

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present today on behalf of the disenfranchised widows of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended whereby benefits and pensions are reinstated to disenfranchised widows and whereby all revoked pensions are reimbursed to them retroactively with interest to April 17, 1985.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from my hometown of Alida, from Manor, from Carlyle, from Saskatoon, and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present has signatures from individuals from the communities of Pleasantdale and Melfort.

I so present.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the review of parental rights. The prayer reads as follow:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Melfort.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today demanding review of parental rights:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People who have signed this petition are from Melfort and Yellow Grass.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of people concerned about parental rights in our province. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Melfort.

I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring a petition forward from the good people of Lemberg and Neudorf. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a greater portion of fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so that Saskatchewan residents may have a safe, reliable, and effective highway system.

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

Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present petitions this afternoon from citizens concerned about the unsafe and confusing entrance to the city of North Battleford. And specifically, we hope that something can be done before the Premier's visit to North Battleford on Thursday so that he will be able to . . .

The Speaker: — Now the hon. member will recognize of course that presentation of petitions is not for debatable time and I'm sure he'll want to get on directly to the petition and to proceed to that.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners this afternoon come from Leoville, Meota, Regina, Mayfair, Cando, Denholm, and North Battleford.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues here today in bringing forward petitions regarding the horrible state of Saskatchewan highways. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed these petitions are from the Prince Albert, Saskatoon areas of the province.

I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens that are concerned about the state of our highways. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of the fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

Those who've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from all over our province. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of the fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so that Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks out in Pleasantdale, Naicam, Melfort, and Quill Lake. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, this morning to present on behalf of the people of the RM (rural municipality) of Fox Valley No. 171 the following cry in the prayer for relief to the government:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately start work on the rebuilding of our secondary highway system to provide for safe driving on what are becoming known as pothole roads, to enter into negotiations with SARM and SUMA for a longer-term plan of rural road restitution reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as the new trucking regulations change safety factors on these roads.

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

These folks, Mr. Speaker, pretty much all come from the Richmond and Fox Valley communities which surround that RM.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the general petitions presented at the last sitting have been reviewed and found to be in order and are therefore received. In addition the petitions for private Bills have been reviewed pursuant to rule 12(7). They are found to be in order and are hereby read and received.

Of Saskatchewan Co-operative Credit Society Limited and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Financial Services Limited praying for an Act respecting the Credit Union Central of Saskatchewan;

Of the Saskatchewan Foundation for the Arts praying for an Act respecting the Saskatchewan Foundation for the Arts;

Of the Saskatchewan Medical Association praying for an Act respecting the Saskatchewan Medical Association; and

Of the Group Medical Services praying for an Act respecting Group Medical Services.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following questions:

First to the Minister of Finance: what are the total costs of production and placement for this year's post-budget advertising campaign?

And second question if I may, Mr. Speaker; I also give notice that I shall on day 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what are the total costs of production and placement of the anti-nurses advertising campaign currently being run by the Government of Saskatchewan?

Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what are the total costs to date associated with the airlift of patients out of the province for medical care including transportation, care, and the costs associated with the transportation, accommodation, and meals for one family member?

And secondly, that I will on that date:

In each of the individual cases requiring the removal of patients from this province, did officials of Sask Health contact the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses to ask if nursing care would be provided for those patients before they were airlifted out of the province?

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice and the cabinet: does your government support with regards to the nurses' strike that

fundamental to our society is the rule of law. There is no liberty for anyone without the supremacy of law. Coupled to the foregoing is an unwritten statement as follows: "There is no absolute right without a parallel obligation or duty." In this case that duty and obligation is upon the union and the individual nurses to obey the law.

Does your government support Sir Edmund Burke's statement about a century ago set out the solution for the situation we find ourselves immersed in this day. "A democracy and orderly society cannot long last unless there is a high level of discipline practised by all who bask under its protective banner. However, the less discipline that is supplied from within the individual, the more that will have to be imposed from without."

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. To you and through you to my colleagues in the House I'd like to introduce two very special people. They're special to me for a number of reasons. First of all, they're constituents, and they're relatives. And thirdly and most importantly, they're here today job-shadowing, so they're with our caucus to see the way the government should really run. So watch and you'll know in a few months what'll really be happening.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, and through you, to members of the Assembly six constituents from Indian Head, that we have with us in the west gallery today and I would ask them to stand as I introduce them.

We have Maureen Anderson, Gloria Karpa, Val Gorin, Karen Ernschaw, Claudette Bugiera, and Ruth Hollis, and I would ask all members to join in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, and members of the legislature here today two residents of Shaunavon. The first is Jan Meek, Jan is the president of local 87 of acute care vision in Shaunavon hospital. And Rhonda Thompson is president of local 251 of the long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, they're here today to make the legislature aware that while there's a nursing shortage in Saskatchewan, we're still laying off nurses in Shaunavon and they would like to say more about that later today. Thank you for coming.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — I'd like to introduce through you to all members of the House a gentleman seated in the west gallery, Mr. Percy Hill from Moose Jaw. A long-time public servant with our Crown corporation, SaskTel, a farmer, and very much a community activist in our community and one of my great political mentors. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to welcome Percy Hill to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Nurses' Strike

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I received a number of statements over the weekend and I'm sure members on the other side did as well, but I'd like to make sure that all members are read the one from Ms. Katinowski, local 62:

I am a member of SCUN (Saskatchewan criminal union of nurses) formally four days ago known as SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses). This is a quick attempt at humour before a discussion of a very serious matter. We as nurses are frustrated first of all with the fact that we have predicted the short of nurses for years and no one listened. We have coped from hour to hour, day to day, month to month, keeping in sight the fact that we could bargain in 1999 for better working conditions, for plans to retain and recruit nurses, and the opportunity to achieve at the very least adequate health care in this province.

Roy Romanow has taken away rights not only from nurses by not allowing us to collectively bargain. They are also taking away the rights of Saskatchewan citizens by ignoring what the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses have been saying for years — health care is in a crisis.

We nurses defy the order to return to work because we feel the citizens of Saskatchewan are worth more than, at best, mediocre standards of care. We believe in the worth of our patients, clients, and ourselves even when our government obviously does not.

We understand the people working in our places are very tired and feel overwhelmed and overworked. We feel empathy for these people. We have experienced these working conditions ourselves.

The people of Saskatchewan — to all of you — without nurses there is no care in health care. From a person who was told . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before going on to the next member's statement, the Chair was not certain whether the hon. member was quoting from a published item or from a piece of correspondence. I just want to remind members of the House that the proper names can be quoted if they're from published items but not if they're from private . . . from correspondence.

Report from StatsCanada

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another brief statistical report from our friends at StatsCanada. Another batch of warm, encouraging numbers that says Saskatchewan is doing quite well, thank you.

Of course on this side of the House we know that statistics

don't lie. When the statistics are good news for Saskatchewan, members opposite think or believe with Mark Twain that there are three kinds of lies — lies, darn lies, and statistics. Mark Twain also believed that smoking 20 cigars a day was good for his health.

But I digress. For the year from February 1998 to February 1999, non-residential building permits in Saskatchewan increased by 51.2 per cent. Building permits in total increased by 8.3 per cent.

I really don't like this kind of competition, Mr. Speaker, but the Tories insist we do it. So how did our Tory neighbours do?

Well Manitoba's non-residential percentage was down by 38.3 per cent and in total building permits were down 19.5 per cent. And the Promised Land, and the Promised Land? Non-residential permits down by a modest 48.4 per cent. Total decrease in Alberta — 27.7 per cent.

Pass the cigars, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nursing Concerns in Rural Areas

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to be able to make a member's statement on behalf of some of the nurses in my constituency.

One particular nurse that called me stated that she belongs to three SUN locals — 227, 13, and 107. This nurse has been forced to work in three different facilities — Cudworth, Wakaw and Saskatoon — with nearly no benefits because most of her hours are casual.

Mr. Speaker, she reiterates a number of concerns with rural area nursing and I would like to read a part of her letter:

In the rural areas it is extremely hard to find a nurse to fill in for a sick call, never mind summer vacations. Our employers dish out overtime and double time on a regular basis. They won't give pay equity. They'd rather keep paying overtime and double time. Meanwhile, our nurses and the rest of our health care workers are overworked, stressed to the max, and heading for burnout like those worn-out shoes.

Do you want a nurse on her sixteenth hour to be the one responsible for decisions affecting your life? Education in certain facilities is also a joke. After nearly a year at my half-time position, I haven't received professional assault response training which is supposed to be mandatory. Few others at the facility even have had this training.

And speaking of legislation, this government pushed through the creation of several integrated facilities, health centres, province-wide. They did not even stop to create standards Acts for such facilities. The only standards Acts are The Hospital Standards Act and the nursing home Act.

To make a long story short, are you . . .

The Speaker: — The hon. member's time has expired.

Moose Jaw Fifth in Canada's Job Creation

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about a week ago StatsCanada identified the 10 cities in Canada with the best job creation record in the past two years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, fifth in all of Canada, fifth in all of Canada, was the city of Moose Jaw, with a job creation record of 14.7 per cent. Fourteen point seven per cent, Mr. Speaker, which is three times — three times — the national average of 4.7 per cent. Mr. Speaker, like the rest of Saskatchewan, Moose Jaw is demonstrating leadership in job creation.

Mr. Speaker, how has this happened? It's happened through the presence of large retailers attracted to the Moose Jaw market. It's happened through a blossoming tourism industry, through a thriving small business community, through a thriving spa manufacturing community in our city. And it's happened, Mr. Speaker, in no small measure, through the strategic investments and partnerships between the city of Moose Jaw and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, just last week SaskTel announced another of these partnerships and investments in the Moose Jaw area. Mr. Speaker, \$5.9 million will be invested in network improvements in the SaskTel network to ensure that Moose Jaw and surrounding communities receive the most dependable, high-quality communication services.

Mr. Speaker, it is the result of these kinds of investments that Moose Jaw is fifth best in Canada in job creation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Layoffs

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while Saskatchewan endures yet another day of health crisis created by the Premier, and only the Premier, another chapter of that crisis is set to unfold this Thursday in Shaunavon. You see, even though the Premier finally admits he has a nursing shortage in Saskatchewan, the community of Shaunavon is about to lose four nurses and another 18 additional health care staff. The reason why, Mr. Speaker, is money.

Both the CEO (chief executive officer) and the Chair of this district said they are laying the nurses off because they have a deficit. Despite appeals for more funding from nurses, the community, the district, and myself, this government is saying no, nurses are not a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I guess it wasn't good enough for the Premier to lay off 600 nurses, destroy the collective bargaining process, and turn them into criminals; he now wants to lay off more nurses. While other provinces are begging for them, paying them more, this government is treating them like dirt, laying them off, and in doing so, permanently undermining quality care for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, as one local doctor put it, and I quote, "This is madness, not wellness." I urge the Premier to stop the madness before it is too late. As I said, the layoff date is this Thursday,

April 15. And if no action is taken by the Premier, his inaction will say everything that needs to be said to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Holocaust Remembrance Service

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the privilege of speaking at the annual Yom Ha Shoah service, the Holocaust memorial service in Saskatoon. It was a day to remember all who were lost needlessly and senselessly during the tragedy of the Holocaust. It was a day for mourning, a day to reflect on our past. But it was also a day to look to the future, a day to reinvigorate and renew our efforts to ensure that an atrocity such as the Holocaust is never permitted to happen again.

Although it is painful, we must continue to talk about the Holocaust. We must tell the stories of those who experienced its horrors so that we can teach young people about the danger of hatred and intolerance. That's why Yom Ha Shoah is so important as are other educational events, events such as the March of the Living, which allows future leaders in the Jewish community to visit sites where the Holocaust occurred.

I'm sure the March of the Living provides a very profound experience for these young people and that it teaches the lessons of tolerance, acceptance and peace in a way that nothing else possibly could. And those young people gave stunningly moving statements about the impact of that experience on their lives.

I'm reminded on the famous quotation by George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

We must do everything we can to remember the past so that we are never again condemned to repeat it. I'd ask all members to join me to commemorate this very solemn occasion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Elevator Closing in Tramping Lake

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, it was my privilege to visit a community in Saskatchewan that I had never been in before. It's a long ways out of my constituency; the community is entitled Tramping Lake

It's a pretty little place on a spring Sunday afternoon. Families raking grass and kids and dogs playing on the sidewalk. But the only elevator left is going down soon. The elevator belongs to the NDP's (New Democratic Party) friend, the Pool. The school, that still has K-12 this year, has only one more year to go and then due to NDP lack of funding, it will close.

Hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that this vibrant, caring, little community will soon be dead — dead thanks to this NDP government and its policy and its friends.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Nurses' Strike

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Well, Mr. Premier, now what? For eight years, you have systemically destroyed the health care system in Saskatchewan. In the last five days you have created the biggest health care crisis this province has ever seen. You have completely destroyed any working relationship you had left with Saskatchewan nurses. And now nurses are saying they would rather quit than go back to work for your government.

Mr. Premier, your health care system is on the verge of collapse. And what are you going to do now? Are you going to go back to the negotiating table and bargain or are you going to enforce your court injunction?

What are you going to do, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We intend to return to the bargaining table as soon as the SUN members return to the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in the province of Saskatchewan where we have to look at the future of this province in terms of its fiscal capacity. Because really where we are today has come about as a result of some decisions that were made in the 1980s that came home to roost in the 1990s, i.e., a \$15 billion debt and \$2 million a day on interest on the public debt.

Mr. Speaker, our province does not have the fiscal capacity to have a 22 per cent wage increase. We have the capacity to have a 7 per cent wage increase but we cannot afford the difference, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the most two-faced government this province has ever seen. Yesterday the Health minister sent nurses a letter. And she said, it's time to end the escalating course of bitterness and recriminations. She said, on behalf of our government I am offering to take that step. That was your commitment, Madam Minister, to end the recriminations.

Then this morning, in today's paper, we see a full page of ads vilifying the nurses and their position. You're running radio ads saying exactly the same thing. What complete hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker.

Madam Minister, your letter to nurses isn't worth the paper it's written on. Why did you write this phony letter when your real opinion appears in the newspaper and on the radio ads?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday the Premier of this province met with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses' representatives and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) for 11 hours. In fact I understand, Mr. Speaker, that there are some indications on the picket line that the Premier only met face to face for 15 minutes. I can assure the people of this province that the Premier met with the

representatives for more than 15 minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week this is what we offered. We offered a minimum of \$20 million or 8.6 per cent of payroll for pay equity to begin in 2001 — 2001. We offered a \$6 million recruitment and retention fund to be used by SUN and the government and SAHO to address issues of nursing recruitment and retention. And, Mr. Speaker, if we couldn't agree on how we use it, it would go to binding arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, the fiscal capacity of this province is such that we cannot afford a 22 per cent pay increase. What we can do is address nurses' issues at the bargaining table once they return to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we now hear SAHO and the NDP saying they're willing to listen. What a joke. You didn't listen in 1993 when you closed 52 hospitals. You didn't listen when you closed the Plains hospital. You didn't listen when you rammed through your back-to-work legislation, and SAHO didn't even listen to its own members when it decided to take the nurses to court.

Some health districts are saying they do not support the court injunction, but they weren't even consulted. The decision to go to court was rammed through by SAHO and the NDP without listening to anyone. And now you're saying you're going to listen.

Mr. Premier, you haven't listened to a single concern about the health care system in eight years. Why would anyone believe you, Mr. Premier, would you listen now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Let me just remind the member of some history. In the 1980s this province's spending was out of control. And that's why we're where we're at today. We had a \$15 billion deficit. And I remind the member that that was a Conservative member elected in '91 and 1995. That is who this party is, the party that got us to where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, this province was on the verge of bankruptcy. We came to office and there was a billion dollar deficit, Mr. Speaker. We had to act and we acted.

And for that, Mr. Speaker, there is no apology because we had to get the fiscal position of this province in order. The apology is that in acting, in taking this province back from the brink of disaster and bankruptcy, we didn't address the very real concerns of people in the workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we have just seen is a example of eight years of irresponsibility because not a single member on that side of the House will accept any responsibility for their actions.

Mr. Premier, it's time for this insanity to end. It's time to return to the bargaining table for real bargaining, not the kinds of

political games that you were playing last Wednesday when you were pretending to meet with the president of SUN.

Mr. Premier, nurses cannot bargain with a gun to their head. Will you admit that your political games over the past week have been a mistake? Withdraw the threats, withdraw the preconditions — go back to the bargaining table. Work out an agreement that addresses working conditions and treats nurses with respect.

Mr. Premier, immediately after question period we'll be moving an emergency motion calling for you to do exactly that. Will you support a return to the bargaining table?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I find it incredible. I find it incredible that this is the member that was elected as a Tory in '91 and a Tory in '95. This is the member that racked up \$15 billion on the debt — \$2 million each and every day that leaves this province to go to Toronto and New York and Zurich, 2 million. That's \$730 million.

Mr. Speaker, with \$730 million we could give the nurses every cent that they're demanding, but we're not in that position.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. Now the hon. members will recognize that the Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the answer being put by the minister . . . Order. And I ask for co-operation by members on both sides of the House.

While I'm on my feet, guests of the Assembly may not be aware of the long-standing tradition of parliamentary democracy, and rules of this Assembly as well, which do prohibit participation in proceedings of the House by guests of the House. And I will ask for co-operation of the guests of the House as well.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, \$2 million each and every day on the public debt going out of here. Now that's what people want. If people want us to go back to the '80s, Mr. Speaker, obviously that's what those people want. Well I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. I have not spent eight years of my life returning this province to a decent fiscal position to turn it over to people like those that got us here in the first place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Transfer of Patients Outside of Province

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have never yet taken responsibility for their actions in the last eight years. And they've never even admitted that they've raised the taxes in this province by \$1 billion in the last eight years. So start taking responsibility for your actions.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, nurses say you're playing politics with the lives of patients and their families. Dozens of patients are being airlifted to other provinces and to Minot. Meanwhile, nurses are saying this isn't even necessary because the nurses are on standby for essential services and they aren't being called.

Madam Minister, why is that? Is it your intent just to make nurses look bad? And is your government using false tactics to get public support? Why are families being told their loved ones must be airlifted out of the province while nurses waiting to provide essential services are not being called?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I understand the process, the decision whether or not a patient needs to be transferred to a facility outside of this province is left to the individual physicians who are making these decisions, Mr. Speaker. What's important to remember, Mr. Speaker, is that we do have essential services in some areas of care in this province. However, we do not have essential services on surgical wards and medical wards where we have people who are not critically ill, but people who are very ill, Mr. Speaker. And individual physicians, as I understand it, are making that decision to move these patients outside of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what we are being told is that the nurses are not being called and they are there to provide services. The government opposite is talking about a process. They'll use the process if it's favourable for them, otherwise they decide the process isn't necessary.

Madam Minister, I spoke with many nurses over the weekend. And they tell me that nurses are ready and willing to provide essential services but they're not being called. And you say this isn't the case. I guess that means you think nurses are lying. Or do you think you can't count on them when patients really need them?

I'd like to ask the associate minister, the former SUN president, which one is it? Are the nurses lying? Or do you think you can't count on nurses? Which one is it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I want to indicate to the people of this province is that a decision whether or not a patient is transferred out of this province is not made by any individual member sitting in the legislature. It is a decision made by a physician in a health district.

Mr. Speaker, I want to report to the public that the people that are being transferred outside of Saskatchewan are . . . The reasons they're being transferred is a decision made by an individual physician. It is not a decision that is being made by the Minister of Health who has no capacity — no capacity — Mr. Speaker, to make medical decisions. It is only the physicians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recruitment and Retention of Nurses

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is the land of opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for other jurisdictions looking to recruit our nurses. Mr. Speaker, this weekend our newspapers were awash in ads asking for nurses to move from Saskatchewan to other parts of Canada and the United States. Who can blame them, Mr. Speaker? Especially after the offensive advertising campaign launched by the NDP government which seriously miscalculated the damage done by its back-to-work legislation.

Mr. Speaker, would the Premier care to explain how his back-to-work legislation has helped nurse recruitment in this province? And does he expect the number of nurses to be lost to this province to other areas of the country is going to be hundreds, hundreds of thousands, millions — how many, Mr. Speaker? How many, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, what I want to report to the member is that the Government of Saskatchewan last Wednesday in a meeting with the president of SUN and the chief negotiator indicated that we were prepared to make a minimum commitment of 8.5 per cent of base payroll, or \$20 million to nurses in order to engage in the whole notion of pay equity, Mr. Speaker. That is a significant commitment by the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, what we cannot do — what we cannot do — is afford 22 per cent in this fiscal year or the next. Mr. Speaker, what we can do is move towards a position that the nurses are advancing over a period of time.

What we cannot do, Mr. Speaker, is to be held ransom for 22 per cent in this fiscal year. We have an \$8 million surplus, and we do not have the fiscal capacity to address the 22 per cent wage increase in this fiscal year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend at home people were asking me why doesn't the government take the money that they're wasting on their smear campaign against the nurses and actually give it to the nurses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Why aren't they spending the money that they're using to ship patients all over the world, so to speak, Mr. Speaker, why don't they take that and give to the nurses, Mr. Speaker?

Maybe the Minister of Health can ask us why she's wasting and blowing taxpayer's dollars in this province when we've got nurses out on strike who are asking for precious little and she won't budge an inch, Mr. Speaker?

Can the Minister of Health answer that question?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the people of this province want to know what is the situation for the government in terms of its fiscal capacity. What I can report to the citizens of this province is this, that we have an \$8 million surplus, that we pay \$730 million each year, this year, on interest on the public debt.

Mr. Speaker, we have three options: we can cave into the demands, the wage demands, of the nurses and we can increase your taxes; we can run a deficit, Mr. Speaker; or we can cut services.

We do not think the people of this province want to increase their taxes, they don't want their services cut anymore, and they don't want us to go back to the '80s when we racked up and racked up the debt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Negotiations with Nurses'

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Premier.

Nurses are committed to a cause, a principle, Mr. Speaker. They are not going back to work. They are defying what has been forced on them because they feel what they are doing is right for health care in Saskatchewan.

They want a health care system that treats workers fairly and recognizes what they're worth.

Mr. Premier, you alone have the power to end this. There are only two clear steps for you to take. You can either slap the nurses with huge fines, throw them in jail, or you can repeal your back-to-work legislation. The choices are clear, Mr. Premier. What is it? Are you going to slap them with fines, put them in jail; or repeal the Bill and allow the bargaining process to go on without your political gain, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the option is clear. What we have to do is to return to the bargaining table as the nurses return to work, Mr. Speaker. And at the bargaining table we will make this commitment — we will make the commitment to deal with nursing practice issues by ensuring that nurses have access to a binding process that ensures that they are meeting the standard of care that they want for their patients through the policies of management. That's point number one.

Point number two, Mr. Speaker, we will address the nurses' issues of seniority. They do not like their seniority clause and we will deal with that. We will make sure that permanent jobs are converted to full-time jobs in order that young people that want full-time jobs and nurses that want full-time jobs will get them.

Mr. Speaker, we make a minimum commitment of 8.6 per cent of payroll, or \$20 million, to begin pay equity. And, Mr. Speaker, we have a fund for \$6 million to recruit and retain nurses. And that fund, Mr. Speaker, nurses will make sure that they have input into that fund and we will agree to how that fund will be spent to make sure nurses stay here and come here, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the only way for the Premier to stop this province from exploding into an all-out labour war, and the only way to preserve the integrity of our health care system, is for the Premier to be a big man and admit he went too far.

He must repeal Bill 23 because section 7 states any provision in a new collective bargain agreement concluded between SAHO between SUN is void if it deals with any monetary issues. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, according to the Bill, no bargaining in good faith can ever take place as long as this Bill is enforced and you know it.

Therefore I once again ask the Premier, if you're serious about letting cooler heads prevail, if you're serious about ending this chaos you brought to the province, will you do what the Liberal caucus asked you to do last Friday, and repeal this Bill today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan and the country of Canada are governed by laws. They are laws that each and every one of us are supposed to abide by, Mr. Speaker. We cannot be put in any position where people avoid the law, Mr. Speaker. The law of the lands is important to the stability of any country and any province, Mr. Speaker. That is the democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is guilt everywhere. There is guilt in terms of the behaviour of these members in the 1980s because of the debt that they racked up. There is guilt because of the federal Liberals because they cut \$200 million to the province. And, Mr. Speaker, we did not respond to the individual concerns of people in the health sector in terms of their workplaces. We are all responsible.

And what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is to go back to the bargaining table, go back to the workplace, and let's get the best deal that nurses have ever had in the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is trying to scare the general . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the hon. member for Wood River.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is trying to scare the general public into believing that nurses are putting the lives of patients at risk. The NDP is misleading the public.

Nurses are saying that those nurses making themselves available for in-call are not being called in. ICU (intensive care unit) nurses are saying that they have never seen the ICU staffed so well, and as one nurse put it, they're tripping over themselves.

Nurses in Swift Current were in their uniforms out in front of the hospital waiting to go in to work. Nurses who have trained for years to provide health care would never put the life of a patient at risk, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister admit the NDP is fearmongering, and will they stop this fearmongering now and quit escalating the problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I am sure that every one of us has received calls to our constituency offices or calls to our homes personally where people are saying to us that their surgery for cancer has been cancelled or is on the verge of being cancelled.

Mr. Speaker, we have people, we have people in this province

that are waiting for urgent surgeries in order to address their very urgent health needs, Mr. Speaker. Those surgeries are not being performed in this province. The surgeries that are being performed are emergency medical procedures, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that in order to resume bargaining, in order to get the best deal that nurses in this province have ever seen, nurses need to return to the workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Negotiations with Service Employees' International Union

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, I just received a call from Tisdale, from the hospital there, and they indicated to me that plans are being made to move patients from the Melfort hospital to Tisdale in the event of an SEIU (Service Employees' International Union) strike. These plans were being made as late as this afternoon. Can you confirm that these plans are underway, and is an SEIU strike now imminent?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As people will know, SEIU has returned to negotiations with the assistance of a conciliator, Mr. Speaker. I understand that SEIU was meeting this morning with the employer and the conciliator, and I understand that those discussions are still in progress.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question again to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, if these negotiations are going along so well, why are these contingency plans being made at this last eleventh hour? Is indeed there the possibility of these negotiations breaking off? Is indeed there going to be a compounded problem in this province of an SEIU strike on top of the mess you've made of the SUN negotiations?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we're not ever going to be in the position that we were in on Wednesday evening, when we believed that the SUN negotiators were going to return and meet with the Premier. And, Mr. Speaker, they were . . . we left our meetings with SUN and the employer at 8 o'clock at night, and by 11:30 we were advised — even though they were to return the next morning at 8:30 — that they were calling a general strike, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, every health district has to ensure that they have contingency plans in order to ensure the public safety.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, how can you expect the SEIU negotiations to go well after the record you've demonstrated with your willingness to negotiate in good faith with the nurses? Why won't you take the stand of bargaining in good faith with all of the health care unions so this province gets out of the mess that your government and your Premier created?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, for the edification of the member, he may know that we do have a tentative agreement with SEIU, that negotiations are ongoing with . . . We do have a tentative agreement with CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) and we have ongoing discussions and negotiations

with SEIU.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that we can return to the bargaining table with the representatives of SUN and we believe that SUN can get the best collective agreement that they've ever had in their history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to rule 46, I seek leave of the Assembly to move a motion of urgent necessity.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Third Party requests leave to introduce a Bill under rule . . . or introduce a motion under rule 46. I'll ask him to very, very briefly describe why he believes that the business of the House should be set aside and then to concisely advise the House the motion he wishes to introduce.

MOTIONS UNDER RULE 46

Back-to-Work Legislation for Striking Nurses

Mr. Osika: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. By reading the intent of the motion I believe will advise and inform the members of its urgency and pressing necessity. Motion reads:

That this Assembly call upon the government to immediately restore a co-operative, positive environment for labour/employer relations for Saskatchewan nurses, which is today being destroyed as a result of NDP back-to-work legislation and inflammatory behaviour that is now seriously jeopardizing our health system by immediately, immediately repealing this flawed legislation or at the very least removing section 7(4)(c) and section 7(5) of the back-to-work legislation which prevent SUN and the employer from free collective bargaining on a monetary issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Leave not granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under rule 46 to present a matter of urgent and pressing necessity.

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Cannington requests to introduce a motion under rule 46. I'll . . . Order, order. Order. Order. Order. Order. The Chair asks for co-operation of members on both sides of the House. Order.

The hon. member for Cannington requests leave to introduce a rule 46 motion and I'll ask him to briefly advise the House why he believes the House should set aside the business and the nature of the motion he wishes to introduce.

Resumption of Collective Bargaining

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we know, we're entering the fifth day of a province-wide strike by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. We believe that it is very important that bargaining again start to take place to resolve this

issue and that it take place without any preconditions put on it.

I will read what the motion would say, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly urges the provincial government and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations to immediately begin collective bargaining once again with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and that these negotiations should come with no preconditions.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ward: — I table the answers to question no. 42.

The Speaker: — The answer to item no. 1, question 42, is tabled.

Mr. Ward: — Open and accountable, table to question no. 43.

The Speaker: — The answer to item no. 2, question no. 43, is provided.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 1

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that **Bill No. 1 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very honoured to be able to rise today in the Assembly to speak to the proposed amendment before us to The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Speaker, without saying, our children are our most vital and precious resource. It's got to be a parent's worst nightmare if any harm or danger comes to their children. And it is our duty as a society to ensure that our children are safe and kept away from the dangers that are a harsh reality in this day and age.

And it's sad but true, Mr. Speaker, that there are people in this world who would want to harm our children. And these predators must be reprimanded, and our kids kept out of harm's way. We in this House have the opportunity to help parents keep their children protected and to assist those children who do not have parenting.

Mr. Speaker, not every child is fortunate enough to grow up in a loving and functional environment. There are too many children in our province that are on the streets selling themselves, prostituting themselves, for a variety of reasons and this must come to a stop. It's very sad and very disconcerting, Mr. Speaker, to drive down the streets and see young teenagers

working the streets.

Mr. Speaker, our goals should be changed. Being a youth in our society is much too risky. The statistics reported of children living in poverty, suffering through child abuse, drug addictions, teen pregnancy, and violence literally numb the consciousness. The perils are so daunting. The solutions are so elusive that we as a nation appear unable to safeguard the well-being of our most vulnerable generation.

Mr. Speaker, the most at-risk youths are those who live in poverty and are in immediate danger of physical, emotional, and educational neglect. But the risk is not limited to the poor. Children of every economic, social, and racial group are growing up in Saskatchewan with little confidence in our institutions, in family security, in quality education, and attainable health care.

Youngsters must struggle to find adult models nowadays to guide their passage into the next generation of innovators and healers, teachers, leaders, parents, and neighbours. Many children have lost the opportunity to succeed and the impact is felt throughout our society.

It's crucial that we preserve the innocence of our children in these difficult times. Children confront life-threatening risks at an early age. And they hear about sexuality and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), violence and drugs from very unreliable sources. Therefore it is imperative that we as parents and grandparents take the responsibility upon ourselves, where it primarily belongs, to inform our youth of the hazards they potentially face in the real world.

In the amendments, Mr. Speaker, to The Child and Family Services Act, I have to say that I'm a little disappointed; because for a number of years I have brought forward the number of things, the important things, that need to be changed as far as legislation goes. We have absolutely no mention in the amendments of safe houses in this government's Bill. The legislation does not lend support either to communities or police in their efforts.

What I am happy about in these amendments, Mr. Speaker, is that the government has finally listened and put a provision in there, in the amendment, stating that a police officer can remove a child from a home without a warrant if they feel leaving the child will harm them further. It's important to note that this is what has been said over the past three years by a number of people and finally the government is listening.

But the Minister of Justice has mentioned that there would be intervention for young people at risk. The intervention the minister mentioned when presenting the legislation is not referring to on-the-street intervention by police; the minister's reference to intervention means placing children in foster homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, most of these children have been bounced from one foster home to another. They need to have immediate intervention on the street and provisions for ongoing specific healing treatment.

(1430)

Most of the government's Bill, as I mentioned, refers to children that are taken already out of abusive home situations. But there isn't any mention, any direct mention of children being able to be assisted off the streets and into healing programs, healing treatments, and immediate help.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken at length on this issue throughout the three years. And I would commend the government on at least putting a Bill forward and tabling this legislation because it means that there is an awareness that something must be done.

There's no doubt that the kind of intervention and the ongoing healing treatment for our young people would require a great deal of public money. However, it does not always have to be public money, Mr. Speaker, that would provide these services. I have had a number of private people and organizations speak to me about the possibility of that happening outside of taxpayers' money. Whether or not that can come to fruition is another story.

And one of the reasons I believe that the government of the day cannot and will not put forward the Bill that I presented is simply because of the overall cost. Our children certainly are worth it but at this time government has chosen not to do it. And so I would be pleased to be one of those referring this amendment in the present Bill to Committee of the Whole where I would be interested in speaking with the Minister of Justice further on it. Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is as the member for Humboldt just noted, encouraging that at least we are now taking this issue seriously; and of course as with everything it is the admission that there is a problem that is the start to any solution. I would say on behalf of my caucus that we know in the sex trade that there are always two sides. There are the buyers and the sellers. And if we wish to address this problem we have to look at both groups.

Now the province of Alberta on the one side of us has basically gone to the issue of rehabilitation of young people who are on the streets selling sex and how they can be dealt with to take them off the street and begin a rehabilitation program. We certainly have no quarrel with that, and I think that in all fairness all members of this House should acknowledge that it is the member for Humboldt who first placed this matter on the public agenda in the province of Saskatchewan.

However there is the other side of the equation too which we ought not to ignore, and interestingly enough, our other sister province of Manitoba has chosen to address the issue of the buyers of sex. And they have done it by amending the vehicles Act to provide for seizure of vehicles and then upon conviction those vehicles are sold and the proceeds from the sale of those vehicles is used for rehabilitation programs for prostitutes.

I think that is an interesting concept. It is one that is endorsed by the Liberal caucus and therefore my caucus will be placing an amendment to the vehicles Act on the order paper to accomplish that. And I think that . . . I see it not as an alternative to the suggestions of the government, or of the official opposition, but something that can work complimentary to it.

So I think that again I congratulate the member for Humboldt for putting this issue on the public agenda. I congratulate the government for responding and bringing forth this legislation. And I would in turn ask other parties and other members of this House to seriously consider the proposal that the Liberal caucus will be placing before this Assembly, namely that we look at the purchasers of sex to see how they can be deterred. And I encourage all members to consider this as another weapon in the battle against the street sex trade as opposed to an alternative and opposition to what the government or the official opposition is attempting to do.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would just conclude by saying that we are aware that one of the problems in dealing with prostitution as a criminal issue is that it has come to attract very small fines. And the criminal courts just don't seem to be the appropriate venue for dealing with a serious social problem. And certainly to arrest prostitutes and maybe fine them \$150 is simply had little impact on the sex trade.

However we know in the case of child support and other areas that driving privileges can oftentimes drive home a message much quicker than a small fine can. And it is for that reason that Manitoba has opted for seizure of vehicles for those who are using their cars for the purpose of picking up young prostitutes. And I think that's an interesting concept Manitoba has adopted, and the Liberal caucus is recommending that for this House and this province as well.

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

Bill No. 14

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 14 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, fewer subjects have raised the ire of people in Saskatchewan in the last few years as much as reassessment, and I believe it's caused many headaches for the government of the day, and for anyone, for that matter, that's been elected. It's caused problems all over the province.

The government states the changes in this Bill will improve the reassessment process and make assessments and appeals more equitable and effective across the province. And this, Mr. Speaker, is something I think that has been drastically needed. Just the equitable and effectiveness of . . . (inaudible) . . . of the appeals is going to help.

The government states changes reflect concerns appellants have raised in the past two years, and this is good to see. Any improvements are welcome since the reassessment of 1997 was a disaster. The government was ill-prepared and therefore got information out to assessors and municipalities extremely late.

Mr. Speaker, neither municipalities nor taxpayers should have to go through what they went through in 1997. Many people who have chosen to appeal their assessments have found appeals to the Municipal Board frustrating and difficult. The

rules are difficult to understand for the average person. And quite often deadlines or other technicalities were missed and people lost their right to appeal. This is not right.

With the appeal, people are facing a well-financed and well-lawyered barrage set up by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency). It is very difficult to fight your case under these circumstances when you're not a lawyer and cannot afford to hire one to deal with these matters. Will these changes make the process more fair? It does go some way, but I'm not sure it goes far enough, Mr. Speaker.

Mention should be made as well to property taxes in general. We now face the highest property taxes in Canada of any of the provinces. It only adds to the overall tax burden in Saskatchewan. This tax burden keeps people from coming to Saskatchewan and forces those who are here to leave. Taxes, Mr. Speaker, are killing us.

This does not mention the overall problem with school taxes and how they keep climbing as the government's commitment to education keeps falling. Property owners now pick up 60 per cent of the tab for education in this province, among the lower provincial government commitments in the country. This year's increase to education will barely cover the cost of the teachers' pay increase which the government negotiated with the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) last year.

And what happens now, Mr. Speaker? This is about half of what the SSTA needs to deal with the new money they need for their new budget. So once again we're going to see the mill rates increase in urban Saskatchewan and in rural Saskatchewan because of the downloading of the government and the shortfall in the money they've allotted for education.

Mr. Speaker, a potentially good change is the comparability of properties within neighbouring municipalities. Currently the Act limits requirements for comparability of the municipality itself. However, municipalities are often part of the larger jurisdiction such as school divisions where a common mill rate is levied. Therefore more comparability is needed among properties in different municipalities.

And I'm very glad to see this happen, Mr. Speaker. We've had occasion in my own community of Saltcoats, and I believe other communities, where this comparability would have helped the situation there.

Another requirement, Mr. Speaker, that is being introduced along with the above point is the requirement for equity among assessments within a school division. These two changes will not be in effect until the time of the next reassessment in 2001. The Act clarifies the method in which appellants serve notice of appeal of their assessment such as regular mail, registered mail, etc. The onus on meeting time limits remain on the appellant.

The current Act is silent on how these notices are to be delivered. Regular mail, registered mail, or personal delivery will be acceptable. Perhaps a good question would be why electronic delivery is not being addressed at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the changes will disallow municipal council or school board members from sitting on local or district boards of

revision to remove any perception of bias, and this is probably a good move, Mr. Speaker.

Changes will allow appellants with property and land in multiple jurisdictions to consolidate all appeals and bypass local board of revision process. And I also agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

Changes being made will allow appellants to take complex commercial and industrial appeals straight to the appeal board level since nearly all of them end up there anyway because of their complexity. This will be allowed only where there is local board of revision and municipality believe it . . . municipalities believe it to be prudent to do so.

Another requirement of skipping the initial stage is having assessed property of a certain amount, that the amount be set by regulations. And I guess the problem I have once again with that, Mr. Speaker, is we're putting decisions off to regulations can be brought in at a whim without any consultation from anyone.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe the three municipal Bills are very similar here and we will have many more questions in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that there are certainly some reforms here being proposed but we know that the mess created in this province by reassessment has resulted in very unnecessary ill feelings and a feeling of oppression of our property taxpayers, and a certain amount of backlash against education and against school boards which I find highly unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we have a relatively high tax load in Canada, but of course that is especially true in the area of property tax. We have the highest property tax in the country and that is a direct reflection, as the member from Saltcoats has pointed out, to the government's lack of commitment to education and therefore their lack of commitment to our province's young people.

They can take the credit for a drop in the sales tax, however, we are told that a direct result of this year's budget will be to trigger a further increase in the mill rate. And it seems to me that the cynical part of that bit of economics is that the government gets to take the credit for a reduction in tax in one area, but by further bleeding the school boards and forcing it up in the mill rate the net effect is we, as taxpayers in the province, are net losers, but the government is off the hook because they can say that the school boards did it and not them. So they can say they gave us a tax break and it's the fault of the school boards if in point of fact we end up, at the end of the day, with a tax increase not a tax decrease.

That said, there has been a lack of confidence in the appeal process and I'm hopeful that these amendments will restore some confidence in the essential fairness of the system. But we know what is really needed to restore confidence in our property tax system is to get back to the tradition of this province, the tradition which the Premier has promised, namely that 60 per cent of the cost of education will be borne by the province and 40 per cent by property owners. If we can get back

to that then I think most people would pay their property taxes with the feeling that it is a fair system.

(1445)

Instead of course, as the member for Saltcoats just alluded, the provincial average is now 60 per cent of the costs of education are borne by property owners. That is an unfair imposition especially on people such as our farmers.

And the other part of that scenario is that with rural municipalities 70 to 80 per cent of the taxes that rural municipality residents pay is for education purposes in many, many cases. When they see that up to 80 per cent of their taxes are going for school purposes, it unfortunately leads to a backlash against education. So I think that, say, if we want to make a declaration that education and young people are important to our future, the way to do it is to say the province will fund 60 per cent of education.

The other area of property taxation though that has not been addressed here and I think has to be is recreation property. One of the expanding areas of economy for our province has been the increasing trend of younger retired people to build their retirement homes in the lake districts of our province. As we know there has been a long-standing Saskatchewan tradition to retire out to the coast or elsewhere. That means that our more affluent retirees take their money with them when they retire.

So this new trend of young retirees building permanent homes in our beaches and lakes is a good one. It's good socially and it's good for our economy. And one of the areas this is happening is in the Jackfish and Murray Lake areas of my constituency. So we want to encourage this.

Now I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs is forever telling us that taxes are not related to services, that it is an *ad valorem* system. Nonetheless under reassessment those people who have permanent residences at the lake find themselves paying taxes equivalent to what they would be paying in a city, and those people have little or no services.

This is extremely discouraging, Mr. Speaker, when a property owner at the lake, who has to make his or her own arrangements for water, for sewage, for garbage pickup, and really a path for a road, and here they are paying taxes similar to what they would be paying in Saskatoon or Regina. This is very discouraging and this is not an incentive to encourage people to retire and build their retirement home at our lakes. So I would ask the government to take that very seriously and consider what could be done on that.

I would also say that again, the Minister of Municipal Affairs says it's not related to value and services, but it seems to me in a general sense all taxes have to be related to services. I mean why else do we pay taxes other than presumably to fund the public services we as a society have agreed we need. So to say that taxes aren't related to services seems to me a non sequitur. And in that regard, at the lakes — and I believe this is a problem in Saltcoats — we have something called a view tax, where people are expected to pay additional taxes because there is a very nice view out the front window.

Well our NDP government has given us many things over the years, Mr. Speaker, I concede. But I don't think, I don't think that even the Premier would take credit for the . . . the NDP for the Qu'Appelle Valley or for the lakes. The view has been provided by someone other than the Premier.

So I say in all seriousness is it fair to charge people taxes for a view that has not been provided by the government? It has been provided by a higher authority even than the NDP.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am in agreement with the general thrust of this Bill, but there is much, much more that has to be done to restore confidence in the property tax system and in our reassessment and appeals system, and I urge the government to look very seriously at some of the issues surrounding this. 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. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 13 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is very similar to the urban municipal Bill. Just a couple of notes I'd like to make on it and then we will let this Bill pass . . . pass on.

It brings forth the compatibility of assessment values, not only in single municipalities but in cases where there's larger jurisdictions. It clarifies how appeal notices are to be delivered and to whom. It removes RM councillors from local and district boards of revision to combat perceptions of bias. And that's probably a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

Changes will force SAMA to re-file assessment field sheets and assessment explanations prior to appeal process and make it easier for appellants to proceed with their arguments. And I think anything we can do, Mr. Speaker, to make it easier for appellants — increasing the amount of availability of information that they need for their appeal and to make it easier for them to receive that information — will be welcomed by all out there.

Changes clarify the use of recordings of board of revisions appeal hearings. Right now, Mr. Speaker, unless it is requested that hearings are recorded, the transcript recordings have no bearing before a Saskatchewan municipal board. This change states that if a recording is made it can be used at the board hearing.

Appellants with properties or lands in multiple jurisdictions, once again as the other Bill, will be allowed to have their appeal heard in one hearing by skipping over numerous local boards' revision. Complex commercial, and industrial cases can be taken straight to the appeal board or a local board of revision, and municipalities deem it to be prudent to do so. This is done because the local board does not have the expertise to deal with certain complex cases. And I agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Municipal Board will have the discretion to allow appeals to proceed even when appellants have made procedural mistakes. This recognizes that not all appellants have access to first-class legal advice. If rules are substantially followed, this appeal . . . where the appeal would not be thrown out for technical reasons, and I think this is a very common sense change, Mr. Speaker, because most appellants are not of legal mind or are not lawyers. So it would make it very, very . . . much more simple for them to do.

Like the urban municipal Act, this clarifies the use of tax tools by municipalities to deal with problems associated with applying school board mill rates, and it tries to deal with the problems where differing assessments through school division result in higher or lower rates than intended when municipalities apply the school portion to the overall mill rate. And this were to take effect for the current tax year.

Mr. Speaker, the member for North Battleford had touched on a very important issue that I feel and I would hope that the minister would also agree with, that we have to get, somewhere down the road, our tax base tied more to the services we receive than the property taxes themselves. I think we hear at rural conventions — and for that matter, SUMA, at urban conventions — that they continuously want the tax load taken off the property landowner and removed to some other avenue. And I believe one way of doing that would be to remove and . . . we pay taxes on the services we receive to a greater degree than we do now.

Mr. Speaker, that's really all I have to say at this point, so I would be happy to have this go to committee and have our other questions answered there.

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

Bill No. 12

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 12 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think these are many of the changes that we saw in the other two municipal Bills. And I understand and agree that obviously the North has many special problems and situations, but I believe these changes that were made in both the urban and rural and now in the northern municipal Act will help the people of northern Saskatchewan as they will help the people in the South.

So I think we agree with these changes and if we have some questions we can ask them in committee.

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

Bill No. 10

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 10 — The**

Boiler and Pressure Vessel Act, 1999 be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, The Boiler and Pressure Vessel Act, 1999. This is a very technical Bill. It can probably be dealt with better in the Committee of the Whole, but there's a few things we do need to say about it.

This rewrites the 1978 legislation, so it was probably, Mr. Speaker, time for an update. The minister stated that changes have been made in consultation with the industry. She didn't say whether the industry approved of the changes or not. We hope they were and we will be questioning that fact very closely in the Committee of the Whole.

The Bill puts in place a new legislative structure with new procedures for appeal and new boards — and that's not surprising because the NDP just loves new boards to appoint people to — and new licensing procedures for those who operate boilers or pressure vessels.

The new Act establishes the Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Board which will consist of up to 11 Saskatchewan residents appointed by cabinet. The qualifications for sitting on the board will be set out in regulations. Let's hope they will put names forward from the industry and not more NDP hacks sitting on the board collecting per diems and expenses.

Much of the technical data from the new Act had been removed from the Bill and then put into regulations. This, Mr. Speaker, is just the latest example of the government's move away from legislative changes into regulatory changes. This of course takes away from accountability for any future changes the government may decide to make without being brought to the legislature. And we definitely disapprove of that method of government.

This particular board will hear appeals of decisions made by the chief inspector. This appears to be a new right of appeal not contained in the old Act. The old power management board has been scrapped. We'll need to determine in committee how these two boards will operate differently and how the new system will be more effective.

The Bill also gives the chief inspector wide-ranging powers to cancel operating licences with little or no accountability to anyone. Boiler and pressure vessels will also be registered with the government with another prescribed fee attached. Why is both registration and licensing needed? One should be good enough. We'll want an explanation of that from committee.

Beyond the licence and registration requirements, an inspection certificate is still needed. Presumably another fee will be collected at the time of inspection. We'll have to ask how much in total this cost will be. We want to keep tabs, Mr. Speaker, on the hidden fees and charges the government imposes. After all it's only another form of tax.

Penalties and fines have also been changed. For an individual a maximum of \$2,000 to a fine of 5,000 plus a maximum \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. And for a corporation a maximum of 10,000 plus 2,000 for each day the offence continues. Second offences will see that the fees go still higher.

We'll need some clarification of this last point. How can a director of a corporation be prosecuted with contravening this Act when the corporation itself is not?

We do have several questions surrounding this Act. And we will be asking those questions in the Committee of the Whole where we would like to see this go. Thank you.

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

(1500)

Bill No. 8

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 8 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think mainly this Bill changes reassessment from the three-year cycle to a four-year cycle. This will have effect of delaying the next round of assessment till the year 2001 and I believe that's probably very important, Mr. Speaker. We support this move; and as many of the municipalities have been calling for this delay, I think to be much better prepared than we were last time around.

This Bill also clarifies SAMA's role as the body which implements assessment but does not set tax policy itself. I hope this means that the government will stop its practice of using SAMA as a political shield as we saw in 1997, and after, when the fallout from the reassessment was taking place. The Bill also gives government increased regulatory powers over SAMA in choosing the base date for which reassessment is based. This is a date in which all properties are valued to maintain consistency. The base date for the 1997 reassessment was '94. The government will now set this date through regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill will supposedly improve SAMA's accountability by requiring SAMA to put out projections of shifts in assessment from rule changes. The Bill also makes clear SAMA's responsibility for assessment by deleting all references to appeals and tax shift since they do not set tax policy, simply carry it out.

This Bill also makes it mandatory that SAMA consult all affected agencies such as municipalities and school boards before carrying out re-evaluations in preparation of assessment manuals. Once again, we can support this as long as the consultations that take place are meaningful and lead to good changes. The consultation process we've seen from the government up till now has been to talk to as many people and groups as they can, and then do what they felt they wanted to do in the first place, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, SAMA will no longer be able to suggest changes to appeal procedures. And this is seen as a conflict of interest in SAMA . . . must appear at appeals and defend its decisions.

The Bill authorizes regulations to set deadlines for getting information out to municipalities. We would prefer to see this right in the legislation. If it's anything like the last time, the

government will no doubt keep changing the deadline as they continually miss it.

We saw information get out to the municipalities much too late last time and this made the process much more difficult and painful, more painful than it had to be. Properties will have to be physically re-inspected every certain number of years, and that number to be set out in regulation.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have a problem with so much being left to regulation. We keep asking the question, why hide it in regulation? Why can we not put it in the Bill so people know what they're dealing with? That would be real accountability.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again we will have questions, but at this time I would let this pass to committee.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say on behalf of my caucus that the decision to delay the next reassessment by one year is a sound one and indeed probably a necessary one given the circumstances.

However, I do have this cautionary note that I think has to be sounded. We know that the main reason reassessment was such a painful process in this province a couple of years ago was because we had delayed it for so long. I believe it was 32 years that we had delayed reassessment. And the longer we delayed it, the more painful the process became. And the more difficult the problem looked, the more no one was prepared to touch it, and so consequently we went on for more than three decades without reassessment.

The principle now of rolling reassessment on a regular basis so that reassessments never get badly out of date is an extremely important one and is one that we can't lose sight of. If reassessment is done on a regular rolling basis, then presumably no one will find dramatic changes in their tax level as a result of reassessment. And that is crucial to restoring some stability in the system and restoring goodwill with those people who have to write the cheques.

So while I say the delay for one year is appropriate, I sincerely hope that that isn't the start of one year and then another year and then another year as happened after the last reassessment, until we ended up with 32 years between reassessment.

I realize, I realize members opposite do not think there's any urgency at getting to problems because they assume, they assume they will be sitting there for decades, and consequently they can deal with the serious problems of this province this year, next year, whenever. But, Mr. Speaker, I will just leave you with this parting thought.

As I go around my constituency, I would encourage ministers opposite: if they have anything pressing they want to do to solidify and finalize their political careers, if they have any monuments they wish to leave the province of Saskatchewan as their lasting contribution to the growth and development of their province, I suggest they do it sooner rather than later. 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. 17

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 17 — The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill allows greater flexibility for municipalities regarding where they have to advertise election notices. This expands types of publications but does not allow the use of strictly advertising papers or supplements.

I understand many local governments have been calling for this because of considerable expense that is involved in following the current legislation. Anything that cuts down on expenses for a municipality is welcomed by all.

The Bill also deals with the problems around school amalgamation which we'll probably see more and more of in future years. Under the changes, where two or more school boards are amalgamated, changes will waive requirement for school board elections in divisions which are restructuring and allow existing trustees to remain in office until a school division is officially disestablished. Existing school boards will remain in office until elections can be held.

While any time you delay an election it is a concern, but we can see reasons why this is the case of there's a need to have this in place. However, we see no reason to delay the provincial election in June, much different to what we're talking about here. We are anxious to take over, Mr. Speaker, as the people of Saskatchewan are also anxious for us to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, the same thing. We'll have questions in committee and I feel that they can be answered at that time.

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

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 3 — The Intestate Succession Amendment Act, 1999/Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les successions non testamentaires** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to speak to the proposed changes the government is making to The Intestate Succession Act. Mr. Speaker, it's advisable for people to make out a will. Having a will provides considerable advantages in that the person drawing up the will can determine the exact financial or property distribution to their heirs or to a charity.

However there are times when people do not make out a will and if no will has been made then the deceased's property will devolve according to intestacy rules. The Intestate Succession Act, Mr. Speaker, sets out the rules for distributing the assets of an estate when a person dies without having a will. When this

Act was first introduced in 1960, a preferential share went to the surviving spouse. When the Act was amended in 1978 to increase that preferential share, it did not clearly reflect the extent of entitlement to the preferential sharer.

And essentially, Mr. Speaker, what this amendment will do is clarify that a preferential share is to be at least \$10,000 to be given to the surviving spouse. And I am pleased to see that this government is addressing this issue in their proposed amendments, and I look forward to further discussion on this Bill in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 4

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 4 — The Securities Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is certainly not one of the most exciting pieces of legislation that I've ever read in my career, however it does do some modest movements in order to promote investment in Saskatchewan and therefore we think it has some redeeming features.

It really is something that would come as a surprise to absolutely no one that the NDP really don't understand how to encourage investment in this province with their high tax policy. Entrepreneurs and businesses just simply aren't willing to locate in this province.

The attitude of this government seems that they don't want to have anything new start here because they quite simply don't understand business. Frankly, we get the distinct impression that they view anyone suspiciously who wants to start something in this province who don't want government involvement as well. That's exactly why we think investment in this province has to be encouraged and we certainly will do everything that we can to encourage it.

We have to start with the taxation and regulatory system that makes businesses across this country, all across North America, ready, willing, and able to locate here free of the interference of this government. If we don't do that, we're going to continue to have the worst job record in this country and the only head offices that we have here are the family of Crown corporations. And we all know how everybody loves the Crowns.

This Bill, the government states that the changes being undertaken in this Bill are similar to changes that are being undertaken in all provinces. They come from recommendations put forward by an industry committee looking at the rules governing company takeovers and shareholders' right.

The term bid has been amended to mean both the bid of the company attempting a takeover, or the company which is the target of the takeover offering to buy back its own securities from shareholders.

(1515)

The takeover bid is commenced when an offer . . . by delivering the offer in a prescribed form to the shareholder of the target company. The minimum period for shareholders to respond to a bid has been raised from 21 to 35 days.

This Act also gives shareholders the right to withdraw their shares after initial acceptance in case a better offer comes along. Shareholders may withdraw shares at any time until the offerer takes up the securities. After take-up, they can still withdraw if an offerer hasn't paid them within three business days. The old Act referred to three calendar days so this extends the period slightly.

After a time period for takeover bids is set out in this Act, the new regulatory clause gives the government the power to set a time frame at anything it pleases. This would have been quite helpful to the government when Talisman tried to take over Wascana Energy. The government could have set the time frame as long as they wanted to.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of other minor alternations in the regulations envisaged by this Bill, and while we have a few specific questions, we'll be able to do that in Committee of the Whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 5

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 5 — The Municipal Hail Insurance Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is another Bill that moves much of the legislative authority into regulations. While we recognize some of these changes are requested, we continue to have a real problem with the amount of things that the government continues to move out of legislation and into regulations.

They like to avoid this legislature. And given their performance this session, I guess I can hardly blame them, Mr. Speaker.

The minister stated that the amendments in the Bill had been requested by Saskatchewan municipal hail association. So we recognize that the changes are probably warranted and will do nothing . . . we will do nothing to unduly hold them up. However, we will have some questions later on.

Under the current Act, two-thirds of voting delegates at the annual meeting can appropriate up to \$2 million from its reserves for the purpose of purchasing capital stock in a limited company. This amendment strikes out the \$2 million figure and puts the amounts into regulations. And again, Mr. Speaker, even though it may have been asked for, we really have concerns with that.

Currently when a claimant does not live within four miles of the crop for which the claim is being made, the notice of claim

must contain the name of someone who does live within four miles. This clause has been scraped, and that is a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

Under the current legislation, claims must be filed by October 15. This has been extended to October 31. And I also agree with that move.

Currently basic indemnities cannot exceed \$20 per acre. Subsequent indemnities cannot exceed \$80 per acre. These amounts are struck out and moved to regulations. I do believe that these amounts, Mr. Speaker, had to be looked at, although I'm not sure that the regulations is the place to put them. Maybe they should have been right in the legislation itself.

Regulatory authority is also being put in place defining any meaning in the Act, describing . . . (inaudible) . . . matter or thing required or authorized by this Act respecting any other matter or thing the cabinet considers necessary. And, Mr. Speaker, this is pretty wide-ranging regulatory authority.

Mr. Speaker, I might say at this time because we're speaking of a hail Act here, that probably being that grain prices the way they are, if the minister could probably legislate a hailstorm this summer, it'd probably . . . the minister would be doing a favour for every farmer out there.

Mr. Speaker, at this time we will let this also pass to committee and we'll have some questions to ask at that time.

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

Bill No. 18

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 18 — The Constitutional Questions Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 18, The Constitutional Questions Amendment Act, 1999 — another Bill of great import by this government.

This is a very important Bill since it deals with constitutional issues, Mr. Speaker. This Bill provides for an amendment to ensure that the office of the Attorney General of Saskatchewan has due notice of all constitutionally based matters before the courts in Saskatchewan.

The Bill also gives notice to the Attorney General pursuant to section 8(7) of the Act so a decision can be made whether it is appropriate for the Attorney General to appear on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

It is important to address the term "regulation" and "Act" and "law" in this Act. As a matter of fact, attorneys in Saskatchewan are ready to provide notice to the Attorney General's office on all constitutional matters.

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, basically strengthens the existing practices and ensures that the legally required notice is provided in a way that will ensure the constitutional interests of

Saskatchewan residents will remain protected. And any further questions on this particular issue, we'll deal with them in the Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 20 — The Business Corporations Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I see we're drawing to the end of a long list this afternoon of absolutely fascinating legislation that the government has proposed. Again, very routine in nature, very much a housekeeping legislation that will clean up some of the issues surrounding the business corporations and regulations surrounding the corporations.

It seems as if this legislation will indeed improve a number of the issues facing corporations in their communications with their shareholders in the way members of boards of directors are appointed, and being necessary for them to accept that appointment, which we hope goes some distance in terms of making board members more responsible for the issues surrounding the corporation.

Again from this side of the House it's very good to see that the NDP is providing some encouragement to business in Saskatchewan. Unfortunately it happens about as often as we see Halley's comet coming into view. So we certainly will support anything that allows this to happen.

Mr. Speaker, we have a few questions about the specifics on the Bill and we can ask them in Committee of the Whole.

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 Economic and Co-operative Development Vote 45

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce her officials please.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. On my left is Larry Spanner, the associate deputy minister. Behind him is Jocelyn Souliere, executive director. Beside her and behind me is Lynn Oliver, the chief information officer. Behind Bryon here is Darryl Kristjanson, the assistant deputy minister, acting assistant deputy minister, and next to me on the right is Bryon Burnett, assistant deputy minister.

Subvote (EC01)

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and good afternoon department officials. Welcome. I would like to cover

a few topics this afternoon.

And where I would like to start is instead of the general area of the Department of Economic Development, is I understand that your department has been assigned the responsibility for the issues surrounding the Y2K (Year 2000) issue.

Would the minister care to give us an overview of where your department is at in that regard?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, to the member opposite, we're very pleased to give you an overview of that.

As of June last year, 60 per cent of the departments and agency systems with direct impact on public services were Y2K compliant.

The Crown utilities — SaskTel, SaskPower, SaskEnergy — reported to the Crown Corporations Committee in November that they're nearing completion of Y2K preparedness plans. And you would know from the media that SaskPower was part of basically a dry run recently which worked and was effective.

So what we're doing is we're doing it across government. But we're also working in partnership with other governments. For example, the federal government has taken a major role in helping us work with the business community to ensure that they understand — particularly the small business community — the requirements here. And the federal government has a 1-800 number which I gather is being utilized quite a bit by people wanting information.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, you indicated I think from the figures that you quoted, some figures as old as last June and November. Do you have information that is more current in terms of the Y2K compliance of the departments?

(1530)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, to the member opposite. We've just completed the results of an IBM survey, which was what was released in June. So this will be an update, and that's going to be released very shortly. But what I can say is that you're going to see there's been a lot of significant progress since June.

I think of all the agencies that the average person worries about the most, it is SaskPower, because it obviously has the greatest impact on the whole province. And what's key there is that SaskPower has been working on this quite literally for years, I believe starting in '96. And I think what people should feel reassured about is that SaskPower's dry run was effective. That is the dry run said that the system will work in 2001 on that day that it matters most.

Mr. Gantefer: — Well, Madam Minister, I appreciate your assurance but I would like to indicate to you some information that I heard over the weekend in my constituency.

Apparently last week an electronic device situated at Tisdale failed, which set off a series of difficulties for SaskPower. The device I am led to believe is not Y2K compatible, is indeed only

scheduled for replacement later this fall.

The people that were in a position to be able to deal with that device were located in Saskatoon. It took them a significant amount of time to try to locate anybody that knew anything about it. When they did, they couldn't find someone that had a key for the lock in the gate to get to this device.

When they did do the alternations or resetting of the device, it triggered a problem at the substation at Beatty. When they tried to address that, it triggered a problem in Prince Albert. And so on a warm spring day a whole section of this province went black because of a device that I understand isn't Y2K compatible in Tisdale and potentially scheduled for replacement later this fall.

So, Madam Minister, I think it's just an indication of how vulnerable in an unsuspecting way the system can be when things go wrong. And I wonder if those kinds of things are being looked at in a thorough way. And I don't want to belabour it but I also want to make sure that you and your department are seriously looking into this issue.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I can say to the member opposite is this testing will be done in a more thorough way this summer; that is SaskPower will quite literally move the clocks forward and then there will be a complete trial run to test. And so that means if it's done this summer, there are several months in which any of the problems can be ironed out.

So I think what people in the province have to feel assured about is that SaskPower has been working on this quite literally for years. They are working not just within the province but with other agencies, and they are going through the process to begin testing the systems well before the event occurs to ensure that the bugs are ironed out and that by January 1, 2000 the system will be working.

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, I appreciate the fact that SaskPower is going to begin testing the system this summer, however, as the example I gave to you which happened last week indicates that it is required in order for the system to work, that there is going to be some physical equipment that needs to be replaced or upgraded to comply with the Y2K issue. And it would seem to me that that same issue is being faced by power corporations across the world, and if it's left until as late as this summer, there might be some serious issues of supply of some pieces of equipment that show up to be the weak point in the link if you like.

It seemed to me that from the reports I got of this incident, which didn't create a great hardship because of the time of year, is that it indicated to me that the system is only as reliable and only as strong as its weakest link; and potentially when you do this testing in the summertime, it may indicate some unforeseen weak spots in the system that may be very difficult to replace because other power corporations, other agencies of that nature, are going to be scrambling to buy those same components.

If the test of SaskPower that was conducted very recently . . . has that indicated and has it revealed some serious weaknesses in the system so that SaskPower is re-testing this summer?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well again to the member opposite, I don't think that SaskPower has anything to apologize for here. I think they have been out in front of this. They have worked on this issue since '96. They have begun the process of testing. They've had their consultations across the piece. And so that we have a few more months and a few more tests shouldn't be surprising to the member opposite. But I think SaskPower's record here has been exemplary.

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, I understand that you have within your department a subagency or an office that is dealing with the issue of the Y2K compliance. Do you have a coordinator that's responsible, or give . . . would you outline what personnel you've dedicated in your department to the Y2K compliance issue?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — To the member opposite, there's a Y2 committee that has been across government collecting information and also providing information. That's been in place for at least two years. Recently they've hired another person to help the coordination as we get into the final stretch, but the permanent committee has been in place for about two years.

Mr. Gantefer: — This individual that you indicate that has just recently been hired, would that be the coordinator that has overall responsibility for the committee?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well again to the member opposite, the main person doing the work has been in place for a couple of years; as we get to the final stretch another person has been added to help in the final coordination.

Mr. Gantefer: — So the individual responsible for the project, or for the coordination of this project has been in place recently or for the past two years?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — For two years.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, minister.

Minister, while I agree with you that Power is one of the areas that are very critical in terms of the Y2K compliance because it's going to have its major impact at the December 31-January 1 period and that's a very severe period weatherwise.

There are other Crowns that also will be critically important. It strikes me as that probably one of the highest technical corporations is SaskTel. Can you update us on the status with SaskTel?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Again to the member opposite. I want to explain more precisely the role that Economic Development plays here. We're just coordinating across government, providing information, and checking on the systems that exist.

If you want details, absolute, you know, precise details as to what's happening in the Crowns, you should ask CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). When they come in for their estimates, they can go through their details. Because we're not responsible for looking at the details that are occurring in different parts of government, except to say this:

the Crowns are in excellent shape. They have been working on this file for several years, they have been doing test runs, and we're very, very confident that the major utilities in the province will work very effectively in 2000.

But if you want to go into the details of what they've done, I would just recommend that CIC is the best place when they come because they'll have all the reports here. I just don't have all of that information beyond the general information that they have been working on it, they are doing test runs, and we're very confident that they're in good shape.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, one of the issues that ... I appreciate you saying that your department's responsibility is to coordinate the efforts interdepartmentally and between the Crown corporations and the departments. Can you outline for me please what the status is in terms of relationship with other agencies outside of this province both nationally and internationally that have potential impact on our agencies?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — To the member opposite, I mean this is I think one of the key things that the Crowns have done, not just work within the province but ensure the major hookups so the other agencies that they're going to have to hookup with are in the same mode as the Crowns.

But I would mention to the member opposite that the minister responsible for CIC has made it clear in written form to the opposition parties that if they want an update on where the Crowns are in terms of Y2K, the Crowns are quite willing to do this. So that information in detail is available to the opposition and to other interested parties and players in the province.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. This is the estimates for your agency which is co-ordinating this effort and I'm trying to ascertain how prepared and how aware of the preparedness that is in place that your department is. Let's move then more specifically to government agencies instead of the Crowns.

Another area that would be critically affected by the potential Y2K compliance issue is the Department of Health. Can you update me, please, on the status of the Department of Health and the health board's readiness for the Y2K compliance issue?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chair, just to make a point as to how this problem can get out of hand or can get misinterpreted, there is some information that I've just been handed about the power outage that you're talking about at Tisdale, and I'll just quote from the report:

The outage was caused by the failure of a current transformer at Tisdale. A current transformer is a device which monitors the flow of current through a line. It should be noted this failure is not related in any way to the Y2K issue.

So I just want to point that out to say that sometimes people can be overreacting too. If there's a problem they say it's a problem associated with Y2K. That one that you mentioned before was not associated with Y2K.

The Department of Health of course is part of the government's

efforts to become Y2K compliant, and I think if you note that the report that was released in June said the Department of Health is making significant progress. We have had requests from the health boards because they of course have to become Y2 compliant for assistance. And in the recent budget we provided financial assistance to the tune of I believe \$50 million to help them become Y2 compliant because they of course will have to do their own work. And that financial assistance I know is very welcomed by them so that they can ensure that their work proceeds quickly.

Mr. Gantefer: — In the coordinating role that you play, is it your job as well then to coordinate the actual implementation of this \$50 million expenditure so that indeed that you know if the expenditure has resulted in compliance with the Y2K issue?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — No, it will not be the responsibility of my department. It will be the Department of Health, and it's established a Y2K management forum to ensure that there is compliance and there is testing with the health districts involved.

The health districts of course are not part of government in a formal sense. They're not a line department and so my department will not have the jurisdiction. But the Department of Health has that issue under control because they have a forum which is doing this with the health boards. Now the health boards will have the funding and they will be doing their testing as well.

Mr. Gantefer: — So, Minister, you know I know your government always pretends that the health district boards are some arm's length organization when it's convenient for you. Are you telling me that the district health boards then are on their own? Or are they coordinating through the Department of Health?

(1545)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, they're coordinating through the Department of Health. So the Department of Health has its own forum dedicated to dealing with the Y2K issue with specific expertise in health. And they're dealing directly with the health boards which now have the financing in place, the \$50 million from the province to ensure that they can become Y2 compliant. So that is even more effective because, as I say, it's being very focused and it's being focused through the Department of Health.

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, in the estimates the whole Y2K coordination that your department is undertaking, would I find that under information technology office? Or what part of the estimates would indicate how much is being expended on your coordination?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, it is part of the information technology office.

Mr. Gantefer: — The number I see in that expense by type on page 35, as I read it, a million almost \$200,000. How much is that as related to this specific Y2K project?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Approximately one-third of it.

Mr. Gantefer: — So for something in the magnitude of \$400,000, you can tell me virtually nothing about the Crown corporations, nothing about the Department of Health, nothing about what is happening inter-agency. And I wonder if you feel that we've gotten good value for the \$400,000 we've expended.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. As you can imagine, none of the departments across government have expertise in this area. So we provide the expertise. We provide the information, the advice. We ask for the plans, and we ensure that the plans are effective plans, and we move them through the system.

Considering the size of government, I think that's a reasonable expenditure for a project of that magnitude that requires so much technical expertise in an area that we obviously have not encountered before.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. While we're on the information technology office, can you indicate to me what other projects are . . . that are being undertaken for the other two-thirds of the expenditures outlined?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I think the best answer, rather than getting into a technical answer, is to say it this way. All the information technology that the government had was scattered in different agencies and departments. So what's happened in the last cabinet shuffle was it was put under my department, under one agency.

And there are three main goals that we have. One is to work with the federal government and people in the private sector to make this province as computer literate as possible. So if we had a goal there, everybody's hooked up to the information highway right across the province.

Hugely important, particularly to rural Saskatchewan. Because if you're hooked up to the information highway, you can do business any place in this province. You don't have to be in a major centre. If you're properly hooked up, you can do business in Melfort just as easily as you can in Saskatoon or in some cases just as easily as you can in Toronto or Vancouver.

The second goal is to use information technology to make it easier for business to access government services, and we have a number of pilot projects that we've done through the Department of Justice for example. So now you can do a lot of the registration that's required for a business using electronic commerce. You don't have to go in and fill out the forms and put these things in the mail and mail them back and forth. You can go to a terminal and do it right there. So that's the second goal.

The third goal is, as we move into information technology and use it more and more throughout government, we want to ensure the economic development benefits are here, that they go as much as possible to local companies or that we bring in, if we bring in an external company — like SAIC (Science Applications International Corporation) has been brought into the province — they work in partnership with our local companies so we grow information technology companies. Because one of the fastest growing R&D (research and development) sectors of this economy is information

technology.

So this is hugely important to the future economy of Saskatchewan and particularly to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. There's a number of issues surrounding that. As I understand it then, your information technology office, would that provide coordination between programs that are initiated both inside of your government and government departments and the Crowns? Is there a coordination across the Crown corporation and the line departments?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Specifically to executive government. And as I say, let me take my example about a business in Saskatchewan. You can now in selected sites across the province — I believe it's about six — go and register your business using information technology.

That's just the beginning of the process from our point of view. Our goal is to get to the point where many of the government services can be accessed through a computer; that you don't have to come to a major centre, you don't have to mail, you don't have to fill out the forms.

So we are expanding across government with all agencies, as we can afford to, to ensure that each and every year there are more government services that are accessed just in that easy way rather than having to use the old standard ways.

And the other point is about access to computers and everything associated with information technology. Now the federal government has a lot of good programs there. So where they have the programs in place, we're just plugging in to their programs but working across governments so that people, again particularly people in rural areas, are as computer literate as they can be because that is going to be a huge advantage to them as we head into the next century.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, I maybe should ask some specifics and to see where I'm getting at. For example SaskTel is very much involved with the Internet, high speed Internet access in certain locations. When you're talking about information technology and you're implementing programs of accessibility to government through these programs — do you coordinate with SaskTel and their Internet and their technology programs — is what I was getting at when we talk about interdepartmental with Crown corporation agencies.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well I'm glad the member opposite has raised this issue, something we should be very proud of in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan I believe is the only province in which rural communities are accessing the Internet without long-distance charges. Two hundred and sixty communities are being hooked up with the assistance of SaskTel but also with the community access program.

So again there's a specific number on that goal to hook up rural communities to the Internet and to do it in a way where they're not paying long-distance charges so that they are in no sense at a competitive disadvantage.

Mr. Gantefer: — So Minister, as a specific question, is your

office of information technology coordinating those activities?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. In terms of this Internet, I think you said, computer literacy initiative that you're talking about. It would seem to me that computer literacy is an educational type of activity. Does your information technology office provide the coordination and course outlines or any things of that nature for SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) or the school system in terms of a vision of where we're heading and some suggested course agendas in order to meet that?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. No, obviously we don't have anything to do with the curriculum in the schools because that is a separate issue and we believe the schools are doing a very good job at teaching computer skills.

Where our department would be involved is initiatives like, recently through the community access program, one of the food banks in the province was hooked up to the Internet which means people who come into that food bank, who usually wouldn't have access to training on the Internet and computer skills, actually had it on-site. Now that one was a federal initiative which we just hooked into. But it's using the ways beyond the traditional education system to hook up people to the Internet. And people who are going to be hooked up through the regular education system, we leave that to the school system.

And as I say, I have kids in the school system. I think they're doing a very good job, but it's people who are not being hooked up through the traditional system.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I understand that the Department of Justice, for example, and Land Titles is moving towards more high-tech or technology-based title searches and things of that nature.

Do you have a role in coordinating those types of activities out of this office?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, we would give them advice. Again, that'll be done through the Department of Justice and through the budget of the Department of Justice.

But obviously because we have experts in IT (information technology), they'll come over and get our advice. And also we'll give them advice about tendering so that we can do our very best to ensure that Saskatchewan companies have the competitive advantage in the sense of they have the knowledge of what's coming and we try to form partnerships with other companies so that Saskatchewan businesses get the most benefit.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, you indicated that you would encourage Saskatchewan businesses to participate in this technological advancement. Do you have specific programs to encourage things like software development, hardware innovation, and technical kinds of things?

Can you outline for me, Minister, what programs you may have that would, in a practical way, encourage those issues?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, no, not directly. Again the Department of Economic and Co-operative Development does not directly provide that programming. Agencies like SaskTel would probably be more likely to move them in that direction. And there are some federal programs that come closer to doing what you're talking about although I don't even think they specifically do that. I think our goal here is to work with the agencies to make all of this happen but not to duplicate their efforts.

Mr. Gantefer: — So there are no programs that specifically encourage businesses to develop software or to make hardware innovations and grow that kind of business in Saskatchewan that would encourage a high-tech industry in Saskatchewan — is that what you're telling me?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we don't directly provide any programs of that kind. We don't provide grants. And I think in fact the public has told us, and the business community particularly has told us, they don't want the government in the business of providing and give me a grant to do this and give me a grant to do that. That's a lot of the '80s that got us into a lot of the debt problems.

But what we do, do, is we give them access to where the information is available. And on things like the land project through Justice, we will inform them about what's coming and what kinds of things they need to do to gear up for the tenders that will be coming down the line.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, does your department and this office provide guidance with other departments in terms of where they would purchase hardware and software for their department needs, or are they all left on their own?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — We have standard tendering processes through Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation that we use in government so that, you know, this is a common part of open tendering, whereby you say here's the requirements that we have and the companies come forward, put in their bids, and the bid that's the most competitive bid is the one that's chosen.

Mr. Gantefer: — In this bidding process for technological equipment, is there any consideration at all weighted or given to the accessibility for IT support in the event that systems fail? And is anything given in terms of a weighting towards local — by that I mean Saskatchewan — companies in that regard considering that information technology systems inevitably will have difficulties and will fail and the issue of serviceability and having technicians available at relative short notice may be an important and critical issue.

How do the criterias work in terms of considering technological support?

(1600)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, well as the member opposite would know, the rules governing interprovincial trade

really prevents provinces from saying, look, I'm only going to hire a Saskatchewan company here or I'm only going to give this to a Saskatchewan company. So you can't do that. And you shouldn't be able to do that — I mean either Canada is one country or it isn't.

So you can't just say we have a Saskatchewan preference policy. Quite frankly, I think it would be not smart for Saskatchewan to want us to have a Saskatchewan preference policy because Alberta would have an Alberta preference policy and Ontario would have an Ontario preference policy. And as a province of a million people — we're a small province — we'd like to have access to those bigger markets. So you can't do that.

But you can . . . The only criteria in awarding these contracts isn't just price — you know, it's the cheapest so therefore we're going to go with it. It's service too. Quality service. And so if in fact there is a company that's located here that can provide the service and the repair work and everything on a timely basis that obviously works in their favour. And so that . . . that is an important consideration in terms of awarding the contract.

So it's not just, you know, we go with the dirt cheapest. We go with the best value all around.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I would like to move to another area if I may. Minister, over the winter the Provincial Auditor made some reference and comments in a report indicating that he was concerned about the fact that provincial charities were not going to receive some of the funds out of the profits from the winding down of the immigrant investment fund.

Would the minister care to indicate why the policy of the department changed so that this money which was originally set up to be . . . any profits were initially set up to be turned to provincial charities, that the government reneged on this province as outlined as an issue of concern by the Provincial Auditor?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — This is not an agency run through this department. This is run through the Crown Investments Corporation. So we get into that when the Crown Investments Corporation is here.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister is your department responsible for the growth funds? Or is that also through the Crown Investments Corporation?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — That is as well through the Crown Investments Corporation.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. We will talk to those individuals at that time.

Madam Minister, in terms of this past winter as well there have been a number of issues raised in terms of I don't know if it was Christmas receptions or things of that nature and the cost of them, and articles quoted in a number of the provincial dailies.

And I wonder if you could outline what the cost of the Christmas networking gatherings that you hosted in, I believe,

Regina and Saskatoon?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I will say to the member opposite this is not in this year's budget, so it's not really technically a question to be answered here. But I have no problem in giving you the numbers because the numbers in the paper were wildly exaggerated as members opposite often do with numbers. The cost in Regina was \$6,020; the cost in Saskatoon was \$4,650 — 47 — not \$10,000 per reception and it was good value for the number of people invited and the number of people who attended.

I think what's important to understand here is that these are the only annual events in which — let's take Saskatoon — we bring together people from the downtown business community, the Innovation Place business community, the university, the co-op sector, and the local economic development authority. And I'll tell you, folks, I wouldn't have hooked myself up with Murray Mandryk when he did that story because they said when they came to the Saskatoon reception, which was after the initial story, they said those guys don't understand how you do business if they're actually criticizing this.

And I didn't tell him that it wasn't you folks as much as *The Leader-Post* and Murray Mandryk making up his own story. Because the key thing about doing business in the '90s and beyond is networking, bringing all the players together. And I think the member opposite knows that that's a difficult thing to do and if you have an annual event where they actually all come together and start looking at the next deal they're going to make, it's very important.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister, and while you may think it's very good value to spend \$10,000 on this networking concept, I think most business people would say just get a tax regime in this province that is favourable and a regulatory regime in this province that is favourable and that will do a lot more than hors d'oeuvres and networking.

Madam Minister, how many people attended these two receptions?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I don't have the actual . . . I don't have the final numbers here. I mean in fact, as I said, we're talking about next year's budget, even that was not really technically required to be answered here. I don't have the numbers but I can tell you this. We invited over a thousand, because what we invited was all the co-op boards, all the key players in the business community knowing that a lot of them would not be able to attend because of the time of the year.

But I do have to ask the members opposite for some answers. Are you saying that some of the things that you have on the record you wouldn't have any receptions for the business community, no networking? I'll tell you, I'll tell you, sir, they were not impressed when they came to the Saskatoon one. They say those guys really don't understand business. Are you sticking with what the member from Cannington said? He wouldn't go on trade commissions? If you guys were ever government you'd use the telephone.

Now I'll tell you, Ambassador Chrétien would be very impressed with that. He'd say that's right, Minister, you just

pick up that phone and you talk to me about the trade disputes, or you talk to me about the trade opportunities in Washington, and I'll answer your call. And I'll bring all those congressmen onto a conference call for you, Minister, because that's how you do business in the 21st century.

You know what folks? You said that when you use the telephone, yours has a crank, and you're still on the typewriters and on the horses and buggies with some of those comments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, your comments indicate to me, your comments, Minister, indicate exactly why Saskatchewan is dead last in job creation in this province. And when you talked about a horse, you know which end of the horse we represent on this government side — is you represent the end of the horse.

Unfortunately, Minister, there has to be a positive way of creative job creation in this province. And it means very clearly to me, Madam Minister, that what we have to do is forget about the cocktail circuit and the networking and provide real meaningful tax relief so that jobs can indeed be created.

Madam Minister, will you explain to me how this past year we've lost jobs where every single province in this country has created jobs?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well, Mr. Chairman, again let's put this into context. Between 1992 and 1997, Saskatchewan's economy was the fastest growing in all of Canada — 1997 we created record numbers of jobs. 1998 the economy slowed down, and I mean why listen to me as to why it slowed down. The Canada West Foundation said it's commodity prices, oil, and other agricultural commodity prices.

Sask Trends Monitor said the only thing wrong with Saskatchewan is low commodity prices. Despite that, our economy is continuing to grow and it's continuing to grow because our economy is more diversified.

I mean, you ask what have we done for job creation in this province? We have been working since we've been government on the Synchrotron project, the largest single scientific investment in Canadian history. Saskatchewan will have one of six third generation Synchrotrons that exist in the whole planet.

Now I'll tell you, you get that through networking. You get that through constant working with the key players to put together the deal. And you don't get that by saying, all we're . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well sure, I'll give Minister Goodale credit too. He does his networking as well. Sure, I have no problem sharing the credit.

You don't get that by saying all we have . . . I've seen your economic development plan. It's about like this — a blank page. It's we'll cut taxes, we'll bring in some regressive labour legislation, and we'll do something on the regulatory side.

I mean I think you folks are still looking on the map trying to find the information highway.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And it's

interesting to hear your comments that the reason that we have the Synchrotron project is cocktail parties. I think that a lot of people outside of this government have been working on that project.

And we certainly stood in this House, and will stand in this House and congratulate all of them, including whatever networking your department did in getting that project into Saskatoon because it is an extremely worthwhile and important project. And you will never hear anything in the negative sense in terms of the importance of that project to Saskatchewan from the official opposition.

The question is, is that you talk about 1991 to 1999 in terms of job creation. I recall that you were talking about something like 30,000 jobs. We're still some 6 or 8,000 jobs short of that over that decade.

And at the same time, Alberta is projecting for next year 34,000 jobs in a single year. How can you sit there and say that we're the only people affected by a bad economy? As I last understood it the price of wheat was the same in Alberta as it is in Saskatchewan. Can you tell me that the prices of oil are different in Alberta than they are in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Again, the member opposite . . . I still think that the idea of you calling yourselves the Alberta party makes sense. I don't really think the Saskatchewan Party suits you folks for a variety of reasons. But I do think that Alberta party might be your answer.

Now to put some facts on the table. It's a fact that the Saskatchewan economy is more dramatically affected by agriculture than any other economy in Canada — far more dramatically than Alberta, far more dramatically than Manitoba. It's a fact that relative to Manitoba particularly, but even Alberta, next to BC (British Columbia) on a per capita basis, we do the most trading with the Far East of the Prairie economies. That's a fact. And if I can find the quote from the Canada West Foundation, they make the point that it's almost unprecedented in Saskatchewan history to have all of our major commodities down at the same time.

You see what I don't understand about the members opposite — and I mean it seriously, we should call them the Manitoba Party or the Alberta Party — everything good happens somewhere else. Nothing good happens here. We have agencies outside of this province — Canada West Foundation — saying, gee, look across the piece, across the piece, all of their major commodities are on the downs and yet that economy is growing. Congratulations to Saskatchewan businesses for the diversification they're doing.

Because that economy — and they say it — 20 years ago, with the prices we have, the basic prices . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, you've got one simple answer — the basic prices that we have, that economy would be in recession. And it's not, and it's not because of the business and co-op leaders in this province and what they're doing. What I don't understand is why you won't take some pride in that too. We're quite proud of what the business and co-op leaders are doing here.

Mr. Gantefer: — Actually, Minister, we're doubly proud of

what the business and the co-op sector are doing in this province because we recognize that they're doing it in spite of you — in spite of you, in spite of the highest taxes or the second highest taxes in this country. They are succeeding in spite of that burden and it speaks to the Saskatchewan spirit and the entrepreneurial ingenuity of Saskatchewan companies.

So we have a great deal of admiration and respect for Saskatchewan businesses and Saskatchewan co-operatives because they're doing whatever they are in spite of the burden of carrying you and your high taxes on their backs at the same time.

Madam Minister, I would like to go a little further in the Synchrotron project and ask you if you would outline the funding arrangement for this project. I recognize that there are a number of partners that are committing funds to this. Could you outline the funding arrangement for this project?

(1615)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, just to take the member up on his comment. Just before I came to question period, I was at a lunch, a Regina business community lunch. Frank Proto — because it was public, the press was there — when he introduced me made comments about this government's record in economic development that I'd love to quote to you — I'm going to get them for you and quote them to you — about how pleased and impressed he is with our record in economic development, and how pleased and impressed he is with our ability to co-operate with the federal government — make things happen in this province. Now I'll bring more quotes for you if you want to get on to that theme.

This is a wonderful partnership. What makes the Synchrotron such a great partnership are the different agencies that are all working together here. The biggest financial contribution came from the Canada Foundation for Innovation which recently made the decision to put in \$56.4 million.

The next biggest contributor is the province of Saskatchewan which contributed \$25 million. The next biggest contributor after that is the Government of Canada which has contributed \$21 million.

The University of Saskatchewan has contributed \$7.3 million. The University of Western Ontario through in-kind contributions has \$4 million. The city of Saskatoon has contributed \$2.4 million. The University of Alberta and Western Ontario have contributed \$600,000 in upfront cash. National Research Council has contributed \$6.5 million; SaskPower, \$2 million.

And funding for the operation have been committed through the Medical Research Council and through NSERC (National Sciences and Engineering Research Council). So that's ongoing operating funding.

It's a wonderful partnership that has been put together by networking, by travelling, by bringing the partners together and working together.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, would you

mind giving me the name of the agency that put in the 56.4 — and I just missed that — and could you tell me the nature of that agency?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The Canada Foundation for Innovation is an agency that was created by the federal government but works entirely arm's-length from the federal government. And they have . . . they make R&D (research and development) investments in various categories.

Saskatchewan not only won the biggest single scientific investment in Canadian history, we also won a series of other smaller investments at the two universities which we have announced over a period of time.

So it's an agency that is committed to R&D, and we work in co-operation with them and cost-match funding on other projects as well.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I understand that I believe it's the National Research Council operates some light beam projects at a Synchrotron in the United States. Is there a financial commitment that you outlined, moving those projects to this Saskatoon Synchrotron, or is it money over and above that shift of research dollars?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — That's included in the \$4 million that I mentioned under the University of Western Ontario. There are beam lines in Madison which have been moved to . . . which are going to be moved to Saskatchewan.

And again I think it is a very important Canadian contribution. When the national . . . when NSERC said, okay we need a Synchrotron in Canada, it was like a competition: where's the best place to have a Synchrotron? The two final competitors were the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Western Ontario.

The University of Western Ontario lost the competition but they have been our biggest supporter. So that when we won it, they, instead of going away and saying, well you know, we're upset we didn't get it, we're going to try to do something to obstruct it or call for it to be reviewed, they actually came on side and supported it.

In fact every major university in Canada, with the exception of UBC (University of British Columbia), has supported this project.

And so I think it's an incredibly important example of how, if you put the effort in and you work at it, everybody can co-operate and make it happen.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, in terms of further opportunity for participation in the private sector for example, I would expect that perhaps the private sector might indeed initiate their own light beam experiments. Has there been any commitment at this stage for further ongoing participation by the private sector? And if there is, does that run into the operating cost rather than this initial capital commitment?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The private sector has been extremely supportive, particularly in terms of writing to the CFI

(Canada Foundation for Innovation) and saying, look, we support this concept, and when the beam lines are up for grabs, we're going to be participating.

The problem in getting the private sector to put their money on the table was twofold. It was a speculative project and it's not going to be on stream for four years. But once it's there, they certainly will be paying user fees to access the beam lines. And some of the bigger companies will probably be working to purchase a beam line, just as NRC (National Research Council of Canada) and some of the science agencies have purchased a beam line.

Just to give you an example of the kind of potential that I believe this holds for this province . . . is one of the biggest agencies supporting the Synchrotron is PMAC, Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada. So they use Synchrotrons but they have to travel way outside of Canada to use Synchrotrons.

In Saskatoon we already have expertise in agricultural biotechnology which companies like VIDO are taking from the plant side to the animal side to the human side of health. We have excellent research at the College of Pharmacy and research at the College of Medicine. The next wing of Innovation Place may very well be pharmaceuticals. Also the federal government has targeted pharmaceuticals as an area where they're going to put new funds.

So what this Synchrotron allows us to do is to build on our existing strengths and through the pharmaceutical companies, instead of just coming to use the Synchrotron, our pitch to them will be everything else we have here to help you with your research, you should be locating here, at least part of your office. And hopefully, eventually manufacturing some of the drugs right out of this province.

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, in terms of the light beams that can be taken off from the Synchrotron, when this was announced there was some technical information that came out and it seemed to indicate that there was a certain number of these light beam experiments that could be set up in conjunction with this Synchrotron.

Do you have the information in terms of how many of these independent light beam experiment locations can be set up with the proposed Synchrotron?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The initial \$174 million will give you 12 beam lines, that's the initial phase one, so that it can accommodate up to 50 beam lines. So I think the key thing is to get the 70 . . . get the original 12 up and running, and then from there it'll go on the basis of demand.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, how many of the initial 12 beam lines that are being proposed are spoken for, if you like, or are there commitments to purchase?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — We already have full funding in place for six beam lines and this is mainly through the basic science agencies, so the other six will either be private sector or an increasing commitment through the funding agencies.

The other thing too I want to say about the funding agencies, not only do they provide operating funding for the beam lines, they're actually backfilling it on the other end. Researchers will have to pay fees to access the beam lines. They're increasing their grants to researchers so that the researchers can pay the fees for the beam lines. So they're assisting on both ends here.

Mr. Gantefer: — In terms of the operation of this facility, is it the kind of facility that starts up in the morning and initiates these beam lines and they run all day or 24 hours a day, or can you give me some indication of the normal working environment that this is going to take place in?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well to the member opposite, I'm not a scientist but I've talked extensively with Dennis Skopik who of course is the professor of physics who is the architect of this. It'll run for 24 hours a day.

And in terms of scope it'll be about the size of a football field when it's finally constructed. So it will be even visually something quite incredible just to look at. But it will operate 24 hours a day.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, I was leading towards the technical staff and the permanent jobs that are going to be created in order to operate it. Could you please outline for me if you could the jobs that are going to be there on a permanent basis to operate this Synchrotron on a 24-hour basis and also what the expected jobs are that are going to be initiated by the companies that operate the individual 12 beam lines.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — It will require 200 people to actually operate the facility. But this to me . . . like the 200 people operating the facility, those obviously will be highly skilled, highly paid jobs, very attractive jobs. But they're just the tip of the iceberg. Where the real benefits will come will be the sorts of researchers and companies who will come to this province to do that research and to see what else we have to offer in the province.

And I guess what I've learned from bringing companies . . . I had a dinner just last week with Dow Elanco, a major American company making a \$10 million investment in the Plant Biotech Institute in Saskatoon. When they come here, they're absolutely amazed at what we have to offer. Their image of Saskatchewan from whatever part of the world they've come from — and they're coming from the United States, Germany, France, Belgium, all across the world — and locating here, not just coming to visit, but actually putting down offices and making investments.

The key will be . . . the Synchrotron will bring more and more of them here. And when they come, they're incredibly impressed with what we have so that there will be other synergies that will result from this.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. In terms of the ongoing operating funding for this project, is it going to be funded through the University of Saskatchewan? And if it is, how will the funds flow to the university? Will there be some from your department or from Post-Secondary Education, and indeed private industry? Or how does the ongoing operating funding mechanism operate?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — There is, I've said to the member opposite before in this House; it is the University of Saskatchewan that's the recipient of the award. And as a . . . I still think of myself as a current professor at the University of Saskatchewan. Governments can sit here and argue about we put in this money, we put in that money. Without the professors there would have been nothing to put the money in, so they created the knowledge and they will be . . . they will house the facility and they will be the main recipient.

Now in terms of the way the funding is distributed and how the facility operates on a day-to-day basis, it will be done by a board and the board will include the key participants; so there'll be federal, there'll be provincial, there'll be university, and there will be the science agencies.

Mr. Gantefer: — So will the funding stream through those key agencies as well — and the operating costs — so that if the province of Saskatchewan is contributing 20 per cent of the capital cost, is it expected that the province of Saskatchewan will contribute 20 per cent of the operating cost?

What I was trying to get at is how is the operating cost on a long-term basis being organized if it's coming through the University of Saskatchewan. Will the university require additional funds in order for it to make its commitments is where I was asking, Minister.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — No. In fact you would know one of the key issues on campus is that none of the core funding would go into the Synchrotron, which it doesn't.

The funding won't come from the province either. The operating funding will come from NSERC, which is providing almost \$5 million operating, the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) through a separate agency but not through their core funding; and National Research Council is providing \$2 million in operating funding, Medical Research Council is providing 1 million, and the rest will be user fees.

So I think what is so good about this partnership is the government's put in the capital but it's the science agencies across Canada, all of Canada's major science agencies, that have come forward and said we'll provide the operating funding.

(1630)

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I have other issues that I would like to discuss with you but I would like to defer to my colleague who has some questions at this time.

Mr. Hillson: — I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister and to the member for Melfort-Tisdale, I did want to ask some questions on Synchrotron before he moved on to other issues.

And of course, as the minister has pointed out, this is one really and truly good news story in the province. Well at the risk of being accused of being one of those gloom-and-doomers, I'm not sure we've had as many good news stories as what members opposite would lead us to believe. I'm not sure that I share their enthusiasm for the fact that our job creation is now slower than

that of Newfoundland. But in any event, I'll leave that aside. We have a good news story and let's make the most of it.

And part of the good news is that, as I understand it, we are likely to have the only Synchrotron in Canada for probably a generation. It is now . . . of course it will be the only instrument of its kind in the country. And I wonder if the minister could answer me: am I correct that there is unlikely to be another one in Canada in the foreseeable future?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I want to answer that question. But I want to set the record straight here.

You know to say that Saskatchewan has a worse job creation record than Newfoundland, I think illustrates the nature of the problem we're talking about.

What the members opposite do is they pick the lowest part of the trough that we've had here in the last five or six years and they say, my God, here was a time in which Newfoundland actually created more jobs.

There isn't an economist in this country that would say the fundamentals of the economy of Newfoundland are stronger than the fundamentals of the economy of Saskatchewan. What they're saying is that the fundamentals of this economy are very strong, very strong in the long term.

And so I mean I want to set that straight because . . . And you know what's amazing? I want to just go on about this for a minute because they're both on the same wavelength. You get out there with the business community. And you don't have to get out there — let's look at some of the headlines.

They're not into your gloom and doom. They're saying things are going well, "Chamber survey reveals business optimism for 1999", "Job Growth Tops", "Regina job market makes one proud." I mean the business people of this province and the co-op leaders are not into the doom and gloom. They say, we're optimistic about the future.

Conference Board of Canada, the most respected of the forecasting agencies says, what's going to happen in 1999? Saskatchewan is going to grow by 2.1 per cent — higher than Alberta at 1.5.

So I mean you can peddle the idea that we should be ashamed of what we've done in this province. We're not ashamed of it. We think we're doing very, very well despite all of the problems.

Now to answer your question on the Synchrotron. Yes, this will be the only Synchrotron in Canada for the foreseeable future. I don't think the Government of Canada is going to make another \$174 million dollar investment in the near future.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes. And you mention that one of the major applications will be in pharmaceuticals. And we know that part of encouraging research and development in this country was apparently the extended patent protection, which does cost consumers and also governments through the drug plan, increased expenditures.

And I wonder if the minister would comment if that in fact is the quid pro quo here of having pharmaceutical research and development to accept extended patent protection. Is that really what's going on in the debate?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — No, it's not part of the debate at all.

In fact, when I was meeting the other night with one of the . . . the company I was talking about, the big American company investing \$10 million, they said by far the most attractive places for an R&D company to locate right now in Canada is Quebec and Saskatchewan. And it's the most business-friendly environment.

And they related . . . they talked specifically about the issues you folks supposedly talk about all the time — taxes. They said, you have a 15 per cent R&D tax credit. You and Quebec have the lowest manufacturing and processing taxes for companies of any provinces in Canada.

It's the . . . (inaudible) . . . the fact that our tax regime — that word isn't coming easily — our tax regimes for these companies are the lowest in Canada. And I'm amazed as I sit here question period after question period, we have high taxes, we have high taxes. I wish you'd talk to some of the companies that are moving in. They're talking about our tax regime as one of the reasons they're moving in, if you're a manufacturer, if you're a processor. So that's the attractiveness.

My other point, though, was what we have here already in Saskatchewan in terms of this province created the first genetically engineered crop, the first genetically engineered animal vaccines. This research is now being translated into the human fields. We have a College of Pharmacy which does world-class research.

When you put all that together and the fact that the pharmaceutical industry is interested in the Synchrotron, the Synchrotron is going to be just another hook for another wing on Innovation Place with companies like pharmaceutical companies in there. And they're already talking to us about moving in.

Mr. Hillson: — I do have some more questions on Synchrotron, but before I get to that I would encourage the minister . . . I have never wanted to classify myself as one of the "gloom-and-doomers." And I think in my personal life, too, I'm not a pessimist. If anything, I've probably erred on the other side and I think I've sort of gone through life with rose-tinted glasses.

But there are some gloom-and-doomers out there, and the newspaper in your hometown is one of the prime offenders that I think the minister will want to be going after. There's a Gord Brock, who . . .

An Hon. Member: — A doom-and-gloomer.

Mr. Hillson: — Oh, a terrible one. Big headlines: "Job numbers slump." And according to him, Saskatchewan down; New Brunswick up by 6 per cent; Newfoundland up by 5.4 per cent; Manitoba up by 1.6 per cent; Alberta up by 3.9 per cent. And I have to check how much Ontario and Quebec are up. Only one

negative in the entire column and that happens to be us.

So I would suggest, Madame Minister . . . You don't have to convince me. I'm an optimist. I'm big on this province's future; I believe in Saskatchewan's future. But this Gord Brock is someone you better get on to and you better give him a real talking-to because he's one of those gloom-and-doomers that you don't like.

Anyway, Madam Minister, back to the Synchrotron. The industrial future of our province, I think all members would agree, has to be in value-added agriculture more than anything else if our future will be in value added for our primary products, especially our agricultural products. And I would like you to kindly tell us what the agriculture implications are for the Synchrotron project.

I understand that's one of the reasons that Saskatchewan was able to land this project and that genetic-based research of seeds and value-added agriculture is indeed one of the major applications that the Synchrotron would have. And I would appreciate receiving some information from you on that point.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well I would say to the member opposite the future of this province depends on value-added agriculture but it depends on a heck of lot more than that — a lot more value added than just agriculture.

In fact before this year is out there were going to be major announcements by this government in a value-added sector that I've yet to hear one member on that side of the House even say. They don't even know what the sector is — they have never heard of it I'm sure.

An Hon. Member: — Say what it is.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — No, I don't think I will.

The reason we got the Synchrotron is simple — because of the quality of the physics department at the University of Saskatchewan. Because those people were able to create the model for a Canadian Synchrotron and their model was the best in all of Canada.

Now all of the rest of this helped feed into perhaps the benefits, but in terms of the decision, it had in truth nothing to do with what we have elsewhere in the economy. It had to do with the professors at the department of physics at the University of Saskatchewan having a world-class physics department that could create a model for a Synchrotron that was better than anybody else's. And every university in . . . every major university in Canada couldn't do better.

Now in terms of what we're doing in value added, I guess my argument to the member opposite would be, we have to do value-added everywhere; not just in agriculture but in all of the sectors of our economy. We have to say we're not shipping out raw products in the future; that's not our first choice. Some of it obviously will continue, but increasingly we're going to ship out finished products.

And that's occurring in the province. And that's one of the reasons, despite commodity prices that 20 years ago, as the

Canada West Foundation said, 20 years ago these commodity prices would have meant a recession in Saskatchewan, we are continuing to grow. Because we are doing more value added, more processing, more manufacturing.

Mr. Hillson: — Perhaps it is my fault, Mr. Chairman, for having rambled in asking the question, so I won't be critical. But I would like the minister to address us and tell us: what specifically are the Synchrotron's applications to agriculture, genetic-based seed research, and to value-added agriculture?

I understand that this will be one of the most important things in seed research and development of new varieties, and I would like to hear what you understand the potential is in that area. And when I asked the question, I didn't mean to demean the efforts of any . . . in any other area to strengthen the provincial economy.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — No, you didn't, and I know that you didn't, and I didn't mean to suggest you were. All I was saying is that we've got to get beyond just value added in agriculture; you have to have value added across the piece. I know you weren't being critical.

I think probably the best way to answer your question . . . I'm not a scientist, but I know Dennis Skopik, the man, the architect of the Synchrotron quite well. And I said to Dennis, I said: how do I explain to farmers what the Synchrotron is going to do for them? Because, you know, you can do all your technical designs but that's not going to help me.

And he said, okay, try this explanation. Right now in the Arctic there are fish swimming around that should freeze in the winter, but they don't. Fish that should freeze because of the temperatures. They don't freeze because they have a genetic structure that prevents them from freezing. What this Synchrotron will allow us to do is to basically take that genetic structure that exists in a fish, transplant that genetic structure into wheat or other products or other agricultural products so that you can actually move toward frost-resistant wheat. And you can create crops that will be resistant to frost by taking the genetic structure out of other organisms that are resistant to freezing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's indeed very interesting and the economic applications are obvious. But I then have to ask the question that I think there is increasing concern . . . I think there is increasing concern in the agricultural community though that the new patent protections being offered to seed manufacturers is ongoing and permanent. In times past when a new variety was developed it came on the market and the first seed of course would have to be purchased but after that it was owned.

And as you know, we seem to have a development which has, I think, potentially sinister applications where either the seed will always be owned by the company, never owned by the farmer. Or we're also hearing of the seed varieties will be specially treated to be sterile, so that some of these new varieties you are speaking of with the tremendous scientific advances will be sterile and cannot be . . . it can never be used for next year's

production.

So I'm wondering, first — I have two questions here — first of all, in view of the heavy government investment, the heavy public investment in the Synchrotron, what can you tell us as to who will own these new varieties?

Will the new varieties be in someways, as I understand Marquis seed was nearly a hundred years ago now, in the public domain or will they be owned by companies? And if they are owned by companies, will it be a case that the first generation has to be purchased by the farmer or will it be a case where the seed will have to be purchased each and every year by the farmer and will never become the property of the producer?

(1645)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite is talking about the terminator gene, as it is called in scientific circles. I think that has to be taken as a separate issue. As an agricultural province we obviously have to look at issues like the terminator gene.

But the question that you have to ask, have to ask the member opposite is, just because we share farmers' concerns about the implications of something like the terminator gene doesn't mean to say well therefore we're not going to do any of this research in this province. Because a very, very, very, very small percentage of the research done here would have anything to do with the terminator gene anyway, but it's going to be done somewhere.

So I think that we can as a province say we're concerned; we want to look into the terminator gene and what it means in the long term. But it doesn't mean that you back out of this sort of research.

In terms of the research, the people who own the research are the people who pay for it. So if they come and they own a beam line and they do their research, they'll obviously own the product. We can't own the product when they pay for the research. And people who come and use the Synchrotron, the private companies, will be paying for the research.

Mr. Hillson: — I agree with the answer the minister has given, Mr. Chairman, but I wonder if . . . Does the government of Saskatchewan have a policy? Have we formulated a policy on ongoing and continuing ownership of seed as opposed to purchase of first-generation seeds when, say a chemical-resistant seed or you've mentioned a frost-resistant seed . . . If it will be owned by the company developing paying for the research, will it be the first-generation seed that will have to be purchased or will it be seed that will forever and ever be owned by the research company?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I think you'll want to get into that in more detail when the Minister of Agriculture is here. But simply put, it's the federal government that will decide legislation in terms of patent rights.

And again I go back to my point — the government doesn't pay for any of this research being done. Even take Innovation Place — all we are really there is the landlord. We build the facility,

we rent it out, we recover our cost. So the people who do the research there, they own the research cause they're the ones who pay for it. And it will be a similar principle here on the Synchrotron. When we develop it to the point that the private companies are coming in, they're going to be paying fees to cover the cost, the total cost of the research. So of course they're going to own the research.

Mr. Hillson: — The construction phase of the project, is this something that can be done by Saskatchewan companies and Saskatchewan workers? I mean, I understand it would be tendered but my question is, do we in fact have the expertise to bid on and work on this project or is it something that we will have to rely largely on outsiders to get constructed?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — There are obviously a lot of opportunities for Saskatchewan companies to participate in this project, and we will maximize them. I know that what we need to start doing. I met on Friday with the president of the Medical Research Council of Canada and he was urging me to go to Japan to look at their Synchrotron and how they constructed it so that we get some first-hand experience on how to do this. But obviously our goal will be to maximize the local input and to do the best job we can to learn from other countries that have gone through the process of building one.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I understand the point that the operating expenses, after construction, will be self-financing through those companies which are using the facility. But is there an agreement in place for cost sharing any potential deficits in operating? Has the Government of Canada made an ongoing commitment for operating beyond construction phase should that become necessary?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I think the key part is that the province is not involved at all in the operating costs of the facility, so it's the other agencies that would pick it up. But I think what has to be emphasized here is what the process was.

Two years ago the province agreed, along with the federal government, to establish something called the collaborative committee which was chaired by Bernard Michel, the president of Cameco. And this committee took at least two years to verify the costs so they had all kinds of consultants' reports done. They had engineers in; they went through the thing with a fine-toothed comb because we had the bad experience in this province of megaprojects that supposedly were going to cost X dollars and turned out costing Y dollars.

Bernard Michel and his committee of experts went through the costing of this project for the two governments with a fine-tooth comb and reassured us that the costs that we put forward are the costs that will be delivered. So we are not anticipating cost overruns.

But in terms of the operations, we're not even a player in terms of the operations, so any of the issues would have to be dealt with, with the science agencies.

Mr. Hillson: — Well, and again, I don't want to be pessimistic of what is one of the best stories to come out of this province in a very long time, and it's something we should all be celebrating rather than complaining about — and I certainly

don't want to do that. But when you say agencies, Madam Minister, is it not correct that one of those agencies is the university which, in effect, is the province?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The main agencies that are doing the operating funding are federal agencies. The main operating funders are NSERC, National Science and Engineering Research Council; MRC, the Medical Research Council; NRC, the National Research Council which are funded by the federal government exclusively. So they are the main agencies that are providing the operating funding. So it's the federal government that in that sense has lined up.

And some of them have told us, by the way — and I don't want to be too specific — their level of operating funding right now is their minimal. They probably will gear it up to . . . they want to put more money in. Because all the talk about industry takes away from the point that the key people using the Synchrotron will be researchers. And so the scientific agencies have the biggest vested interest in ensuring that this project goes, and that it goes as quickly and as effectively as possible.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I just want to thank the minister for her answers on Synchrotron. I think it is obvious that she is knowledgeable in this area and, as I said before, it's something that I think everyone in this province should celebrate.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a number of other issues that we would like to talk about. And I would move that we rise and report progress.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS