

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Whereas your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce royalty taxes on new drilling in Saskatchewan to stop job loss and create new employment in this sector.

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

These petitions come from the Carievale, Bellegarde, Bienfait, Carnduff, Estevan — across the southeast, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to finally show a serious commitment to roads and highways in Saskatchewan by urging it to increase its highways and road construction and maintenance budget by \$300 million over the next five years as called for in the Saskatchewan Party's election platform.

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the big city of Regina.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of people of the province who are concerned with the exploitation of children in the sex trade, and although the government has addressed this issue in part, there are still outstanding issues. And so I present this petition on their behalf. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to enact provincial legislation that would inject a stay-away order restraining anyone who interferes with the healing process of victims of child prostitution — anyone who threatens in any way the healing while it is taking place should be subject to a large fine — and provide the police with the authority to search a place where they believe a child is being held by pimps or perpetrators of this crime for the purpose of engaging in child prostitution activities.

And the signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Montmartre, Denzil, Cactus Lake, and other places throughout Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the state of 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.

The signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from one end of the province to the other — from Maple Creek, Piapot, to Meadow Lake, Pinehouse.

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again this afternoon bring petitions on behalf of residents of the northwest requesting:

That the confusing and dangerous entrance to the city of North Battleford be redrawn and particularly that the Highway 40 intersection with the Yellowhead be changed.

Your petitioners this afternoon come from Battleford, North Battleford, Cochin, Delmas, and — as the member for Athabasca used to say when he was bringing petitions — all across the land.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour once again to present petitions on behalf of people concerned about children with specific learning needs in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide essential funding and ensure the delivery of scientifically proven, diagnostic assessment and programming for children with learning disabilities in order that they have access to an education that meets their needs and allows them to reach their full potential.

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

The people who have signed the petition for today, Mr. Speaker, are from Pakwaw Lake, Red Earth, Shoal Lake, and Prince Albert.

And I present it with great pleasure 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, and pursuant to rule 12(7) these petitions are hereby received.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Gantefer, Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the committee's third report which is hereby tabled.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that we present our third report.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me at this time if I did not give credit to not only those members who worked so diligently in preparing this, the third report, but also to all those members who have served in this term on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The committee has worked very diligently over the last four years catching up on outstanding issues, bringing the matters under review up to a very current basis. And I think that every committee member that has served over this past term deserves a great deal of credit.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important to acknowledge the people that have chaired this committee over the past because I think under the chairmanship that has been exhibited in the past, we have seen the committee move to what I consider a very professional way of dealing with the departments' accounts. And by and large I have to say, have done so in a very non-partisan way which I think speaks well of the status of this committee and the fact that it holds the affairs of this province in high esteem.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to move, seconded by the member from Regina Northeast:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Concerning negotiations with David Milgaard regarding the issue of compensation, I give notice that I shall, on day no. 28 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: how much has been paid and incurred for negotiators in salaries and expenses since negotiations for compensation were opened with Mr. Milgaard; has a final offer of settlement been made to Mr. Milgaard; if no final offer has been made, when does the department anticipate making such an offer?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Before proceeding to introduction of guests by other members of the House, with the support of the members, the Chair would like to introduce to you a large delegation who are currently seated in the Speaker's gallery.

There are 28 in total — 26 social sciences teachers and a couple from the Department of Education — who are gathered together in Regina these days for Saskatchewan's first Social Sciences Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy and they come from in excess of 20 of your constituencies from around the province.

Now these are those who teach the future leaders of Saskatchewan, the youth of Saskatchewan, and are here specifically for professional development to assist in their knowledge and their enthusiasm for the system of parliamentary democracy as we practise it here in Saskatchewan, and as many of you will know because many of you are scheduled to have direct contact with them over the next couple of days as they meet with you face to face to discuss the practice of the institution and how you apply it.

They have already met with the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker, and clerks among others, and will be meeting with House leaders, chairs, whips, administrators, among others in the next two and a half days. Before leaving to return to the classroom, they will be involving themselves in commitments to add to the resources in the teaching of parliamentary democracy in our province to enhance the teaching of it for the future leaders of our province.

Hon. members of the House, ladies and gentlemen of the House, I ask you to show your appreciation for their efforts by extending them a warm welcome from the members of the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, someone who doesn't need much of an introduction in this legislature, but our good friend and former colleague Ken Kluz, who was the member for Kelvington-Wadena from 1991 to '95 is seated behind the bar here today. I ask all members to welcome Ken as he pays a visit to us this day.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Social Studies Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, today marks the first day of the Saskatchewan Social Studies Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy. This week our social studies teachers from across the province will be visiting the legislature. They are here to get a better understanding of provincial . . . democratic system by watching us work.

Teachers hope to increase their knowledge of the system so that their teaching will be more accurate and up to date. And myself, being part of the profession, I understand what professional teachers are. They will also take this time to discuss and develop new educational materials on democracy.

This teachers' institute will be an excellent opportunity for our educators to have first-hand discussions with government and

opposition members. It is also a chance for teachers to discuss teaching methods with each other.

Lastly, the teachers will be able to contrast how what they saw and the events of the legislature with how they are portrayed in the media.

I'd like to add that the Speaker supports the teachers' institute and his office has done much work and sees it as a local extension of the Speaker's parliamentary outreach program.

Please join me in welcoming our teachers to the legislature this week and wishing them all the best with their classes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member for Lloydminster in welcoming the teachers here today. And on behalf of the official opposition, I would like to welcome all of them participating in the SSTI (Saskatchewan Social Sciences Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy) and thank them for their continued commitment to broadening the education of parliamentary procedures to the youth of our province.

The SSTI program is an exceptional way for social science teachers to gain a better understanding about the realities of democracy and its importance in our society.

The program also allows teachers to obtain first-hand knowledge of parliamentary procedures and democracy at its finest. The information they will take back to their classrooms is vital to the youth of Saskatchewan as they are our future leaders.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also would like to mention a face that might be familiar to people in the gallery, my Co-Chair from the Calgary Declaration, also from Esterhazy, is again a member. And if all teachers in Saskatchewan are as dedicated to the parliamentary system as this teacher, our children are well served.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Appreciation of Registered Nurses

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From time to time several of the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) have risen to tell us of their pride of their offspring.

Well today I want to tell this House that my son is a RN (Registered Nurse) presently working in the oncology unit of Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon. He's glad to be back at work serving his patients. Like many other younger nurses, he has had to survive with casual shifts here and there, as new permanent positions are all but non-existent.

Hopefully that will now change with the new agreement, and people entering the profession will be offered permanent, full-time positions that will allow them to build a career here in Saskatchewan and not in Texas or Ontario.

We do not want them leaving the province as so many nurses had to do a few years ago because of the cutbacks.

I ask all members to join with me in expressing our appreciation, not only of my son, but of all the 8,400 registered nurses in Saskatchewan who are back caring for the sick of this province. Their efforts are deeply appreciated. We are grateful for them and are proud of them all, whether we are related or not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hudson Bay Snowmobile Club Wins Excellence Award

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As winter draws to a close I would like to bring the work of one important club to everyone's attention. In my home riding of Carrot River Valley, the Hudson Bay Trail Riders Snowmobile Club has had another outstanding year. The club has been boosting the town's tourism industry by holding snowmobile rallies. It has entertained the constituency by providing safe and well-groomed trails. The club is run entirely by volunteers and paid for through fundraising.

This past summer the snowmobile club was recognized for its efforts. They were invited to Michigan to receive the 1998 Snowmobile Excellence Award for outstanding promotion and development of snowmobiling — an international award, Mr. Speaker, and a wonderful achievement. The club was commended for showcasing the sport of snowmobiling and promoting safe and responsible riding.

And I know that I probably shouldn't be mentioning winter. It is after all a few months away, but winter in Hudson Bay, the moose capital of Saskatchewan, the snowmobile trail capital of Saskatchewan, is wonderful. Come and visit us this winter and enjoy the trails and hospitality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Thanks to Volunteers During Health Care Crisis

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention today the number of volunteers who have come forward during this very difficult time for health care in our province. In the North Central Health District alone we have seen volunteers from all over the province and as far away as from Alberta. They're there to look after their families and friends. They're there to assist in any way they can in the acute care, and in particular the long-term care facilities. And it's especially important with the withdrawal of services from the support staff.

I want to take this opportunity to commend these volunteers who continue diligently to assist in our health facilities. We cannot express our appreciation enough to these people who have taken time from their own jobs and travelled many miles to pitch in at this time of crisis for health care brought on by this government in Saskatchewan. Please join me in expressing our sincere appreciation to the volunteers of the entire province who have put their shoulders to the wheel when the government has failed them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Food for Learning Week

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Mayor Doug Archer last week proclaimed Regina Food for Learning Week in recognition of the program's tenth anniversary. There was an anniversary celebration on Saturday to honour the non-profit corporation and its 115 volunteers and staff.

Regina Food for Learning was started in 1988, 10 years prior to now, to oversee the development of a child food service program for Regina's schools and their neighbourhoods. Since then the program, Mr. Speaker, has provided over 344,000 meals and snacks to hungry children throughout Regina at 19 different locations actually. The children are also taught about nutrition and how to prepare basic low-cost meals.

The program, Mr. Speaker, receives department funding through the REACH (Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger) program and it's only a small part of the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children.

The president of the Regina Food for Learning, Judy Tilling, and the rest of the staff deserve huge credit for the way they have successfully run this program and I wish to thank them for their hard work and dedication throughout the years, their dedication to helping young people who are less fortunate, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, for fuelling education. So thank you to them all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wayne Gretzky Retires

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I think, Mr. Speaker, I'm doing this statement because I've been told many times I look like him, not play like him — look like him. As we are all aware that after 21 glorious seasons in the NHL (National Hockey League), Wayne Gretzky officially retired from the NHL yesterday.

Gretzky has simply been the most dominant and compelling hockey player in history. He holds over 61 NHL records including ones that will never be broken. These include highs of 92 goals and 215 points in a single season. A mark likely that will also never be broken.

Gretzky has accumulated an amazing 894 goals, 1,963 assists, and 2,857 points over his career. He has averaged 1.92 points per game since entering the NHL as an 18-year-old.

In fact, Gretzky has been a superstar almost all of his life. When he was 10 years old, he scored 378 goals for his atom league team in Brantford, Ontario. Another record that still holds.

But what makes Gretzky such a Canadian icon isn't just the records he holds, it was also his off-ice presence. Always polite, charming, unselfish, and humble — maybe that's where we have a similarity — he was someone all Canadians were proud to call their own.

Gretzky is truly a Canadian legend. It has been said that he

represents all that is right about Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish Wayne Gretzky a wonderful retirement and thank him for enriching all of our lives. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Small Business Loans Association Program

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The small business loans association program can be held responsible today for the creation of many jobs in rural areas. In Wilkie alone, 26 new full-time jobs and five part-time jobs were created by the Wilkie Development Corporation with the help of SBLA (small business loans association).

Our government provides funding to the various small business loans association programs as a way of investing at the local level. Small businesses such as hair salons, grocery stores, and hardwares have used the help of SBLA. The program can now make loans of up to \$10,000 to help create and maintain jobs.

The track record of the small business loans association is looking very good. During 1998 the SBLA program created more than 360 jobs and maintained 565 more, mostly in rural communities. Since it began, the SBLA has created and maintained over 12,800 jobs — an outstanding accomplishment. I'd like to commend the SBLA and the Wilkie Development Corporation for their hard work and efforts in rural Saskatchewan.

It was a pleasure for me on Thursday to recognize Wilkie Development Corporation achievements and to congratulate Eugene Boucher, the Chair, on their accomplishments and I wish them continued success.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Management of Health Care

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, it took almost eight years of NDP (New Democratic Party) mismanagement but you finally succeeded in bringing the health care system to its knees and every family in the province is going to pay the price for the NDP's spectacular health care failure — 8,400 nurses on strike for 10 days, 1,800 surgeries cancelled, 185 sick people airlifted out of the province, and the lives of thousands of families thrown into chaos.

Mr. Premier, your government's cancerous management of the health care system has got to stop. Mr. Premier, have you learned anything from this disaster? What are you going to do to address the serious health care problems that are forcing nurses onto the picket line? What actions will you take to fix eight years of failed NDP health care mismanagement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, you'd swear

by listening to the member that the health system in this province doesn't really do a lot each and every day. Well, Mr. Speaker, each and every day 35,000 people come in contact with the system. Every day, Mr. Speaker, people go to see their physicians, they see specialists, they get tests done, they have operations in the hospital, they receive services from home care, they receive services from ambulance care. Mr. Speaker, the amount of services that our health system provides is absolutely phenomenal.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget we have added an additional \$195 million and we are now spending \$1.9 billion per year or 40 per cent of overall provincial spending on our health system, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our health system does work — it does work. It does provide services to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the strike is behind us, and, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward with getting on with the business of providing health services to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, all we get from your Minister of Health is tired, old NDP sloganeering. But all your worn-out NDP slogans in the world can't hide your government's brutal record. The longest waiting lists in the country; doctors driven out of the province by high taxes; nurses driven out by intolerable working conditions; and closed hospitals — that's your record, sir. No amount of NDP double-talk is going to change that.

Mr. Premier, there is a crisis of public confidence in the NDP's ability to manage health services. Instead of taking the nurses to court, you should be focusing on a cure for a very sick health care system.

Mr. Premier, what commitment can you give nurses today that the intolerable working conditions you have inflicted upon them will improve?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Well obviously, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just can't stand good news. Mr. Speaker, 8,400 registered nurses in this province are now back at work. Mr. Speaker, this particular collective agreement has given nurses what they've been asking for for over a decade, as I understand it, even while his predecessors, the Conservative Party, were in office in the late '80s and early 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, in this collective agreement nurses have a way to address nursing practice issues, Mr. Speaker. They're going to see the movement from casual jobs to more full-time jobs. Nurses now will have across the system seniority provisions. We think, in this collective agreement, there are many provisions, Mr. Speaker, that will address nurses' workplace and workload issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently the minister hasn't learned a thing from the health care disaster. People don't want more useless rhetoric, they want solutions. They want leadership, not NDP political fixes.

Mr. Premier, how much has this health care crisis cost us? How much did the NDP spend on airlifting sick people out of the province? How much did taxpayers spend on your NDP newspaper propaganda campaign? How much will it cost to deal with 1,800 cancelled surgeries?

Mr. Premier, how much did it cost taxpayers for your temper tantrum? What is the price tag going to be for the nurses' strike?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I can't imagine the position of the member opposite. There are now 8,400 registered nurses that have returned to work. We have a situation where we have a memorandum of understanding, Mr. Speaker, where that memorandum of understanding addresses the kind of issues that my colleague, the Associate Minister of Health, has been fighting for since she became president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses in the '90s and before, Mr. Speaker.

We have in this collective agreement . . . we are going to see the conversion of permanent and part-time jobs to full-time jobs, as the member from North Battleford has referred to. That is in the memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to have binding, independent assessments where nurses' workload and nursing practice issues can be addressed if they can't be addressed by the employer. And we're going to have system-wide seniority.

Mr. Speaker, the nurses in this province have been fighting for these issues for over a decade — long before our government came to office. Mr. Speaker, this collective agreement gives them the right to address the workplace issues that they've been fighting for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, after bringing the health care system to a complete halt for almost two weeks, you still haven't solved a thing and clearly you haven't learned a thing.

The nurses still don't have a contract. The nurses are still overworked. And binding agreements, we remember those with the judges — when the government didn't agree with it so they just broke the law. The nurses are still leaving Saskatchewan at an alarming rate, and there's still a massive shortage of nurses in our hospital, hospitals. And the cancer clinic employees are still on strike, Mr. Speaker.

And yet the Minister of Health says she wouldn't change a thing about how the NDP handled the nurses' strike. First you say you heard the nurses loud and clear. And then you say you weren't concerned about legislating nurses back to work and imposing a settlement. Nothing the NDP did this week improved the mode or working conditions of nurses.

Mr. Premier, what new solutions do you have for nurses who are calling the moving company today because they can't stand to work another day under the NDP's health care plan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to

remind the member what his party has said about health care. Mr. Speaker, what they have said is that they are basically going to freeze health spending at the rate of inflation. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's about \$18 million.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, we have added an additional \$195 million. Let me remind the member that there is additional funding to deal with waiting times in the province of Saskatchewan. Let me remind the member — and I know he loves to look at his computers and the Internet and so on — go across the country and see what's happening all across the country in the area of recruitment and retention, not only for RNs, Mr. Speaker, but other health professionals, physicians, and specialists.

Mr. Speaker, you would think by listening to that member that Saskatchewan is the only province that is addressing this issue. Well, Mr. Speaker, go across the land and there are problems everywhere, Mr. Speaker. And I will say to the people of this province that we have a collective agreement — or we have the framework for a collective agreement — and we think that we're going to address the issues that nurses have spoken about so eloquently in the last 10 or 11 days.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Call for Election

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 years the Premier took mismanagement of the health care system to a new low level. He almost single-handedly destroyed the health care system in this province and now he's getting cold feet about calling an election.

The Premier is already making excuses to weasel out of the June election. Mr. Premier, your four years are up in June. It's time for the people of Saskatchewan to pass judgment on your dismal record — the highest taxes, the worst roads, the worst job-creation record, and a total disaster of the health care system.

Mr. Premier, it's time for an election. Will you commit to a June election now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that obviously the election will come soon enough, and I want to say to the member opposite that it will probably be too soon for that rump of a Tory Party sitting on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite that Tories wishing for an early election is like a turkey wishing for an early Christmas. And it will come soon enough. Relax. June is the first option the Premier has coming forward to call the election. And I say to the members opposite: be prepared, the election will come in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Premier, I know you

don't get to call the election; the Premier does. For very good reason you don't get to call the election. You are completely and your government is completely out of new ideas and your record is one of complete failure.

I have a copy of your 1991 platform. This is what you are going to do for the people of Saskatchewan. You're going to negotiate improvements to GRIP (gross revenue insurance program); you cancelled GRIP. You are going to have better health care; you've destroyed health care. You're going to eliminate the need for food banks. And there are more people on welfare in this province than ever before. And here's one more promise that you, Mr. Premier, made and that was to hold general elections every four years.

You've broken every other promise that you made in the '91 election campaign and now I think you're getting ready to break this one as well.

Mr. Premier, what are you afraid of? Why don't you just call the election today and let the people of Saskatchewan decide who's going to be the next government?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, when we call the election, when the Premier calls the election, we will remind the people of Saskatchewan of the record of that Tory administration when they were in government. And if you go through, one by one, of the members sitting on that side of the House they were either members — as the member from Moosomin — of the Devine government or they went to conventions and supported Devine and the administration that led this province, that led this province to the brink of disaster in terms of the economy.

The highest per capita debt in the country at \$15 billion in total, high taxes, record numbers of young people leaving the province. I say to that member opposite, when you talk about their record, they yell and holler because they try to pretend that they're not Tories.

We will remind the people over and over again that you're Tories and we will remind them of your record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, we have a new health care crisis in the House today. This is a government that's suffering from cold feet and no backbone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Your mismanagement of the health care system is not a reason to delay the election — it's an excuse. And that's all it is.

If we have to wait for you to fix all the problems that the NDP have created, we'll never have an election in this province. And that's exactly the reason why we need an election in Saskatchewan — so we can start cleaning up the mess of the NDP record. But instead we have the Premier acting like Lucien Bouchard waiting for the winning conditions to be put in place before he calls an election.

Mr. Premier, your commitment was to hold a general election every four years. Your four years are up. Stop making an excuse . . . making excuses. Call the election and let the people decide.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that member from Kindersley, it's laughable to think about what he's saying. He represents the seat, he represents the seat and was elected as a Tory where Bob Andrew, where Bob Andrew, when he resigned, the seat was left open for how long? For two years, two years, Grant Devine failed to call a by-election in Kindersley. And he has the audacity to come here and say, as a Tory, that we should call the election today, in April. That's nonsense.

I say to the member opposite: open your eyes, look at your record, look at your record on taxation, on debt, on sale of assets. And I say to you, you should not want an election too soon because you may be just transferred back to the private sector.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Status of Negotiations with Nurses

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the injunction against the nurses has been put off for a week. Both sides asked the judge to postpone it. What surprises us the most is why the NDP would still go ahead with these outrageous fines. Grudgingly the nurses are back at work.

Mr. Premier, you already put a gun to the nurses' heads to force them back to work. Why are you still intent on public mugging? Rather than poison the waters completely for collective bargaining in this province, we ask the Premier to call off the dogs and stop the court injunction now. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this matter is before the courts and so I can't comment on this specifically.

But what I would say is that in our constitution, in how we've organized our society in Canada, the judges have a role to play in how the system works. And I think it's incumbent upon us to allow the process to work and deal with the issues and the laws and the courts and the respect for the courts.

And I would beg all hon. members of this Assembly to recognize your role to uphold the laws of our country and to respect the respective roles of our Legislative Assembly, our executive branch, and of our judiciary. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier isn't a negotiator or a conciliator — he's a terminator. He terminated the nurses' right to strike, he terminated their right to bargain, and now he has terminated their future in Saskatchewan.

Nurses on the picket line in Davidson, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon have said that after the way they've been treated by this NDP, they're out of here. In other words, because of this

NDP terminator, they won't be back. Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier to tell us part two of his plan. Is there some magic solution that he has, or are we just going to have to wait for Terminator 2: Judgment Day, when the nurses terminate him and this NDP government?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the people of the province will know, there is a memorandum of understanding that has been arrived at between the employer, the province of Saskatchewan, and SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses).

Mr. Speaker, the SUN leadership returns to the bargaining table to bargain the collective agreement in the days ahead, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this memorandum of understanding, there are significant gains for registered nurses in this province in terms of addressing their workplace and workload issues.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that people want those issues addressed — overtime, workload, nursing practice, the need to make more full-time jobs. Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that once the collective agreement is implemented, that we will have nurses coming to the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, in the nine days the NDP kept the nurses on the picket line, the government didn't have to pay millions in salaries. Now it looks like the nurses are able to go back to work, albeit after a gun being held to their head. Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: with all the millions the NDP did not pay out in salaries during the strike, will you promise that that money, those millions, in addition to the agreement, will go into the recruitment and retention of nurses in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, any time there is a withdrawal of labour by a group of working people who go on strike, one of the ramifications of that is that you do not receive your normal salary for the hours and days that you work.

Mr. Speaker, this province spends \$1.9 billion on health care. I can assure the member that next year, when *Public Accounts* are released, all \$1.9 billion will have been spent on health services for the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, at the start of the year, the NDP government said its priority would be to recruit nurses, especially after the Regina Health District was forced to close 64 beds because of a lack of nurses. In the NDP budget, they said health care would be taken care of because of restored federal government funding and the money would go to front-line nurses. Now the NDP offers less money than what Alberta and Manitoba nurses are getting, after legislating nurses back to work and threatening them with fines and jail.

Does the Premier think his NDP tactics are an effective way of attracting nurses to this great province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the member is that if you look at nurses' beginning salaries in this province — that's their entry-level salary — they have, I

believe, the third or fourth highest entry-level salary in the country. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the top salary before this collective agreement, we were about sixth in the country — ahead of Manitoba. Those are the facts, member.

With this collective agreement, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that we will see significant improvement in the workplace for registered nurses. I'm also confident, Mr. Speaker, that we have addressed the issues of pay, particularly our commitment to implement pay equity in 2001. I'm not aware of any other registered nurse in Canada that will have that kind of pay equity implemented in their collective agreement.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, this question is for the government's chief labour negotiator once again — the Premier. The Premier has shown himself to be a man willing to trample the rights of workers at a moment's notice. The Premier has shown himself to be a man willing to stick his nose into bargaining when it's not going his way. By imposing settlements, the Premier has made the collective bargaining process a farce in this province. Why should anyone else bother to negotiate when they know 2, 2, and 2 is going to be shoved down their throats. And if that's too hard to swallow, maybe the Premier will offer a toothbrush.

I ask the Premier if his take-it-or-leave-it offer is the best that can be expected by any other union?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I can tell or share with the member is that all of the Crown corporations and the civil service and I understand also third parties, about 98 per cent of the collective agreements have been agreed to in the public sector and all have agreed to the mandate of 2, 2, and 2 plus 1.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan only has a limited amount of fiscal capacity, Mr. Speaker. There's only so much that the people of this province can pay for.

Mr. Speaker, inflation in this province today is less than 1.4 per cent, and yet in fairness to working people in this province who have certainly assisted the province deal with debt and deficit, we have a collective agreement that . . .

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I was saying, Mr. Speaker, is the people of this province pay, you know, taxes for the revenues of this province. This is all we can afford, Mr. Speaker. Now if we had to sort of take their advice, I'm not sure that we wouldn't be back in a deficit position and adding to the provincial debt. I'm not interested in going there, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think any citizen in this province is as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Policing in Southwest Saskatchewan

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my

question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, people in southwest Saskatchewan are again expressing serious concerns about government plans to cut policing services. Southwest Saskatchewan is thinly populated and has been policed for decades with one- and two-officer detachments.

Now the towns of Eastend, Climax, Val Marie, and Consul have reason to believe they are about to lose their police officers. Mr. Speaker, that means the entire southwest corner of the province would be policed out of detachments in Maple Creek, Shaunavon, and Swift Current.

Mr. Minister, can you assure the people of Climax, Eastend, Val Marie, and Consul that their communities will continue to be policed by RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officers who live there?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, our policy in this government is to provide policing throughout the whole province in a way that's sustainable and affordable for all of us and that provides safe communities for everyone.

The RCMP have been working with the communities in southwest Saskatchewan and they have told the Consul and Eastend people and I think Climax as well, that they're not planning to leave that area. But they want to work with those people to figure out some of the ways that some of the costs can be shared.

And practically, I know and I've been receiving regular reports as these discussions have continued, that they're continuing to talk with the people in those areas. But there is no plan to have the police officers leave those communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 25 — The Education Amendment Act, 1999/Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I move that Bill 25, The Education Amendment Act, 1999 be introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 241 — The Resumption of Services (Nurses - SUN) Amendment Act, 1999

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 241, The Resumption of Services (Nurses - SUN) Amendment Act, 1999.

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

MOTIONS

Leave of Absence of Members

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I ask leave to propose a motion on the absence of members.

Leave granted.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the member from Cannington:

That leave of absence be granted to the members for Saskatoon Mount Royal, Saskatoon Southeast, and Rosthern for Monday, April 19, 1999 and Tuesday, April 20, 1999 to attend the Midwestern Legislative Exchange at St. Paul, Minnesota on behalf of this Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ward: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to convert question 53 to motions for returns (debatable).

The Speaker: — Item no. 1, question 53 is converted to notice of motions for returns (debatable).

Mr. Ward: — I'd like to table the answer to question 54, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to item no. 2, question 54 is tabled.

Mr. Ward: — Yes, I'd like to convert question no. 55 to motions for returns (debatable), Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Item no. 3, question 55 is converted to notice of motions for returns (debatable).

Mr. Ward: — In the spirit of open and accountable government, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the answer to question 56.

The Speaker: — The answer to item no. 4, question 56 is provided.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 21 — The Coroners Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Coroners Act, 1999. The legislation governing coroners sets out the rules respecting those deaths which must be reported; the rules how investigations of the circumstances surrounding the death will occur; and the rules respecting inquests.

The Coroners Act has not been amended since 1980 and most of the current provisions result from a reform of coroners' legislation in 1936. The Coroners Act provides a framework for the coroner system. That system requires that unnatural deaths be investigated for the following purposes: to determine the facts surrounding a death; to determine the identity of the deceased; to determine the time, place, and medical cause of death; to identify health and safety hazards; to make

recommendations to prevent deaths in the future; and to maintain public confidence that due attention and concern is afforded deaths that occur under unusual circumstances.

The Coroners Act, 1999 requires that deaths must be reported to a coroner where anyone has reason to believe a death has occurred as a result of violence, misadventure, from a cause other than disease or sickness, or as a result of negligence or misconduct or malpractice on the part of others.

The coroner must make inquiries and examine the circumstances surrounding the death. The coroner may order that a post-mortem examination of the body be conducted. If it is necessary to satisfy public concern and to provide a public airing of the circumstances, the coroner will hold an inquest.

The proposed amendments to this Act include provisions to update the Act and make it more relevant to the issues faced by coroners in the late 1990s in Saskatchewan. Many of the changes give rules and procedures for situations where the current Act is now silent.

For example, the new Act will give guidance to the Chief Coroner, other coroners, and those people dealing with the coroners in investigating unusual deaths.

Mr. Speaker, while the current Act has proved very flexible over the years, the lack of clarity in certain areas has made it difficult at times to determine what rules and procedures apply to specific situations.

Provisions in this new Act expand the instances where a death must be reported to a coroner. Presently unnatural and unexplained deaths and all deaths of inmates in penitentiaries and correctional facilities must be reported.

The new Act will also require deaths to be reported where the death occurred in the course of the deceased's employment; the deceased was a child under care pursuant to The Child and Family Services Act; the deceased was an involuntary resident of a mental health facility; or the death resulted from the actions of a police officer.

The coroner's powers of investigation are specified in the new Act. In an investigation the coroner may take possession of the body; cordon off for 48 hours the area where a death occurred; take charge of objects that are the personal property of the deceased and are found near the body; remove objects that might be required to establish the identity of the deceased and the cause and manner of death; order a post-mortem examination; and require the assistance of police officers during the course of an investigation.

The Act also establishes, Mr. Speaker, the criteria that the coroner shall apply to determine whether an inquest is necessary. These criteria are: to ascertain the identity of the deceased and determine how, when, where, and by what means the death occurred; to inform the public of the circumstances surrounding a death where it is necessary to do so; to bring dangerous practices or conditions in order to make recommendations which will prevent deaths; and to educate the public as to dangerous practices or conditions in order to prevent deaths.

With respect to a coroner's inquest, Mr. Speaker, the inquest will continue to require a jury of six persons. The new Act will use the random jury selection process specified in The Jury Act, 1998. However, there are two exceptions to a totally random jury selection process.

They are: in employment-related deaths, the coroner will be able to include someone on the jury who has expertise with respect to the type of employment involved; and where the deceased was an Aboriginal person, the coroner will be able to include on the jury one or more persons of Aboriginal ancestry who are chosen from sources specified in the regulations pursuant to the Act.

The new Act specifies circumstances surrounding holding an inquest. These are: inquests will be held in public unless the coroner believes that there is a possibility of serious harm or injury to any person as a result of the hearing being made public; the coroner is required to give notice of an inquest to any person who requests to be advised if an inquest is to be held, to the next of kin of the deceased, to persons who the coroner thinks have a substantial interest in the inquest, and to persons whose conduct may be called into question by the inquest.

As with many of the procedural provisions relating to inquests, this is already done as a matter of practice by coroners.

Currently if a person has been charged with a criminal offence arising out of the death, the inquest cannot be held or must be discontinued until the criminal charge has been dealt with by the courts. These rules will continue to apply, but the new Act also allows the Chief Coroner to apply these provisions to provincial offences as well as criminal offences.

In addition to adjourning the inquest after a charge has been laid, the coroner will be able to order a ban on publication of evidence to ensure that a person who may undergo a trial is not subjected to publicity arising from evidence at the inquest that may prejudice his or her right to a fair trial.

The coroner is given power to ban publication of evidence at an inquest which results in a finding of self-inflicted death. Thus release of information could be limited to the name, address, and occupation of the deceased, plus the fact the death was found to be self-inflicted. This could be done to avoid embarrassment for the family of the deceased or to prevent copycat situations.

(1430)

There are several new procedural provisions respecting inquests that deal with the rights of parties withstanding, summoning witnesses, taking evidence, admitting of documents, adjournment of proceedings, recording evidence, and contempt proceedings. Many of these provide legislative authority for what is already occurring as a matter of practice. As is now the case, the jury is directed to determine the name of the deceased; the time, place, and cause of death; and to make any recommendations that it considers appropriate in order to avoid similar deaths.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, an effective coroner's investigation

system reflects the value our society places on human life and promotes accountability and public assurance that the government is concerned about preventing deaths. An effective coroner's system results in enhanced credibility and public confidence in our justice system. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the changes being made in this Act contribute to the continued effectiveness of our coroner's system.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act respecting Coroners.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak to the second reading of The Coroners Act, 1999, and I'm pleased — very pleased — to see this Act brought forward because in 1996, 1997, and 1998, I brought to the attention of the ministers of Justice and Social Services and to the members of the legislature the need to have more thorough and extensive investigations into the circumstances surrounding deaths, especially the deaths of children.

At that time I discovered there were an inordinate number of children under the age of one dying in Saskatchewan. And I also discovered that there was no mechanism in place for thoroughly investigating the circumstances surrounding those deaths. Without this, it is virtually impossible to identify ways to prevent these deaths. So I believe this Act is way past due; but I'm very relieved that it has finally come about, Mr. Speaker, and I will be looking forward to further discussion with the minister on this Bill in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 27 — The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 1999.

In October, 1998 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Re Eurig Estate* that probate fees in Ontario were invalid because they were enacted without proper authority. The effect of the decision was suspended for six months until April 22, 1999 to allow time for governments to amend their legislation to provide proper authority.

Mr. Speaker, this Act responds to that decision. The amount payable on an application for letters probate or letters of administration has in the past been set out in Queen's Bench regulations. This Bill puts those amounts into the Act itself. The amount payable remains the same.

All of the provinces are required to take steps in light of the Supreme Court decision. Similar Acts have already been passed in Ontario, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick; the other provinces are preparing to follow suit.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

as the Minister of Justice just explained, the reason this Bill is coming forward is because of a Supreme Court decision. And in layman's terms what happened in that Supreme Court decision, Mr. Speaker, was that they made the decision that because there was no services being provided, these were not actually fees for service but rather were a form of taxation — a taxation of .7 per cent on the value of the estate being probated, Mr. Speaker.

The court determined that because there was no service involved in the collection of these fees, that it then had to be placed under statute to make it legal to collect this kind of taxation, Mr. Speaker. And that's why this particular Bill is coming forward today.

I have to ask the minister — and I hope he will explain it when this Bill goes to Committee of the Whole — why does this particular fee or tax, why is it in place when there is actually no service provided for it? It's simply an estate tax. It's a tax on dying, Mr. Speaker, pure and simple. The collection of a taxation on the total value of an estate being probated simply is a tax grab by this government — and by previous governments, Mr. Speaker because this is not a new tax, this tax has been in place for a number of years now — and it's simply a tax grab by the government on dying. It takes the money away from the heirs and places it in the hand of the government.

And why, Mr. Speaker, is the amount established as \$7 on 1,000? Does this Act give the minister the authority to change that at any point in time without coming to the House? Does the minister have to come to the House if he wants to make an adjustment in it, Mr. Speaker?

We believe that estate taxes are not the thing that we should be doing, Mr. Speaker. The taxes should be upfront where people can see them and not on the dying.

Mr. Speaker, there's one other thing on this particular Act that is very NDP — very NDP. Because again, Mr. Speaker, they're deeming something to have happened. They go back, Mr. Speaker, into the past and deem that this Act was in place before today. That all the things that were done previously under the legislation that was in place, that the Supreme Court ruled was invalid, now becomes legal.

We remember that, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Rosetown did it to farmers. He deemed that the GRIP contract was in place before the deadline ran out. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that that was not the case. Every farmer in this province knows it, and the NDP in this piece of legislation are doing it again, Mr. Speaker. They're deeming something to have happened when in reality it did not.

The same thing happened, Mr. Speaker, with the judges, with the judges. They deemed a settlement to have been in place when in actual fact they broke the law, Mr. Speaker, in settling the labour negotiations with the judges. When they had binding arbitration . . . they had binding arbitration in place, Mr. Speaker, that this government had introduced; they broke it and deemed a settlement to have been in place. That's what this government does — they deem everything to have happened some time in the past and make what was illegal, legal.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are a number of people around this

province that have some interest in this particular piece of Bill . . . this Bill. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 28 — The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 1999/Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi sur l'administration des successions

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 1999. This Bill proposes the same change as that outlined in The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 1999.

In 1998, a new Act was passed which divided The Queen's Bench Act into The Queen's Bench Act and The Administration of Estates Act. These Acts have not yet been proclaimed. When they are proclaimed, the new system of setting out in the Act the amount payable on an application for letters probate or letters of administration will continue.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to amend The Administration of Estates Act.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Act, like the previous one, deals with the issues of probate that were brought forward by the Supreme Court in the settlement of the issue that was before them, where it was determined that the probate fees being charged were not legal, Mr. Speaker.

And this is an attempt to do exactly that, to make what was happening in the past, legal today. There is no deeming in this particular piece of legislation though, Mr. Speaker, because it's dealt with under Bill No. 27.

The same issues arise though, Mr. Speaker, with this piece of legislation and there are a number of people across this province who are interested in it. Therefore I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 8 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 1999

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To my left is John Edwards, the acting assistant deputy minister. Behind him is Ken Kolb, senior policy analyst. And behind me is Keith Comstock, acting executive director. All from the Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome the minister's officials once again today.

And on the assessment Bill amendment we are talking about today, I think we've fully answered our questions and we'll let this Bill proceed at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

(1445)

Clause 9

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, on clause 9, a proposed House amendment, a copy of which has been distributed to the members opposite. It was noticed in discussion the other day that in the printed Bill that we were using, there was an amendment required to:

clause 12(1)(f) of *The Assessment Management Agency Act*, as being enacted by Clause 9 of the printed Bill, by striking out "pursuant" in the fourth line and substituting "pursuit".

I so move.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Madame Minister, all I would ask in this case is, what does this change . . . or what are the intentions of this change, or was this an oversight in the original amendment?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this is simply, if you might say, a typo. If you will check the record of *Hansard*, I am so eagle-eyed that in reading this clause in response to a question from the member opposite, I did read "in pursuit of that objective" but the text reads "in pursuant" which doesn't make sense, so we're just changing the typo. Thank you.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 10 to 19 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 14 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 1999

The Chair: — It is the same minister, same officials.

Clauses 1 to 19 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 13 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 1999

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the minister, we are getting a fair number of calls on the issue of principal residence, which is leading to certain inequities that I know the minister is familiar with, and I would like to ask her

if the department has proposals for dealing with those situations.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite is most likely aware, if he was here during the committee discussion the other day, that the department set up following the last reassessment, a review committee — two review committees actually — one on the assessment experience and one on exemptions province-wide, all exemptions.

At this moment, the conclusions and reports of that very broad-based committee, those committees are being circulated back to the members of the committees and the various stakeholder organizations for their feedback and discussion. And when that is received by the government we will then, as a minister and department forward some proposals to the government for action. But obviously given the time of the legislative cycle, those proposals will not likely take the form of legislation until the next session in 2000.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Also I know the minister has on many occasions explained that our property tax is an *ad valorem* system; nonetheless, it is the expectation of most taxpayers that in one way or another taxes are related to services.

With reassessment, people living — especially in some of the resort areas at the lakes — find themselves now paying basically city taxes with no services or very minimal services I should say. This is partly because of the view tax which of course is not related to anything that the municipality has given them.

But it seems to me we want to encourage people — the trend that is occurring right now of people retiring by building permanent homes at our lakes rather than leaving the province — we want to encourage that. But they are being discouraged when they find themselves paying city taxes without city services. And even on an *ad valorem* system there seems to be something not quite right about that, and I would ask the minister to please address us on that.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the review committees did examine issues related to the *ad valorem* system that we and every taxing authority in North America at least uses for local taxation purposes.

And I can only assure the member that we recognize that resort property and second residences are very important. A lot of people don't realize that 1 out of 20 or 5 per cent of the residences in this province are secondary or cottage, if you like, lake residences. So we recognize it as an important issue and I can assure the member that membership of the resort communities organizations were stakeholders that were included in the review committees. So the many issues that the member raises on behalf of his constituents have been taken into account in those discussions, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 20 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 12 — The Northern Municipalities
Amendment Act, 1999**

Clauses 1 to 22 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1500)

**Bill No. 17 — The Local Government Election
Amendment Act, 1999**

Clause 1

The Chair: — I see that the minister has one change in officials. I would ask her to introduce him.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, behind me is Michael Littlewood, the executive director of legislation and school administration from the Department of Education, has joined us for the purposes of this discussion. And on my left, who has moved from behind me to the front, is Keith Comstock. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Madam Minister, we can only be so agreeable for so long and then it wears thin; we have to put an end to it. Madam Minister, I'd like to welcome your new official that's here today, that's joined you now. And we just have a few questions on this Bill, Madam Minister, because the changes I believe are fairly mild changes.

Madam Minister, you say the municipalities have been asking for a change in rules regarding how and where they must advertise notice of elections. Could you actually just explain how you've loosened these rules up?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it's the definition of newspaper that is changing. And as the member will be aware, it is usually . . . Just take, for example, the Saskatoon region — I'll give the one that I'm most familiar with — there used to be a requirement the way that it was worded, that an ad would have to run regarding elections in the newspaper in the area that had the greatest circulation.

Well it costs a great deal more to advertise, for example, in the *Star-Phoenix* than it does, for example, in the *Rosthern Valley News* or *The Village Press* which circulate in the rural areas.

So this is designed to allow municipalities to advertise requirements for election in a local periodical that is distributed at least weekly and in a publication other than that used exclusively for advertising. So it must meet the definition of newspaper but it's more flexible and allows municipalities to cover the area where they need to inform people but at their discretion at a lesser cost.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree with that change. I think it will be a cost-saving measure for the municipality involved.

You still though do not allow these notices to be placed in advertising supplements even though these types of papers

probably have a wider circulation than the paid subscription papers. Was that even a consideration this time in the changes that you've made?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we would respond that it was considered. But given actually the importance of these and given that sometimes advertising supplements have a fairly sporadic distribution — for example, I receive mail on a rural route myself — and just depending on the distributor of the advertising supplement, certain areas might be covered and certain areas might not.

So the subscription list for a local weekly is likely to be more representative of the population.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you've changed the rules regarding the ordering of names on the ballot. Are they currently listed strictly in alphabetical and was this seen as an advantage to those with names beginning with an early letter in the alphabet? And I guess that's always the way we've done it. I've never really thought about it being an advantage to everybody, but because my name begins with B I kind of like the old system better. Was that why this change was actually made?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, a number of issues were considered in this. Of course as the member opposite knows, I'm not running for re-election so I don't care if my name starts with T and is at the bottom of the ballot. I was able to get elected in spite of that considerable handicap.

I think it's . . . it's more than mythology that the first name on the ballot in alphabetical order has some kind of a perceptual advantage. And municipalities have actually been asking for this change so that they could use, for example, a rotation or the method of a draw to determine in what order the names would come on. Because you know what might happen, if the candidates . . . if the real candidates' names started with, say, S and T and then there was Fido . . . was first, this could pose a problem.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I may have missed this earlier, you may have answered this already, but will this strictly be up to the municipality involved? Will the municipality decide which name goes on first and by what method? Can they decide by any method they so wish?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, this is enabling legislation. A municipality can decide whether it wishes to avail itself of this option and by what means.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I believe also in this legislation you're going to begin allowing voting at bedside, which I think is a good thing. But how will the scrutinizing work in this case? Is there any kind of scrutinizing that will ensure secrecy, fairness of vote, and so on?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this has been done in a limited way in the past, and the ballot box and the agent will actually be taken to the person who requests to vote in this manner and style.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You're putting in also provisions to account for displaced voters similar to the changes we saw recently in The Elections Act, 1996. Can you tell us how this will work in a practical sense?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the provisions are being provided for this kind of situation — like an evacuation in a forest fire, for example, or the potential for an impending flood situation. So it allows for a postponement and we think it will provide more flexibility in these kind of situations.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Last year, Madam Minister, in Regina we saw a circumstance where a school board trustee resigned, causing a by-election. This by-election cost thousands and thousands of dollars to run and about 5 per cent of the voters turned out to vote.

Many people thought you might address this situation during this session by putting forward some alternatives to holding by-elections in cases like this. Was this considered this time around and if not, like it hasn't been, why would you not look at that in this case?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that a number of options were looked at but that paramount there is a number of issues that would have to be looked at.

First of all it was, there was, a desire to consult with the whole SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and perhaps be supported by the resolution of a convention which the timing of the consultations didn't allow.

And the other issue that complicates it is that there is a move and a desire in some quarters to move to the ward system for school board elections and . . . which it already is in rural areas but in urban areas. And this then would become less of an issue because it would be much more cost effective to hold a by-election in a ward than it would in a city at large. So I'm not to say that we would preclude ever looking at that, but in light of the new circumstances there would have to be an, you know, another round of consultations.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that answers all the questions we have on this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 22 inclusive agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would move that Bill No. 17, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1999 be moved without amendment.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would also like to add that during the discussion and question and answer that we had, I referred mainly to municipalities, but in all cases, school boards could be interchanged because it applies to both.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No 10 — The Boiler and Pressure Vessel Act, 1999

The Chair: — With the indulgence of the committee, this Act has 63 clauses but it is broke into 11 parts. Can we go part by part?

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of committees. Madam Minister, I'd like to thank you and your officials for coming in today. The last time I believe that this Act was changed was in 1978. And I expect that there have been a number of amendments that have dealt with various issues up until now.

I wonder if you could give us an explanation on why you felt it was important to rewrite the Act at this time. Basically what kind of changes have you done to it? And who did you consult before making these changes?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, before I respond to the questions, I'd just like to introduce on my left Nick Surtees, who is the executive director of protective services . . . protection services. We had another change in officials here.

The member opposite is correct in his observation that it's quite some time since any amendments have occurred to this Act. There have been a number, a large number of changes you might say since the last amendments, in the design, in the technology of equipment itself and in the kind of workplaces and settings that high and low pressure vessels are used. And in response to many industry concerns, we have undertaken very extensive consultations respecting the potential changes to this Act, and that is why and how the changes have been undertaken, Mr. Chairman.

(1515)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I wonder if you could supply us with a list of those people that you consulted with and the times and locations where those consultations took place.

This Bill is in a lot of cases, about the safety issues involved with pressure vessels and pressure piping. What new safety issues are you dealing with here and how are you dealing with those safety issues?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all we'll be pleased to provide members opposite with a copy of a list of the industry associations and stakeholders that were consulted, which would include manufacturers, major industrial users, business organizations, third-party users, trade-related organizations, and unions.

The reasons, as I understood the member opposite asked, that these were undertaken is the need to move technical and administrative requirements to facilitate flexibility in response to technological change.

And I guess one issue could be that there are a number of small manufacturers particularly in the growing food-processing industry in the province who feel . . . these might be located in

rural areas. And while the procedures they use might be quite sophisticated, in some cases they are using low-pressure vessels which require less stringent standards for operators and so forth, because they feel that some of our regulations for the high pressure vessels are too onerous for them to afford. Having to move to the other option restricts their capacity. So we've been asked . . . there are a number of issues. That's just one that I give by example.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, perhaps you could give a clarification of what you mean by low pressure versus high pressure. Where is the cut-off?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite will have, I believe, a copy of the Bill. And the definitions of a high pressure vessel will appear under the definitions under (j); and the low pressure vessel is defined under (l) of the definitions. And these differences relate to the working pressure, the number of kilopascals, and the pressure at which . . . the pressure and temperature at which the equipment is operated.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I won't ask you to translate that into pounds of pressure. Seven times is what the number is, roughly.

Madam Minister, in this Bill what you have done is removed a fair amount of the meat that was in the previous Bill dealing with standards, and have put those into regulations. Are those regulations presently available, and if they're not, how soon will they be available? Since they were laid out previously in the Act, what was the reason for withdrawing them from the Act itself and putting the standards into regulation?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Again, Mr. Chairman, the regulations . . . the parts that the member refers to that would be moved into regulations are currently the subject of further consultations as to the specifics. And so the Bill would be proclaimed at the time that the regulations have been agreed on through the consultative process. And that timing would be, I guess, in the near future.

And the reason that that would be done is to provide, in the changing . . . the rapidly changing technology that we have in this field, to be able to be more flexible by having to change a regulation rather than to come for an amendment in the House to the legislation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You have definitions in here for low and high pressure. I also know that there's other legislation on the statute books of Saskatchewan dealing with other pressure units such as used in the oil field, the pipelines, etc. Will this Act pertain to those, or will those remain under separate Acts?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in section 3 of the Act entitled application of the Act, it provides that in clause (c) and (d) oil and gas as defined in The Pipe Lines Act and The Gas Licensing Act are specifically exempt from this legislation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister, it doesn't make any sense to make something redundant when it's already in place in one place. One of the things that this Act does

introduce that's new is a Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Board.

Madam Minister, I wonder if you can explain to us exactly what you envision this particular board doing? Who will be on this board? Will they be representatives from industry or will they be someone else? And what will their qualifications be?

I note in the Act that you have outlined requirements of qualifications for inspectors but no place does it talk about the requirements for qualifications of the people who are sitting on the board.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for the question. It's proposed that there would be an 11-member board that would consist of people who would be nominated . . . whose names would be placed forward by the sectors that I've previously mentioned being manufacturers, major industrial users, business organizations, trade-related organizations, that sort of people. And so I think it would be . . . it's more than safe to assume that the personnel or the nominations that would come forward to serve on this kind of a board would carry with them the qualifications and technical expertise required to make the judgments that will be called upon to make.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, these people will be placed on the board by order in council — meaning by cabinet. You're saying they'll be nominated from industry. I don't see that in the Act, that nomination process is in place. If it is, perhaps you can point it out to me.

Will the government be appointing any representatives to that board, or will they all be coming from nominations from industry?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the very first interpretation in the definitions, in section 2(a) of the Act, sets out that any reference to board means the Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Board established pursuant to section 44 of the Act. And then the board would actually be prescribed in the regulations, and all of the members would be nominees from the kind of organizations previously mentioned and confirmed by order in council.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But, Madam Minister, that nomination process is not set out in the Act. You're talking about putting it into regulations. That means at any point in time, if it does become part of the regulations, it can be removed from regulations. It doesn't outline that the nomination process will be from industry. It simply says — to my reading — that it will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in accordance with any criteria or procedures for appointment that are prescribed in regulations.

So, Madam Minister, would it be possible to include in the Act the inclusion that the nominations would come from industry for appointment by the Lieutenant Governor in Council?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, well that's actually a standard procedure. Any criteria or procedure that is prescribed . . . for appointment will be prescribed in the regulations and then, as any other board, when the nominations come forward from the various stakeholders then they're confirmed by order

in council.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well unfortunately, Madam Minister, we've seen too many times in the past that the major qualification was an NDP membership card. If it was included in the Act that it would be nominated from the various sectors of the industry, then that requirement wouldn't be the predominant one. And it would . . . If it was there, it would be a secondary one and not the predominant one.

We believe that it would be better if it was included in the Act that the nominations for the safety board come indeed from industry rather than not being included — being silent on it in the Act — because it allows too much interpretation, Madam Minister.

I'm sure that, knowing you, you would appoint someone nominated from industry but we also know that you have tendered your . . . you've given notice that you will not be seeking reelection. Therefore if your party should have the misfortune to again become government, there would be another minister on that side of the House and they may not be as diligent as you are in ensuring that somebody from industry was represented on there. So, Madam Minister, I would think it would be very worthwhile if included in this Act — rather than in regulations — was an outline for the nomination process.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the procedure of nominating people to boards and commissions and a membership card in a particular party may have been the vogue when the members opposite held government, but we have many examples where we have boards of . . . for instance the Fire Service Council that was recently set up consists of nominees entirely from the professional and volunteer fire service in the province, with no nominations from us.

And I'm sure that for this kind of a board — where the kind of expertise is subject to strict regulation, any aberration from the regulations could have serious consequences for employees or the public — that industry itself would be very upset and make it clearly known publicly if they felt that there were people being appointed to this board who were not competent to rule on appeals and to make decisions for this highly sensitive industry, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I agree that when industry came before the board on an appeal process and they felt that the people hearing the appeal were not knowledgeable, they would have a serious concern. And that's why I raise this very issue, Madam Minister, because we have seen too many government appointments that, when appointed, perhaps don't have the total grasp of the field in which they have been appointed.

Therefore it is incumbent on the government to ensure that the people being appointed to the position such as this — which is a very technical position — actually have a grounding in the industry that they're being asked to judge, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, you're also in this Act appointing special inspectors which is a new category, I believe. Under what circumstances would these special inspectors be appointed, and how would those duties vary from that of chief inspector?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite asks about special inspectors as set out in section 4 and this is meant to be for a certain . . . a special circumstance like, for example, you might have one inspector who inspects wells only as an area of expertise, and so they could be designated a special inspector for one area of the industry only and not a general inspector. So in that sense, the two kinds are designated differently for that purpose.

(1530)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So what you're talking about is a sort of a one-off situation where they would be limited in what they could inspect. Would those limitations be clearly spelled out in the licence that they were given so if a person contacted them for some other area of inspection that they could turn it over to another individual in the department or to the chief inspector?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there will be again in the regulations, specifications described for the various kinds of inspectors. But if I can read between the lines in the member's question, I think what he means is, you know, would there be special inspectors that are qualified in one area only and not in others? And I think it's more likely to be the opposite. A special inspector might be qualified as a general inspector but have, in addition to that, some qualifications which give him some particular expertise in a particular field.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Then you're seeing special inspectors being able to carry out all kinds of inspections but they would focus in one particular area. Would that be a correct assumption?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think the qualifications may be broad but the focus of their duties may be limited, so there might be more of a demand in one certain field of inspection. And so an inspector would be focused more on that but the qualifications would be broader, could be broader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Not only do you license pressure vessels or pressure piping under this, but you also license the operators of those under this particular Act, Madam Minister. What changes are in place on that and will you continue to recognize or will they be grandfathered for the people who held the old steam tickets in the past?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the new provisions will reflect the current provisions and so there won't be a change except that — and I wouldn't refer to it as grandfathering — but instead of a licence there will now be a certificate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Will there be a cost for upgrading to the new certificate for those people who held the steam tickets in the past?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that there haven't been any fee changes since 1991, and that the system will continue to operate and there'll simply be a conversion upon the renewal.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm sorry

I brought that up because now that you know that it hasn't changed since '91, I'm sure that the government, the Minister of Finance, will be rushing out to change that one.

I understand that boilers and pressure vessels have to be registered with the government. Will there be any additional costs under the new system compared to the previous registrations?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, of course things are always subject to change, but there are no changes in those costs contemplated in this legislation or the regulations pursuant to it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You've added a new section dealing with accidents or explosions of a vessel licensed under this Act. Can you tell how this is changed and why?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the provisions haven't really changed; that the language has changed somewhat to reflect the reality of today's technology and so forth.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. As the investigative powers of the chief inspectors changed, have you changed the Act to allow access to private property in any manner? I know that in the past dealing with some of the environmental issues, the Acts have changed considerably to allow access by department people to all properties without a warrant, except for domiciles. Has that been included in this Act?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, on page 19 of the Act there is a section relating to enforcement. This section of the Act provides that in order to have access to the premises to inspect, that a warrant is necessary, and this is a provision that was not included in the old legislation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, are you saying that the provisions of entry with a warrant were not included in the previous Act?

I read in here that there are conditions in which an inspector can enter:

... without a warrant if:

- (a) the conditions for obtaining a warrant exist; and
- (b) the inspector has reasonable grounds to believe that the delay necessary to obtain a warrant would result in:
 - (i) danger to human life or safety; or
 - (ii) the loss, removal or destruction of evidence.

If the inspector was to exercise that particular judgment, does he have to provide with evidence to substantiate his belief that evidence was going to be removed or destroyed or lost if entry wasn't made immediately?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I am advised that there

... where a warrant would be required, the Act is quite specific on that. Then the powers that could be exercised described by the member opposite in section (3), in the event that, for instance there may be damage to life or property or whatever, in the absence of a warrant, the inspector deems it necessary to have access he must ... it is ... The onus is on the inspector to make sure that all of the conditions that would have allowed him to obtain a warrant exist.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well maybe the onus is on the inspector, Madam Minister, but I don't see any place in here where the inspector has to provide evidence of that condition. He has to have reasonable grounds. He is the one who interprets what reasonable grounds are to access the property without a warrant.

Surely he should be able to — after the fact if he does enter the grounds — be able to substantiate here's the reason why I entered the grounds without a warrant. No place in here does it say he has to be able to do that, Madam Minister, and again I believe that would be incumbent on the government to insist that that kind of reasonable grounds be in place. That that kind of evidence be available for the inspector to provide, after the fact, if he does enter grounds without a warrant.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I guess I may be reading the section differently than the member opposite but I believe that the first part of the section sets out the conditions that are required in order to obtain a warrant. Section 3 is very specific about:

an inspector may exercise all or any of the powers mentioned in subsection (2) without a warrant if:

- (a) the conditions for obtaining a warrant exist; and
- (b) (if) the inspector has reasonable grounds to believe that the delay necessary to obtain a warrant would result in
 - (i) danger to human life or safety; or
 - (ii) the loss, removal, or destruction of evidence.

And then it goes on to talk about:

... shall not enter any premises that are a private dwelling without the consent of the occupant or a warrant ...

And so obviously if an inspector did not use due diligence to make sure that the circumstances for a warrant existed based on this ... if it happened to me, I would read this and I would say I can sue and I can claim for damages and I can be successful based on this.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, it would be nice to believe that we could actually turn around and sue if they entered the property without reasonable grounds, but you also have clause no. 60 in here — non-liability — which says:

No action or proceedings lie or shall be commenced against the minister, the department, an inspector, an employee or agent of the department ...

And so on and so forth. And I think that would do a pretty good job of limiting a person's access to the court system in the case where the property owner believed that reasonable grounds were not there for immediate access, Madam Minister.

When we look at the appeal process on this, and it deals with — or doesn't deal with — court action, as the case may be, what grounds would a person have for appeal and would the decision of the board be . . . would you be able to take a decision of the board and challenge it in the court system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, on page 19, section 52 states that the decision of the board is final and there shall be no further appeal. And section 44 sets out the grounds for recourse to appeal — being licenses, registration of designs, inspections, quality management systems, and certificates of qualification.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So you're saying in this particular Act that a decision by the board is not therefore challengeable by the court system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that is correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I find that very concerning that the government would put in place a board that can make the decisions unilaterally with no appeal to their decision. Not even the court judges in Saskatchewan, Madam Minister, have that power. You can appeal up to the very top court, to the Supreme Court of Canada.

And indeed the Minister of Justice was bringing in legislation today to make amendments to the legislation in Saskatchewan, just as every other justice minister across this country is doing, to make corrections to legislation that was flawed because the Supreme Court ruled it as such.

And here you're introducing legislation, Madam Minister, that doesn't even allow the citizens of this province to have access to the court system who are, under our system, the final arbiters of the written law. And, Madam Minister, I find it appalling that you would introduce this kind of legislation which would restrict the access of people of this province to their court system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Oh, I gather the minister wants to answer.

(1545)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member shouldn't let his blood pressure get raised over this issue because this is actually, this is actually a fairly standard disclaimer, and in fact it's a very standard disclaimer and it does not rule out a court action.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you just stood up and said here two minutes ago, that it did rule out a court action. So can you appeal to the courts or can you not appeal to the courts?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure whether I misspoke myself or whether the member opposite misunderstood me. What I meant to say and what I believe I

said, but anyways to put it on the record, that for the purposes of this Act, the appeal is limited to the board and the board's decision is final. If someone is aggrieved by the decision, they always have recourse to the courts.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for clearing that up because there are numbers of pieces of legislation that have been presented by your government that do limit people's access to the court systems, such as the SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) no-fault insurance.

Madam Minister, the chief inspector and the general inspectors, the special inspectors that you may have employed within your department, are these people bonded?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, they certainly have specific sets of qualifications and so forth. But in the sense of . . . I'm not sure whether the member opposite means financial liability bonding, they're not, as other public servants are not required to be bonded.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But, Madam Minister, these have access under reasonable grounds to confidential information. They have access to private property without warrants under those reasonable grounds. They have access to things that the normal civil servant does not have access to.

And I think, Madam Minister, it would be of value both to the individuals working in your department and to the people with whom they work in the general public if they were indeed bonded, Madam Chair. And I would ask that you give serious consideration to providing bonding for them.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, again, I think that the member opposite is getting really, really excited. We've had on our farm low pressure vessels for about 30 years and they've been periodically inspected. They have never blown up. They're periodically inspected.

And I would say that the inspectors that come to look at our boiler don't have access to any more, in terms of our property, than insurance agents and appraisers, boiler insurance agents and appraisers, utility meter readers — just a variety of service people that come into your premises in the course of business. And I've never noticed anything missing after any of their visits, Mr. Chairman, so I think it might be an anxiety that the member opposite could relax about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Chair, I am certainly making sure my blood pressure is under control given the state of health care in Saskatchewan.

But, Madam Chair, we're not talking about your general inspections. We're talking about the case where the inspector would be entering onto the grounds with a warrant, or with reasonable grounds without a warrant. So something has happened there.

The only thing they're excluded from is your residence. They can enter your place of business for evidence; they can enter your work sites. They can enter everything except your home.

So there is opportunities there for them to have access to confidential information, to industrial sensitive information, Madam Chair, not just whether or not they're looking inside your chicken house.

So, Madam Chair, I think indeed it would be of value if these people were bonded when they're carrying out those kind of duties. When they're carrying out their normal inspections, that's a different matter. But when they're carrying out the investigations, when they're carrying out investigations in people's place of businesses related to some of the items — the pressure vessels and piping, etc., under this Act — I think for their own protection they would benefit from being bonded, Madam Chair.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we can certainly take that suggestion under advisement. But I think given that the consequences of a failure of one of these installations can be extremely serious, that the member opposite think about that. And I'm not sure whether he's under high pressure or low pressure, but I think he should relax a little.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I am so relaxed I'm enjoying this. And I have indeed worked with both low and high pressure vessels in my career although they didn't come under this particular Act. They came under the pipelines and flow lines Act, Madam Minister.

When we look at the provisions of this Act and the standards of this Act, does this bring us in line with other provinces? Is this Act, in regulation standards, more onerous than other provinces? Are the penalties in line with other provinces or are they more or less onerous than other provinces?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that's a very good question on the part of the member opposite because certainly that was one of the serious issues that was taken under consideration, is not only other provinces but in a North American context in order for industry and manufacturing and the kind of workplaces that would employ boiler and pressure vessels, that being competitive is a very important consideration. And so we have tried to take into account of all of the provisions, penalties, and circumstances that surround these issues in a number of jurisdictions in North America and we've tried to conform on average as closely as possible.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Under the provisions of this Act, even if a corporation were not prosecuted for breaking the law, individuals sitting on the boards of directors of the corporation could be prosecuted. Under what kind of circumstances could that happen?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the provision is a fairly standard provision and becoming more so actually as I've noticed, and similar sections exist in The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 and The Environmental Management and Protection Act. And the reason for such a provision is to provide an additional and more effective deterrent against failure to comply.

In certain cases, a corporation may be willing or able to absorb fines for offences whereas a director in an individual capacity may not. In some cases, a corporation may no longer exist and

no longer have any assets with which to pay the fine, and recourse against directors is the only option.

In a prosecution against the director, a judge would have to make a determination that the corporation would have been guilty of an offence but no actual prosecution or a conviction of the corporation would have to have taken place in a separate proceeding.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Two more questions, Madam Minister. Under section 8 of the Act, (1)(b)(ii), it talks about:

(ii) the chief inspector has reason to believe that it is not in the interest of public safety to issue the licence.

In reading that, Madam Minister, it seems to me that what it's saying is that the person applying for the licence actually meets the standards necessary, but for some reason the chief inspector believes that it's not in the public safety to issue a licence.

Under what circumstances would that happen? And is that a correct interpretation?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, certainly this Act is specific enough that it wouldn't be a matter of the whim of the chief inspector whether or not a licence would be granted. But he may refuse to issue a licence if the applicant does not meet all the requirements, for example, can't pass the required examinations and so forth.

And if the section (b)(ii) that "the chief inspector has reason to believe that it is not in the interest of public safety to issue the licence," it may be a question of character. He has some problem with references or past work history for example. The reasons that the member opposite, who's operated in a commercial sense, would understand.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, it does seem a little strange though if the person is establishing a business or an industry meets the requirements of the Act, but the inspector for some reason believes that this person should not have a licence to operate a pressure vessel. If for some reason their character is not of sound enough nature, then I guess you would have to question some of the other things that were issued to them, such as a business licence to operate. And why is the inspector of pressure vessels being the one to make the determination whether or not this person should actually be in business?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is different from business licences in that these issues have consequences for public safety. But this is another example of a decision — for instance, an applicant does not receive a licence based on the chief inspector's decision. This decision also is appealable to the board, the Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Board that we discussed earlier.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What kind of training or what kind of qualifications are in place for the chief inspector to allow him to make these kind of judgments?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the public service and the department that the chief inspector is employed by would

set the criteria and the qualifications that would be required to carry out the functions as would be set out in the job description.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Will the chief inspectors be given any special training on how to judge character or business qualifications of people applying for pressure vessels and piping?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, since I got myself into this, I'll try to get myself out of it. I simply use the, you know, the issue of character as an example. I'm quite certain that the criteria for and the qualifications for a chief inspector would be generally in the area of technical expertise. But also in such a senior position in the department with the kind of responsibilities that would accrue to that position, it would be assumed that this person would also have some other skills, some interpersonal skills, and superior judgment skills as well. I'll use character just as an example.

The Chair: — The committee . . . I asked earlier but didn't get total agreement. Seeing as it's 60-some clauses, can we go parts? Is that agreed?

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 63 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1600)

Mr. D'Autremont: — I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and her officials coming in today and especially her special assistant from Shellbrook for the work she did today on — I guess it's Saskatchewan River, sorry about that — with the municipal Acts and The Boiler and Pressure Vessel Act.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I too wanted to express my gratitude for the assistance of my officials and the diligent questioning from members opposite this afternoon.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 8 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 8 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 14 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 13 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 12 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 17 — The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill No. 17, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1999 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 10 — The Boiler and Pressure Vessel Act, 1999

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Environment and Resource Management Vote 26

The Deputy Chair: — I'll invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with us today Stuart Kramer, deputy minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management). And behind me, Dave Phillips, assistant deputy minister of operations. And next to him is Dave Tulloch, team leader of corporate development unit.

Subvote (ER01)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome to the minister this afternoon, and to his officials.

Mr. Minister, there are a number of areas that I'd like to address during these estimates in regards to SERM. But today I want to spend this time — I think until the clock runs out — going over some issues that are of great concern to SARRC (Saskatchewan Association for Resource Recovery Corporation) and SARCAN as it relates to the drink container recycling program here in Saskatchewan.

And I understand that SARCAN has recently signed a new 10-year contract with your department. Can you please outline the main points of this contract?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, thank you very much for the question. The main point of the long-term 10-year contract is there will be adequate funding for SARCAN to continue to operate in Saskatchewan. There will be opportunities to collect new items such as the juice boxes which was recently added as well as the plastic milk containers, and there's also opportunity for SARCAN to expand.

I just recently attended expansion of new facilities in Kamsack and Canora, and SARCAN is alive and well and doing a great job here in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, can you tell me about how much money will your department pay to SARCAN in each of those 10 years, and how much will it pay in total?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, for this year we're paying \$8.1 million to SARCAN. And I can at this time assume that levels of funding will be somewhat similar in the coming years and perhaps expanded if need be.

(1615)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Eight point one million dollars to SARCAN through those deposits. How much will actually be collected by government?

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member for Humboldt on her feet?

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Chair, just to clarify the question put to the minister a bit, if I could.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering how much the provincial government takes in through the deposits on cans and drink containers, and the environmental surcharge that you place on cans and drink containers in whole . . . in total.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, it looks as though we do not readily have that figure available. If we find it, we'll report it later this day. And failing that, we'll certainly get a specific response to the hon. member.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, when you get your response, I want to know what it is over the 10-year period of time, what is expected by your government.

Mr. Minister, in talking to SARCAN, I understand the return rate of pop cans in Saskatchewan is actually over 100 per cent, okay. As I understand it, much of this is due to containers

coming in from Manitoba because Saskatchewan provides a higher refund than Manitoba does. Are you aware of this problem, Mr. Minister, and what are you proposing to do to combat this type of smuggling from other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the question . . . and few programs you can boast about over 100 per cent success. And the hon. member correctly identifies the issue being is that we are receiving containers mostly from Manitoba.

We've worked with SARCAN very effectively in reducing this flow of containers in from Manitoba by limiting the number of containers an individual can take to a depot at any particular time. We also recognize that this is still a problem and we are looking at options, again in co-operation with SARCAN, in a way of dealing with this ongoing problem.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the limitation I guess is a good thing but I think it . . . this problem is really quite a serious problem. We have a bootlegging problem here and in fact SARCAN estimates that about one and a half million dollars is lost from the provincial treasury here from our taxpayers' money every year due to these out-of-province cans coming in in that number. Is that number, that amount of money, accurate in your estimation?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Your information is the same that we have, Mr. Chair, inasmuch as we are paying out a lot of money to people bringing in containers from Manitoba and we are looking at ways, continual ways of dealing with this. In co-operation with SARCAN, we hope to have some ideas in place fairly soon.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, have you discussed this problem with your counterparts in Manitoba?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, I have, inasmuch . . . I invited the Minister of Environment from Manitoba to come to Saskatchewan last year and in fact took him on a tour of the Regina SARCAN depot and they were very impressed. But the province of Manitoba is looking at recycling and reducing waste in a different program so they have chosen not to follow Saskatchewan's example.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you mentioned that you were talking with SARCAN to deal with this problem, and I'm wondering what proposals your government is looking at to curb this situation? It's a serious situation.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well we certainly have ongoing discussions. As I have identified, we've limited the number of containers. We've identified individual people who continually bring containers in and the depots have the option of refusing the containers. So we will continue to work with SARCAN to do whatever is necessary to stop this flow of cans into Saskatchewan and, at the same time, reduce the money going out of the province.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I just wanting to put forth a bit of a suggestion here. And I think it might be incumbent upon your government and a good idea to talk about interprovincial

relationships dealing with the exchange of these containers throughout the provinces here, especially our neighbouring provinces. Because we are told that there are, as far as the limitations go right now, there are certain people who conspire to get around SARCAN's weekly limit of \$50. And how seriously do you view that problem — you know, the conspiracy to get around that weekly limit?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well you correctly identify the issue and we realize that it's certainly not totally resolved. We will continue discussions with Manitoba and Alberta. And also, as you may be aware of the individual in the Yorkton area who was fined for failing to pay income tax on a lot of money which he obtained through recycling of cans. So from various . . . from the legal, from the co-operative, from the educational aspect we will continue to work at this problem.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, can you briefly describe your department's work on regional waste minimization plans?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, the whole issue of regional waste disposal recycling is certainly a very important issue here in Saskatchewan. Identifying this, we set up a pilot project based out of Humboldt area called REACT (Regional Authority of Carlton Trail) and this is the final year of that project.

This project is a pilot project, I might reiterate, in as much as we will be doing an analysis to see how we can improve recycling on a regional basis. We certainly want to point out the pitfalls. We want to point out the things that worked well. And when other communities and areas come together to form a regional waste disposal site, we can learn from what we learned at the REACT pilot project.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm very well aware of the REACT program in Humboldt and area. But I also have some concerns coming to me from those people that are responsible to make sure that people with disabilities also continue with their recycling programs.

And so I have to ask you, can you tell me whether SARRC's . . . there is participation by SARRC in those REACT programs?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There certainly is some co-operation and collaboration between SARRC and waste reduction on a regional basis. I can assure you that SARCAN . . . SARRC operations provide a very important role. It's been very successful in helping the environment, creating jobs for those who most need them. And this will certainly be something that we will maintain here in Saskatchewan and dovetail the recycling, the co-operation, in future regional waste disposal projects.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, SARRC members operate extended recycling services as you well know, for their communities. And they recycle approximately 26,500 tonnes of paper and cardboard.

And I think there is some concern that, you know, with the expansion of minimalization plans, waste minimalization plans, that in fact they won't have that volume in the future.

Do you see that SARRC will lose any work or jobs through these waste minimalization plans?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — As I said earlier, Mr. Chair, SARCAN and SARRC are very important here in Saskatchewan, very unique to our province. And we will ensure that any expansion in regional waste disposal projects will include SARCAN . . . SARRC so that there's not competition, so that there's not winners and losers. We want everybody to win as we proceed down the road of waste reduction and recycling and recovery.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I have to ask you if that statement is a commitment today, that SARRC in fact will have input into any further and ongoing regional waste minimalization plans. Will they get your commitment to that?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Certainly SARRC will have a role to play and their input will be very much appreciated. Can I guarantee that they may not lose some paper or cardboard here and there? I cannot, but they will have a very prominent and important role in the whole issue of recycling as we expand on the waste reduction recycling programs.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, can you tell us how many SARCAN recycling sites there are in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — About 70, give or take a few. And there's more sites opening all the time. And these sites employ around 300 people, and many of them with disabilities.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If you could be a little bit more precise, do you know how many other communities have applied to have one of those sites but they're still on a waiting list?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There often are communities that would like a site. And the SARCAN board would determine if two communities were too close together, they would probably not give each community a site because they want to make sure that the one community that has a site is successful. But it's a SARCAN board decision but I do know that wherever possible, the SARCAN board does fulfil the wishes of the community wishing to obtain a site. And the numbers of the sites are continuing to increase.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, are there presently at this time any plans to put in place any more of these recycling centres?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We're not aware of any community waiting for a site at this time, Mr. Chair, but we can certainly check with SARCAN to see if they have some new sites which will be opening up this year, and we can let the hon. member know.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like to turn to a couple of other recycling initiatives in Saskatchewan. First off, tire recycling. I understand that the industry body set up to deal with used tires in Saskatchewan is at an arm's length to government. But as legislative authority, you must have some information on this program.

I understand that up until only recently the surcharge on all tires

was voluntary, and it no longer is. Can you tell us when this change was made and why this was done at that particular time?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the question on the whole issue of tires. You are correct. Scrap tire recycling is industry driven. We are at arm's-length of the project. And you are correct in that the project was voluntary to begin with.

And what we found last summer, a year ago now actually, the number of tires, the number of dealers participating started to decline. We were losing ground. The Scrap Tire Corporation came to us and asked us to legislate, make it mandatory for dealers to participate and pay for the tires. And what we also had found was that some dealers were simply pocketing the \$3.50 and it was not going to where it was supposed to.

So at the request of the Scrap Tire Corporation through legislation last fall, September or so, we did make it mandatory for dealers to participate. And as a result, the Scrap Tire Corporation is now economically viable.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through that program, can you tell us how many tires are being recycled in Saskatchewan currently? And what percentage of used tires does this reflect in total?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We currently recycle about 700,000 tires a year. Roughly 1 million tires are sold in the province each year. And since we made the program mandatory, we've had several hundred other dealers sign up. And I think the industry has realized that this is good for the environment and they need to take on the responsibility of getting tires out of the landfill.

Once the program is firmly established, stockpiled tires, tires out on farms, will be recycled, and this will be a great service to people who have tires laying around. And we certainly look forward to getting them out of the environment as well.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, the surcharge on tires is not refundable, as it is with pop cans. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That is correct.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, you partially answered my question that I have right now, but I'm afraid that the fact that the surcharge is not refundable will hinder efforts to recover these old tires, and so what incentive do people really have to bring them into a recycling centre? I've heard of people talking about this and saying that there are a few disincentives in place, and certainly one of them is the lack of the surcharge not being refundable.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Unfortunately the cost of running this program — trucks coming out, picking up old tires — we just need that much money to make the program viable. So I guess it's a cost that society is prepared to bear in order to keep the tires out of landfill sites. But the tires are being recycled in various ways and forms and we want to ensure that this continues.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, for people who do want to recycle tires, there are many other tires that are out there that are not taken to these recycling places, so there are a great number of these tires.

Where people need to have some commitment I guess from government that there's going to be a longer term goal for this program in terms of the numbers of tires to be recycled and places to take them, a lot of people, Mr. Minister, don't even know where they should be taking them.

Has there been enough communication with consumers? Because many simply don't have a clue that there is any recycling occurring and they view the surcharge as simply another tax.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, as I pointed out, we just made it mandatory about six months ago that dealers participate and the program is still in its infancy.

As it stands now, 700 to 800,000 tires are recycled each year. When you get your tires changed in a garage, the old tires are left there. You don't have to worry about taking them home.

And as the program . . . as the corporation becomes more sustainable, gets a little bit more money in its account, then we will go back and work on the stockpiles — the tires you refer to out on the farm, at landfill sites, at dealers who in the past haven't been able to recycle tires.

And actually to Manitoba's credit they have gone back and they've been able to pick up a lot of tires from stockpiles.

So because of the infancy of the program here, we are basically recycling tires which are currently being used. And certainly stockpiled tires, old tires, are next on the list.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I had a call from some farmers who are obviously taking their used tires to a depot that has been set up for recycling; and it's a matter of about, I guess, 40, 50 miles for them to transport their tires. They were a little disconcerted with some of the regulations that were attached to the transport of these vehicles.

Now they did mention to me that there was a limited number of tires that could be transported in a vehicle that did not appropriate signage on it. And there's a number of tires that they're only allowed to take before there's a covered vehicle or something to that extent. Do you have . . . Can you tell me what regulations regarding the transport of tires by farmers or dealers to these sites are in place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Certainly under our legislation and department, there is no regulations or legislations regarding the number of tires that can be hauled other than that the loads must be secure. We can certainly check with the Highways department to see if there are restrictions there. But this is news to me here in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Julé: — All right, Mr. Minister, I want to go on to another environmental issue but before I do that my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena has a couple of questions to pose to you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, the tire recycling issue is one that's very important out in our area and I noticed you said that now it's been taken over by the government, or looked after by the government, it's now considered economically viable. What do you mean by economically viable?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I wish to, Mr. Chair, correct the hon. member. We have not taken over the Scrap Tire Corporation; it's still industry-driven at arm's-length. What we did merely was do a regulation . . . legislation to allow the corporation to make it mandatory for everybody to participate in the program to make it successful. And by doing that the corporation will be economically viable. In other words, they will be able to operate, pick up tires, and eventually go to the stockpiles.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is it what you consider to be economically viable at this time?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — A year ago, Mr. Chair, the corporation had a debt of tens of thousand of dollars simply because they did not have enough tires, enough volume, and enough people participating. And at this time they are economically viable. It means that they're getting out of debt. And the program is expanding and we're getting more tires recycled.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. Then if it's working on volume; if what you're needing to make this whole system work . . . then why aren't you looking at the farms right now? So many farms have old tires sitting around. There are other places that are waiting to get them picked up. How soon is this going to be part of the issue? And if it's going to mean economic viability, then it should . . . then the sooner you get it on board the better it should be.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The hon. member makes a very good point, Mr. Chair, and as I pointed out, it's just been about six months since we've made it mandatory for all dealers to participate, and as a result we've had several hundred dealers come on-board in the last few months. And the industry is growing very quickly here and it's just a matter of time.

I hope within a year that farmers will be able to get rid of their tires out on the farm, and as soon as the system gets geared up to accommodate the tires, a million or so tires which are used every year, and then we can go back to the stockpiles, either dealerships or on the farm. So you make a good observation.

Ms. Draude: — Again, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, then if . . . Do you have trucks on the road? Are they paid for by the scrap tire association, or is the government helping to put more vehicles on the road to do the pickups?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, there are trucks on the road. There's about 60 jobs associated with the Sask Scrap Tire Corporation, and again there's no government money into it. The \$3.50 which you pay to change your tire helps to cover the cost of getting that tire from the shop, getting it trucked down the road to a recycling operation.

So it's industry-driven, it's a non-profit organization, and it's working successfully and we look forward to greater success. We've recycled about one and a half million tires in the last two

to three years since the program was brought in.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, do the neighbouring provinces, like Alberta and Manitoba, have recycling programs in place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, they do. The three Prairie provinces have similar programs; their fees are similar, and their programs are similar, and we certainly work with each other to pick up the ideas which are working and some of the pitfalls as well.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one last question on this issue then. Do we have any incidents, like we do with the pop cans, of tires coming in from other provinces? Is there any reason that it would be more viable for somebody to bring it in or out of Saskatchewan into another province?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There is no noticeable problem. All three provinces have mandatory programs and their fees are much the same so there's no advantage to hauling them from one place to the other.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you mentioned that the dealers, rather the trucks that are being used for the transporting of tires between a dealer and the recycling depot are vehicles that are being supplied by the industry. Are there instances where a recycling depot and those people manning that depot would be using their own vehicles to go and pick up tires?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Other than an individual bringing an old tire in from the farm or something, Mr. Chair, this is a corporation. The corporation hires carriers, licensed drivers, and so we see very few if any tires being transported by a private individual. So the contracts are with trucking companies to move these tires and it's through the corporation.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I need to get back for a moment to some of these detriments or deterrents rather to having this program work well. I again have to mention to you that — and I will talk with you a little bit later about this after the House is closed — about a recycling depot indicating to me that they can only go out to farms or dealers and pick up a limited number of tires unless they, in fact, they have got a hazardous vehicle or hazardous load stop . . . or not stop sign, but sign on their vehicle. It seems to pose a problem in that it's a little costly.

But it's also the idea of having to attach this sign and to continually go out. If they don't have this kind of thing or, I guess, a bigger vehicle covered in, they then have to go to pick up these tires and get six or eight at a time, or whatever it is, and then go another 40, 50 miles back again to pick up another six or eight. And it gets to be a very tedious and costly journey simply because of some of the regulations in place.

I'd like you to comment on that, and I'd like your commitment to discussing this with some of the recycling depots to further get input from them on how maybe the system can be made simpler and more cost effective for them.

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well, Mr. Chair, the hon. member raises a very important issue, and to my knowledge, certainly tires are not considered hazardous waste. Used oil, car batteries, things like that, I know there are restrictions on the amount.

But I'd be very happy to discuss with the hon. member following the session here with more particulars so that we can check into this and see indeed what the problem is.

Ms. Julé: — Yes, Mr. Minister, if I mentioned hazardous waste, I retract that statement. I meant it was an indication that there's a road hazard. This kind of a sign apparently was required of the depot managers to have on their trucks.

Mr. Minister, we have about 15 minutes left or so, and I want to spend a few of those minutes on oil recycling, also being done through an arm's-length organization known as SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres), and that's not to be confused with SARRC recycling. Again though you as the legislative authority, I am assuming that you do keep yourself informed on these issues and would know that.

First, can you tell us how many of the ecocentres have now been set up by SARRC?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, thus far five centres are fully up and established in the province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe their goal is to have 30 of them set up. Is that correct? And over what period of time is that expected to be accomplished?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, Mr. Chair, the goal is to have 30, 31 depots set up within the next couple of years as part of the oil recycling program.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. How many of those centres have been set up in the past year since the last time we had this conversation in estimates?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There have been two depots set up, opened in the past year.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, we've had a number of complaints from those people in the province who have been collecting used oil for some time, and they're complaining that SARRC will not designate them as official ecocentres because they don't meet requirements set down by SARRC having to do with simple things like the appearances of their buildings. Is this something that you're hearing, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, certainly the ecocentres being established by SARRC, the used oil people, is just one part, one chapter of the oil recycling program. There are over 140 other businesses which will collect oil, and this provides an opportunity too for these people to get rid of the used oil. We can no way expect 31 or 30 depots in the province to cover everybody. So the depots are one part.

And certainly we're working with industry, with RMs (rural municipality), with businesses, depots, garages, to assist the public in getting rid of their used oil.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. But, Mr. Minister, the focal point of my question was that there are people that are upset, there are complaints coming from people that they don't meet requirements set down by SARRC simply because they don't have . . . they're not meeting the requirements, their place is not — excuse me — meeting the requirements like the appearance of a building.

Is something that simple preventing more of these from being set up? And wouldn't you agree that if that is so, it is more important to get these ecocentres in place than to worry about the colour the buildings are or some sort of frontage on the buildings?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — A full-fledged recycling depot must be manned, it must be in a position to take containers, and have proper storage, and also filters. So the full-fledged SARRC depot which we are familiar with is a very . . . I guess the full-meal deal. And we have certainly . . . SARRC, including ourselves, are working with local communities. If there's a problem in having somebody getting used oil, certainly we are not worried about the colour of the building. The main thing is to get the oil into a container and have it picked up by a recycling group of people or truck, whatever.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, we in fact have had some complaints from specific industries that are telling us that your department has absolutely mentioned that they cannot have these places in . . . or these ecocentres in place simply because the appearance of their building does not meet the requirements, and that comes down to the colour of a building. Have you in fact heard from these industries presenting that very problem to you? And I'd like to know if you have, what their comments to you have been?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I guess we have had complaints, Mr. Chair, inasmuch as people have come to us and said, we're paying us 10 cents a litre, we have no place to take our oil. We're not worried about the colour of the building, we're not worried about if it's a SARRC ecocentre, we're worried about getting a place in the community for people to take the oil.

We do not need full-fledged, manned, brand-new recycling centres in each community. We would never be able to afford that. The community doesn't need to pay that either. If there's a garage that has a tank and is prepared to take used oil in and get paid for that used oil from the truck that comes and picks it up, that's what we are interested in doing.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, are you aware of the facility at Mallard Industries in Wadena?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Not in any detail.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, Mallard Industries actually has a collection depot there and they have been trying to work with your department in order to become part of this system. And they've been told that their set-up doesn't meet the physical layout that you require to actually allow them to be part of the system — things like the colour of the building and that type of thing.

There is a number of people employed there. It's a handicapped

centre where people are allowed to gain some independence by working in a facility where they are productive. And the people that are working there are very frustrated with the fact that their facility cannot be seen as a centre right now.

So can you give me some information on where they are on the list of a centre that would be approved?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chair, I'm not familiar with the site but I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the member details on this specific site. And we would certainly do whatever we can to help the community and the business out in its recycling efforts.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll look forward to the exchange then because it's something that's very important to this industry. They are doing a lot of work in this area.

Mr. Minister, there was some costs involved or some recycling fees involved before the government actually got involved in collecting oil and filters. Can you give me an idea of how much money the government collected before the system was actually put in place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Just a point of clarification, Mr. Chair. The government did not see a penny of the used oil fee. It was all industry driven, the same as the tire industry.

And I know that SARRC has an annual report. We just cannot recall what they took in in the first year. But we can get that annual report for the member, and in there it will show how much money was collected on a fee for selling oil and their containers and the filters as well.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Then the money that was previously collected all went into SARRC and the government never saw any of it? Is that the same answer for the filters as well?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That is correct. This is again industry driven, the same as the scrap tires. We do not receive a penny of that money. It all goes to the SARRC organization and that applies to the filters as well as the oil.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

