why we should be politically interfering. No tax dollars are at risk. It's an arm's-length agency and the best decisions are decisions made by an arm's-length agency. They can't have it both ways; they can't say when they don't like what they think the result might be, that we should interfere, but in principle, independent agencies should be independent. We believe independent agencies should be independent all of the time.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, your job is to ensure that Saskatchewan is known globally as a great place to do business. What about the people that have their money invested in this company? This is another example of the government getting involved in business and hurting those who actually know what they are doing. Now you're running this company with no technical expertise.

Since you exercised your take-over of the company, CEAPRO Inc., which owns 100 per cent of the common shares, has stopped funding Canamino. You obviously have no plan for the future of this company now that the Wheat Pool has backed out. This is the company that was on the verge of becoming successful and profitable, and a key component to value added industry for agricultural products. Now investors are threatening to sue you because of the damaging effects your actions have had on the company and their investments.

Madam Minister, what message do you think this is sending to the ag-biotech firms that you're trying to attract to Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — To the member opposite, this is not a government agency. And it's not taxpayers' dollars; it's foreign investors' dollars and is an independent agency.

But she asks a very good question which I want to answer. What are people outside of this province saying about Saskatchewan as a place in which to invest? I'd like to quote from the Investment Dealers Association of Canada, its recent report:

The strong growth of recent years and this year's projection of continuing economic growth are clear evidence of a more diversified, efficient agricultural sector, a more diversified provincial economy.

The association credited the economic growth to sound fiscal management by the provincial government:

The province, in our view, has moved consistently in the right direction for the last four years.

Now if she would like some more quotes about what other agencies outside the province say about Saskatchewan as a place in which to invest, I have them here for her and we can continue.

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

#### Additional Hiring of Nurses

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the government was forced to take a step in the right direction yesterday when it announced the addition of 200 nurses to the health care system. However, many people are questioning where the government is going to find the nurses to address the areas most in need, such as acute care and critical care needs.

In the Southwest Health District, CEO Alan Ruetz says he's having trouble attracting nurses to Shaunavon, particularly for summer relief. He says it may result in the present nursing staff providing on-call services.

My question is to the Minister of Health: do you support the notion of nurses providing on-call service in our hospitals?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that the question that he asks about how we're going to recruit nurses in the province is one that we've been speaking with with the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, one that that we've been speaking with SUN about, Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and have been speaking with SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) about as we look at enriching nurses across the province.

And I appreciate the member's comment. Now it's two days consecutive that both he and the member from Thunder Creek stand up and say that it's a wonderful decision that's been made by the government of the day to enrich the number of staff that we have in Saskatchewan. And we support that position as well, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the member opposite that we'll continue to work very closely with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, with the Saskatchewan association of registered nurses as well, the Department of Education, and Health, to ensure that over the next several months we put together a strategy that will add additional nurses to work in Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. McPherson:** — Mr. Speaker, I notice that the minister avoided the question — that is, is he in support of on-call services by the nurses?

Mr. Speaker, I spoke with Shaunavon's two physicians today who used less than flattering words to describe even the thought of nurses providing on-call services. They say such a thought is, among other things, preposterous, unthinkable, naïve. These doctors say when life-threatening situations present themselves at hospitals, it is imperative that a nurse be on duty at the hospital — not on call. Mr. Minister, this makes a mockery of your so-called health reform process.

You plan on meeting with the Southwest Health District Board next Monday. What will you be telling the board, Mr. Minister, and what immediate action are you taking to ensure this issue is resolved and health services do not even sink further under your government?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite that when I meet with the district health board, I'm going to be saying to them what they've been saying to me. And the member opposite should be paying attention to this because it's in his riding.

The members on his district health board are applauding the fact that they're getting a new facility in your district. Soon in Shaunavon you're going to have a new facility of which your district health board has been promoting, of which you weren't even a part of . . . in on the initial opening, Mr. Member. And I say to you, that's what the individuals in your community are going to be saying.

Recently the members from your community, when we opened

the Ponteix facility again — and the services have been enriched substantially — they say to us that they're very pleased about the services that they're receiving there.

And I say to the member opposite, what you should be doing is you should be going out to your constituency and promoting the quality of health care services that are being enriched on a daily basis rather than taking your dog and pony show around the province, which you lead and you chair, trying to dismantle health care in this province instead of working to enrich it.

And I say to you, you need to change your attitude; you need to change your style and start to promote the services of health care in this province as opposed to taking it apart.

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

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the minister would try and take credit for the addition to the hospital of some nursing home beds when it's been a 17-, 18-year fight. Before you were ever involved in politics, there were good people out in Shaunavon fighting for that and now you're putting forward the position that you don't even have to have staff in that facility.

Mr. Speaker, it appears the nursing shortage is not limited to hospitals, as residents of Shaunavon nursing home found out yesterday. The nursing home in Shaunavon has a policy that a registered nurse must be on duty at all times. Yesterday two nursing aides were advised there was no RN (registered nurse) to cover the night shift. They refused to work unless a nurse was on duty, so finally the director of nursing for the district had to cover the night shift.

Mr. Minister, any team needs depth in building its line-up. And our nurses and doctors are no different. You say 200 nurses will be added to the system. Where, Mr. Minister, are you going to find them and what are you doing to ensure that they go to areas in desperate need and when?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that the addition of 200 nurses to the province of Saskatchewan; the addition of additional physicians to the province of Saskatchewan, which is the rural physician program last year, 26 new positions; the increase of additional funding for positions, of which \$5.5 million to rural on call; another \$1.3 million to emergency services to rural Saskatchewan — all of those accomplishments, Mr. Speaker, have been done by this government alone.

An investment of \$1.72 billion in health care in this province by the people of Saskatchewan. Not one additional penny from your friends in Ottawa — none. And I say to the member opposite, if you're objecting about the quality and level of services that we have in the province today, you should be putting your pen to paper as the member opposite from you, from Ottawa, to Ottawa and say to them, you need to help enrich the funding in Saskatchewan rather than being critical, Mr. Member, of the services that are provided across the province. Could you do that?

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

### SaskPower Infrastructure Maintenance

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. The last several weeks we've been talking about SaskPower rates in northern Saskatchewan and now we run into another problem — the infrastructure of SaskPower throughout the North.

On September 17, 1997, Dean Anderson was repairing street lights in Cumberland House when the power pole he was climbing broke off at the base and fell to the ground, killing Mr. Anderson. Instead of globe-trotting boondoggles, instead of rewarding NDP friends and insiders with fat severance packages, will the minister admit that his government's policy of taking more and more money from SaskPower is a mistake? And that it has hurt SaskPower's ability to at least maintain its Saskatchewan-based infrastructure?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that the unfortunate accident that he refers to, I'm sure that it would be fair to say that all members would share in the grief that the family has towards the individual involved in the accident, there's no doubt about that.

As to the issue, Mr. Speaker — if the member from Wood River would quit heckling on this important issue where there's injury of an individual at hand, and he has the lack of courtesy even to listen to the answer — I would say that obviously infrastructure is truly important in the province of Saskatchewan. Earlier today we were in Lac Pelletier announcing the infrastructure expansion to the natural gas program.

In total we procure in the province of Saskatchewan about \$1.2 billion in goods and services for our Crowns. In terms of expansion of the system, over \$300 million will be spent this year alone in the province of Saskatchewan improving the systems that our Crowns use, but I would argue that the thousands of men and women who work in the Crowns provide the best service in the world at the most reasonable costs. And any other argument to dissuade . . .

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

### Child Prostitution

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I stood in the House and stated to the Minister of Justice that major financial deterrents are needed to effect an end to the sexual abuse of children through the child prostitution trade.

Now I want you to think about this. If Saskatchewan had the legislation in place that I put forward, pimps and johns could be fined \$25,000. It would take 30 fines to raise the \$750,000 that the government and in fact the taxpayers have dedicated to help street children.

Mr. Speaker, a \$25,000 . . . or just the threat of a fine of that magnitude would clear the streets of pimps and johns a heck of

a lot faster than a \$500 fine and a slap on the wrist. In addition, the money from these heavy fines paid by the perpetrators could and should be used for healing programs and safe house programs and relieving the taxpayers of that burden.

Mr. Minister of Justice, recognizing that the elementary law of supply and demand operates . . .

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister of Justice, will your government finally take initiative and show some courage by imposing major deterrent fees on pimps and johns?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, in reference to the member's Bill which is before the House, I want to report to the House today that it will be my and our intention as government to take her Bill and use it as a part of a significant consultation with people across the province over the next coming months, looking to whatever might be appropriate legislative change in our next session.

I want to say to the member and invite her to . . . and I know she has the document, the summary document that came from the conference which was held in Victoria, drawing together young people, children, who've been involved in the trade on the streets. In the covering — I don't have it with me so I can't quote it exactly — but in the covering note, that document says, and these are the children who say this to us, that the process is as important as the product. We need to engage in the process, engaging Saskatchewan people, engaging communities, engaging the children before we develop the product.

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that response, but I ask you to please centre on what I have asked. I'm talking about supply and demand. I'm talking here about eradicating this horrific crime. These are steps that can be taken in spite of anything else and everything else that is being done.

Other provinces, Mr. Minister, have taken these steps. We have been talking about this now for three years. Why does it have to go into another year? We need your response, your immediate response now and this year. Mr. Minister, will you please take the necessary steps, put in place what can be done immediately, and help the children that are really suffering on the streets of Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, there are many things which are happening on a very immediate basis. Those things are happening in the communities of Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and elsewhere in our province. And there will be further announcements of activities which will be happening in the next few days and weeks.

Mr. Speaker, our assessment of legislative penalty, and trusting some of the best legal advice that we've been able to assemble around these questions, tells us that we're in some conflict with the Criminal Code of Canada and therefore would be threatened

with having such laws simply thrown out of court at the first occasion. Mr. Speaker, we share with the member a desire to do whatever we can legally to protect children on our streets and to take those adults who would abuse the children on our streets off the streets.

Finally, let me also remind the House that today if any adult is found abusing a child on our streets, it's not simply a prostitution charge it is a child abuse charge. Because it is child abuse that we're talking about here, not as apart from adult prostitution.

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

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### **Bill No. 225 — The Saskatchewan Regulatory Reform Act**

**Ms. Draude:** — I move first reading of Bill No. 225, The Saskatchewan Regulatory Reform Act.

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

#### **Bill No. 747 — The Naming of Northern Municipal Airports Act**

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 747, An Act to enable Northern Municipalities to Name Airports within their Boundaries be now introduced and read the first time.

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

#### **Bill No. 748 — The NORTHERN Act**

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 748, The New Organized and Rigorous Transportation, Housing, and Economic Renewal of the North Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**The Speaker:** — Hon. members, before orders of the day pursuant to section 14 of The Provincial Auditor Act, I table the Provincial Auditor's 1998 Spring Report.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### SECOND READINGS

#### **Bill No. 47 — The Saskatchewan Insurance Amendment Act, 1998**

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Insurance Amendment Act, 1998. This Bill is the result of this government's decision to review

and modernize Saskatchewan's financial services legislation. Members will recall that The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997 was passed in the last session of the legislature. A new Credit Union Act has also received second reading this session. The amendments before this House today were developed in a manner consistent with the principles that guided the development of The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, 1997 and The Credit Union Act, 1998.

The Bill before us today deals with phase one of the review of The Saskatchewan Insurance Act. Phase two will focus on extensive amendments to the balance of the Act. Planning for phase two is under way. The proposed amendments deal with changes that needed to be addressed at this time.

The first amendment addresses immunity and corporate status for the insurance councils. While the current legislation establishes the Saskatchewan insurance councils as the primary regulators of insurance agents and brokerages, it does not provide the councils with corporate status nor does the legislation extend the same statutory protection commonly extended to other regulatory bodies. The insurance councils have requested that these changes be made. This Bill also introduces provisions which reinforce and update the supervisory and enforcement powers of the Superintendent of Insurance and the insurance councils.

The existing legislation does not provide the superintendent and the councils with adequate powers to regulate compliance with the Act. For example, under the current legislation the only remedies available are cancellation, suspension, or placing conditions on an insurer's or agent's licence. Although these remedies are appropriate in certain situations, they do not effectively address all situations which may arise.

Further, many of the provisions we are examining today are more than 30 years old. The insurance industry has undergone significant change in the past three decades. For example, the penalties for contravention of the Act are no longer an effective deterrent. Fines under the existing legislation range from \$25 to \$200. Modernizing this legislation requires that the Act includes a range of remedies, updated fine amounts, and improved penalty provisions that are comparable to those available to other regulators.

This Bill provides a range of remedies allowing the regulator to respond more appropriately to infractions under the Act from minor incidents to more serious breeches. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have incorporated administrative law principles to ensure that companies facing sanctions are provided with an opportunity to know and respond to the case against them and to be heard by the regulator regarding the appropriateness of the sanction. The modernization of these powers is important to ensure the superintendent and the councils are in a position to act effectively and provide the consumer protection intended under the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, today's Bill also addresses concerns regarding the use of consumer's confidential information. With the increasing use of new technology such as telemarketing and the Internet, the ability to pass consumer information back and forth has increased.

Consumers have increasingly expressed concerns about the use and disclosure of their personal information. The Bill before you is designed to ensure that the personal information which consumers provide to insurance companies is used only for the purposes that the consumer designates.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments also address the important consumer protection issue of tied selling. Tied selling occurs when consumers are forced to buy products that they may not need or want in order to obtain a product they do need. The amendments prohibit the sale of an insurance product as the condition of the sale of another product. Consumer groups have expressed their support for the inclusion of these provisions in the legislation.

Further amendments clarify and modify the appeal provisions under the legislation. Technical amendments are also made, many of which address issues that have been identified by the industry. A number of these amendments are made to harmonize the provisions of our legislation with the legislation of other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, in reviewing this legislation we have consulted extensively with industry, consumer groups, and other governments. I appreciate the time, effort, and cooperation which these groups have contributed to the development of this Bill. This Act carries out the first step in a much needed modernization of this important piece of provincial insurance legislation. It provides increased consumer protection and will ensure the continued smooth operation of the existing Act.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to amend The Saskatchewan Insurance Act.

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

(1430)

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments before I would suggest we adjourn this piece of legislation and allow for some further, not just debate, but research to go into the piece of legislation to determine whether or not the legislation exactly meets what the minister's been telling us the reasons for the Bill. As I understand it, the insurance brokers are indicating that it makes simple housekeeping changes, but I think there are some significant changes as well in the Bill that we certainly need to keep our eyes on and need to take the time to address and look into very carefully.

One of the things that I believe the Bill does do is enhance the role of the Superintendent of Insurance and also clarifies the duties of the Superintendent of Insurance. It sets out the superintendent's statutory authority to request all relevant information needed to perform his duties under the Act and set out a reasonable time frame when any such information must be turned over.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's appropriate in order to allow the superintendent certainly to carry out his duties and meet any requests or any suggestions that have been brought to his attention that he needs to follow up on. He needs to have the access and needs to be able to set time lines so that he's not left in a position where six months down the road someone is

coming back and was asking the superintendent, what have you done in regards to this question, is the concern we've raised. So I think that's certainly something that's appropriate and proper to be in the Bill.

The Bill also ensures confidentiality of information, requests by the superintendent, but does under certain circumstances allow him to share the information with the police. If there's information that would be required it would be of a nature that would suggest that maybe it's appropriate that the police be informed if a request is made.

The Bill also allows the superintendent with the minister's and consumers' consent to bring action against insurers practising misleading or deceptive conduct. And one question, I guess, that needs to be asked at the end of the day is why the minister's consent is needed?

Mr. Speaker, as you look at the Bill, the Bill also gives the right to appeal a decision by the superintendent to the Court of Queen's Bench, and that allows that to be expanded. It also prohibits the sale of an insurance product as a condition for the sale of another product, and currently the legislation does not allow the people to sue insured persons for economic loss.

Under the new legislation and under this Bill, it now includes that. And I think, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure many people on many occasions have attempted or would love to have at least got some of the loss they incurred but haven't been able to, and I think this is a positive move.

It also allows the superintendent to refuse to reinstate an insurance licence in the case where fees and costs attributable to an investigation have not been paid. And, Mr. Speaker, this is an area that we want to look at very carefully.

If indeed fees and costs attributable to an investigation have not been paid, and the reason they haven't been paid is because the person that assessed the fees was not guilty, then you would have to ask why would you be going after them if indeed they were fees that were used to defend their innocence.

We want to make sure that the legislation certainly deals with people fairly and doesn't impede people's rights or responsibilities. It also strengthens privacy provisions and insurance councils under this Act are given corporate status. It is made clear they are not representatives of government. I think that's certainly appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

The more we can do to remove government from areas of direct responsibility or direct involvement, the more I believe at the end of the day that we will provide an avenue whereby consumers can feel very comfortable with, whether it's insurance companies or other business companies.

Mr. Speaker, what we're looking at here is direct involvement. We're saying governments need to regulate but they don't always necessarily need to control and be directly involved. And I think that's appropriate.

With these few comments, Mr. Speaker, however, I believe we need to take more time to consider the legislation. Therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 55 — The Power Corporation  
Amendment Act, 1998**

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move the second reading of The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 1998.

Mr. Speaker, in 1997 this government undertook to review its policy with respect to the payment of grants in lieu of taxes to the cities. One of the matters identified was the surcharge . . . or by the surcharge is the amount that may be added to the account of SaskPower customers in cities and towns and villages and remitted as payment in lieu of taxes.

The municipal surcharge is collected monthly but was remitted yearly or half-yearly. In response to this direction, it was given to SaskPower to remit the municipal surcharge payment monthly commencing October 1997. This has been done since that time.

This Bill will simply amend section 36 of The Power Corporation Act to provide SaskPower with the authorization to remit payments monthly effective October 31, 1997.

Accordingly, I move second reading of The Gas Inspection Act, 1998.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here again we have a piece of legislation that looks very simple and the minister says is very positive. There's a few positive things about the legislation. No doubt about it. The fact that municipalities can now look to receiving payments on a monthly basis rather than a yearly basis is certainly a positive move.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the fact that municipalities have been looking for a number of years for grants in lieu of property taxes for government property, it's unclear how this is the case since this isn't new money. And I guess the question we have to ask here, when we get into further discussion and debate and questions in committee, is what this does to address the questions municipalities have in regards to grants in lieu of taxes, and whether or not this piece of legislation supposedly meets some of the requirements.

Now the fact that SaskPower will be sending . . . changing the method in which it pays its municipal surcharge, while on one hand it's positive, it's on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we need to look very carefully to make sure that indeed this is money going directly. And if it's money going to . . . that it's new money, not just another method whereby the governments say we're now giving municipalities some more funding but on the other hand they may remove it from another avenue or another source so at the end of the day the line stays the same or the net return to municipalities is zero.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate that we take time to address this and to look a little more seriously and a little more closely into this piece of legislation. While it looks very simple and straightforward, I think, Mr. Speaker, it demands some time by the opposition and scrutiny

of the piece of legislation. Therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 54 — The Crown Corporations  
Amendment Act, 1998**

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act, 1993.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, does two main things to the Act. First it will give the Crown Investments Corporation the legislative authority to make grants to subsidiary Crown corporations with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Second it will eliminate the mandatory requirement that the minister responsible for a subsidiary Crown corporation serve as chairperson of that Crown's board of directors.

Mr. Speaker, the first amendment will address some of the housekeeping that we need to do. On July 23, 1997 Crown Investments Corporation obtained an order in council. This order in council gave CIC the authority to provide up to \$8 million in grants to the Saskatchewan Transportation Company while it was going through a restructuring period. Upon further examination, we have determined that The Crown Corporations Act, 1993 must be amended to provide CIC with a specific authority to make grants to STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) or other subsidiary Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, we were acting in good faith when we proceeded with the approval of the order in council last year, and we were acting on the advice that the term "cash advance" in section 6(1)(f) of the Act included grants. When we concluded that this was not technically correct, we took immediate action.

We stopped providing grants to STC and we began preparing an amendment to the Act to specifically allow for grants to subsidiary Crowns. We wanted to be certain that we had clear legislative authority before proceeding.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment we are introducing will correct the misinterpretation of the Act, it also ensures any grant of more than \$50,000 to a subsidiary Crown must be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This amendment does not change the nature of assistance to STC which was announced last year.

Mr. Speaker, STC needs this financial assistance so it can remain solvent and continue to provide jobs, and more importantly, service to the people of Saskatchewan. The assistance is essential, no matter whether it comes in the form of a grant from CIC or from the General Revenue Fund.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people need and want a provincially owned bus company — that was clear in the discussion/debate that went on in 1996. They understand the financial challenges of operating such a company in a province where the population is spread out and distances are far.

None the less during the Crown review they told this government that STC must take action to operate more efficiently. The financial restructuring that is taking place at

STC is addressing that concern. Grants from CIC will help the company remain solvent during this restructuring period.

Mr. Speaker, the second amendment we are introducing today to The Crown Corporations Act, 1993 is a direct result of the Crown review I just mentioned in 1996. During the so-called "Talk About Saskatchewan Crowns" public hearings in 1996, people raised concerns about the potential of political interference in our Crown corporations. They said one way to change that perception would be to remove the requirement that cabinet ministers chair individual Crown boards. They said it would be more appropriate to designate a Chair from among the members of the board other than a cabinet minister.

Mr. Speaker, this government agrees with this proposition.

We have six cabinet ministers on the CIC board of directors and this board oversees the decisions of the individual Crown boards and gives direction. As well, decisions of the Crown boards are scrutinized by the Crown Corporations Committee, members who sit on that committee are members of the legislature, and ultimately decisions are approved by cabinet.

With these checks and balances in place, we see no need for cabinet ministers to remain as the Chair of boards of directors of our Crown corporations. We believe those roles can better be filled by qualified people who have so graciously agreed to serve on individual boards.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment follows through on a commitment made by the government and we first made this commitment last June in a document called "Saskatchewan's Crown Corporations: A New Era." This document was the government's response to the Crown review and we later restated our commitment in a release to the public. And now we are following through on that commitment.

This amendment also includes the necessary clauses to amend the legislation of the Crown corporations affected by this change. Mr. Speaker, it pleases me then to move second reading of The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 1998.

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

(1445)

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again a few comments regarding the legislation and the Bill presently before the Assembly. The minister talks about the fact that one of the things this Bill does is remove cabinet ministers from the board of directors of Crown corporations.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, for a number of years people have been asking and felt that it would be certainly appropriate and probably de-politicize the whole issue of Crown corporations if cabinet ministers were not directly involved in an area of directorship or on a Crown board or even as the government has done for the past number of years, the current government, of putting cabinet ministers as Chairs of the boards of Crown corporations.

We have seen certainly just recently some of the problems that can arise. The Channel Lake fiasco is a good example of how

Crown corporations can run amok. And the fact that we had cabinet ministers involved on the board of CIC and certainly involved in SaskPower, Mr. Speaker, shows very clearly that even their involvement did not necessarily mean that . . . doesn't mean that Crown corporations will not make mistakes or may have run into situations where we have the Channel Lakes and the taxpayers are left footing the bill at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, I guess when we look at this, however, you're talking about removing ministers from the board and certainly I applaud that. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there are a lot of positive, solid business people throughout this province that could be invited to sit on boards of Crown corporations to give some real business-like leadership to our Crowns to make sure that they do indeed meet the objectives of the Crowns and their reasons for existence. One of the questions that we certainly will want to pose to the minister is how appointments to Crown corporations' boards of directors will be made.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the Chair of the board, it might be appropriate to allow the members of the board to elect their own chairman from within their board after you've put the board in place, therefore they have control.

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, though that we do not face the situation down the road where Crown corporation boards are taking a lot of criticism for some of the hits that corporations may face as a result of . . . being publicly funded, publicly responsible due to economic times not necessarily able to meet all the demands put on them. And the government just using them as a scapegoat, as we see with health boards where, if a decision is made that is not something positive, the Minister of Health and the Premier will blame the health district board for the decision; something positive — the government takes the credit. I would hope that isn't something that will happen in regards to Crown corporations.

The minister talked about the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, suggested that we need to continue subsidies to this Crown as a result of the fact that it has so far been unable to operate in the black — in fact continues to run a fairly high deficit — and if it wasn't for the subsidies certainly would have discontinued existence a number of years ago.

The minister's comment that back in 1986 the public said, Mr. Speaker, that we do need and we should have a public transportation company within the province, I would suggest to you — and I'm sure even members of this Assembly who are on the road — more times than not in watching the STC buses roll by you can barely count anybody sitting in the buses. You'd have to ask yourself if indeed if this is such an important service, why aren't people using it.

And the other question to be asked is: is one of the problems that we're facing the fact that we do have other companies operating throughout the province? Other companies that possibly could provide assistance and provide a service probably more economically to the people of Saskatchewan rather than continue to subsidize a publicly-owned bus company that certainly is not in a position to even operate and keep its head above water without government subsidies and taxpayers' dollars.

So it certainly appears to me to be, Mr. Speaker, that while the Bill before us, the legislation, has some very positive notes to it, there are a number of questions that certainly arise from the piece of legislation and questions that we would look forward to addressing at a later date as we get into . . . as we move forward into committee.

However, I think there are a number of issues that we need to look at a little more carefully in preparing ourselves for that work in committee.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I feel it's important that we don't just move this into committee today, but it's appropriate that we adjourn this piece of legislation. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I now move to adjournment of debate on Bill No. 54.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 49

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Calvert that **Bill No. 49 — The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few short comments before allowing this piece of legislation to move to committee. As noted earlier, the Bill amends legislation putting in place the mechanisms for the government social service reform that has been announced recently, and because the federal government Revenue Canada will be administering the child tax benefit, a couple of changes were necessary. And, Mr. Speaker, the other day when I spoke to this I brought some concerns in regards to that, and certainly we'll want to raise some questions, some more questions with the minister as we get into committee.

First the Act was amended to allow the provincial government to enter into agreements with the federal government. Second, this section of the Act dealing with notices of decisions: for example if Social Services was to determine there was an overpayment, there's a certain process to follow with change to be consistent with federal legislation. And in that regard I don't have a problem.

I believe it's certainly appropriate that we have some consistency across the piece, especially when you're dealing with third-party agreements and certainly federal agreements with provinces and how you administer funds and how you follow up to determine whether or not taxpayers' money is certainly being spent wisely.

And, Mr. Speaker, as well, notice of decision is explained above to . . . the Saskatchewan employment supplement program will be specified in the program and regulations, not the Act, to allow for greater flexibility for the department in the future.

And I understand when you move to regulations, what it does,

Mr. Speaker, certainly allows for . . . if changes are needed it allows for a quicker turnaround rather than waiting for the Legislative Assembly to sit and that particular piece of legislation to be brought before this Assembly and the changes discussed and eventually passed. So that certainly seems to be positive.

At this point however, we'll need greater clarification from the minister during Committee of the Whole. Although we certainly agree that flexibility is an important element of any program, we are concerned about allowing this government to continually govern by regulation. That's a concern that we've raised with a number of pieces of legislation, where we seem to be moving more and more areas of responsibility into regulation.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems we have in this province right now is the fact that we've become too overly regulated to the point that in many cases, for individuals and businesses, we are stymied in our ability to move ahead because of regulation. But there are places for regulation. There are places where government needs to make sure that there are sufficient regulations to make sure that the rights of individuals are protected.

Generally there is nothing in this legislation we are not supportive of. There are questions to be dealt with in Committee of the Whole and I think we can make the point that although these are good first steps we need to go much further to break the welfare cycle in this province.

One of the first things we must do then is create a vibrant economy so people have jobs to go to. And that's an issue that I raised originally and it's an issue that the Saskatchewan Party continues to hold to, the fact that we need to create an avenue within this province that allows individuals who have ideas for businesses to continue to function. And that's part of the red tape I was talking of earlier, that we don't so overly regulate people that it takes away the incentive to establish and set up businesses.

Or even for businesses that do a lot in this province but right now continue to have headquarters outside of the province because the rules of business that we continue to have in this province discourages them from coming to this province to invest. And that, Mr. Speaker, means that while they are not investing in the province in a major way, while they put some funding into the province, we do have a lack of job opportunities.

As a result of those lack of job opportunities, we have individuals who are forced to, at the end of the day, turn to social services and to welfare. And I find, Mr. Speaker, most people would prefer to work at a good paying job and be able to support their family rather than look to welfare.

So in regards to The Saskatchewan Assistance Act, we do have some questions we want to raise with the minister in Committee of the Whole and we look forward to that opportunity. However, at this time I don't see any point in upholding any further movement of progress of the piece of legislation. Thank you.

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

Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

**Bill No. 44**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that **Bill No. 44 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, whenever we discuss any issues having to do with municipalities we are concerned because of the severe and constant funding hits delivered to local governments courtesy of the members opposite.

Municipalities have been devastated financially by the government. So when I look at this Bill the first question I ask is, will this cost the municipalities more money? If it does cost the local governments more money to meet pension requirements, how much more? Where are they expected to find this cash? From the provincial government? I doubt that very much.

That being said, we don't begrudge municipal employees an improved pension plan. This Bill will improve benefits for about 2,500 municipal and school board employees. These for the most part are hardworking men and women and they deserve the security. Their jobs have been made all the harder given the stresses put on them by the decisions made by this government and its policy of downloading. However, Mr. Speaker, I feel at this point we can ask our questions in Committee of the Whole and see no reason to hold this Bill up.

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

**Bill No. 45**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 45 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act** be now read a second time.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Automobile Accident Insurance Act has actually two parts to it that we have been discussing. The first part actually scales back the insurance offered by SGI for snowmobiles. We now have the policy only covering liability for snowmobile owners. This is something that was discussed to great extent last winter when the snowmobile owners were afraid that they were going to be de-registered and it caused considerable concern. This now allows them to have the liability insurance and the option to buy property coverage.

We had a couple of suggestions that were brought forward to the government at that time, and that is suggesting that premiums be put up too so that . . . raised so that the owners of the snowmobiles could actually ensure that they would have coverage if there was an accident. And we also suggested that they inspect snowmobiles before licences were issued, and that would have also give some coverage and also would have ensured that there wasn't . . . that the premiums were never . . . weren't paid on . . . or we didn't have to pay out for

snowmobiles that were maybe not fit to be driven.

But the government has opted to only cover for liability insurance, which means that now owners are going to have go out and buy separate property coverage. The snowmobile association accepted this change and it's something that probably will be looked at again in the future.

The second part of the Bill allows SGI to withhold someone's driver's licence if they are guilty of a property crime until such time as they pay restitution to SGI for their crime. Now this means to us that the government is trying to look proactive on the problem of crime, and youth crime in particular. We support any actions that might help reduce crime; however we question whether this will actually do anything to prevent crime.

I don't believe anyone thinks that a youth who is brave enough to steal a car in the first place will stop because he might not get his driver's licence later on. A 13-year-old that's in the process of stealing a vehicle I can't imagine is going to stop in his tracks and say, gee, in three years from now I might not get my driver's licence if I do this; maybe I'd better stop. I say it's an action that we definitely question. If he's stealing or breaking into a car, it seems certain that he's not too concerned about the laws we have right now anyway.

The government's new-found love for getting tough on crime is laughable. A year ago the Minister of Justice stood up in this House and told us he didn't think it was a major issue. And now all of a sudden, everybody's jumping up and down to address people's real concern in this regard. And this is the best we could come up with. I hope this is just the first step in the government actually taking property crime seriously.

(1500)

It's interesting to note that this Bill only addresses the issue of restitution to SGI. There's nothing in this Bill that's . . . to talk about restitution to victims of crime who have to fork out things like a \$700 deductible that we were faced with last weekend with a man who had to pay to SGI for a vehicle that he was . . . he had a collision with when attempting to stop a bank robber.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things we would like to discuss in this Bill, but we would at this time send it to the committee and discuss it later.

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

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**General Revenue Fund  
Highways and Transportation  
Vote 16**

**The Deputy Chair:** — Before I call the first subvote I'll invite the minister to introduce her officials.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sitting to my right is my deputy minister, Brian King; just to my left is the executive director of logistics, planning and compliance, Bernie Churko; directly behind me is executive director of corporate

information services, Lynn Tulloch. And Barry Martin will be joining us shortly, who is the executive director of engineering services.

#### Subvote (HI01)

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And good afternoon, Madam Minister, and I want to welcome your officials here today. Madam Minister, my counterpart from Cannington had asked questions the last time we had Highways estimates up, so bear with me if I also repeat some of his. And I've been reading *Hansard* to get some of your answers. And some of my questions actually are very close to his but I would just like to re-ask them maybe in a different way because they may affect something different.

But some of the concerns that I have had brought to me in letters that I have had wrote to me, there seems to be a misunderstanding out there that if someone does damage to their vehicle on one of the highways, whether it's a pothole or whatever it is, who really is responsible? Now in some respects I understand SGI will look at it, and in others, unless I'm misinformed, maybe even Highways themselves. So could you maybe give me an overview of what process these people take.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, as I'd said previously, there are three types of claims. The one type of claim, if we are definitely at fault — there hadn't been signage or if there had been some reason that we were at fault — we would pay the damage cost.

The other type of claim is where there was no fault that we could identify on behalf of the roads and so on, that would go to an insurance claim then.

And there are some in which maybe there's some, you know, kind of that grey area in which we sit down with the person and we try to negotiate then a settlement.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — So, Madam Minister, if someone hits a hole and busts a wheel off their car, who would they go and see then? You're saying really in that case probably SGI? If there was markers up and, as you said, if there was flags there and so on, then probably it would be an SGI problem, would it?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, yes. If the damage or the condition of the road was clearly marked and the person, you know, hadn't followed that marking, it would be an SGI claim.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Does the Department of Highways carry liability insurance or is that strictly at the peril of the Highways department to cover these costs, or is there a liability insurance on the side that covers situations like this?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, no, we don't carry any liability insurance.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, another concern and I've had it happen to myself in fact on two occasions last year — when the Highway crews are out there and they're patching and they do put a . . . surface it with oil and then they come along and put the gravel on it. And

I know in the past few years, I've seen them go back then and they sweep. You know, as it starts to dry and it's packed in, they sweep off the excess gravel. And for some reason last year on more than one occasion — and I had actually two stone chips myself and I've had others bring it to my attention that this year — it seemed like . . . or last year it seemed like that wasn't happening like it was before. And I know the two different times myself . . . and I can use by Fort Qu'Appelle was the example, but you know I'm not specifically picking out that highway crew there.

But I've had it brought to my attention in other areas where the excess stones were not swept off. And I know in my case I have two stone chips to prove it, and I'm sure if I have, many others have.

And I guess my question is why is that happening and is a windshield covered in that case?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, okay, the understanding here is that on the high volume roads sweeping would be done sooner than on a low volume road because part of the treatment actually — and both should be signed — is that you drive it . . . to put it into the treatment, the stones and so on. So they should be signed.

We could actually get you the detailed policy on that. But how soon it's swept and so on depends on the volume of traffic. But part of that treatment is that it's actually the impact of putting the gravel into the treatment itself.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — That's what I thought, Madam Minister. I understood . . . that's what I had thought would happen out there. I guess in the cases that I'm talking about and maybe it only happens once in awhile, but it is a concern for anyone, especially if you buy a new vehicle and you get two or three stone chips right away on your windshield.

And I know in the case . . . and I can't verify it both times that I got a stone chip that it wasn't marked, but I know once in particular there was absolutely no marks, and I knew they had been working on it because I'd come in through that way, and then the damage was done. And I mean, you have no forewarning. You know that there's work being done out there in the last few days and all of a sudden you get a stone chip.

And I don't think it matters, Madam Minister, as you know, I'm sure you're well aware, how fast you're driving; it really doesn't have much to do with it because in that new tar or, you know, in the last few days if the temperature is warm it picks up.

(1515)

Madam Minister, is there any kind of an arbitration board then if someone has a problem out there, and SGI for an example really doesn't want to deal with it, it says it's not really their responsibility, is there any kind of arbitration board or, for lack of a better word, ombudsman or somebody that people can actually go to and try and have someone arbitrate whether they get any coverage or not with the Department of Highways or who it really should go to?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, I'm just . . . I forgot something in the last question. I was going to mention this that the policy hasn't changed . . . like last year wasn't different in whether the sweeping when it occurred than other years previous.

On the case if there's damage done to a car in which a person is trying to deal through the Department of Highways it would be our area managers that would first deal with that person. Now if that's not satisfactory it does kind of move back up and we'll also then have him go to the executive director of the region and he can eventually get to the deputy minister.

But we are looking at reviewing the whole policy and wondering . . . looking at the possibility of a third party or a mutual party trying to arbitrate some of these pieces.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm glad to hear that because I think it has been a . . . It's a problem for us as MLAs out there because we know that's happening more and more. And I'm sure it must be a problem for you because in many cases we have nowhere to turn but to write to you or take your time. And I guess by talking to . . . you've mentioned the area managers and executive director.

Possibly you could tell me like in our case if we have a concern brought to us as MLAs out there, who is the right person then should we see? Is it the area manager, executive director? Who should we go to, to try and get some kind of a resolution to the constituent's problem?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — If the complaint hasn't already been forwarded I would — I mean the first place is the area manager, they try to deal with it — but if it's already come to you and that's already been dealt with it might be then like I said kind of in that order of going to the executive director of the region or then up to the deputy minister.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — And as a last resort, the minister, I would presume. Thank you, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, another concern I have out there — and I know I'm not alone in this situation because there are others that have also talked about it — but how do you go about . . . is there an engineer on the job, say a section of highway now that you're out resurfacing. You're just starting to get going on the resurfacing projects.

And my concern I guess partly comes back from when I was a reeve out there, and I know how we used to inspect the roads after they were built and you had final inspection, and before you would pass that road everything had to be exactly the way you wanted. It couldn't have stones in the top section of the road and so on.

And you wouldn't pass that road unless you felt it was built to the standards it was supposed to be built by and engineered to. And you wouldn't pay the final portion of the money to the contractor. You could hold back a certain amount of money if that road was not built to the standards that it was supposed to be and the contractor had agreed to build it by.

I guess where my concern is, in some of the surfacing jobs that

we're seeing in the province right now — in my opinion anyway and maybe you disagree with me — is that there is a big difference between the quality of work that is being done out there by contractors. And I don't know if you've seen that as I have, but I know some of my MLAs on our side here have certainly seen it, where one contractor will do just a splendid job out there; you can't see the joins in the new pavement. As they do sections, you know, it's nice and smooth. And for the first couple of years at least it stands up very well and you appreciate being on those roads.

But there are also others, Madam Minister, and I think it is a concern because I'm sure that they are being paid whatever they tendered for, as well as the person that's doing a very good job out there. And I guess my question is: is there an engineer on that job at all times, you know, to guarantee that the job is being done? I know in some areas where they're putting sand underneath or — I call it sand, you may call it gravel — and then resurfacing the top, which seems to be a new idea and maybe going to work well.

Is there someone there to protect our interests as taxpayers to get what we ask for out there?

**The Deputy Chair:** — Order. Before the minister responds, I just would request the hon. member from Saltcoats follow rule 28 and direct his comments through the Chair. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Okay, Mr. Chair. On the surfacing question then, there is a person on site as the project manager all the time, if he or that person isn't there, there would be a technician on site. And you say, as with the RMs (rural municipality) for a sign off that that whole project would have been . . . had to reach a certain . . . the quality or level that you know that they would be you know monitoring for. Now they can reject the project in which case then they don't get the payment and they have to redo it or rework it, or sometimes there can be acceptance of a project which isn't quite of the top quality in which you would want and there'd be a reduced payment because of that. So either it's accepted or it can be accepted with reduced payment or it can be rejected.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Is there a number of times that the reduced payment happens, and you know maybe that goes hand in hand with what I'm talking about. But say in the last fiscal year, how many times would that have happened?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, on the answer to this, we don't have the specific numbers. I guess it can vary from sometimes a few hundred dollars or even on a million dollar contract where you have one piece, they break the work into small units, and they might be able to deduct a little bit you know if something wasn't right on one piece of the work.

But we would have to get back to you on more significant . . . like if you wanted specific numbers. But we don't feel that there's any significant difference in the last year, or this year, from you know the various years. They try the quality of services, we can't see a big difference in it.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Madam Minister, I certainly don't want to get into specifics of which highways

were fixed to what I felt were good standards because I definitely don't want to hurt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the construction companies that are involved and I don't want to get into that at all. I was more concerned about I guess the job that we're receiving for the tax dollars that we're paying, Madam Minister, and I know in the RMs that was the biggest concern we as councillors and reeves had, and I'm sure it's no different in this situation, just many more dollars are involved.

And I guess what you're saying is that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's not . . . doesn't seem to be any more common now than it was before. Maybe it's just the certain roads that I'm driving on, but in the last year I really feel that I've been on occasion to drive on some that have just been repaired that I would really question about how smooth they are. And if those roads that have just been resurfaced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and already have little ripples in them, how long is that going to last before they're just about back to the point they were before.

And I think when we're paying, as you know, and you're more aware of than I am, the millions and millions of dollars to repair these highways, we need quality work done out there, and I think that was my concern.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I'd like to go into a little bit different area now and the one highway, Madam Minister, I know this is really coming into and I know there's many around the province, but it is No. 15 Highway from No. 9 over to 16 — and I just explained that's from Melville across country there by Bredenbury. And it's not the only one like that, there's many in the province I believe like that, but that highway I believe was never built to a very good standard and it's breaking up every spring and actually all summer. And the highway crews out there are having a tremendous time trying to just keep that road in any kind of repair.

And, Mr. Deputy Chair, the question I guess this time I have to ask is, are we getting to a point where we are going to be turning them back to gravel roads. Because I notice on that highway, because I travel it when I get caught and can't go no other way, is that part of it's gravel, part of it's pavement. And once again I think the windshields and everything else come into call here. So highways like that, are we in the process of deciding should they go back to gravel or should they be repaired as pavement?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, okay, first of all we are doing a tremendous amount of work on the number of kilometres in the highway system in the province, like over I think 30,000 kilometres of highways. And we're doing a lot of work both in intensive preservation and reconstruction. And you know we have 3,000 kilometres of a national highway that we're looking at — that we'd hoped we can get some funding — about 8,000 kilometres of provincial and 15,000 kilometres of the thin surfaced or the collector surface highway.

Now in any of these pieces, like the piece that you're talking about right now on Highway No. 15, Bredenbury to Junction No. 9, there is work going to be done on that piece of intensive preservation of around the 33 kilometres. And then Raymore to Semans, which is further on on that highway No. 15, there's another piece — around 14 kilometres of intensive preservation. Now if other pieces still need preservation work, those will be

done.

And some pieces of highway on our collector system, and in that one as I'm told, it that it was built on maybe some poor soil conditions in some places, some alkali soil conditions and so on. And there are pieces in which we do put it to gravel for a period of time anyway to dry them out or look at conditions.

And the other aspect is in planning. Now we don't have any reversion program plan from the department, but we're working with the area transportation planning committees to look at overall traffic patterns, where we do need to upgrade, where we may look at some truck haul routes that might be more effective as in a grid system. I mean we've got to look at all those pieces in what the future will hold throughout the province.

(1530)

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, in the case of No. 15 highway, why I've brought that concern forward today is that I've just been contacted by my local RM. And we have in the RM what we call the correction line. And you know as most RMs have names of roads, they call them . . . this is actually a correction line. What is happening now, the traffic and the heavy traffic is diverting from No. 15 about 2 miles over, going down a correction line, and they're losing the road.

And I guess my concern, and their concern I know is, that as the traffic diverts off of 15 because of the condition it's in, the expense is falling directly with the RM. And that road at the present time will not be covered under any funding agreement with the government because it's farm access.

And I guess the real concern for the RMs . . . and I'm sure it's happening in that area, it is happening in a number of areas. Madam Minister, there was a time and not that long ago that I would have said that we shouldn't be turning these roads back into gravel. I would have said, Mr. Deputy Chair, that we should definitely be keeping them on an oil surface.

Having looked in hindsight now and the condition of some of these oiled surfaces such as the road we're talking about and the condition it's in — and I'm glad to hear you say that some work is going to be done with that — but I guess, maybe you know, maybe there's some point we might be better off having them back in gravel than having to go through this, you know, and having our constituents and taxpayers driving over this busted-up pavement all the time.

Maybe there is a point that we would be better off having them back in gravel and I don't think I'd probably have many of my constituents agree with me on that at this point, but I honestly feel there must be some point there where we have to give up. Either rebuild the whole road and put a base under it, such as this road . . . because we just can't win on that road, and it's just about impassable.

So I would hope . . . and I would ask you to comment on this. Mr. Deputy Chair, I would ask the minister to comment on this. If you get to the point where you may consider putting some of these roads back into gravel, will a number of things be taken into consideration? Number one being the cost of gravel, the

distance you would have to go to get gravel. And I guess where another of my concerns comes is in our area, especially at home, and there's many areas in the province getting to that point, where there's a great shortage of gravel. And I know in our home area we're going to end up hauling probably 60, 70 miles to get good quality gravel in the very near future.

And you know as well as I do who that's going to cost. It's going to cost the local taxpayers, but it's going to cost all taxpayers because we're going to be hauling that on the highway system. So I would hope you would take that into consideration too. Would that be possible?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, I think in response to that, one of the reasons that we formed the transportation area committees is to do joint planning. And as I say from the department's perspective, we do not have a reversion plan in place, but if it makes sense in areas . . . I think we've got to look at our whole system from the national, provincial highway system down to the collector roads and what's happening in total areas.

Part of that is the change in grain transportation; part of the pressures is some of the other economic development that's occurring in the province, which is good news but it puts a big stress on the transportation system. And we do face that right from the farm access roads right up to the national highways.

And so one of the initiatives is also they've been working with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and the Department of Highways and looking at what every road use is — part of the reclassification. Also setting up the area planning committees to look at are there ways in which we should be putting heavy load volumes . . . especially if we're going to lose branch lines and so on, are there certain patterns of roads and where the traffic should go.

If we have some of those becoming a heavy haul road, and maybe that is in the grid system, and we're saving a thin surface highway because it's still important for the school bus traffic and the ambulance and the, you know, lower weight traffic, we have to do some good thinking and good planning. And that involves not only the province but the local municipalities.

And so we've been willing, and we've had some examples of where it's made sense for heavy traffic to be diverted more on to the municipal system, in which it's saving the highway system and that we can do some joint funding of maintenance on that to help out the RMs and so on, because it's a win-win.

So there's a lot of work being done to try to coordinate how we can plan for the future to do the very best we can with the dollars we have. And even at the local levels they've recognized . . . I've been at many, many meetings too that there's a lot of shifting going on right now. And they said maybe how we would have spent our dollars even a couple of years ago may be different than the way we want to see them spent now.

So we're really open to working with local area planning committees, with the RMs, the towns and areas, to sort out what's the best in the interests of the economic development, also the social needs of our communities, tourism, all of those

pieces.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd just like to get you to elaborate a little bit then and ask the minister, Mr. Deputy Chair, about the reclassification that you talked about. Can you elaborate a little more on it? Because I understand from what you're saying that RM roads, as well as secondary highways all the way up, would be part of this program. What kind of a classification . . . Like how is it going to work and how will it be in conjunction with the RM roads?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, the reclassification is just . . . (inaudible) . . . a lot of preliminary work has been done. But it is working with SUMA, SARM, and the province. And to reclassify, these are all of the roads, like I said, right from a . . . like a farm access up to the national highways road system. And we're working really closely with them.

And the classes are based on really management being able to look at their use and so on, and what kind of management and cost it would be also to maintain those different classes. So it looks at their function. And now it also will look at, even though it might be a low volume road it may have very important social implications because it's an important road to a health centre or something like that.

So there's a lot of work being done. It's at a fairly preliminary stage. I know SARM and SUMA have presented it at their conventions, just kind of the general outline. There will still be a lot of work done on that. But I think one of the other reasons and goals for it is that then we can understand, if we can finally kind of classify the system, that we have some understanding of what kind of level of service and what that will be at the different class levels. And then we would after all of that is done . . . also of course it comes down to how will those be funded.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, I'd like to ask the minister, when you set your priorities for a year, and I know you have it and I haven't got it with me right now, but the highways that you're going to . . . your plan is to work on this summer, how are those decisions made? Because I know in some of the areas, in my area it really kind of makes you wonder sometimes how you decided to fix this one and leave this one over here.

And my phone rings right away. As soon as you start working on . . . I'll give you an example. And I know the road needs working on; I'm not disagreeing with you there at all. But from Canora to Kamsack I believe you're doing a section of that highway. I can't remember the number. No. 5 west. And I believe you're doing some work there and that's great; the road needs it. But go one step further past Kamsack and go south, and I believe it's No. 8 Highway heading south to Wroxton.

And I get more complaints out of that piece of road I think probably than I do in any in my constituency. And I can just hear what's going to happen when I see work being done on the other highway and not touching the other one over there. You know, I know it's going to happen to me and I'm sure you're going to get some of the feedback too, Madam Minister.

How do you decide which roads get priority and which don't?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, do I . . . Okay, I'll keep answering. Okay, on that question then on maintenance of roads, we use an asset management program. And so the specific piece that was asked of me on . . . like No. 5 Highway, it may look in better condition but it's also a larger investment. And they also are . . . They analyse them each fall and this one needs to have the investment made in it so you don't lose dollars, a larger amount later for when it needs to be fixed.

Where Highway No. 8 would be a thin membrane surfaced highway, a little less investment, it may look in a little worse shape, there will still be maintenance done on it, but they have to kind of balance the kind of volumes that are on the roads and also the investment that's already there. And so sometimes pieces of the system will be fixed that look like they're not in as much need of repair but it actually preserves the investment, and in the long run it makes dollars . . . it makes wise use of the dollars being spent on our highway system.

On any of the capital construction and new construction, we do a benefit/cost analysis on it and we prioritize projects with that and of course you're always considering other pieces in that, like the importance of how much twinning you can do each year, with economic development and other priorities within the province.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Minister, I would like to continue on, on the costing and the analysis of where you do your work, and I would like to focus a little more specifically in my area.

In your analysis or in this year's budget, is there any allowance taken for the type of winter that we have? For example in my area in Highway 41 last winter, I received very few complaints in the spring about the type of the highway and it seemed to me to be an extremely severe winter. You would expect that with the snow loads and all the rest of it that went on and the temperature that we had last winter it would be a severe winter. This year, by contrast I've received an infinite number more of concerns about Highway 41 and it seemed to me that that would be out of sync.

So the question I have specifically is, has your department noticed a great deal more problems with things like frost heaves and things of that nature this spring as compared to a so-called normal winter and spring?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker. You seem to be very observant on that. It was a milder winter and we actually were surprised that there was still a significant amount of heaving.

And I guess what they were saying is that the frost, actually in a year that there's not as much snow coverage and maybe is even milder, it actually penetrates deeper. And it actually then gets into moisture farther down in the soil and so that comes up. And actually we had a surprising amount of heaving this spring that we wouldn't have thought normally, because it was a milder winter. But that seems to be the explanation.

Now when there is this extra heaving we do then start targeting more dollars in, because you could never actually predict exactly which roads in the spring will receive this amount . . . of kind of damage. But then dollars are reallocated to try to repair

those roads.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Madam Minister, I accept your explanation if we're talking in the middle of a field, because the snow then stays on the field and insulates the ground from the frost penetration. Surely you're not telling me you left all the snow on the roads over the course of the winter and therefore the frost penetration varies. We're talking a situation where there is no snow on the roads and a good winter or a poor winter, so how would that be the explanation.

(1545)

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Yes, Mr. Chair. Okay, we do keep the snow off of the surface of our highways and roads. But the ditches fill in with snow and that's the insulation, like the blanket that's around them when you have a heavier snowfall that we didn't have this year. And so there is that kind of an insulation effect.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Madam Minister, again I have to take some difference with you. It's sort of like saying a bald man doesn't have to wear a hat because he's got hair over his ears. Madam Minister, the top of the highway is exposed. The frost goes down from that point; it doesn't come in from the ditches surely. And so it shouldn't make any difference in terms of the top of the highway if the frost is going down.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, you know, I have a science background here so this is getting kind of interesting. But the whole . . . I think the issue here is the winters that you have snow — and I don't have an engineering background but this is what . . . and it does make sense — that there would be snow in the ditches and also up the side slopes, which would be insulating. Now if the snow isn't along that side slope, the frost tends to penetrate into the soil then deeper. And that's . . . at least that's the explanation in which the . . . I guess the theoretical explanation — but that's the explanation too from the . . . that the engineers would say that they think we experienced last year.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I would like to use one of the letters that I received from constituents, a particular concern about Highway 41. And it's a concern I have as well and I've travelled on that road last spring. When I went to Saskatoon from Melfort on the highway, there were a number of severe potholes, let's call them that. And I have to give the Highway department some credit in that through the course of the day, or in the morning or early afternoon, they attempted to do some grading to stabilize them, if you like, for a better word. When I came back at night in the dark, because of the traffic on the highway and perhaps the big trucks, they were again severe potholes.

My question is, is the signage adequate in those kind of circumstances because when you're travelling in daylight you can see a flag or a red sign fairly easily. At night when it's dark, it's much more difficult and in essence the severity of the circumstances change through the course of a day. How do you reconcile those issues from a signage and a safety perspective?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, there's two things there: that we do monitor roads in which those type of conditions . . . on a

daily basis; and we've worked on improving the signing policy so that there's more than just maybe the little triangle or the flag right at the pothole. But that if there's a severe stretch of road, that there would be a sign up that would say, the next number of kilometres, you know, slow down because of the potholes, or you know, that there's work being done. So we have tried to, I think, make sure that the public is aware of the type of road condition that they'd be driving on.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Minister, because people become sort of complacent if you like, in the springtime because you see a certain sign and you drive over the pothole that it's flagging, and it's not too bad. And another time you see the same sign and you drive over the pothole and, you know, you're almost knocked out of the car because it's a very severe pothole as compared to the last signage.

And in many instances people become complacent, not knowing what the severity of the pothole may be, from a minor bump to a crater, as described in this letter. Is there a methodology that the people might understand that clearly identifies the expected severity of the pothole?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — I think, as I said before, Mr. Chair, that we don't have I guess different types of signs for different levels of potholes, because what is done, I mean, is that if it's a pothole we want people to slow down and be very cautious on it. They are trying to be monitored. If it's a severe break, those are monitored probably twice in a day, and that they try to get them fixed within three to four days after that.

So I would hope that the people of Saskatchewan, when we have signage out, you know, that they would drive accordingly. And certainly if there's something, a permanent spot or something that's of some kind of danger, a bump say before a railway or something like that, those have permanent signs.

But these other pieces, we don't get the different criteria. What we do want is to have them flagged; people should slow down and be cautious; and we try to get them repaired as soon as possible.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Madam Minister, I think in the instance that I explained, on Highway 41 this spring, there must have been a very severe kind of acknowledgement of the problem because the grader was parked right in the ditch next to the pothole. The only thing I missed — it might have been the break — was the operator to run out there and keep grading it in between every vehicle that went by.

And part of the problem . . . and seeing a vehicle go by . . . are these large grain trucks and large trucks that are on the road right now. You could see literally the situation dramatically changed with one vehicle going over that location. Is that not the kind of thing that's severe enough that needs more long-term repair in order to prevent those kinds of potholes from being that unstable?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, now I think there's definitely, I mean, concern. And if you say if there's one big truck, it can do considerable damage especially if there is . . . I would hope it wasn't during time that there were road bans on and that there weren't overweightes on that — and I think that's another piece

that's extremely important in our budget, that we have compliance and that we work with the trucking industry throughout the province in order that we keep the right weights on the right roads at the right times.

The other piece is though, I think what we're seeing here is an example too, of a branch line in that area that it hasn't been abandoned yet but it certainly . . . we're starting to see the increased truck traffic out of that area on the highway system and it's certainly something in which it does amount to a lot of stress on the road system.

And I would hope, as we've seen here at different private members' days, in which we would still get support from both opposition parties, in that we should have had, first of all, a moratorium on rail-line abandonment during this important review, but that the stress that will be on our road system, that if we'd see the number of branch-lines abandoned, will be a tremendous challenge to our province.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, while we're talking about potholes and I'm just talking of some preventative measures, last fall it was brought to my attention that No. 1 had — No. 1 Highway just west of Broadview, just over the overpass of the tracks there — had some areas that certainly looked like they had potential for break-out before the spring. And I chatted with the department, chatted with officials, and I had people respond to me and say, there really is no problem there, took the time to drive the area.

What was being brought to my attention was three different areas, very close, probably within a quarter mile section, almost all of them were in the middle of the road where you could see the pavement was already starting to break and starting to push up.

Yes, it hadn't broken open yet, but the concern was the fact that would be one of the very first areas that would break up come springtime and the results were actually that they were. In fact I would have to commend local highways officials for being out there very quickly, even before it really got very warm, because they really start to break out very quickly.

And I was wondering, Madam Minister, what is the policy of the department? When you see areas where you can tell that there's an area that will break out, you're in later in the fall, it's still nice enough, wouldn't it be appropriate at that time to address and make sure that that piece of pavement is reconstructed so that you don't have a problem early in the spring before it really gets mild enough to get out and address it.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — I think if the weather conditions permit, our department does try to do as much work as they possibly can still in the fall, and if some of those kinds of pieces are noted. We actually were able to last year to put an additional \$10 million into our budget because we did have a good fall, recognizing that a lot of significant work could be still done last fall.

And so those things are brought to the attention, through the different areas, the Department of Highways workers and so on, seeing these kind of pieces, and we try to constantly manage

this huge asset that we have across this province in transportation.

So if there's a good fall and we've got the dollars and we can identify problems, we try to do the work.

**Mr. Toth:** — Well I guess, Mr. Chair, what I'm saying, Madam Minister, is the fact was this was brought to the attention but nobody really did anything. The comments that came back to me were, we didn't notice anything out of the usual on that particular stretch.

And I thought, just for my own information, I took the . . . basically, it's on my way a lot of times driving. I drove and the first time I missed it too. But then I noticed, taking another drive over it, because I called the two individuals that had called me, I called them back, and they said well, yes there are breaks there; the area is going to break. And I spotted that.

I guess the concern I have is that nothing was really done last fall when it was brought to the attention of highways and the results were this spring . . . early break-out. And that's a major highway and then you're coming into that intersection — or not the intersection — but you're coming to that overpass where it tends to have some congestion at times, and I think it was important because of the location of those spots.

So I guess what I would say in the future — Madam Minister, you indicated that every attempt is being made — I think we need to just look a little more closely, even earlier in the fall. If there's areas that look like there's potential problems . . . areas early in the spring, even before it gets nice enough maybe to address those, to make sure that those little boils don't turn up breaking open. And certainly this past winter, as mild as it was, some of those started to crumble even a lot earlier, I think. So it's just a matter of keeping on top of it.

Madam Minister, in a couple of areas of particular interest certainly in the Moosomin constituency, our Highways 47, 48, and No. 8 south of Moosomin. Now your department will be aware of the fact that there's upgrading being done on No. 8 north of Fairlight. I forget; it's about 7 miles I believe — about 13 kilometres, and 3 or 5 kilometres west on Highway 48.

Madam Minister, I'm wondering where we are with the project right now and whether or not you're going to move further with that project. Because one of the problems that's arising, and the department will be aware of this, with the Sask Wheat Pool terminal being put at Fairlight, basically it was put in an area where we're dealing with two highways that were in very poor shape. And as a result of that volume of truck traffic both moving north-south and east-west, while there's improvements close to the terminal, those two highways are taking quite a beating.

And certainly when you get No. 8 south of Moosomin, you get into the valley area. You get into an area with a lot of large truck traffic where it creates a very unstable situation as a result of large trucks and smaller vehicles on a very narrow top highway.

So I'm wondering, Madam Minister, what the department is doing to address the other areas of both No. 8 and No. 48 as far

as further construction on those two areas of highway.

(1600)

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, in response to that, first of all of course some of the work that is being done is the work through the CAIP (Canada/Saskatchewan Agri-Infrastructure Program) funding. And also the other piece that you talk about on Highway No. 8, we're putting in significant dollars too for some intensive preservation, but it will . . . it's I guess rated very high over the next five years on a significant kind of work being done there.

But I think one of the pieces that needs to be . . . I think everyone needs to recognize, is the number of terminals that are being put up in the province, the consolidation of the grain-elevator system, the branch-line abandonment, is having tremendous pressures on our road system right across this province.

And when I've had an opportunity to meet with the grain companies, and I know that they will put significant investment in, that often they might have invested 8, \$10 million and they'll talk about the kind of road work that needs to be done, and we might be talking \$20 million in an area or more. And so because of the kind of rationalization and the speed in which this is happening, it is difficult to respond to all of it as quickly as possible.

We talk of course again, like I said earlier, on area planning. Let's make the best decisions that we can with the dollars both provincially, municipally, and of course as I say before, I would hope that the federal government would be putting in their dollars also into our province both on national highways but also on the huge stress that we're seeing on the infrastructure because of the change which is happening from rail to road.

We also think it's extremely important this year still with the grain transportation review, that we get changes in the Canadian transportation Act which allows for true competition, which allows for short-line . . . friendly type of legislation in which we can have short-lines run in this province which will help to meet then some of the pressures that we see on our road system.

Also in talking with the grain companies though we also speak . . . we talk as we have with other industries in the province on partnership agreements. And I know grain companies will say to me, well we need the system changed from secondary weights to primary weights. We just cannot respond to all of these demands as quickly as possible, and certainly if there was some dollars being put in, in which grain companies could also contribute, we could respond to improving some of the infrastructure related to the terminal locations in this province.

**Mr. Toth:** — Well, Madam Minister, you mentioned that the project down at Fairlight is under — I think you called it the CAIP program — is this an ongoing program, or will there be more funds available under this program for further highway maintenance, repair, and construction? And also, Madam Minister, I would suggest to you that when you look at No. 8 south of Moosomin it needs more than just an upgrade of the surface area. It certainly needs . . . I think it needs the same type of work that's being done on No. 8 just exactly north of 48 —

the current construction where they're widening the top of the highway and then surfacing it.

So I guess, Madam Minister, my question to you is: how many more dollars are available under the CAIP program, and is there an application already put forward to extend the construction on both No. 8 and No. 48 in that vicinity?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, on the CAIP funding, there will still be this year's allocation and my understanding is there will be one more year left in that funding. That is, remember, dollars that came back as part of the Crow benefit pay-out to producers. So it was just dollars really targeted back to the province through that benefit; so it's producer dollars that are going into grain dependent road systems.

Now we submitted as a province over a hundred million dollars worth of projects and we only get allocated to the provincial system somewhere between 24 to \$25 million worth of projects.

So that just shows some example of . . . it's almost a drop in the bucket when we look at the type of dollars that need to be spent on our road system due to the changes in grain delivery patterns in this province.

So there's 84 million was allocated to the province all together. Somewhere around, I think, 24, 25 million, maybe 28 million, something like that was allocated to provincial . . . We, like I said, submitted well over a hundred million dollars worth of projects.

Now the CAIP committee is made up of, again, representatives from the federal government, from SARM, SUMA, and the provincial government. And so also the local municipalities are applying then for those dollars. So there's probably at least one more year of projects that will go to that committee and they will decide which projects will get allocations. But there will be significantly more projects put in than what the CAIP funding will be able to meet.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, so what you're saying then as far as any further construction or upgrading of No. 8 and No. 48, at this point, there isn't any, or you don't perceive that there will be any further construction in the near future?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, as far . . . the CAIP committee would decide. An application could still go in and so they may still be eligible for other funding for upgrading of some of those roads in that area.

But on our provincial basis, Highway No. 8 is a high priority for us to continue on as a provincial government separate from CAIP. And so I think that you'll be seeing, you know, significant work there within the next five years to try to complete that work all the way up to Moosomin.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Madam Minister and Mr. Chair. I think certainly people in the area, living along Highway No. 8, would certainly be pleased to hear that.

As I look at your budget this year, Madam Minister, and the previous minister talked about \$2.5 billion over 10 years which,

if my arithmetic is correct, is about \$250 million a year. This year we're up to 218; we're falling short by 32 million. It seems to me that unless we get up immediate . . . or get up to 250 we're going to . . . we're basically now at a point where you're looking at about \$260 million a year just to catch up to that 10-year, \$2.5 billion figure.

Now if you had even \$250 million, Madam Minister, it would certainly give you some leverage to address some of the concerns out there. And rather than saying 5 years down the road for No. 8, which is I'm guessing now in the neighbourhood of 10, 12 miles left, that's a long time to look at that period of highway to be upgraded. And I would hope that the department would look at that a little more favourably.

I was pleased to hear your comments about it being a priority. And for the sake of the traffic up and down . . . As you're aware of the fact there's . . . it's not just grain terminals, Madam Minister, it's just the safety of the public moving up and down. Because just in the last three years that we've actually seen two terminals, one on the north end, one on the south end of that particular stretch of highway. So we certainly appreciate what has been done.

But I think most people are saying and hoping for . . . especially when you go through the Pipestone valley area with the hills there and how narrow the top is at that particular section. I know for a number of people, and just travelling there myself, many times you hope you're over top of the hill before you meet someone because it's so narrow and people tend to crowd the centre line rather than getting over to the side. So it would be certainly pleasing to see construction in that area continue in that area.

Another area, Madam Minister, and your officials will be very familiar with it, is No. 47 north-south. I believe last year there was some resurfacing was done on No. 47 north of Grenfell — I don't know if it quite went to the valley, to the Qu'Appelle Valley — and I'm wondering if there's further resurfacing, the surface had come apart. But the major area certainly south of No. 1 between No. 1 and No. 48 and 47, in that area last year.

In fact, Madam Minister, if I was going across country in my constituency, I didn't take 47. I found the gravel or the grid roads tended to be in better shape. Now it's not that I'm asking you, Madam Minister, to allow this to fall into a grid road, because I think people would be certainly disappointed if it did. But what is the status of No. 47 at this point in the Highways budget?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Okay, Mr. Chair, there is work being done on Highway 47 . . . 10 kilometres south of Junction No 48 is one of the pieces that is designated for intensive preservation. Grenfell to 20 kilometres south and of course then further south yet, Estevan to 3 kilometres south. But those were all designated kilometres. I think that's well over . . . well that's over 30, 32 kilometres of intensive work being done on Highway No. 47.

I had the opportunity actually last year, I was out on Highway 47 and Highway 48 out in that area, and it's as you say, I mean there's a lot of . . . It's sitting down I think with areas, area planning is going to be an important part of all of the

decision-making but there is a tremendous amount of work being done in that area.

**Mr. Toth:** — I thank you, Madam Minister, and Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, if I heard you correctly you're saying that there's . . . what you're saying is intensive preservation on 47 south of No. 1 down to 48 and then south of 48. When you're talking of intensive preservation, what exactly is intensive preservation?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, well intensive preservation, it involves actually increasing the overall surface strength quality of the road segment. It has strategic treatment combinations put in place, and so it's not upgrading to a new level of surface but a lot of work is done on it to reconstruct the level of the road in which it should be at.

So it's more dollars, much more dollars being put in, which can go anywhere from in the dollars . . . here it says anywhere from oh 5,000 to \$20,000 per kilometre depending on the kind of treatment that's done on intensive preservation. So it's major work being done on the piece.

(1615)

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair. Thank you, Madam Minister. So in other words it's a little more than patchwork. As I gather and what I'm hearing you saying and when you're talking of more major work, if there's a major area of breakup and a pothole developing, tearing that out and putting in, building it up and making sure that it's upgraded so that it can withhold, I'm gathering that you're going to have some kind of a surface, probably a cold treat surface. Is that correct when you talk about intensive preservation that you would put on that? That you would do the whole surface of the road or are you doing it just in a patchwork mode?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, intensive preservation as it says, depends again on the road that you're doing it on. But you will be doing . . . you will be fixing up weak spots, you will be bringing it back to a condition again, depending on the type of road it is. But you're not upgrading the road; but what you are doing is repairing it to a good standard on it.

So it's much more than potholes; you're fixing weak spots. It'll depend on the volumes again on that road and so on, on what kind of treatment that gets done on each piece of road. But you're not upgrading it to a different level of road.

Intensive preservation though can be where you resurface, it can be reconstruction of that piece if there's a weakness there. So it involves a significant work to bring it back to that standard.

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, I guess when you're talking significant work, and I know that of your officials that are here with you today I've had a chance to chat with some of the gentlemen coming in from Yorkton. There was an area he was responsible for and I was hoping once he moved up that it would be an area that would really be a priority.

But I would like to . . . when we talk about 47, we talk about break up, one question I would ask, Madam Minister, is especially . . . okay just using 47 as an example because of so

many break ups of the surface, do you take that surface in the upgrading and kind of rip it up and redo it, repack it so that it's indeed all moulded together or is it just done in spots as you upgrade areas that are really broken up.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, well I think it's . . . as I said before, it'll depend on each road but it is usually then reconstruction. And definitely there's times, if it's 2 to 3 kilometres, that it would be . . . you know, the surface would be taken off, it would be reworked and redone. If there's significant stretches in which they need to build the grade up and it needs to dry out, it maybe then becomes a gravel surface for a year — try to get it dried out, then put the surfacing on the next year.

There's different treatments depending on the conditions and on each section. But this kind of work is certainly well beyond the regular maintenance and preservation work that is done on other pieces of highway.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair, thank you, Madam Minister. Because I think that's what most people are looking for at the end of the day. I don't know if people are particularly all that concerned about the fact that we do a patch here and maybe a half a kilometre here and a kilometre down the road, but take the time to indeed do some aggressive long-term work, even if that means a little bit of extra gravel for the time being as you allow that piece of roadway to settle so that you can indeed put the surface on that will last for awhile.

And if that's the route that Highways is following and if that's . . . I think if we just explain that to the general public, let them know this is what our intention is, but in order to achieve it, this is the route we have to follow.

I certainly commend the department for taking those steps and following a procedure that looks at the long term, because the facts are we can't keep coming back to the 47's or the 48's or the No. 8's. I think we need to build . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — 312.

**Mr. Toth:** — And my colleague says 312. There's just too many roadways in this province to continue to every year have to address the same question. So the more we can look at building towards the long term, the better off everyone in Saskatchewan is going to be.

Everyone's been on my case about bringing up my particular points. I have one more — No. 1 west of Wolseley. And we talked about twinning. I'm wondering, Madam Minister, where you hope to be come fall in regards . . . Are we just going to be basically following and completing the engineering phase and tendered contracts, or is there going to be actual construction begin on twinning of No. 1 east of Indian Head?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — On that section of the twinning, we will be then contracting it out. We expect to have dirt moving this fall. So you should see dirt moving this fall if everything goes well.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair, one more question. I know I said one more question, but just a point in closing. And I appreciate the

fact that what you're talking about for No. 1 and the twinning. And certainly I agree with you, Madam Minister; I think it's important as well for the federal government to recognize its responsibility when it comes to the national roadway structures in this country.

I think and I firmly believe that the province can certainly give some leadership. But at the same time the federal government, the federal Liberal Party, has to recognize that if they're talking about a national unity, they've got to recognize their responsibility in helping maintain national roadways such as No. 1 and the Yellowhead when you look at the traffic flow and the number of people, all kinds of Canadians, who travel on those highways.

And so it's important that continues to be raised and I guess it's important that Mr. Goodale begin to recognize he's our only voice here in order to speak on behalf of the government . . . of the province of Saskatchewan.

One question in closing though. That last question is, Madam Minister, I'm not exactly sure whether your department has any influence or whether it comes under your department, but it would seem to me that for all the four-lane highways in this province that there might be time to and appropriate to consider in the near future bumping the speed limits a little bit such as we see in other provinces on well-maintained good four-lane highways. Thank you, Madam Minister.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is a number of things I would want to just comment on and from a previous comment too is that we do understand our \$2.5 billion commitment. And that we will continue to ramp up the budget and we will meet that \$2.5 billion commitment. And I have to agree with the member opposite on that I do believe the federal government has abdicated its responsibility and that transportation really is a unity issue.

And it's one of the things in which when the rail system was built across this country that pulled this country together. There are certainly some strong north-south pulls right now. And if we can't keep strong east-west connections I think it's, you know, it's unconscionable. I think there's a moral obligation of the federal government to make sure that we have a national transportation system.

And as we see all other countries, developed countries, as we see our neighbour to the south in the national funding that they put into their roads and they've just announced a continued national funding on interstates called the ISTEPA (Intermodal Service Transportation Efficiency Act) agreement which is hundreds of billions of dollars that they're going to be putting into interstate connections across that country. And we're getting zero dollars from our federal counterparts.

And so I think it's extremely important, that our local governments are affected by the conditions to the road system of which we see with branch line abandonment, the changes in the Crow benefit, in which it took hundreds of millions of dollars out of this province, and we're getting zero dollars back to compensate for that.

And we have that effect on the provincial system. We see the

federal government opting out in not only roads but in navigation, in the airports. And so I agree with the comments that you've made on that.

On speed limits, it's certainly something that we would need to consider. If we have good four-lane highways, should we be considering changing the speed limits — I think there needs to be discussion on that.

I think one of the things though we always have to recognize is that speed is one of the biggest factors in fatalities, in the kind of accident rate that speed is one of the biggest contributing factors. So we have to look at the safety conditions but also what would be good for the public in this province. Thank you.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and Madam Minister. I'd like to follow up on a couple of issues that you've already discussed briefly this afternoon, Madam Minister.

In your 1998-99 construction project you identify, I think, four key areas as to where highway projects will be located. You talk about grading and you talk about surfacing; you talk about preservation resurfacing, and then you talk about intensive preservation.

I think you've expanded a little bit on intensive preservations, and of course the first category, grading, new construction, you've mentioned Highway No. 1 and what might be happening there as far as earth moving.

Could you expand on the other two areas especially, Madam Minister, in terms of what people would expect to see as the job completion. If we're talking about surfacing or we're talking about preservation resurfacing, what's the difference in those classifications and what kind of jobs would we expect to see as a result of a highway in one category versus a highway in the other category.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Okay, I think, Mr. Chair, if I've got the question correct, is you're asking, okay what does strictly surfacing mean. Like there's grading, which is done on a new piece of road, I mean, being built. Then surfacing would be the treatment that's being put on top of that. New grading resurfacing would just be when a pavement or whatever needs to be resurfaced, where it would be taken off and new surfacing placed on that.

So surfacing is a new piece of road where resurfacing is taking a piece that needs new surfacing work and it's taken off and redone. And that would range . . . and the cost of resurfacing averages about \$80,000 a kilometre.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Then let's spend a little time on the resurfacing aspect. You've indicated on resurfacing that you're replacing the surface that already exists. Who would determine which highway falls into that category versus intensive preservation? I think you've indicated to my colleague that Highway 47, Highway 48 are in that intensive preservation column. What will determine which highway is in the resurfacing?

And the second question, Madam Minister, you indicated that

there would be a new surface driving on — and I'll use Highway No. 5 as the example that travels through my constituency. We've seen examples of different surfaces placed on Highway No. 5. One continuous piece of highway, but we see what I call a hot mix laid down, hot pavement; then we see cold mix, then we see sand seal, and then we see something else.

What kind of criteria is followed by your department officials to determine what piece of road is going to receive what treatment?

(1630)

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Okay, I thank you for that. Mr. Chair, on the resurfacing, resurfacing is what you would do on your major structural pavements. And so that would be like a Highway No. 10 that you would do . . . what would be in that category would be the resurfacing; those would be the thick, structural pavements.

On our thin surfaced highways, on the collector system more, those pieces if there is even . . . even if they do a resurfacing, that is called intensive preservation — those would be down in that level.

Now there may be different treatments, again, depending on the volume and they try different mixes and different ways whether, you know, along so there may be, like as you've seen on Highway No. 5, different types of treatment in different sections. They're always trying to use the most appropriate treatment for the volume of traffic and to extend the life as much as possible.

And of course that all comes into asset management and their benefit/cost analysis and the work that they do on which pieces . . . what is being done on which pieces of highway.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Order, order, order. Stand that . . . Order. Hon. members, there is becoming a drone in the room and I just ask that all conversations be ratcheted down a significant number of degrees.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, as I was indicating, on your listing you've indicated that Highway 5 will have a couple of projects in fact, and one is the completion. And I guess I want to follow up on your explanation about what type of surfacing is being done as well as a follow-up on my colleague's comments, the member from Saltcoats, regarding when you finally are approving that a job is completed.

I understood your answer to say that there is a hold back from a contractor of course until the job is completed. And I would refer you to the section of No. 5 from . . . you have it down as: "complete east of Clair to Watson."

That was the section of highway, Madam Minister, that was under construction last year. It looked like it was finished and then it fell apart. And I want to tell you, Madam Minister, that I even have had a bus driver for Saskatchewan Transportation Company, the STC, travelling from Saskatoon on No. 5, who had stopped to tell me, like, what has happened? This road was

supposed to be completed.

The question that he had was: did this contractor get paid, and was he paid completely for that job because it really wasn't completed. And I notice that you have it down on your project list as being completed. Is this in fact true? Was this job completed last fall and you're having to redo 8.5 kilometres? Or is this a follow-up on what was a project last year?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Okay, Mr. Chair. On this piece, what it means here when it says, to complete, it needs to be completed. And there were some difficulties found on that piece, so that work will be continued this year. And it will be completed. Some of it — like it wasn't all done — but some of it, what was done, needs to still be worked on. It has not been accepted and so that project will be worked on.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Madam Minister, is this a job that will be re-tendered? Is it the same contractor and was there a hold-back from the previous contractor as far as not being completed? And was there a penalty imposed upon that contractor for the condition of that highway?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, yes, it is the same contractor. Yes, there was money held back. The project will have to be still worked on and completed and it will have to be decided at that time again whether or not it'll be accepted. It hasn't been as yet and so that work has to be completed. Money was held back. It is the same contractor.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I know that many people who travel on No. 5 will be looking forward to that chunk of highway getting finished. Because I understand from talking with some SGI agents as well, there have been accidents, vehicle damage as a result of the condition of that highway, and the concern by the bus drivers. One is who is going to be paying for this? Is it the contractor? Is it the department? And I know you've answered that already and I won't expound on that any further.

Madam Minister, a couple of years ago you announced, or the former minister of Highways announced a restructuring of the Department of Highways where you had offices moved from the community of Yorkton in the engineering department and moved to Saskatoon.

There were a lot of concerns expressed to me by individuals working with the Department of Highways about relocation, about having to move to Saskatoon, and then finding out that indeed most of their jobs took them back into the very area that they had moved from — east-central Saskatchewan.

I'm wondering if you've had a chance to look at that restructuring that occurred a couple of years ago. Is there an assessment of that and is there any proposed changes in terms of bringing what I look at as far as bringing the people back to the area that they're actually performing the work in.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, there was significant restructuring. And any time that that's done, I think you always do it very cautiously. And you do have some empathy for the people that have to move. But overall we have seen . . . we've reviewed it, and we feel that again we've had significant

administrative savings. And from time to time definitely people do have to go back out to areas to still work in those areas.

But overall there has been administrative savings and we've been able to put more dollars back into actually then working on the roads, and preservation, and upgrading, and so on. So it's been sometimes difficult in any reorganization but we have seen a significant savings in administration by it.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. While we may have seen some savings I think what we are hearing from people in the area, that they have a concern about service. And we're talking about responding in the wintertime. This past winter has been a mild winter and of course those complaints weren't there. But recall the previous winter, a lot of people were concerned about having to respond to Saskatoon, to having to ensure that indeed the people were near the job site.

So while you've said that you've reviewed it, I would encourage you to look at maybe some decentralization ensuring that we have people available at the source where the problems are, rather than having them in the city. Located in Saskatoon isn't a whole lot of benefit to the area of east-central Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, a different area of concern has been one that has been brought to my attention by the community development officer in the town of Canora. Shannon Walker contacted me recently regarding the reclassification of roads in rural Saskatchewan — highways, municipal roads, etc. — and has indicated that your department is currently looking at reclassifications. Reclassifying roads from I believe a class 1 to a class 7.

Is this a project that is under way right now, who is being consulted, and when do you expect this project to be completed? Or is this just a draft that you're looking at that may never prove to come to fruition?

**The Deputy Chair:** — While the minister is preparing for the answer, I would request the hon. member for Canora-Pelly to direct his remarks through the Chair, according to rule 28.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Excuse me. Thank you for the question. Mr. Chair, on the piece when you talk about the consolidation and the restructuring of the department, as far as the service for winter conditions and so on, I mean the crews were not consolidated to Regina and Saskatoon. There was some consolidation even in our regions and areas, but the winter crews are still out there.

And we do re-evaluate that at all times to always be watching the kind of level of service and the timely level of service that needs to be done on those systems. And actually I believe our departments responds. I know this last year was an easier year, but we had some significant storms in areas and there's been extremely good response of the department in trying to get roads clear and to keep safe road surfaces for people to drive on in this province.

On the reclassification as I've said earlier, this has been a project in which the Department of Highways, SARM, and SUMA are involved in. And it's definitely still at a fairly

preliminary stage. There's been a lot of work done on it but there still will be a lot of work that still needs to be done.

And in the reclassification as I'd said previously, it's really to look at every road, right from farm access up to the national highways, and decide in those level of classes what those roads will . . . not just the volumes but what they are used for. And then be able to, once the road system is classified, to then have a pretty consistent level of maintenance, surface, and what people could expect if they want a class 3 road or a class 7 road or whatever that might be.

That's going to take a lot of time. I think we're in a significant time of change within the province. Reclassification is one of those major initiatives going on. Area planning, working with local governments. We have to work with the tourism industry, economic development. All of those pieces have to be put into this reclassification.

(1645)

And we see transportation under tremendous stress but under tremendous change. So I think in developing this, we don't have a time line where it necessarily has to be done, but it's going to take some time over the next few years I believe before that will be all completed. We need to go back to communities and say, do these meet the kind of needs; does this classification make sense to you. There's nothing written in stone yet at all.

And so there's a lot of work's been done but a lot of work that needs to be done. And I think we have to see what happens with branch-line abandonment and many of the other issues that are facing the transportation system in this province.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. While I'm pleased to hear that this is in its preliminary stage I want to flag concerns for you from the town of Canora and others who have indicated that Highway 5, that there might be a situation where portions of Highway 5 will be classified in different classes.

That kind of classification I'm sure is going to lead to changes in the amount of service, in the amount of maintenance, and the amount of work that is being done on it. I think it's going to seriously affect the tourism industry. It will seriously affect the transportation of product.

And I'm talking border to border when we look at No. 5. It's a main arterial. Even though we look at it on a map and we see that there are classifications on the draft kind of preliminary work that you've indicated, that chunks of the highway may be classed as a 2 or a 3.

And I think the town of Canora is flagging . . . as you said, you're going to consult with the communities. They're already concerned and the mayor has indicated to me that they have a strong concern about the fact that Highway 5 suddenly has a classification from Kamsack to Canora being a no. 2 for instance, and then from Canora to Watson it might be a no. 3, and then from Watson to Saskatoon it's back to a no. 2. That kind of a classification I think is silly, and I'm hoping that your officials will heed the concerns of communities like Canora and address that, and I'm trusting that you will.

Madam Minister, one of the other concerns that is actually related to my constituency, and I brought this to the attention of officials in your department awhile back, many small communities are a short distance off of highways — 1 kilometre, 2 kilometres, the like. The community of Stenen is a short distance off a particular highway and one of their concerns of course was that a piece of that road has literally fallen apart and a surface — which was an oil surface, dust free — was there for years and years. The Department of Highways has come in and has resurfaced it back, raising it of course with a clay-gravel mixture and leaving it as a gravel surface. As a result the complaints from residents living along that section are extreme, and they raised that concern last year.

The response I had was that the amount of money that's allocated for those kinds of projects, of fixing those short little arterials was exhausted, and that they would have to look for the project on another year. I'm wondering if the community of Stenen and the residents who live along that road indeed can look forward to a resurfacing of that section back into an oil surface?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did have the opportunity actually to meet in Canora also, and a couple of the issues you've raised were certainly raised to me at that time. And in speaking to the town of Canora and I know the municipalities and so on in that area also, we tried to reassure them on the reclassification and also said to make sure they're talking also to the group, whether its SARM or SUMA, you know, on their concerns too in that.

On the access road to Stenen, on the Stenen access road, it won't be resurfaced this year. They do not feel . . . it's still I guess graded to a level at which it can take the heavy truck traffic that's on it. It needs to still be worked to make sure that that surface can accommodate the truck traffic that's on it to heavier weight. So to resurface it right now wouldn't be the time to do it. They're going to continue to maintain that road and maybe in the future then there can be resurfacing done but there is not . . . they just don't feel that it would stand up now to resurface that road at this time.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Madam Minister, and Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, while I appreciate the fact that, you know, stabilization of a base has to occur, I do though sympathize with the people that live along that stretch. And I'm wondering if the department, while they're waiting for the stabilization to occur, would consider a treatment that many communities . . . many small towns treat a lot of their sections with I believe, a calcium chloride mixture.

Will the department consider that immediate type of treatment to alleviate the concerns of these individuals that, you know, have some health-related concerns as well, living along the road, asthmatic conditions where that particular . . . the volume of traffic on that section of highway has caused major concern for those individuals.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, my understanding on the calcium chloride treatment, we would have to look into it. It doesn't work on every area. It's not necessarily that effective, but we certainly can take that under advisement and we'll get back to you on it if it would be a suitable treatment for that

road.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate your compliance there. A final question, Madam Minister. I believe it was last year that we discussed the . . . a Bill that talked about the responsibility of materials that are left on a highway or on a road surface, that fall off of vehicles or the . . . produce that's hauled. The question that I have for you, Madam Minister, is who is responsible for cleaning up materials that, of course, no one can identify.

What I'm referring to, Madam Minister, is many . . . with the increase of truck traffic, especially semi-trailer truck traffic, we see a lot of blown tires. We see huge amounts of rubber that's left on the highway. And the concern that has been expressed to me by a couple of individuals is that while travelling, the car immediately in front of another car hits a piece of rubber that's left on and it comes through and it smashes a car window.

Number one, who is responsible for the damage to now the car? And secondly, is it the responsibility of Department of Highway crews to ensure that the road conditions are safe and indeed those chunks of rubber that have been left by a semi-trailer that's long gone and unidentifiable, who is to ensure that those materials are picked up?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, on any of the pieces that, like you say, of debris or something that might be on the highway, our crews, Highway people would like to be made aware of it, and they try to clear it as soon as possible.

But specifically, we're not liable for those . . . for pieces that have fallen off and end up on the roadway. And certainly if we can have notification and we try to track down, if it's at all possible, if you can find, you know, where it did come from because the other party is liable.

But I know that the Highway department workers do a . . . really do want to be notified. And I would say that to the public in the province: if there is debris or things that are on the highway, they do their utmost to get that cleared off the highway because it is a safety factor. But the department is not liable for debris that's on the highway.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, while the minister's indicated that departmental officials are not liable, nor is the department, I'm wondering if a directive can be given to Highway workers to ensure that when there is a crew that is actually doing sand sealing for instance and are driving by . . . and I've seen it happen — where a particular Department of Highways vehicle will drive by a chunk of tire that's left on the side of a road and they don't pick it up.

And while I know that there are many projects around the province of Saskatchewan where community groups are given remuneration for ensuring that the grades and the ditches are cleaned — and I want to commend your department for doing that because I think that's a way that we can ensure that our province is attractive to tourism — but that's only done once a year. And as a result, the other 364 days, no one seems to have that obligation to ensure that it's picked up.

And while a phone call may be the only way that will bring to

the attention, I would hope that workers in the Department of Highways will take it upon themselves as a responsibility, ensure that while driving, no matter what their job description is I guess, will they stop and ensure that those materials are picked up.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Chair, I believe that . . . Now you may have been citing an example where somebody didn't pick something up. I think that most of our Highway workers take an extreme pride in keeping the surface of the roads as safe as possible and that they do have some obligation to pick up debris, articles, things on the road that shouldn't be there. And I would believe the majority of times that that is done, but I will certainly bring it to the attention of Highway workers that I think that that is some obligation that they should have, is picking up things that could be a danger to the motoring public on the road surface.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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