

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of parents concerned about parental rights. The prayer reads as follows:

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 signatures on this petition come from the community of Melfort.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, to present a petition, a petition calling for the scrapping of the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to end its unfair tendering policies and immediately cancel the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

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

And the petition I present signed by individuals from the community, I believe, of Regina.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition from concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are demanding review of parental rights. 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 and to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

The signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Fosston and from Melfort, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to call upon the NDP government to provide funding in this budget to have the Swift Current Regional Hospital equipped and staffed as a specialty care hospital and to immediately provide funding for the purchase and operation of both imaging equipment and a renal dialysis centre.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions in the thousands that we presented on this issue are from across the province. I won't attempt to name all the communities involved but there are signatures from the communities of Ponthex, Aneroid, Kincaid, Gravelbourg, Mankota, Swift Current, and virtually all across the south and the southwest.

And I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleague in bringing forward petitions in regard to the same issue, the regional hospital issue. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the NDP government to provide funding in this budget to have the Swift Current Regional Hospital equipped and staffed as a specialty care hospital, and to immediately provide funding for the purchase and operation of both imaging equipment and renal dialysis centre.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I have here are more hundreds if not thousands of signatures to add and they are from Simmie, Kincaid, Shaunavon, many from Swift Current, Gravelbourg, Hazenmore, Ponthex, Meyronne, all across southwest Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present petitions this afternoon. The prayer of relief which calls on behalf of both the federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of fuel tax revenues towards road maintenance and construction so our province's residents may have a safe highway system.

The petitioners this afternoon come from Cando, Gallivan, Rabbit Lake, Cando, Richard, Mayfair, Cut Knife, Vawn, Glaslyn, Battleford, and North Battleford.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I also rise on behalf of citizens with respect to our highways. 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 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.

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

And the people who've signed this petition come from the good

communities of Eastend, Climax, Frontier, Robsart.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, petitions from the RM (rural municipality) of Progress, No. 351, which surrounds the community of Luseland.

And I'll read the prayer:

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 long-term plan of rural road restitution reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as new trucking regulation changes safety factors on these roads.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, these come from the Luseland community and a few from Unity, and I'm happy to present it on their behalf.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the petitions presented at the last sitting have been reviewed and found to be in order. Pursuant to rule 12(7) these petitions are hereby received.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 25 ask the government the following question:

How many firefighters are on permanent staff available to fight forest fires in this province; how many firefighters are on standby; what is the potential for forest fires in the north forest for this year; has any new equipment been purchased or any planned for this year; how much money is recovered by sending our men and equipment to out-of-province fires on an average and for last year; and do you have any make-work programs or training programs available to keep the crews busy between fires?

I also give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I shall on day no. 25 ask the government the following question:

Of the Minister of Justice and the Premier: does your government have a clear, simple-to-understand definition of the implications for nurses contained in the back-to-work legislation and subsequent court order; does your government intend on supplying such an explanation to rank-and-file nurses so they know where they stand with regards to the law; if contempt of court charges are laid, who can they be laid against, the union as an independent entity, the union executive members, and/or individual nurses; what are the implications for individual nurses?

I so submit, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Hon. members, before we proceed to the introduction of other guests, I would like to welcome on behalf of the members of the Legislative Assembly a large number of special guests who are seated this afternoon in the Speaker's gallery and in the west gallery. We are honoured to have members from 15 Wing in Moose Jaw.

Let me now outline today's 15 Wing introduction program, which is being held to honour 15 Wing. In just a moment, I shall invite the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party to pay tribute to 15 Wing Moose Jaw, and the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Following these remarks, nine members of the Assembly will introduce their guests.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, it is my pleasure today to welcome — as you have already done, sir — representatives of 15 Wing Moose Jaw, and to recognize the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force. These men and women are a beautiful sight in this legislature for a whole number of reasons.

I want to deviate from my script to say that in my own family a very close cousin of mine was a flyer and ended up retiring as a brigadier general in the Royal Canadian Air Force, flew the Burma Road, and also fought in the European theatre during the Second World War and luckily came back home safe and sound. And I well remember the stories and the anxieties that the family shared about this particular experience. And I can't help but think of that when I see this spectacular group of men and women with us and their proud tradition.

Mr. Speaker, we in this province have been very proud, I would say indeed blessed, to have had 15 Wing in Moose Jaw and have enjoyed the service and the protection of the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force). And you sir, Mr. Speaker, as a representative of Moose Jaw, together with my colleague, know all too well the important role that the 15 Wing base has been to the city of Moose Jaw, to the people of Saskatchewan, for more than 60 years — not only militarily, keeping the peace; but also to the economies of Moose Jaw and indeed all of Saskatchewan.

And I know that the contributions of 15 Wing Moose Jaw will continue to grow with the establishment of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) flying training in Canada. In fact yesterday it was my pleasure and honour to meet with the French ambassador to Canada and this was topic number one on the agenda with the French ambassador. He's got to join in and urge his country to join in on the NATO training.

At the same time we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force which has been serving Canadians and indeed the people of the world since 1924. The RCAF — I didn't know this but if my historic facts are correct — started out as a small service providing forest fire and fisheries protection in its initial period. And then it grew to become a stalwart defender of democracy and freedom during the Second World War when 18,000 brave people gave their lives in the ultimate sacrifice for democracy and the rule of law. Later

today it will be my pleasure and honour to introduce to this House three veterans of that war.

After the war the RCAF continued its service under that name, and later as the Air Command of the Canadian Armed Forces, contributing to Canada's efforts to peacekeeping and disaster relief around the world.

As a committed Canadian, as we all are here, I accept Canadian Armed Forces, but I'd be remiss if I didn't say that I still prefer RCAF as opposed to Canadian Armed Forces. But nonetheless the Air Command of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, through the war both in combat and in training, allied flyers, 15 Wing and the RCAF spread the good name of our province and our country throughout a grateful world.

Since the war the air force and pilots trained in Moose Jaw helped provide those peacekeeping and disaster relief efforts that I mentioned a moment ago, also spreading further the good name of our nation and our community. And of course the Snowbirds have long been the international ambassadors of goodwill.

Now before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, my welcoming remarks, I would be remiss very much if I did not remind each and every one of us here today that we have brave flyers and support crew who today are participating in the dangerous but necessary NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) mission in the former Yugoslavia. And I'm sure I speak on behalf of every one assembled when I say that our thoughts and our prayers are with them and with their families.

So I'm proud to honour and celebrate both the achievements of 15 Wing and the long and glorious history of the RCAF. And like everyone in Saskatchewan I'm looking forward to many more years of that same service, pride and community.

Congratulations and thanks to all of you. And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, colleagues in the legislature, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome everyone here today on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party in recognition of 15 Wing Moose Jaw and the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian RCAF.

In its infancy in the early 1920s the RCAF performed admirably, as indicated by the Premier, spotting forest fires and smugglers' fishing boats. But it also was involved in helping to map our Canadian wilderness by the use of aerial photography.

Canada distinguished itself during World War II to become the fourth largest Allied air force. Today the air force is an integral part of the Canadian Armed Forces and plays a strong role in protecting Canada's sovereignty and in maintaining the peace worldwide.

On behalf of the official opposition I would like to congratulate Colonels Hanton and Ouellet on their outstanding achievements

and continued success with CFB (Canadian Forces Base) Moose Jaw. Also, congratulations to the Royal Canadian Air Force on their 75th anniversary. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my privilege and pleasure for me to be allowed to rise today to recognize the men and women of 15 Wing Moose Jaw and to extend on behalf of the Liberal caucus our heartfelt congratulations on this the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

As many of you may know, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, my alma mater, recently celebrated its 125th anniversary, so I know well the pride and the sense of accomplishment that the members of our armed forces, particularly the air force, must feel today.

I have, Mr. Speaker, enjoyed many opportunities over the years as a former member of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) to both train, work, and, yes, even socialize with the members of our armed forces. I have fond memories of CFB Gimli, CFB Southport, and CFB Westwin, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that there are no finer men and women than those who choose to serve their country.

It is with that great deal of sense of pride that I greet those seated in your gallery and in the west gallery here today, and all members of armed forces. I would also like to extend greetings and support through you, Mr. Speaker, to all those brave men and women serving Canada so well throughout the Balkan region and indeed throughout the world.

As we celebrate today, we must remember that at this very moment the pride of Canada goes in harm's way. I am sure all members will join with me in wishing our forces who have responded to their call in the Balkans God's speed and good luck. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — In just a very brief moment I will call on members of the Legislative Assembly to make specific introductions of the 15 Wing people who are here today, and as each group is introduced, I will ask that you stand and be recognized with your introductions.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming that you will be introducing Colonel Ouellet. Before I start my introductions, I know this is not the debate but I was very much taken by the Leader of the Third Party's welcome and congratulations and as he recited the various segments of service that he had the pleasure of participating with various members of the military, he talked about even participating in celebrations. I was wondering if he could tell us which were the hardest of those duties that he had to do from time to time. Just a joke, a mild joke.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce to you, sir, four retired members of the Royal Canadian Air Force who are in your gallery. They will be our personal guests, the guests of the House, at a dinner this evening at the Government House in

honour of the 75th anniversary of the RCAF and of 15 Wing Moose Jaw.

I will ask each of them in turn to rise and be acknowledged by members of the Assembly. First, Honorary Colonel (retired) Frank Hanton. Col. Hanton was a fighter pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Europe during the Second World War. He served in a number of squadrons and flew many missions over occupied Europe.

On one of these, he was badly burned and became one of — as I gather they are referred to — one of the guinea pigs, the first people to undergo experimental — experimental plastic surgery. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross and attained the rank of squadron leader.

After the war, Col. Hanton served many years with the Manitoba government air services. In 1978 he became director of Saskatchewan executive air and air ambulance. After retirement he served as principal aide-de-camp to the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. He was honorary colonel of 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School.

Ladies and gentlemen of the House, please welcome Honorary Colonel (retired) Frank Hanton.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Next, Flying Officer (retired) Dr. Lionel Hastings.

Dr Hastings served as a navigator and observer in bombers with the Royal Air Force during the Second World War. He had 50 operational sorties. After completing his tour of operations he took a special detachment to a communications squadron in Belgium.

He crashed in Belgium in October 1944 and spent seven months in hospital, also one of the famous guinea pigs.

After the war, Flying Officer Hastings studied dentistry at Toronto and spent 24 years in private practice in Ontario. He came to Saskatchewan in 1974 and taught dental therapists for 14 years before his retirement. He has also taught this profession and carried out similar duties in the People's Republic of China.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, please welcome Flying Officer (retired) Dr. Lionel Hastings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Next, Wing Commander (retired) John Yeomans.

Wing commander served with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War as a navigator and staff officer. Shot down in southern Germany, he was a prisoner of war for 15 months in Germany and Poland. After the war he continued his career in the RAF (Royal Air Force) around the world in South Africa, Cyprus, Aden, and many other locations.

His wife Elaine who is with him today was also an officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force and she might just stand and also be acknowledged. There she is.

In 1976, he moved — they moved to Canada and in 1977 the wing commander became director of the Saskatchewan Central Vehicle Agency and held a number of important positions with SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) before his retirement.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, please welcome Wing Commander (retired) John Yeomans and Mrs. Yeomans.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And the fourth person who served in this capacity is honorary Colonel Terry Lyons. Colonel Lyons served for 28 years in the Royal Canadian Air Force and Air Command.

After retiring at the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1980, he worked for the private sector in Regina, was manager of the Regina Flying Club, was an executive with the New Careers Corporation of Saskatchewan, is now the honorary colonel of 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School at 15 Wing, Moose Jaw.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, a welcome please for Honorary Colonel Terry Lyons.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — With the approval of the members of the Assembly, it is now the honour of the Chair to introduce to you the wing commander's executive. The wing commander's executive comprises a small staff that is intimately involved in day-to-day running of the wing and the planning and execution of wing level events.

The staff is made up of the wing chief warrant officer who is the senior enlisted member and close advisor to the wing commander, the wing chief's assistant, the executive assistant to the wing commander, the wing public affairs officer, and a civilian secretary.

Together this staff organizes events from parades to visits of foreign dignitaries, handling the administrative details, and allowing the wing commander to concentrate on the decision-making and leadership of the wing.

It is a pleasure for me to introduce to the House three specific individual members of the wing commander's executive.

First of all, Col. Mark Ouellet.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Col. Mark Ouellet is wing commander of 15 Wing. A native of Edmonton, Col. Ouellet has served in Moose Jaw, Cold Lake, and Germany. He has been a flying instructor, member of the Snowbirds, and a fighter pilot. From last October to January, he was task force commander of Canada's CF-18 fighter contingent in Aviano, Italy. He has been wing

commander of 15 Wing Moose Jaw since August 1998.

Hon. members, Col. Mark Ouellet.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If I may introduce now Honorary Colonel Doug Marr, himself a former member of the Canadian air force, had a distinguished career in the service of the city of Moose Jaw. He has been honorary colonel of 15 Wing since 1996.

Honorary Colonel Doug Marr.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — And if I may now introduce the chief warrant officer, Bob Frosst. The senior enlisted member of 15 Wing, Chief Warrant Officer Frosst has been wing chief warrant officer since 1996. He has had a long and distinguished career in the Canadian Forces as a meteorologist and in professional development and training. He was awarded the Order of Military Merit last year, in 1998.

Chief Warrant Officer Bob Frosst.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — And I would ask that if all together all the members of the wing commander's executive would rise and be acknowledged by members of the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member of this legislature privileged to represent 15 Wing in this House, I want to extend a greeting to Colonel Ouellet, Colonel Marr and to all of our guests today, which also include the mayor of Moose Jaw, His Worship Ray Boughen.

And I want all members in this House to take note that Moose Jaw Wakamow is the only constituency that has an air force.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide a special introduction to the members of the force that are seated in the west gallery. Mr. Speaker, seated in your west gallery are members of the 15 Air Maintenance Squadron. This, Mr. Speaker, squadron was formed on the first of April, 1993 when the Air Command Wing concept became effective.

The squadron is a central maintenance organization under the leadership of an aerospace engineering officer, currently Major N.D. Bell. The squadron is composed of 258 people; five officers, 249 non-commissioned members and four civilians.

The squadron, Mr. Speaker, is responsible for aircraft maintenance activities for all of the 97 CT114 Tutor aircraft throughout the Canadian Forces, including 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School, 431 Air Demonstration Squadron — the Snowbirds, the Flying Instructors School, the Aerospace Engineering and Test Establishment at Cold Lake and the Central Flying School in Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, these are the men and women who truly do give our air force its wings.

Mr. Speaker, with the advent of NATO flying training in Canada, 15 Air Maintenance Squadron is scheduled to disband in August of the year 2000. And, Mr. Speaker, we will miss them — we will miss them.

I will ask that Captain Thompson, the Deputy Commander and members of 15 Air Maintenance Squadron rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm privileged on behalf of my colleague, the member for Thunder Creek, to tell you a little bit about No. 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School, Mr. Speaker.

2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School, the "Big 2," provides basic flying training for all Canadian Forces pilots, and advanced flying training for all Canadian Forces jet pilots. In addition to Canadian military pilots, 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School has been involved in training foreign pilots as well throughout its existence.

The school motto is "The best in the West" and looking into the future, the school is looking forward to the challenge of living up to its motto before an international audience as the centre for NATO flying training in Canada.

No. 2 Flying Training School was formed in Yorkton, Saskatchewan in September 1945 and moved to the Royal Canadian Air Force Station in Moose Jaw in June of 1953.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that Lieutenant-Colonel Clements, commandant, and members of 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School to please rise and be acknowledged here in this legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to acknowledge all those who have already been introduced and say what a . . . how pleased I am that I'm a friend of Mr. Calvert who owns the only air force in Saskatchewan.

The wing operations branch supports 15 Wing and its aviation units in our primary mission of providing jet pilot training for the Canadian air force. The wing operations branch operates under the command of the wing operations officer and consists of the following agencies:

Wing operations centre, in addition to providing flight planning services, acts as a coordination centre for 15 Wing aircraft if they encounter difficulties when away from Moose Jaw.

15 Air Traffic Control Squadron provides safe, orderly, and expeditious air traffic control services to 15 Wing aviation units and other aircraft. Aircraft traffic movements in 1998 numbered over 158,000.

Military police provides professional security and police services.

Firehall provides all fire services to 15 Wing, including both

structural and aviation-related, conducts safety inspections, provides hazardous material control, and is responsible for occupant extrication in the event of a vehicle or aircraft incident.

Meteorological section provides weather forecasting and observations, briefs pilots, and answers any technical weather-related inquiries.

Transport provides snow and ice control for 15 Wing, including all runway surfaces, administers a vehicle pool, and conducts driver training and vehicle accident investigation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask Lieutenant-Colonel Major and members of wing operations to rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm indeed honoured this afternoon to introduce the wing comptroller branch.

The wing comptroller branch is responsible for administering military pay and benefits, managing the wing's multi-million dollar budget, maintaining personnel records, and arranging the long-distance moves for service members.

The challenges which the traffic technicians and resource management clerks face hinge on the fact that everything they work on affects service members personally. Payrolls must be on time, promotions actioned, moves properly arranged, and careers managed from enrolment to release. As a result, clerks and technicians are required to deploy wherever the Armed Forces goes. In the recent past, members of the comptroller branch have been sent to the Golan Heights in the Middle East and to Ellesmere Island in the high North. As members of the logistics branch, they strive to live up to the branch motto of "Service Second to None."

I ask Major Cornfield and members of the wing comptroller branch to rise and be acknowledged. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and indeed a privilege to recognize the people who really make those planes fly — the pilots.

The flying instructor school is responsible for the teaching of new instructors destined for instructing undergraduate pilots, providing the initial training for fighter pilots, all the post-graduate jet conversion training, and the Canadian astronaut flying program.

I ask Major Thorneycroft, commandant, and all members of the flying instructors school to rise and be acknowledged. Major.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having grown up in Moose Jaw, it's a great deal of pleasure for me to also rise and to introduce a section of the unit out there, the 15 service support branch.

Mr. Speaker, the 15 service support branch is a multi-faceted organization responsible for all administrative and logistical support to the operation of the wing. This support includes medical and dental services, pastoral services, human resources, supply services, loss control management, telecommunications, and information management and information technology services.

The branch is also responsible for providing personnel support programs, which include fitness, sports and recreation, and a number of other programs that contribute to the quality of life of military members and their families. As well, 15 service support branch oversees the support provided to the wing by industry partners such as Bombardier, Frontec, and Aramark. Finally the branch includes the air reserve flight which provides valuable augmentation to various units of the wing.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly, commanding officer, and members of 15 service support branch to rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm indeed honoured to stand today to acknowledge the air demonstration Squadron 431 — the Snowbirds. The Snowbirds are an excellent example of the professionalism found throughout the air force and the Canadian Forces. Not only do they demonstrate the teamwork required to exhibit skilled precision flying, but they also embody the dedication of the highly trained men and women of the Canadian Forces.

Their air shows are renowned across North America. They are excellent ambassadors for Canada and the Canadian Forces. We in Saskatchewan, and I know particularly the people of Moose Jaw, are proud to be the home of the Snowbirds. Unfortunately the Snowbirds are away on tour. However, their logistics officer, Captain Perry, is here to represent them and I ask him to please rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I thank hon. members for your introductions of our guests of 15 Wing, and we'll now continue with the introduction of the guests.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege of introducing members of Saskatchewan's Provincial Advisory Committee for the International Year of Older Persons. 1999 has been designated by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Year of Older Persons. Canada's theme, "Canada, a Society for All Ages" was approved by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for seniors in June 1998.

The theme is to encourage an intergenerational approach to celebrate the contributions seniors have made and continue to make towards the continued growth of our country and our province.

In Saskatchewan an advisory committee of 12 people has been appointed to provide leadership to seniors, their organizations, and to communities and corporations in the promotion of IYOP

(International Year of Older Persons) activities throughout 1999.

I would like now, Mr. Speaker, to introduce the advisory committee members to you, and ask that they stand as I introduce each person. Reverend Wes Ashwin is chairing this committee. He is also Saskatchewan's representative on the Canadian Coordinating Committee which is overseeing the implementation of the IYOP plan in Canada.

Elmer Noble represents the Saskatchewan command of the Royal Canadian Legion. Now this is a person that's very familiar to members of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon. Sylvia Fedoruk, Mr. Speaker, former Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Marjorie Willson, IYOP Chair and vice-president of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism. Frank Draper, president of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism. Ed Simonar, president of Saskatchewan Seniors Association Incorporated. Ruth Weinhandl, first vice-president of Saskatchewan Seniors Association Incorporated. John Bryde, a member of the Regina Senior Citizens Centre Association and the Seniors Education Centre at the University of Regina. Rowena McLellan a member of the Saskatoon Council of Aging. And Eric Bergeron, a member of the Fédération des Asnee Fransaskois, a provincial French seniors' organization affiliated with the national Fédération des Asnee.

Not with us today, Mr. Speaker, are Alpha LaFond of the Muskeg Lake First Nations and Emma Pratt of the Ochapowace First Nations.

These individuals, Mr. Speaker, bring to the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee an impressive wealth of experiences, insights, and perspectives, and I am honoured that these busy men and women are working on our behalf to lead International Year of Older Persons activities in Saskatchewan.

Please join me in expressing our appreciation for these Saskatchewan seniors who are truly making a difference for us all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome the members of the Saskatchewan Provincial Advisory Committee for the International Year of the Older Persons.

Their commitment to the recognition of seniors and the beneficial role they play in Canadian society is unparalleled. And for that, on behalf of the official opposition, I thank them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would ask leave to add our voice on behalf of the Liberal caucus to our seniors and the people that will be working on behalf of those of us, and as the member from Rosthern and I may well be recognized as being the appropriate representatives to bid you all thank you

and welcome here.

And if I may, Mr. Speaker, I too find it very interesting that the seniors do have a great deal of humour, ideas, opinions, that is communicated to a lot of us, to the people throughout the province in a publication that's called *Senior Living*, which I read and I find not only enlightening but amusing.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you why I find some of this amusing for the benefit of the military personnel that are here. Some of the humour. "Murphy's Military Laws: if your sergeant can see you, so can the enemy; the only thing more accurate than incoming enemy fire is incoming friendly fire."

And near and dear to me, Mr. Speaker, is another. This is part of this publication . . . I dearly enjoy it. It's called "Lighten up your day." And it does.

An old gentleman was driving on the freeway at his usual speed which was too slow. A highway patrolman (RCMP) pulled him over and said, "I guess you know why I stopped you, sir."

"Sure I do," the elderly gentleman said. "I was the only one you could catch."

So that once again I want to thank each of you that continue to bring your advice, your counsel, and your help to those of us that very much appreciate what you do for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, some business people who are visiting the Legislative Assembly today.

Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are Juan Manuel Baez and Ernesto Baez — if they could stand please. These gentlemen are with Identificacion Pesajet y Control SA de CV of Mexico. And Bill Elliott, a president of Massload Technologies of Saskatoon. Accompanying them is Inge Ryan from STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership).

Mr. Speaker, these guests met with our Premier this morning for an hour and I understand they had a very productive meeting. Mr. Speaker, these business people exemplify the evolving landscape of the Saskatchewan economy.

Last year during the Team Canada mission to Mexico, these two companies established a partnership through a signed agreement for \$100,000 of loadcells from Mexico. This partnership has expanded into a joint venture marketing company in Saskatoon to market mass loads loadcells to Mexico and Latin America.

This is good news for all of Saskatchewan. Not only will these two companies benefit, but this is an important contribution to the development of Saskatchewan's interests and expanding commercial linkages with countries in that region.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to have these

distinguished guests with us here today. I wish them all the very best in their endeavours and I would ask the members of the Assembly to give them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Law Day

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, today is Law Day. The purpose of law in society, the Law Society of Saskatchewan reminds us, is to set the guidelines and rules by which the citizens of that society can live in harmony. I congratulate the law society and all professions which work to interpret, deliver, and enforce the law.

I'm sure that the member from Melville, a retired and distinguished member of the RCMP, and the member from North Battleford, a lawyer himself, join us in our tribute.

Unfortunately the leader of their party, Dr. Melenchuk, has in effect decreed that Law Day is irrelevant. Dr. Melenchuk says we have no responsibility to obey the law if we don't like it. I wonder how his two members, professionals sworn to uphold and respect the laws of this country, feel about their leader inciting illegal actions.

We shouldn't be surprised with Dr. Melenchuk's statements, though. This is the same man who stabbed the former leader of the Liberals in the back, with the assistance of the member from Wood River — no noted oath-keeper himself.

No respect for democracy or the law. What a sorry record for a political leader. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nurses' Rally Song

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night I took part in a nurses' rally in Yorkton, and this was nurses from the East Central Health District.

I'd like to quote, Mr. Speaker, from a song that the nurses sang last night and I'd like to just quote you a verse. I'd sing it for you but I don't want to put you through that punishment. The verse goes, and I quote:

Oh we don't want him, you can have him . . .

And by the way, Mr. Speaker, this is called "The Premier's Polka."

Oh we don't want him, you can have him,
The Premier's too tight for us,
The Premier's too tight for us, the Premier's too tight for us.

Oh we don't want him, you can have him,
The Premier's too tight for us,
Much too tight, way too tight, much too tight for us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I could go on but I know for sure I'm going to be ruled out of order so I'll stop there.

Mr. Speaker, the impression I got last night that this . . . from local 43 in the East Central Health District is the opinion of nurses of our Premier. Also, Mr. Speaker, from calls we're getting that I'm finding that no one — and I mean no one — is impressed with the government ads that appear every day in the newspapers, and other ads that are being paid for by the nurses, by the way, and other taxpayers, to bad-mouth nurses.

Mr. Speaker, many are saying, why not give the nurses a half page of these ads so that they can explain their side of the issues, the real issues. Mr. Speaker, I believe what this does is shows just how unpopular the Premier and his government is with everyone in Saskatchewan in 1999.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fundraiser for Parkinson's Disease

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, what does \$36,800, Parkinson's disease research, Regina Teachers Club, curling, and a hundred and ten thousand dollars have in common?

Ben Holden, the 1999 Regina Teachers Club curling classic honorary chairman helped put together a one-day event last Saturday, a one-day bonspiel, with 36 teams and roughly 250 corporate and individual sponsors. The day culminated with a silent auction at which they raised \$25,000 and they raised it for Parkinson's disease research.

Saskatchewan neurologist, Dr. Ali Rajput, who is himself a world-renowned leader in research in Parkinson's disease was very grateful for this year's \$36,800 which brings the Regina teachers' total to a hundred and ten thousand dollars they have raised in the past four years.

I want to congratulate everyone who was involved in this very, very worthwhile event, and wish Dr. Rajput the very best. And my thanks again to all of the teachers and sponsors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Easter Musicale for Moosomin

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the community of Moosomin was blessed with a fine presentation of an Easter musicale called *The Door*.

Mr. Speaker, a lady in our community, Marilyn Lyman, I believe, was the one who had seen this presentation. And when she came back to her community she had gone to all the churches and asked individuals in the community if they'd like to be involved in this presentation to which, Mr. Speaker, they had as I understand it, some 100 participants who took part — whether as musicians or portraying different aspects of the Easter scene.

The tragedy, Mr. Speaker, is that they only did three . . . actually they had scheduled three performances; they did a fourth one because it was so well-received. And the tragedy is that when my wife and I arrived, because we don't live close to the community, the doors were closed for the third time in a row because of how well the presentation had been represented.

Mr. Speaker, I think what it does, it speaks very highly of what communities and individuals can do when they want to do something together. In fact it went over so well that there were people from as far away as Winnipeg, Manitoba; some people went out from Regina; people from the Oxbow communities.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's something that we can commend the individuals of Moosomin and all those involved for their hard work in this presentation and we look forward to them doing this again in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Banner Year for Southwest Credit Union

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ho hum, Mr. Speaker, another good news story from flourishing Swift Current. This time I wish to report to the Assembly that once again the Southwest Credit Union posted a banner year in 1998. This marks the 58th year that credit union services have been available in Swift Current and it is fair to say, I think, that our credit union has been one significant reason our community has grown and prospered since 1947.

At the annual meeting last month, general manager Fred Townley-McKay announced that the total assets increased by 17 million to 255.7 million at year end. It was also announced that southwest will be amalgamating with the Gravelbourg Credit Union with its 24 million in assets and 2,300 members.

One particularly interesting detail came out of the meeting, Mr. Speaker, and I throw it in for the benefit of the Tories across the way who want to return us to the glory days of the '80s. One reason this was such a good year for the credit union is that it sold most of the farm land it had accumulated for foreclosures. Foreclosures, Mr. Speaker, made before 1993.

When was that land forfeited? Why in the heyday of the party that claimed it was the farmers' friend and defender of the rural way of life — claims, I believe, we still hear today. Hollow then; hollow now.

My congratulations to the Southwest Credit Union on another banner year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Government Insurance Crime Prevention Programs

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to tell the House about SGI's (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) support of the auto theft strategy. Property crime drives up insurance rates, creates concern and inconvenience for victims, and results in perpetrators spending time in jail. SGI considers crime prevention one of its top priorities and takes its commitment very seriously.

SGI has been providing assistance to a number of youth-oriented programs across the province. In Regina this commitment includes SGI's partnerships with Summer Unlimited and the Rainbow Youth Centre, organizations that offer programs to get youth involved in positive activities.

SGI support also extends to Ataskata, an organization that works to get young offenders to turn away from criminal behaviour. As well, SGI works with police services across the province to assist them in their efforts to reduce the incidence of theft.

Last fall, SGI introduced a crime prevention contest that aims to get students thinking about the consequences of criminal behaviour. The contest has met with so much enthusiasm that it's been expanded this year, Mr. Speaker.

These contributions directly support the youth initiative identified in the auto theft committee strategy.

Another component of the strategy involves the improvement of security and detection options in vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate SGI and the organizations involved in this youth initiative. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Federal Gun Control Legislation

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, our government is not supporting or co-operating in any way with the injustice perpetrated by Bill C-68. You have heard it from a former Justice minister, Bob Mitchell; you've heard it from our current provincial Minister of Justice, as well as from the Minister of Environment who is adamant about this matter.

More recently at the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation convention in Lloydminster, the Premier of this province stated his and our government's 100 per cent opposition to Bill C-68. Our position is firm. And I assure you, as a hunter myself, we will fight this matter all the way.

The federal government of Justice has misled parliament about the implementation costs that have more than doubled since 1995. Now we learn that the minister has known since at least August of '96 that the number of guns and gun owners on which these estimates are based was fatally flawed.

This government believes in the responsible use and storage of firearms, and we believe that the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on this program would go further if spent on police officers and crime prevention.

This ridiculous Act is not effective as a matter of safety and flies in the face of our private rights as individuals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Further Negotiations with Nurses

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the health care system in this province is collapsing, and why? Because the Premier won't blink first.

Mr. Premier, the health care system is falling apart. People's lives are at risk and nothing is being done because the Premier insists on behaving like a child in the middle of a temper tantrum.

Mr. Premier, your behaviour is being described by the people of this province as infantile. This health care crisis was ignited by you, Mr. Premier. Now what are you as Premier going to do to get us out of this mess?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the people of the province will know, the Premier of this province met with the leadership of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses last Wednesday — one week ago. The Premier met with the nurses for several . . . over a course of several hours. I believe some 11 hours, Mr. Speaker, and at that time the Premier listened and heard what the leadership was saying about certainly nurses' issues in the workplace as it pertained to nursing practice, recruitment and retention and seniority, and the need to have action on the part of the employers.

The Premier was under the impression that the leadership in both the employer and nurses' organizations were going to go away and consult with their various committees and come back and meet with the Premier the next morning at 8:30.

Mr. Speaker, it's my opinion that the Premier did provide leadership and he did try and attempt to ensure that health services continue in the province. Unfortunately, the nurses decided to go on a general strike.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of the province believe that that explanation is inadequate. We are in crisis. It is not a good enough explanation. Lives are at risk. Patients are being airlifted out of this province. Families are being disrupted. Cancer treatments are on hold. And there's no end in sight because the Premier insists on throwing a temper tantrum.

Mr. Premier, that's not leadership. That's just childish. The people of Saskatchewan expect you to act in a more mature manner.

Mr. Premier, what steps are you taking now? Are you talking to SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses)? Are you listening to the nurses? Do you understand that nurses just want to be treated with dignity in a respectful manner and not like criminals? Mr. Premier, what are you doing to try to resolve this mess?

(1430)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as I recall the vote in this legislature last Thursday, if I recall the results, the Saskatchewan Party and the Liberal Party voted against the legislation. We moved on the legislation because we felt it important to ensure that health services were continuing in the province given that we were hearing from the major health districts that they could not withstand a major withdrawal of service for any length of time.

Mr. Speaker, we know that public safety is a top-of-mind issue for the citizens of this province and it is a top-of-mind issue for myself as the Minister of Health.

We want to thank the nurse managers and the paramedics and the general physicians and specialists in this province for doing everything in order to ensure that our patients are being looked after as well as possible. And we also acknowledge that SUN has in some cases provided essential services, which has assisted with the situation.

Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that SUN will listen carefully to the court order and they will encourage their members to return to work because that's how we're going to settle this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the legislation brought in in this legislature was nothing but dictatorial muscle. That legislation was an injustice towards the nurses. That legislation did not allow for collective bargaining.

Mr. Premier, when you brought in your back-to-work legislation, you said the health system couldn't survive for more than a few hours without nurses. We've now had nurses off work for a week, and you stubbornly refuse to do anything about it, and all because you fear your pride will be hurt.

Mr. Premier, this dispute isn't going to be resolved by you holding your breath and stomping your feet. It isn't going to be resolved by court actions and government advertising condemning nurses. It's only going to be resolved by both sides compromising a little. And you have to take the first step, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, please humble yourself and start acting like a leader and take the first necessary steps to end this standoff. Will you do that, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to remind the member that, I believe, a couple of weeks ago in this legislature, there were calls for this legislature to get the grain handlers and the inspectors in Vancouver back to work and to have the federal government order those folks back to work. My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that they have returned to work.

And in the history of this province, when there have been occasions when this legislature has found it necessary to introduce back-to-work legislation, people who have been on strike have returned to work, Mr. Speaker. We live in a province where people abide by the laws of the province and we would encourage, we would encourage the SUN to get and encourage their members to return to work and abide by the law.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Madam Minister, will you allow the nurses to be the law-abiding citizens they've always been by doing what your government did when it broke its own law in The Provincial Court Act with the judges? Will you undo the back-to-work legislation?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the back-to-work legislation which was passed by this Assembly less than a week ago is back-to-work legislation that is the law of Saskatchewan. And as you know the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations has received a court order urging or ordering the leadership in the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses to ask — request — their membership to return to work.

Mr. Speaker, we have laws. They are fundamental to the foundation of this country and to democracy, Mr. Speaker. And we would urge — we would urge — SUN to ask their members to return to the workplace so that we can get on with the collective bargaining that is so necessary to improve working conditions and nursing practice issues in the workplace, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Doctors Leaving Province

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Health.

Madam Minister, as you just had an answer for, the NDP (New Democratic Party) has created the worst health care crisis in this province in 40 years. The front page of the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* today calls the nurses strike an “NDP labour nightmare.”

Madam Minister, thanks to the NDP hospitals are closing across the province. After eight years of NDP mismanagement Saskatchewan’s health system has completely broken down. But it doesn’t stop with the nurses, Madam Minister.

You’re NDP government is also doing an excellent job of chasing out doctors. Last week’s headline in the *Maple Creek News* declared, “Taxes drive doctors out of Saskatchewan.” Madam Minister, that makes five doctors the NDP have chased . . . has chased out of Maple Creek in the last three years.

Why, Madam Minister? Well according to the doctors, it’s the NDP’s sky-high taxes . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. The hon. member has been extremely lengthy in his preamble and — order! — I’ll ask the hon. member to go directly to his question now.

Mr. Heppner: — Is that your plan for health care, Madam Minister, threaten the arrest of nurses and chase the rest of the doctors out of the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You know, Mr. Speaker, coming from the members of the Tory Party, it’s absolutely incredible. I mean this is the party that is saying that they are going to freeze health care spending at the rate of inflation, which in this budget year, Mr. Speaker, would mean \$18 million. That couldn’t possibly deal with these wages and benefits and other issues that we have with various health care providers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it’s almost laughable. I mean here we have a party

that is sticking up apparently for leadership that avoids the legislation — avoids the law, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a party that runs around Saskatchewan saying that they’re going to do all of these things for health care, yet they’re going to freeze health spending at a time when our government has just put a \$195 million into the health system or 1.9 million.

Here we have a party that obviously says we can afford 22 per cent wage increases at a time when we need to put more people into the health system in order to deal with the workload. Mr. Speaker, I find the member’s comments incredible.

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Mr. Heppner: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is incredulous. So are the people across this province at the disaster that they’ve created. She talks about sticking up. The only thing that’s being stuck up around here is the people there that are sticking up for their Premier who’s messed this whole thing up with his negotiations.

The NDP’s outright assault on nurses and doctors is working. Thanks to the NDP government’s disastrous management of the health care system Saskatchewan is suffering through huge shortages of nurses. Those that are left are on strike because the NDP has created an intolerable working condition for them.

The doctors are being driven out because the NDP has given Saskatchewan the second highest taxes in Canada.

But don’t take my word for it, Madam Minister, listen to one of the doctors in Maple . . . what he’s saying from Maple Creek. He says:

I enjoy it here . . . But to pay between . . . (48 and 50 per cent) income tax is just killing me . . .

Moving across the border into Alberta allows doctors to form a company and be taxed . . . (between) 32 to 35 per cent . . .

Madam Minister, what is the NDP doing to stop the exodus of doctors out of Saskatchewan because of your high taxes?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the member still can’t add. The Tories couldn’t add in the 1980s — that’s why we have the \$15 billion deficit.

Mr. Speaker, what they want . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What they want apparently is more revenue — less taxes and more money . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the Chair is having some difficulty, hon. members, being able to hear the answer being put by the minister and the Chair asks for the co-operation from members on both sides of the House.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let’s be clear about where we are in this process. We have a \$2 million-a-day interest payment on the public debt.

That's money that's leaving.

Mr. Speaker, they obviously want us to capitulate to demands that we cannot possibly meet. They talk about a high tax system in the province of Saskatchewan. How does this work, Mr. Speaker? How does it work? We are apparently supposed to reduce taxes in the province, increase program spending, and somehow find the revenue. Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't add up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Alberta Nurses to Work in Saskatchewan

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, the Chair of the North Valley Health District has now confirmed that they will be bringing in nurses from Alberta to ease the pressure of the strike.

Madam Minister, can you tell us what is the overall strategy from bringing in nurses from Alberta and other provinces? How many districts are going to do this and how many nurses will be involved?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier, we are in a situation in the province where we have very few out-of-scope nurse managers. We are now into a close to one week of a general-wide, province-wide strike by all, practically all RNs (Registered Nurse) in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we can solve this problem. We can solve this problem.

What we are encouraging SUN to do is to ask their members to return to the workplace, and when we do that, we will be at the bargaining table immediately. And what we will do at the bargaining table is deal with nursing recruitment and retention, deal with pay equity, deal with nursing practices, so that nurses can provide the kind of nursing and care that they need to provide, Mr. Speaker.

What we can't do, Mr. Speaker, is to provide a 22 per cent wage increase at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Offer to Canadian Union of Public Employees

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you are imposing a contract on nurses with your heavy-handed Bill 23. You have said it and your Bill says it: there is no room to bargain.

However, we have just received a memo that there are better deals for some but not for all. And we have it here — we'll send a copy over to you, Mr. Premier. I'm going to quote from it. It's from the CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) Health Care Council to CUPE health care residents:

In an attempt to assist with the current state of provincial health care negotiations, CUPE contacted the Minister of Health, Pat Atkinson. As a result of our intervention we have . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order, order. Order. The hon. member I don't think identified the source he's quoting from as a published source, and so I would ask that he honour the rules of debate which require that — from other than published sources — that he use that designation and recognize the House.

Mr. McPherson: — The quote goes on:

As a result of our intervention, we have been instrumental in achieving additional funding to provide for Extended Health Benefits and Dental Plan improvements for all Health Care workers. This additional funding will be 2.1 per cent of payroll and will be OVER AND ABOVE ALL OTHER NEGOTIATED INCREASES.

I would like the Premier to explain, confirm, or deny, are you playing political games with our health care workers in this province?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I find it extremely interesting that, on the one hand, members do not . . .

An Hon. Member: — Do you find it interesting Roy?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I think I have the floor. I know that hon. member is notorious for his lack of respect for this institution, but let me finish the answer by saying I find it rather peculiar to have some members of the House — as the Saskatchewan Party members have been doing, the Tory Party members have been doing — criticizing me for the eleventh hour negotiations with the nurses, and in this particular member's question, getting up, taking the exact reverse position, and criticizing the Minister of Health for trying to resolve a health dispute.

Mr. Speaker, these people can't figure out A from Z. They're the most confused opposition. God forbid that we should ever put health care in the hands of Liberals or Conservatives. Just like the KOD (Keep Our Doctors) and anything that they've done in the years gone by, they will destroy this plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Full-time Positions for Nurses

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, in today's paper, the NDP is continuing its smear ad campaign against nurses. After laying off 600 nurses and completely destroying their working conditions this government chose to use the heavy hand of back-to-work legislation and fines. No wonder we have a nursing shortage, Mr. Speaker.

This morning I spoke with Rachael Tilson, a nurse from the Regina Health District. Rachael tells me that she graduated from Kelsey in 1991 but couldn't find any work in Saskatchewan as a nurse. Throughout most of the NDP years since then she's worked full-time in Montana as a nurse. Last year she came back to a casual position at the Plains. We all know what happened to the Plains, Mr. Speaker.

Despite a nursing shortage the best this government can make available to her, Mr. Speaker, is a permanent part-time position.

Madam Minister, how do you expect to keep nurses when all you're offering is part-time work and smear-ad campaigns?

(1445)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I can indicate to the member that as part of this bargaining process with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and the employer that there has been discussion around language governing the conversion of casual and part-time jobs to full-time jobs, Mr. Speaker. We have been saying for some time, and I think the employer has acknowledged this, that it's absolutely imperative that we have full-time jobs in the registered nurses area if we are to ensure that our graduates are going to stay in the province of Saskatchewan.

If you look at health care across the country it would appear as though we have seen the conversion to casual and part-time jobs in many, many provinces. Every province is dealing with this issue. And we believe that once the employer and SUN return to the bargaining table that language can be put into the collective agreement that would ensure more full-time positions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Well, Mr. Speaker, while the minister is waiting to make up her mind, Rachael and other nurses like her will be going back to Montana. Then where will we be with our nurses?

Mr. Speaker, this is a tale of two provinces. The province of BC (British Columbia) has announced that they're going to spend over \$50 million to fill 1,000 full-time nursing positions in that province. In the meantime they're going to spend an additional \$200,000 on an ad campaign to attract nurses.

According to an article in today's *Vancouver Sun*, Gary Moser, president of the Health Employers Association of BC said that with contract bargaining behind them, the nurses and employers can now work together toward the common goal of and I quote, "stealing nurses from other provinces." It's quite a contrast when Saskatchewan is doing everything it can to attack nurses.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the minister. Why is she spending thousands of dollars to attack nurses while another NDP province is spending thousands of dollars to attract nurses? They want to attract. You want to attack.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to the province of British Columbia and their recruitment campaign. I want to say to this House that there is a recruit . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, do I have the floor . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, I please would ask . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I suppose that I ought not to be surprised that the Liberal Party will not give me a chance to speak since the Liberal Party's leader says publicly that the nurses of Saskatchewan should defy the law of this

province and defy the court injunctions and therefore it should come as no surprise to me that they exhibit this lawlessness in this Assembly.

What I was about to say, Mr. Speaker, is when the member talks about British Columbia and recruitment, it is an acknowledged fact that nurses are in high demand and are being recruited everywhere — in the province of Saskatchewan, British Columbia, right across the country. But what the hon. member did not tell the House in prefacing his question, was that the nurses in British Columbia settled for zero, zero and 2 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Alberta Nurses to Work in Saskatchewan

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, you never even tried to answer the question I asked you. It was simple. Are you or any health districts bringing nurses from Alberta in to Saskatchewan to fill in while the nurses' strike is on?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what the province of Saskatchewan through the Government of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations is attempting to do is to return to the bargaining table as soon as humanly possible to get a collective agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we can resolve the issues. We can resolve the issues in the workplace to improve working conditions, Mr. Speaker. We can ensure that there are funds available to recruit and retain nurses for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we can deal with seniority provisions and we can convert casual to full-time positions, Mr. Speaker. But I want to assure the people of this House and to the people of this province that we can resume collective bargaining as soon as the nurses resume work in the workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, once again my question is for the Minister of Health. And I repeat, are you or any health districts bringing nurses from Alberta in to fill in for Saskatchewan nurses while the strike is on?

Question is plain and simple, Madam Minister: are you or are you not bringing in nurses from Alberta?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The question is simple and the answer has been equally simple and clear. The hon. member will not accept it for political reasons, but the answer is clear.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time for cooler heads to prevail. This is a time for compromise. This is a time for negotiation.

This is not a time, like the Liberal Party, to advocate a continuing breach of the law. Nor is it a time for the

Saskatchewan Party which advocates a five-year freeze on health care spending — five-year freeze on health care spending, five-year freeze on health care spending. Not a time for them to do this either.

What this is, is a time for nurses to honour the law and to honour the judges. And we will have SAHO at the table and we'll do everything that we can to achieve as reasonably as we can, within the fiscal capacity of this province as left to us by those people opposite, to have the best possible health care system in Canada — which we still have in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Now the Chair is much encouraged that we have galleries filled with peacekeepers here today.

MOTIONS

Motion to Recess

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move:

That the House do now recess until 4 p.m. to honour 15 Wing and to recognize the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and that this Assembly reconvene at the call of the Speaker, ringing the bells five minutes in advance of reconvening.

And I move that, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — Hon. members, then, with the motion having been carried, I would invite all members and guests to a tea, to a Speaker's tea, in honour of 15 Wing. It will take place in room 218 on the west wing of the Legislative Assembly Building.

And I will also direct the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the bells at 3:55 to summon the members to reconvene at 4 o'clock. If members and guests will just remain seated until the mace has been lowered.

The House now stands recessed.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

(1600)

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Layoff Notices — Shaunavon Hospital

The Speaker: — The House will come back to order.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I, by way of letter, informed your office that pursuant to rule 19 I was requesting authorization for a priority of debate motion to be heard.

The Speaker: — I will ask the hon. member for Wood River, the House Leader of the Third Party, to very briefly advise the Assembly of his reasonings for his notice of motion under rule 19 and request for priority of debate and to advise the House of the actions he wishes it to take.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reasoning for this being so urgent and pressing today is the fact that tomorrow there are going to be layoff notices given . . . or acted upon in the Shaunavon hospital.

We have nurses, four nurses, and 18 or 19 support staff that had some months ago received their layoff notices. They come into effect tomorrow.

Given the climate of what's happening in this province today, with other provinces openly raiding our health care professionals, we are of the concern — and this has been related to us by these health care workers — that if in fact we do not put a halt to this, they are more than likely going to be seeking employment elsewhere. This will have an impact on the community of Shaunavon and in fact the southwest part of the province as we will not get nurses to come back to this community.

This is urgent and pressing today. We need some action by this legislature, by the government, to at least put a halt on going ahead with the layoff notices until we can find out if in fact these layoff notices are warranted. The board, the health district board, has made it very clear they need the staff; that in fact it's due to financial considerations, the deficit they're running. If they could get funding in the district, that in fact they would not let the staff go. That, I think, Mr. Speaker, constituted the emergency and pressing necessity of this going ahead.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Wood River makes the request under rule 19 that the business of the House be set aside under priority of debate pursuant to rule 19. And the Chair is prepared to rule on his request that the business of the House be set aside.

Earlier today the House Leader of the Third Party provided a notice for priority of debate to the Office of the Clerk as required under rule 19(2). The notice was accordingly distributed pursuant to the notification provision of the rule.

And members will be aware that it is the Speaker's responsibility under rule 19(5) to determine whether that matter is proper to be discussed, and whether the matter should receive urgent consideration over the other business presently on the order paper. Having reviewed the member's case, I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

In reviewing any case for a priority of debate the Speaker is obliged to review the case in the context of both the extent to which it concerns the administrative responsibilities of the government, and whether the matter could come within the scope of ministerial action, and also the probability of the matter being brought before the House within reasonable time by other means.

The member has established that the issue he raises is of considerable importance to the public. He also points to the fact that funding of health care through the Department of Health is within the administrative responsibility of the government, and therefore within the scope of ministerial action.

However with respect to bringing the matter before the House within reasonable time, it is clear that the member has had a number of opportunities to raise these concerns, including in the debate on the Throne Speech and in the budget debate at which time he could have moved the subamendment addressing this issue.

This is not an isolated issue but rather it's part of an ongoing concern on the broader issue of health care services. The potential layoffs cited in the notice are health district decisions that are not within the direct administrative responsibility of the minister.

The member's notice refers to the long-term effects of the potential layoffs. These long-term effects and the broader concern respecting funding may continue to be addressed by this House through the current review of estimates for the Department of Health in the Committee of Finance and through private members' motions in the usual way.

The Chair is not satisfied that the imminent layoff date stated by the member prevents the House from effectively dealing with these issues in the normal course of business. This matter can be brought before the House within reasonable time by other means, as is the case for other similar matters. Therefore the request for a priority of debate is denied.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I request the question be converted to orders for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — The item no. 1, question no. 52 is converted to notice of motions for returns (debatable).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, with me today are Glenda Yeates, the deputy minister who is seated beside me. Behind Ms. Yeates, is Bonnie Durnford, the assistant deputy minister; behind me is Bob Wihlidal, who's the executive director of financial management for the department. Beside Ms. Yeates is Phil Walsh, the executive director of income support; and behind Mr. Walsh is Richard Hazel, who's the executive director of family and youth services. Thank you.

Subvote (SS01)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And good afternoon to the Minister of Social Services, and good afternoon and welcome to his officials.

Mr. Minister, I would be happy if we could have just a great conversation this afternoon and a discussion surrounding the amendment to The Child and Family Services Act that your government has tabled. And I understand the tabling of that was with the intent of having some measures put forward that would stop the exploitation of children through the child prostitution trade.

As I have looked through the legislation, Mr. Minister, I have noticed that there really aren't any concrete measures other than one that I can see, that have been changed in that legislation, that will really be an effective help for children on the streets. I see that there has been a lot of wording, a movement around of words; I see that there are no measures in place that will concretely help those children on the streets.

So, Mr. Minister, I would like to know why there is nothing in this legislation about safe houses in the province, especially in the cities of Saskatoon and Prince Albert?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat at a loss, or Mr. Chair, I'm somewhat at a loss. Perhaps the member has not fully understood that we are in Committee of Finance, to deal with the estimates for the Department of Social Services.

The member is asking very specific questions about legislation pertaining to an Act or Bill that is before the Legislative Assembly and is due to come up in committee in due course. And we would at that time be prepared to entertain any specific questions related to that legislation, but . . . and would of course, be prepared to entertain general questions related to the child and family youth services aspects of the department. But as to the particular Bill I'm not in a good position to deal with that here today.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, the reason that I'm bringing this up is because obviously there is money that is apportioned to Social Services for use for our children within the province. The children that are suffering from sexual exploitation on the streets should be . . . should be able to have some of that funding go toward things that they need, that the people of the province are demanding are done. And I'm going to be getting to the funding very quickly.

In fact the first question I'll ask you is: how much funding by the Department of Social Services in this budget has been apportioned or is set out for safe houses in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for the question. This year we have budgeted 750,000 in the estimates to deal specifically with the question of children who are at risk due to sexual exploitation in Saskatchewan; and particularly to support efforts in the cities of Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina at this point, where the risks have been identified as having been . . . or are being . . . or are the greatest.

We have undertaken community consultations with groups in those three cities. On the basis of those consultations we have set out a budget of 750,000. Some of that 750,000 will be going to support at this point a safe house which has been established in Saskatoon.

Discussions are ongoing with groups in Prince Albert as to additional efforts that may be required to support the efforts that the community is undertaking. Some of the funds in Prince Albert are being utilized by the community to support outreach services through a children's activity centre.

In Regina discussions are ongoing with the groups and I understand that some of those discussions revolve around the establishment of a safe house in Regina as well.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So within the budget right now there is no designated money specifically for use for safe houses in Prince Albert or in Regina. Is that correct?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I can tell the member that we feel that we have sufficient funds in our budget to support the efforts and the priorities that are identified by the community groups in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

In Prince Albert, as I indicated, they feel that their priority is for support for a youth council and a youth drop-in centre.

In Saskatoon, as I indicated, there is a safe shelter that is in operation. They feel that that's their priority.

In the case of Regina, there are funds in the budget to support a safe shelter in Regina. But any time it comes to real estate, there's a certain reluctance to indicate to the public what it is that we're prepared to pay or what it is that we're prepared to support when it comes to real estate. Perhaps at the end of the day, when we're all done and the safe shelters are operating, we would be in a position to be more forthcoming about issues related in part to real estate.

But we feel that there are sufficient funds in the budget to support the operation of the safe shelters in Saskatoon and in Regina where they have identified that as a priority as part of their efforts and to support the operations in Prince Albert.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, \$750 million, that amount indicates to me that if you were going to apportion that between three cities for safe places, safe houses, for children to escape the streets — at least for a short time — that that would come to somewhere around 200 and maybe \$10,000 per city for a safe centre.

Two hundred and ten thousand dollars is a substantial amount of money, but I'm not sure it's enough money to be able to maintain a safe place; to be able to purchase a place as well as to maintain that place with proper counselling services, medical services, and so on, and also to staff that place.

Can you tell me just whether the people in Saskatoon have given you an indication about how much money they are going to need to provide for all services in that safe house and how

much they will need for one year?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I just want to indicate to the member that the Department of Social Services is one of a number of agencies that are helping to support the operations of the safe house in Saskatoon. It's my understanding that Saskatoon Tribal Council is also one of the parties that's involved in supporting the operation of the safe shelter. And I understand that the Department of Justice is also providing support, and there may well be other community groups that are also providing support for the operation of that through the collective effort by the Communities for Children in Saskatoon.

I would point out too, Mr. Chair, that in Saskatoon we have coming on stream in very short period of time the Saskatoon children's centre as a means of providing additional services for children that are at risk, and also have made arrangements with other agencies, parts of the department in Regina, to expand the services that will be available for children that are at risk. Children that may be referred to those services through a safe house or in other means.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, another major component, I guess, of assisting children who are at risk and children who have not only been dealing with the emotional abuse of sexual exploitation etc., but they've also been dealing with — and trying to live with — addictions to drugs and alcohol, all of which seems to go together for these unfortunate children.

Mr. Minister, it is my understanding that in the province of Saskatchewan services for youths that need drug and alcohol treatment are limited — and very limited. I understand that there are three spaces at the Calder Centre. And I think that the people of the province know as well as you know that with the closing of Whitespruce at Yorkton, which was very successful, there was a great sort of apprehension and fear on the part of people in the province that we would not have treatment centres and adequate treatment centres for youth of this province for drug and alcohol treatment.

Mr. Minister, how much money has been specifically designated for the drug and alcohol treatment for the youth of our province?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I want to preface my response by saying that the member would be well advised to ask that question of the Minister of Health, because it's the Health department through the health districts that ultimately provide services for people in Saskatchewan when it comes to addictions.

We are interested in working with the various health boards and various health districts to try to provide for an integrated, coordinated response to needs that they determine are there and needs that we assess as being there, so that there is a good response, not only on the health . . . (inaudible) . . . by us to deal with children that are at risk.

But again I would . . . I'm not in a position to answer the member's questions as to the resources that are allocated for addiction services, because again that falls under the Department of Health and the health districts.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, it is the Department of Social Services who has the mandate and the responsibility — or should have the responsibility — to determine what kind of services are needed for the youth of this province.

If you don't have any figures in front of you, I can understand that. But as far as the responsibility to know and to instruct the rest of your government as to what kind of services are needed for drug and alcohol treatment, and certainly a very pointed suggestion on your part to them that the money should be designated for the youth of our province in these areas, is something I would have expected that you would have done in budget consultations. And in doing that, I would hope that your government would have given you some response about what kind of services you were going to have for youth in this province.

Let's just get back to the Calder Centre for a moment. Is what I'm hearing and the information I'm getting correct, Mr. Minister — is the Calder Centre only providing three spaces for youth that are addicted to drugs and alcohol?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I would advise that the member should ask that question of the Minister of Health when her estimates come before this committee because, again, I'm not in a position to clearly answer the question for the members. And I wouldn't want to mislead the member by guessing as to what the answers might be and therefore would encourage her to put that to the Minister of Health.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I am deeply disappointed in a sense. And I don't, I don't mean to say that in a derogatory manner, but I am deeply disappointed that the Minister of Social Services, certainly whose mandate is to care for the children of our province that need care and aren't getting it anywhere else, should see to it that he would know how many spaces there are in this province for youth that need drug and alcohol treatment.

To be able to stand here today or to stand, as the minister has, and simply say he doesn't even know how many spaces there are at the Calder Centre that are designated for youth is a bit shocking and to me a bit disconcerting.

I would hope that you would have somewhat of a . . . in fact a very precise idea of what kind of treatment is available here, where it is, and how many spaces are being provided in relation to the number of youth that need those services.

Can you not tell me something about what spaces there are for drug and alcohol treatment for the youth of this province, in this province?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, children in Saskatchewan may at any time require any number of services from agencies over which, or departments over which, we have no direct control. It may well be, as the member suggests, that children in Saskatchewan need access to addiction services which are provided by health districts and are funded in part by the Department of Health. It may well be that children at times require access to special education services which are provided by school boards and which are funded in part by the Department of Education.

It may well be that children at some point or another may require access to child and youth services or the mental health services that are provided in Saskatchewan, which again are run by health districts but funded in part by the Department of Health. It may be that children need access to recreation services which are provided by, in many cases, by local municipalities and are funded in part, I suppose too, by the provincial government. I don't know about that.

(1630)

We try to work wherever we can at the local level, at the regional level where we have staff, with the service providers in those areas to bring to their attention the information that we have about the needs of services for children and for youth and work with them where we can to provide for an integrative response. But we are ill-positioned and we are not structured in a way to provide or to account for specific service deliveries in those areas.

Now I understand that other provinces may have organized their services differently. That is to say they may have a department that has responsibilities for child and family services and then therefore have all responsibilities for all services that are provided to that sector of the population. But we're not structured in that way. But we do try, as I said, to work with other departments and other agencies at the level that we work which is at the community level to provide for an integrated and coordinated approach to deal with the needs of children.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I understand that and I believe that what you are sort of referring to . . . although I am having a great deal of difficulty following what you're saying, because I was specifying in my question that I wanted you to indicate to me how many spaces there were for youth in the province for drug and alcohol treatment. And I really didn't get an answer to that.

I believe what you're saying is that the district health boards would be the ones that were determining the need for such treatment for children. And so it's up to them basically to ensure that that service is there. That might well be so as far as a theory goes, but the fact is that there is . . . for children we don't have crisis intervention in district health boards in most of them that I know of. There is in fact, a lack of crisis intervention for adults in our districts let alone children.

I have been told that counsellors that work with families in districts are really backlogged, and a lot of counsellors simply, because they say it's their preference not to deal with children's needs for counselling, won't do it.

So never mind drug and alcohol addictions and treatment needed for that, we don't even have a situation, it seems, in a province where there's adequate and absolute provision for children that need counselling services possibly because of their parents being addicted to a drug or alcohol. So I think that I'd just like to make the statement that crisis intervention is lacking badly within the districts.

And the other thing that's a bit disconcerting to me is, you know, when I'm hearing that social workers are hired for the districts and oftentimes they are the ones that can determine

whether they will provide a service or they won't, and to what group of people they will and to whom they won't.

So how are we going to ensure that the services that people need here are happening for people if in fact, you know, social workers can determine for themselves once they're hired who they will and they won't see.

I find that to be really badly lacking as far as direction from government on what kind of services must be provided. I don't think it's fair for a district to be hiring people, social workers, that simply say, well, I won't deal with psychotics or people that have long-term problems that need therapeutic care; I'm just a counsellor here. I don't think it's right for them to say I won't deal with children.

I'm wondering if you can comment on this and if you're aware of the kind of situation that we do have happening.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Again, Mr. Chair, when it comes to health care services, the specific responsibility is that of the health district. In fact their legislation indicates that they are mandated to do a needs assessment of the health needs of the people in their districts, and then to respond to that.

As I indicated, we try to work with the health districts to ensure that the children for whom we have responsibility and youth for whom we have responsibilities are provided the services that the health district is responsible for providing.

If there are specific instances of where services are not being provided, you know, I would ask the member to bring them to our attention and we'll certainly take that up with the health district concerned.

Having said that, we do as a department allocate funds for a broad range of residential care and treatment services. For example, we contract with Ranch Ehrlo Society to provide for up to 45 spaces for treatment services. We have contracted with the Prince Albert Grand Council to provide for up to 16 spaces in their treatment home.

These treatment homes typically deal with children that have a wide range of presenting problems — maybe some health related, maybe mental health related, maybe other issues. And we contract with those agencies to provide treatment services in a residential setting.

But again when it comes strictly to health facilities, it's the responsibility of the health districts, and so I'm ill-positioned to answer specific questions about the services being provided by health districts.

And again if the member has some specific concern about a service that needs to be provided, isn't being provided by a health district, we'd certainly be prepared to look into that for the member and get back to her.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I presume that we are getting a little bit into a Health discussion here, but when you talk about the health districts being responsible to meet the needs of their district and that's done through needs assessments and this does include childrens' needs in those

districts. The very fact is, Mr. Minister, in the last very short while, I have learned that neither Central Plains Health District nor Gabriel Springs Health District in Saskatchewan has done a needs assessment since 1994.

Now my question to you — and I guess it could be posed to the Health minister — is: is there no monitoring by your government as to whether or not the health districts' mandate is being kept up? Whether or not in fact there's an evaluation report that is done that your government should inspect, and if inspecting it they see that there are some recommendations that need to be put forward to spiff it up then maybe . . . and not maybe, I believe it's government's responsibility to do that. By not doing that, and I believe it's not being done, we don't have any assurance that the needs of children are going to be taken care of in those health districts. And, Mr. Minister, I don't expect you to respond to that if you don't wish. I will be taking it up with the Minister of Health.

But I just wanted to make one more comment before I turn the questioning over to my colleague. In this House approximately a couple of weeks ago, three weeks ago, I issued questions to you regarding the workload of . . . the caseload rather of child protection social workers in the province.

Now you had indicated to me in your response that there were 50 child protection workers that were extra that were put out there.

I have since found out that most of those, and the money I guess designated to that, is going to work with young offenders and not necessarily with child protection. In fact I was told that by a social worker from this province.

So I need you to be able to stand today and to explain to those child protection workers that are so in need of added help just in fact where you have designated the money and where, you know, whether or not it did go to young offenders.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I want to thank the member for the questions, Chair, because it provides us with an opportunity to set the record straight. I think the member has been misinformed.

In fact when we undertook to add 50 staff for the child protection services, 43 of the 50 staff were immediately allocated in the area of child protection. Another seven staff have been allocated to other priority items but we have undertaken to ensure that all those seven staff will also be transferred or allocated to child protection services as of July 1, but the other 43 are and have . . . were allocated for child protection and went to child protection.

Most of those would be in front-line staff, child protection workers. Some went into supervisory because, as you will know, the Children's Advocate also had some concerns about the level of supervision in some areas. Some also went importantly into resource or helping us to identify further resources in the way of foster homes because that was also a concern that we had. But again most have gone into front-line child protection staff. All of the positions, or the 50 positions are going into child protection work.

There have also been other staff that have been added to the department in the area of young offenders over and above these 50, so perhaps the member has been . . . her attention has been drawn to those increases in staff and led to believe that there was no increases in the area of child protection.

But again the 50 were allocated for that, have in large part gone to child protection as I said, with the exception of seven who will be there by July 1. But in addition to that, significant other staff have been added in the area of young offenders.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So, Mr. Minister, if I'm hearing you correctly you are saying that the child protection workers that were allocated — the 50 extra — were actually allocated or in the field of child protection, not necessarily in institutions like we would have in North Battleford? Is that correct . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . All right, I thank you for that.

And although I would love to go on here, we always have to be mindful of the clock and I would like to allow my colleague to present some questions to you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, and to your officials. Mr. Minister, one of your most recent statistical reports gives a definition — well actually it doesn't give a definition — of employable, fully employable. There's some terminology here I'd like some answers to. We have a line that talks about fully employable employed, fully employable unemployed, fully employable training. And then we have a number of different numbers: October '91, June '98, September '98, December '98. And a question that arises from that — a number of questions, actually — but the first question I'd like you to respond to is, how does your department define a fully employable person for purposes of granting benefits?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, if the member is referring to the quarterly statistical report of the department where there is a footnote, fully employable — a person capable of working 36 hours per week or more, and that is based on assessments made by the caseworker at that time.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying, Mr. Minister, is your definition of fully employable is someone who has . . . You're talking of the physical ability to work 36 or basically using the word 36 where most cases we're still on 40-hour weeks. But I take it you're just talking about the ability to work, put in a full weekly . . . work at a job for a full week. And that's based on a caseworker's assessment of that person's physical ability to work at that type of job and be able to be employed for eight hours a day, five days a week, or seven, or whatever the numbers.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Again I would point out to the member, Mr. Chair, that this is an assessment that is done by the caseworker when a person presents himself for income support. We try to determine their physical ability to do — to use your words I think — a full-time job. And on that basis would judge them to be fully employable.

There may be instances of where a person who is otherwise

fully employable physically, mentally may not be in a position to do that because they have other mental health problems.

There may also be other limiting factors. You may have a person who has an obligation, for example, to care for another family member which may limit their ability to actually work the 36 hours.

But essentially what we're talking about is someone that presents themselves to the caseworker; the caseworker judges them to be in a position to work, physically work 36 hours a week.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mr. Minister. How would a single parent with two children be classified? Would they be classified as a fully employable? Or what assessment is done in a situation such as that?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, when a person presents themselves to the department for income support, the fact that they are a single parent by itself would not necessarily put them into some other kind of category.

Being a single parent doesn't mean that they are not fully employable. Having said that, there may be presenting circumstances that are assessed by the caseworker at the time which suggest to the caseworker that that person is something less than fully employable. And there may be factors such as the age of the children; there may be other factors such as the special needs of a child, one or the other, that may limit that person's ability to work for the 36 hours.

But simply the categorization of single parent by itself does not exclude them from being considered to be fully employable. But again we look at each individual case, we look at the presenting circumstances and make an assessment based on that.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, another question arises. How many fully employable people are currently receiving benefits from the department?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, again I'm . . . I would refer the member — and I assume that he has this, the quarterly statistical report as of December 1998 — as of the end of December our figures show that there were 14,351 cases before our department of those who we consider to be fully employable, which for the interest of the member is 1,178 less than December of the previous year.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, the question is how many fully employable at this time? Would those numbers not be available yet? We're past the first quarter of 1999.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, at this point, at the end of March the figures I have is 16,026. But again, I would point out again to the member that typically we have seasonal patterns, that during the course of the year there may be an increase. We don't have the comparable figures for this category as compared to March of the previous year, but would point out that overall social assistance caseloads are down this March from the previous March.

But I don't have the breakout for the employable category as such, but again would point out that there are seasonal patterns. I don't have the comparison with the previous year, except all social assistance caseloads which again are down from the March of the previous year.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, are fully employable welfare recipients required to carry on a job search while receiving benefits?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, in our case planning with our clientele, we try to ascertain in any individual case what is the best plan that will lead to independence . . . that is to say, independence from social services. That may involve that person being encouraged to seek employment. That may also mean that we encourage that person to look for ways to upgrade their education as a means to, in the long-run, furthering their employment opportunities.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, so what you're basically saying then is you do ask of recipients, welfare recipients, to carry out job search. If that job . . . if that recipient though, however, doesn't have a lot of skills, what does the department . . . You talked about encouraging further education. Well how do you encourage further education?

Do you give them some assistance to go get education? If they don't have the finances or the wherewithal, then what avenue do they pursue to get that education to indeed receive or get the job skills that you're trying to suggest that they need in order to find a job in the workplace?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I would just very briefly indicate to the member that there is a joint undertaking of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training and Social Services which was commenced in August of 1997, which is the provincial training allowance which provides financial support for people who need to do a basic upgrading of their skills, such as in the area of adult basic education — quick skills, short skills programs, of a short duration of less than 12 weeks.

And we would encourage those that have very limited skills to pursue that kind of opportunity and we would also be in a position to, following that or if that's not the appropriate one, to provide adequate support in other areas.

Mr. Chair, at this point I would move the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

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