

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Whereas your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce the 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 Carnduff, Oxbow, Weyburn areas, Mr. Speaker. Across southeast Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to bring forward petitions in regards to regional hospitals.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that signed the petition are from the Shaunavon, Admiral area of the province.

I so present.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I present petitions from residents of the northwest concerned about the confusing and dangerous entrance to the city of North Battleford and requesting that the junction to Highways 40 and 16 be relocated.

Your petitioners come from Battleford, North Battleford, Cando and Saskatoon.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise once again on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about children with special needs and their education. 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 an 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.

Mr. Speaker, the people who've signed this petition today are from Meath Park, from Montreal Lake, Gronlid, Saskatchewan and Prince Albert.

And I present it on their behalf with pleasure.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens who are concerned for farmers in the crisis that they find themselves in today. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon provincial and federal governments to immediately take steps to end unfair world subsidies and provide farmers with prompt relief from declining incomes and act as watchdogs against rising input costs which are harming the rural economy.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed these petitions come from all across this province.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the condition of our highways in this province. The prayer reads:

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

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

And the good people from Ituna, Foam Lake, Hubbard, Yorkton, and Bankend have signed these petitions.

I so present.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

#### Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

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

Your committee has considered the following Bills and has agreed to report the same without amendment:

Bill No. 302 - The Group Medical Services Act, 1999

- Bill No. 303 - The Saskatchewan Foundation for the Arts Act
- Bill No. 304 - The Saskatchewan Medical Association Act
- Bill No. 301 - The Credit Union Central of Saskatchewan Act, 1999

Your committee recommends under the provision of Rule 66 that fees be remitted less the cost of the printing with respect to Bill No. 303.

**Mr. Johnson:** — Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the member for Kindersley:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in and that the said Bills be accordingly referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to.

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

#### Eastern Air Supplies Wins Award

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the pleasure to attend a recognition event for a very successful business in my constituency. A Canora business named Eastern Air Supplies was the recipient of an award presented by Saskatchewan Power for product excellence. I want to also thank the minister responsible for the Crowns for being in Canora to present that award.

Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago Len and Lena Jackson started a small, two-person business on the family farm where nylon straps and belts were manufactured. From those small beginnings Eastern Air Supplies now occupies a 6,000 square foot building within the town of Canora and employs nine people.

The company is the owner of the only high speed loom in western Canada that can produce straps of various widths. The uses for this product have continued to increase. Tie-down straps, tow ropes, slings to lift locomotive engines in excess of 400,000 pounds, Mr. Speaker, are just a few that I can name.

I want to congratulate the Jacksons, the employees, and all supporters of this venture. I understand that an expansion of this business is soon to take place.

Best of luck and success to Eastern Air Supplies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Weyerhaeuser Canada's Revised Business Plan Provisionally Approved

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Today it was announced that the province has given provisional approval to Weyerhaeuser Canada's revised business plan. This is good news for the people in Prince Albert, for those in northern Saskatchewan, and for the Saskatchewan economy as a whole.

The plan, after extensive consultation, Mr. Speaker, proposes sustainable expansion of Weyerhaeuser's lumber operations while it relinquishes part of its licence area. This in turn will allow for other new developments in the North.

The plan projects a \$90 million investment and the creation of 500 new jobs. The Big River saw mill and a new Wapawekka saw mill will account for these new jobs. All of this in addition to a \$315 million environmental upgrade already announced for the Prince Albert pulp mill and the paper mill.

Mr. Speaker, this is a significant announcement and example of how government and industry are working together to provide significant and sustainable — and particularly on this Earth Day — environmentally sound development in northern Saskatchewan.

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

#### Carmel Athlete Wins Wrestling Championship

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a young athlete from my constituency, from the community of Carmel — Ryan Shedlosky. Ryan won the bronze medal in the 45 kilogram weight class at the national age class wrestling championships held in St. Catharines, Ontario last weekend. Shedlosky who wrestles with both the Humboldt Collegiate wrestling team and the Saskatoon Wrestling Club attended as a member of Team Saskatchewan after becoming a provincial champion in his weight class at the Saskatchewan open age class championship.

The national championships in all age classes are open tournaments. Ryan was competing in the cadet class, those aged 15 and 16. In his weight class there were 20 competitors. Ryan finished the tournament with a 4:1 record with his only loss coming in the semi-finals to the eventual gold medalist.

Ryan was also the provincial open champion in the 45 kilogram class for juveniles. This is the age class for 17- and 18-year-olds. He could not attend the juvenile nationals because it was held the same week as the cadet championships.

Mr. Speaker, Ryan enjoys wrestling and eventually would like to represent Canada at an international event. So I congratulate Ryan, and good luck with his wrestling career.

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

#### Earth Day

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a day when many people around the world try and emulate our pioneers. They do so by reducing their consumption of non-renewable fuels and by reducing consumption of renewables as well. Re-using resources is also something people do today, this 28th annual Earth Day.

Our pioneers, Mr. Speaker, used to reuse apple boxes, apple crates, and they used them as chairs and as tables and even as cupboards. Today we can reuse newsprint as attractive wrapping paper or we can even recycle the same newsprint. There are many things each of us can do to honour our planet

earth and to help make a better future for ourselves, our children, and our fellow people. Today we can help, we can beautify, we can purify the air.

I urge each of us to renew our personal commitment by practising energy conservation, by recycling an additional item that perhaps we don't recycle in our own household, or by planting a tree.

Mr. Speaker, this 28th anniversary of Earth Day reminds us that this earth is a fragile planet and it is our island home.

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

#### **Elk Losses Due to Tuberculosis**

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, elk producers across Saskatchewan face severe losses due to detection of tuberculosis in one elk on a farm in Ontario. The 473 animals at this farm will be destroyed by the end of the month due to an order from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

While elk breeders and the Canadian Venison Council support the inspection agency's effort to protect food safety, they oppose the imminent loss of a valuable research opportunity if the slaughter proceeds too hastily. They also oppose the low rate of compensation.

Thirty-four of the 36 owners whose animals will be destroyed are from this province. They will receive compensation amounting to only 20 per cent of their herd's value. Considerable hardship to producers and communities will result.

The provincial Liberal caucus has attempted to get the federal minister to meet and discuss this matter with affected producers. He agreed to send bureaucrats but this meeting produced no positive results.

In closing, we urge the Minister of Agriculture to get involved and ensure these producers are fairly compensated. Join the provincial Liberal caucus and producer groups to encourage the federal government to act fairly and help our producers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Volunteer Recognition in Prince Albert**

**Mr. Langford:** — On Saturday, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night I had the chance to attend this year's volunteer recognition award banquet in Prince Albert. I enjoyed the banquet and the entertainment very much.

Don and Erma Brunsdon provided music and the Meath Park Ukrainian dancers did a part for us as well.

Volunteers in our community do priceless work in almost every area of service.

I would like to mention some of the people from my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers who were recognized. They are Bob Robinson for special services, Peter Feschuk for sports, Helmer and Lois Aspvik for special services, and Glenna

Elliott for recreation.

I once again would like to express my congratulations to them. Thank you.

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

#### **Third Party Leader Welcomes New Granddaughter**

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to stand and share a very wonderful event that occurred in my constituency yesterday, April 21.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell my colleagues here in the Assembly and all our wonderful guests that are here today, that as we go through the path of life there are highlights. And yesterday was another one in my life because Kevin and Kim Osika-Schick, my daughter and my son-in-law, presented my wife Barbara and I with a beautiful little baby granddaughter, Kierra Dawn Osika-Schick. And I am so . . .

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

**Mr. Osika:** — I thank you for that. It's quite an exciting event, and I just want to assure you that my family is doing everything possible to maintain the population in this great province of ours.

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

#### **National Organ Donor Awareness Week**

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. To demonstrate the life-giving importance of this week I'd like to read from a recent letter I received from very close friends of mine, Elaine and Kelvin Greschner.

It reads that:

On March 27, 1999, my wife (Elaine) received a life-saving double lung transplant. We had been waiting for the call since June of last year . . . and wondered if the call would ever come. Now, nineteen days later, the progress she has made is remarkable. She is walking, lifting weights, and in her own words, has "gotten her life back."

The sad part of this is that many people, young and old, are waiting to "get their life back." The even sadder part is that many don't survive (Mr. Speaker).

For their good fortune, they want to give something back. During donor awareness week, Elaine and Calvin, or Toby as most of us know him, are asking people to forward photocopies of their organ donor card to the Saskatchewan transplant coordinator, so that they can be used to bolster the spirits of those who are waiting a transplant.

For more information please call 1-800-667-7551.

The letter goes on, Mr. Speaker, to say "thank you to

Saskatchewan Health for covering the costs of flying” them to Winnipeg and for paying all hospital and drug costs for the procedure.

It closes by saying “they’re heading off for a glorious three-mile walk.”

I think, Mr. Speaker, no further comment is necessary.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Negotiations With Nurses

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, I’m sorry but I have to say I told you so. Yesterday I said your memorandum of understanding was nothing more than an NDP (New Democratic Party) trick designed to fix your political problems instead of fixing the health care problems in this province. You did it to social workers and now it’s clear you’re doing the very same thing to nurses.

Nurses say you’re doing nothing to address the issues in the memorandum of understanding. You’re doing nothing about the working conditions and the excessive overtime. In fact nurses say SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) is actually pulling items off the table that were in the agreement when it was signed on Sunday.

Mr. Premier, which items have you pulled off the table? And which part of the agreements are you now reneging on?

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, as usual the Tory Party’s position is — and question — is filled with inaccuracy. The negotiators are SAHO, on behalf of the employer, and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses on behalf of the union.

I want to say that as far as the government is concerned until late last night according to some news reports the issues of the dispute had been resolved and are resolved by the memorandum of understanding signed last weekend — the answer I gave the hon. member yesterday. And as far as I know neither party has repudiated the MOU (memorandum of understanding). And as far as I know both parties still agree that a future collective bargaining agreement will be on the basis of the MOU.

So therefore I am surprised to hear of news reports that we are at an impasse or at an apparent impasse. And thus in consequence I’ve asked the facilitator, Mr. Stephen Kelleher of British Columbia, to prepare for the government a written report as soon as possible detailing the positions of the two parties that they’ve taken to the table this week. And I’ll release that report as soon as can be done so and thereafter determine what other action is to be taken.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Premier, the nurses don’t believe that this MOU is on the table complete. Patients don’t believe you. Nobody believes you. You destroyed the health care system and you forced the nurses to go on strike. And now you’re breaking

your very own agreement.

Mr. Premier, what are you going to do now? The first time you talked to nurses, that fell apart in a matter of a few hours. And your latest commitment to nurses took about four days to fall apart. So we wonder what the plan is now, Mr. Premier. What’s the next political trick you’re going to use on Saskatchewan nurses?

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

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, it’s obvious — to me, in any event — that there’s hardly any value in giving an answer to the hon. member and the members of the Conservative Party over there because the follow-up question is based on something entirely different than the answer that I gave. It doesn’t matter what I say; she gets up and reads her prepared text.

Let me just repeat it one more time. Nobody has repudiated the MOU so far as I know. The basis of a future agreement is based on the MOU.

The news of an impasse as reported by the news reporters and the journalists is a surprise to the government. I’ve asked Mr. Stephen Kelleher to give me a written report on the issues taken by both parties, which report will be made public to the House and to the people of Saskatchewan; and what action thereafter, if any, that has to be taken will be announced at that time.

That’s the second time I’ve said that to you. See if you can devise your question, please, which is based on that answer.

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

**Mr. D’Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Premier could devise an answer that’s related to the question, because he hasn’t answered the question for us, he hasn’t answered the question for nurses, and he certainly hasn’t answered the question for the people of Saskatchewan.

So again my question is for the Premier: Mr. Premier, the ink isn’t even dry on the agreement you made with nurses and it is falling apart because you’re still not listening. The nurses say working conditions are not being addressed, and this morning both sides walked away from the bargaining table and the mediator says that both sides are too far apart to continue bargaining.

Mr. Premier, once again you have betrayed the nurses. What are you doing . . . you’re doing nothing to address the working conditions and the patient care. Mr. Premier, you didn’t learn a thing from the 10-day strike. Why are you already reneging on the agreement you made with nurses?

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

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, if the matter wasn’t as serious and as grave as it is, it would be laughable, these questions. The memorandum of agreement is made by the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, to which the government was able to facilitate the agreement. It remains the basis of the

agreement until I hear otherwise, not from that hon. member or from the old Tory Party under a new name. I'm going to hear it from Mr. Kelleher, and on that basis the public will know what the facts are and we'll know what action we have to take.

But I tell you what we won't do, Mr. Speaker. We won't do what the Saskatchewan Party says it will do when it gets into power and that is, "a plan to invite private health providers to the province to reduce waiting lists, passed without any opposition or convention." They say they stand up for the nurses. They stand up for private health care providers. They stand up for American two-tier health care. That's something we do not subscribe to.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier may be laughing at nurses and at patients, but the people of this province will not be laughing when they go to the polls when he ever calls the election.

Mr. Premier, we have a very serious problem here. Nurses don't believe a thing you say, and why should they? You've been talking about better health care for eight years, and what has it got us?

We have hospital closures, record waiting lists, nursing shortages. Your health care record, Mr. Premier, is a complete failure. And now nurses are threatening to walk off the job yet again because of your mismanagement and deceit.

Mr. Premier, when are you going to learn . . . Besides getting a report, when are you going to address the problems of working conditions and patient care in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, the working conditions issues have been addressed in the memorandum of understanding. The monetary issues have been addressed in the memorandum of understanding. And so far as I know, no party has rejected that memorandum of understanding as the basis of a future settlement.

But what the Leader, Deputy Leader of the Saskatchewan Tory Party here, the Sask-a-Tory party, should tell this House is whether or not he supports 22 per cent plus. Tell us whether you support 22 per cent plus for the nurses.

In your next question, tell us if you do. And if you do, tell us where you're going to get the money from.

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

### Funding for Education

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Minister, the teachers and school board members across Saskatchewan are telling us that eight years of NDP government is enough. Enough, Mr. Minister, to bring the K to 12 school system to its knees. Because over the past eight years

the NDP has cut education funding while costs continue to increase.

On Tuesday the minister accused the Saskatchewan Party of wanting to freeze education spending. That, Mr. Speaker, is not true and the minister knows it.

What the minister is trying to do is cover up his own government's record. The fact is that the NDP has simply frozen K to 12 education funding at its 1991 level. School divisions would be better off today by \$382 million.

Mr. Minister, will you explain to the people of Saskatchewan why the NDP has cut funding by almost \$400 million since you were elected in 1991?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that, and to the member from Canora, that obviously he's experiencing a fair bit of anxiety where he sits today. Because when the member opposite sat on this side of the opposition, the member opposite talked a lot about — and as a school trustee for Saskatchewan — about how it was important to invest money into education, like this government has been doing over the last several years.

But today, Mr. Speaker, when he goes over to the other party, where he's over at the other party with the Saskatchewan Tories, he's in a dilemma, Mr. Speaker. Because over there they say that they're not going to grow the education budget; they're only going to grow it by 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, on an annual basis the cost of living, 1 per cent. And that's huge turmoil from the member, Mr. Speaker, because when he was a Saskatchewan school trustee president, he wanted to grow education.

Now he's in conflict with his own policy, Mr. Speaker, his own party policy who are going to freeze education in this province; they're going to freeze education in this province, and he doesn't like it and is now speaking against the policy of his own party. Which is an interesting position for you, Mr. Member, to be because now this is the third position that you have, a Liberal, a Tory, and now which party are you speaking on behalf of, sir?

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Education had better get his facts correct, okay? And the facts are these, Mister Minister. If your NDP government had frozen education funding in 1991 levels instead of cutting the funding, school divisions would be better off by 382 million. That's fact, Mister Minister. You can twist and you bob and you weave and you can do everything you want, but that's fact.

And it gets worse. While the NDP was cutting education funding for eight years, the cost of providing K to 12 education services was increasing by \$120 million. Mr. Minister, it's a double whammy for school divisions. Less funding for the NDP government and increasing taxes. So thanks to the NDP, school boards have had to raise an additional \$550 million from property taxes to make up your shortfall.

Mr. Minister, will you admit that the NDP has downloaded \$550 million in education costs to the property taxpayers in just eight years?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to assure the member opposite that we both have a fair appreciation and understanding of what the operating grants were from 1991 to now, the year 2000. And the operating grant, Mr. Member, in the year 1991-92 was 374.3 million, is what you're alluding to — the operating grant was 374.3 million.

Today the operating grant, Mr. Member, is 392.5 million. That, Mr. Member, is an increase of \$20 million of over the same period of which you talk about.

I want to say to the member opposite, you keep alluding to the amount of dollars who have been reduced on the property side. When you take a look at what happened, when you take a look at what happened, Mr. Speaker, during the Tory administration in 1982, the percentage of government investment in education was 55 per cent.

Today over that same period of time, it's gone from 55 per cent, it's gone up to 39 per cent. And over the first period, from 55 per cent to 45 per cent during the years of 1981 to 1991 — it is your party are the people who reduced. Your party is the people who reduced it, 10 per cent over the period.

This government has an investment in education, will continue to grow it, Mr. Member, into the future, to ensure that Saskatchewan children . . .

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you have to understand that there are monies that are being transferred to school boards in three categories. They are operating grant; they are educational development fund; and they are the capital grant.

In 1991, Mr. Minister, for your information if you haven't received that over the last six months, that number was 452 million. Today, Mr. Minister, that number is 427 million. Every year since 1991 that number has been smaller than 452 million. Those are the facts, Mr. Minister. School divisions depend on that. You know that as well as I do.

A Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker, will not freeze spending on education and we certainly won't cut \$382 million from the K to 12 funding.

Mr. Minister, your predecessor, the current Minister of Health, complained in 1991 that education was being underfunded by the previous government. Mr. Minister, after eight years your NDP government has yet to match the 1991 funding level.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is: Mr.

Minister, will you finally admit your government has devastated K to 12 education and driven local property taxes through the roof at the same time?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite, and he knows this as well as I do, that in education over the last ten years or rather the last eight years in this province you've seen innovations in this province that you haven't seen anywhere else in Canada. And people come to this province to look at the education models we have here of which to some degree, Mr. Member, you had some responsibility in helping it get there. We have, and you'll agree with me, that we have some of the best education programs in Canada.

We have a new community school model today, Mr. Speaker, of which people from across the world come here to look at our community school model and are transplanting it in communities across Canada today because it's the best model.

We have a special education program in this province, Mr. Speaker, that's second to none anywhere in the world. People come here to look at our special needs program and look at how our program works.

We are concerned about rural education in this province and through SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) provide some of the best SCN site education anywhere in Canada. People come here to study our SCN programs.

And I say to the member opposite: you need to take a look at the history in this province in education. And you, sir, and your party are on a path to zap education in a big way. One per cent increase on an annual basis is what you talked about in this province which is a reduction to education in a big way.

And I say to you, Mr. Member, if you want to change the agenda on your party you should be . . .

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

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

### Negotiations with Nurses

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. During the morning negotiations between SAHO and SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses), the mediator brought in to fix your mess has reportedly thrown up his hands. He has thrown up his hands in frustration because the government, the NDP, according to him has not budged one bit during the new round of negotiations.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, he is reported to have said the NDP has reneged on the memorandum of understanding. Nurses are now contemplating their next move which could include more job action.

Mr. Premier, you tried to decoy the nurses with another diversion from your political bag of tricks, but it looks like this latest slight of hand is going to blow up in your face like the nurses' original walkout.

Are you going to inject yourself into this next round of

negotiations or learn from your previous experience?

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry I perhaps, did not hear the Leader of the Liberal Party's question but I thought he said that Mr. Kelleher indicated that somehow the negotiations were — what were his words?

**An Hon. Member:** — Reneged.

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Reneged? Yes, we reneged were the words.

That is not the situation. I'll have a written report from Mr. Kelleher sometime later this afternoon or early evening, and we will have a list there of the issues that SAHO says are outstanding, a list of the issues that he says that SUN are outstanding and we'll see how big the impasse is.

So far as I know, nobody has reneged on the MOU and nobody has said that the MOU is not the basis of a settlement. That there are gulfs and differences on the negotiations, obviously Mr. Kelleher has said that publicly.

Let's get the written report; I said I'll table it. You can take a look at it and the public can take a look at it and we'll decide what to do.

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

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Minister of Health. Your government has spent time calculating nursing staffing level plans. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Health could tell us how many nurses have signed contracts outside of Saskatchewan? How many are seeking work outside of Saskatchewan? How many have given their notice to retire? And how many are looking for alternate employment?

If those questions, Mr. Speaker, can't be answered, then how can we arrive . . . how can you arrive, Madam Minister, at a master plan of what is needed and what is realistic? The nurses you said last year were virtually hired are now virtually gone.

Will you stand in this House today and come clean with the truth about this entire situation?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member may not have had an opportunity to read the memorandum of understanding that was signed between the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. This memorandum of understanding was signed on Sunday morning at about 7 a.m.

What I can report to the member, contained in the memorandum of understanding are several elements that are important to workplace issues.

One of those elements, Mr. Speaker, is an independent assessment process which deals with nursing practice issues. Now nursing practice issues surround the issues in the workplace. And our government and SAHO and nurses have made a commitment to deal with that issue in this collective agreement — that's point number one.

Point number two, a second important issue for nurses is to convert casual positions to full-time positions, and that that commitment is in that MOU.

And thirdly, Mr. Speaker, nurses want a seniority-wide process. And that commitment is in the MOU.

Mr. Speaker, we have in that MOU the elements necessary to correct the kinds of issues that nurses want addressed in the workplace. And I can assure the public, this government wants those issues addressed as well.

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

### Advertising Budget in SaskPower

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the minister responsible for Crowns — the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday the minister bragged that SaskPower made a hundred and forty million dollars while sucking this from the taxpayers of the province. However in 1997 while taxpayers were being gouged of millions of dollars, SaskPower's communications and public affairs department went on a shopping spree, Mr. Speaker, with a 50 per cent increase in the budget.

According to a freedom of information request obtained by the Liberals, SaskPower's PR (public relations) department increased their spending in 1997 to just over 4 million bucks, up from 2.7 million the year before.

Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier, how can you tell the workers of this province to shut up and take 2 per cent hikes while you reward your PR flacks with a 50 per cent increase in their budget?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the point of the question opposite is. The Crown corporations are running . . . the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan, the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan provide amongst the lowest utility rates in Canada.

Go down the list of them — go down the list of them from Energy to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) to SaskTel to Power. They provide to Saskatchewan citizens 10 per cent of the jobs; they provide a significant benefit in the low rates; they provide a profit to pay down the debt that the members opposite created for us through the '80s; and they provide a hundred million dollars annually to the provision of services like education and health.

If the member opposite doesn't like that, maybe he wants to join the Sask-a-Tories and ask for privatization.

We like what the Crowns do and the way they do it, thank you very much.

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

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By that response,

we have to assume that they are more than prepared to defend at election time, each and every hack that they've hired, each and every time that they've increased ad budgets by 50 per cent. Well, we'll work on that at election time.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time that we've seen this double standard from the NDP. The NDP raised some health districts' CEO (chief executive officer) salaries by 17 per cent. SaskEnergy increased its advertising contract to their NDP hack firm Phoenix Advertising by 50 per cent in one year.

At the same time the NDP pad their ad agency contracts accounts and their PR budgets, students get shafted, potholes get bigger, and our health care system slips deeper into a coma. Perhaps it's time you started to care more for the people of this province than you care about the politics and the propaganda of your government.

Is this your priority, to load up your NDP friends and insiders as much as they can carry from the public purse before you go to the polls?

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, there is something the member opposite may not understand. That the Crown corporations today are in a competitive mode; they are . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is finished muttering from his seat, I'll continue.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite surely is by now aware that the utilities in Canada, through national regulation, and in many cases are now in a competitive mode. And you know what? The Saskatchewan taxpayers have supported the place of these Crowns in the competitive industry — whether it's in SGI on the regular insurance; whether it's in SaskEnergy where the rates are the best and nobody can come in here and compete; whether it is on SaskTel, where SaskTel has retained over 90 per cent of their customers because of the loyalty.

Yes, of course it's important in the competitive marketplace to get your message out. The member opposite might want to see his companies fail. The member opposite might want to see his Crown corporations fail. But I tell you we do not, and the people of Saskatchewan do not, and we're going to let them run good businesses like they've always done.

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

#### **Retention of Physicians in Province**

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, last week the Saskatchewan Party raised a very serious problem in the town of Maple Creek. The people of Maple Creek have lost five doctors in three years because of the NDP's high taxes.

Madam Minister, Mr. Speaker, this problem is not confined to Maple Creek. Towns and cities all across Saskatchewan are watching helplessly while doctors and specialists leave the province and that's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You ask the question why? Because the NDP has burdened them with the second highest taxes in Canada.

The latest doctor to leave Maple Creek told the local newspaper

that he was leaving because NDP taxes are killing him. This doctor said he was going to Alberta where he will be allowed to incorporate and therefore pay far less in taxes.

Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, what is your government doing to encourage doctors to stay in, rather than leave this province?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I find this an interesting question coming from this member who was elected in 1986, 1991, and 1995, as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Let me remind the member, and perhaps go back a little in history, to talk about why we're at where we're at in this province.

Mr. Speaker, each and every day in this province the citizens of this province spend \$2 million on interest on the public debt. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because that member's party racked up a \$15 billion debt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that that member would talk about high taxes, more spending on roads, more spending on health, more spending on education, and tax cuts, given that we have \$2 million a day on interest, or \$750 million each year.

Mr. Speaker, that member's party's position does simply not add up and we're not going to go back to the past where this province was in debt and deficit.

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

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

##### **Bill No. 217 — The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill 217, The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act.

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

##### **Bill No. 218 — The Crowns Corporations Amendment Act, 1999 (Foreign Investment Prohibition)**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 218, The Crowns Corporations Amendment Act, 1999 (Foreign Investment Prohibition).

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

##### **Bill No. 219 — The Crown Corporations Disclosure Act**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 219, The Crown Corporations Disclosure Act be now read a 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. 221 — The Crown Corporation Managers' and Permanent Heads' Salaries Act**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 221, The Crown Corporation Managers' and Permanent Heads' Salaries Act be now read a 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. 222 — The Crown Corporations (Board of Directors Appointment) Amendment Act**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 222, The Crown Corporations (Board of Directors Appointment) Amendment Act be now read a 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. 223 — The Crown Corporations Amendment (Referendum) Act**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 223, The Crown Corporations Amendment (Referendum) Act be now read a 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. 224 — The Accountability of Subsidiaries of Subsidiary Crown Corporations Act**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 224, The Accountability of Subsidiaries of Subsidiary Crown Corporations Act be now read a first time.

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

**MOTIONS**

**Distinguished Volunteer Medal Recipients**

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

That the House do now recess until 4 p.m. for the Saskatchewan volunteer recognition tea, and that this Assembly reconvene at the call of the Speaker ringing the bells five minutes in advance of reconvening.

Leave granted

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — With that carried, I will ask everyone to remain seated in your places. Those who are involved in the medals event this afternoon will leave and will re-enter the Assembly as soon as possible, and we're able to begin.

We will now stand recessed with the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the bells to summons the members at 3:55 p.m.

**The Assembly recessed until 4 p.m.**

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Mr. Speaker, and here it is, the answer to question 62.

**The Speaker:** — The answer to item no. 1, question no. 62 is tabled.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**The Chair:** — Before we get started, I would ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To my immediate left is the deputy minister of Education, Mr. Craig Dotson. Directly behind me is the associate deputy minister, Ken Horsman. Seated right next to Ken, to his left, is Mae Boa, executive director.

Michael Littlewood, seated next to me is . . . Michael is the executive director, legislative and school administration; Larry Allan, the executive director of school finance; seated at the back is John McLaughlin, executive director of teachers' superannuation; and Mr. Cal Kirby, director of facilities. And to my right and one desk back, Mr. Chair, is Gerry Sing Chin, who is the manager of the school operations grants. My officials, Mr. Chair.

**Subvote (ED01)**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think before we agree to that item, we have a few questions for the minister. And, Mr. Minister, I want to welcome you as the Minister of Education, the first opportunity that you've had to be in Education estimates. And of course a special welcome to all of your staff here this afternoon.

We have a limited time period today, Mr. Minister, and so there are a number of things that I want to touch on. We'll begin, Mr. Minister, by looking at of course education overall. As the Minister of Education, a recently appointed Minister of Education, you've inherited some of the things, of course, that the former minister was trying to institute.

One of those was in the area of amalgamations and restructuring of Education. What I'd like to have you clarify for the members of the House and of course people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, is the restructuring plan that the former minister had embarked upon, voluntary . . . the kind of plan that was put in place has been a bit of . . . a bit of . . . a bit

successful but also has struggled. And we hear most recently I think in the last couple days we hear now that in the west Saskatoon area that the school divisions there are looking at it and saying: no, amalgamation is not on for us. And in fact they have withdrawn from that process.

I understand the quotation in *The StarPhoenix* from director of education Brian Keegan has indicated that the board unanimously . . . that board unanimously has indicated that they will not take part in restructuring.

What I'd like to ask of you, Mr. Minister, is as far as your . . . your philosophy and your idea about amalgamations, about restructuring, are we following the pattern that was established? Have you ideas on how we can move forward? And also I guess, how do you address the concerns that have been expressed by the director of education and the board in Saskatoon (West)?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to first of all thank the member from Canora for the question and certainly indicate to the member that this is a wonderful portfolio that I have the opportunity to be a part of today. And I know that he has a strong appreciation for my feelings, having been an educator and also a senior member of the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), the president of the organization in this province, and has worked hard for the betterment of education in this province.

So I know that he shares with me the admiration that we have for the system and the people who work in it and the initiatives that we have undertaken in this province over the last several years. Really to make this a better place for our Saskatchewan students and residents and provide good opportunities for children as they move on into the workplace and the careers and for the training in this province.

You asked the question about amalgamations and sort of the overall thinking and direction of the government. As you've well described, that in the last several years the minister prior, Ms. Atkinson, and certainly I have taken the same position, and that is to continue to speak to school divisions across the province and talk about voluntary amalgamations because there are certainly efficiencies in the amalgamations across the province.

Today as you well know there are some 90 school divisions, 90-plus school divisions across the province. And gradually we're seeing or have seen over the last several years a coming together of school divisions. As you're familiar with the area from which you come, not the Crystal Springs, but the Crystal Lakes School Division has recently amalgamated and have found some efficiencies in there.

And there are lots of issues, as you well know, with amalgamations. And our position will be to continue to encourage them, on a voluntary basis, to promote amalgamations across the province because there are efficiencies.

And I'm saddened today to respond to your comment as it relates to the Saskatoon West decision because I think it's an unfortunate decision for that part of the province, because a lot

of good work went into trying to determine whether or not there were benefits to this.

And when I examined some of the work that they have done with the Outlook and Biggar School Divisions, there was I think something like 450 or \$480,000 worth of efficiencies that they had in fact identified which really would have made its way back into the operation of the schools.

And I know that you have identified on a number of occasions the kinds of pressures that exist within the school environment, and I concur with you for sure on those. And if any time you could take that kind of administrative saving and transplant it or redirect it into the front line operations of school divisions, or classrooms, it would be very, very valuable.

So I'm hoping that there might be some further discussion in that area and that amalgamations continue to be viewed in a generic way across the province, with our promotion of it, of course.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm glad to hear those last couple of words — with your promotion. And I think this is a time, Mr. Minister, for leadership. And I raised this question with the past minister as well.

When we talked about restructuring of school divisions, we talked about taking existing — and you've mentioned Crystal Lakes School Division and I think that's a good example. We've taken two existing school divisions — boundaries that existed in about 1944 or whenever they were drawn — and we've put them together. And the question still is before school division boards, that new board of education, there are problems. And I've referred to them a year ago as areas on the fringes. The fringe problems of the boundaries.

Have you, as the current minister, do you have the Boundaries Commission in place? Is it assisting boards of education to solve the problems that exist with the old boundaries of the 1940s? And what do you see happening in terms of providing leadership to boards of education to address those concerns. Because I know, Mr. Minister, you've made a couple of good points around some of the efficiencies that boards of education may achieve.

But what's happening with boards of education currently of course is that they're doing a lot of sharing. And they have done that already and they have reduced costs as a matter of balancing their books, of course. But at the same time, when they look at amalgamation and they look at a large system — and I understand that that system was going to be in excess of 4,000 students and in excess of 25 schools — they pull back. They pull back and I think the public in one area has responded by saying, we don't think you should be part of that huge area; it's not beneficial for us to be in that.

At the same time we hear of boards of education who have already amalgamated — in a much smaller sense, the Crystal Lakes School Division — and there are still areas that haven't been addressed. And they will not be addressed by the school division — neighbouring school divisions — because of course we're talking about turf protection. We're looking at areas of land that if you, if you agree to transfer a huge amount of land

to the neighbouring school division, you lose that tax base. And as a result they're not willing to look at that.

Will your department, will you as Minister of Education, be providing leadership in that area to address those concerns and assist any of the boards of education who are struggling with those kinds of boundary problems?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member, when we talk about assisting boards in the role of amalgamations — we've been doing this now for some time — and the undertaking certainly from me and from the department will be — and this government — will be to continue to do that in the way in which we have in the past. And today we provide some remuneration to district boards to assist them with their consult, financially, in the amalgamations. And certainly our departmental people are there to assist with some of the progress work that they do.

And the Boundaries Commission is in place — the question you asked of whether it is in place, and it is in place. It's there to assist school divisions if in fact they want to engage the Boundaries Commission in their work of amalgamations.

You asked though a very important question. And that is, you know, will there be a more significant role played by the government or the ministry in advancing amalgamations across the province.

And by and large, what this administration has said, and I think we'll continue to take the position, is that we do it through consensus and that we encourage the district boards across the province — or not district boards, excuse me, school divisions; some of the language is still a little tight as you can understand — so school divisions across the province to, to work together.

Now there may be some interest, or there may even be some promotion, that we should do this by dictate. But it's clearly not the position of this administration or this government to impose that kind of a process on school divisions today.

(1615)

Because what we've seen historically — as you've seen, I know — over the years school divisions have gotten together; they've made decisions about increasing the size of their boundaries; they've closed schools over the years, historically. And so we've allowed that process to continue to take place at the local level with the elected trustees, who we think represent the communities and their constituency in a very admirable way. And they're always concerned about the quality of education of students and equity. So as much as we might see, or think that we see, deficiencies in the system — and I think there are some, and that's why we talked about amalgamations — getting in front of it as a ministry or as a department I think is certainly not the direction that I would be supporting today, but rather to continue to work in partnership with school divisions to promote that into the future.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you've indicated that there are about 90-plus school divisions. I was wondering if any of your officials have a listing of all of the school divisions that exist in the province today. And could

you also indicate to me how many school divisions exist like the new Crystal Lakes — how many amalgamations have actually taken place?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Member . . . or Mr. Chair, to the member, there are 30 that have now become nine. So we have nine amalgamated school divisions across the province. And when you ask how many school divisions do we actually have in place today, I said it was 90, but it's really 100 — we have 100 school divisions today. And we can provide you with a list of all of those school divisions and we'll have that available for you in the future.

**An Hon. Member:** — Do you want that in alphabetical order?

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you. Well the member opposite wants me to ask for it in alphabetical order, but it really doesn't matter, Mr. Minister. I know the gentleman might have trouble reading from A to Z, but it won't really matter.

The document, Mr. Member, that we're really interested in, of course, is the nine amalgamated school divisions. I believe, Mr. Minister, you've received a number of letters from those school divisions, and I'm not sure whether there's more than one.

How have negotiations proceeded within those new amalgamated boards of education with both their professional group — in other words arriving at a new link agreement — and with their paraprofessionals, if indeed there is a union group as CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) or whatever it may be. Do we have new contracts in place in all of the nine amalgamated school divisions?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I'm not able to answer that question fully, because when you ask how much correspondence I've had with the school divisions that have amalgamated, I've only had actually correspondence from one of the nine that I've identified to the member from Canora. And it really has only been from the Canora, Timberline School Division, which is the new Crystal Lakes School Division, is the only one that I've had any correspondence from where they've identified some issues that you've identified this afternoon.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I haven't had the opportunity to contact the other eight boards as well but I will do that, and I hope that those boards also will be in contact with your department.

As indicated in that letter, Mr. Minister, I think we have a bit of a problem occurring here. And the letter to you, Mr. Minister — I mean you have a copy of that and so do I — the board of education has identified some concerns.

What they're facing is, of course, two existing contracts that existed with the teachers' associations of both of those school divisions. Two existing contracts existed for the CUPE workers as well. And now they're trying to negotiate. And of course it's both groups looking at what was probably their best clauses and they're putting them forward.

As indicated in that letter to you, Mr. Minister — I think it's dated January 12, '99 from the board of education, the director of education — they're looking at a figure of \$140,000, new

dollars, would be necessary if they were to implement the requests that were on the table at that time. That's a staggering amount of money to bring about new contracts. And I know we're talking about contracts right across this province in health care and everywhere else.

What role will your ministry play or your officials play in assisting Crystal Lakes with, I guess first of all, some advice?

And secondly, are you going to be addressing the . . . if indeed there are more than just Crystal Lakes that are having difficulty and require additional funding, will any additional funding be allocated to those new school divisions, that upfront costs that will be necessary to put in place new contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, on balance we would view these as being some savings across the piece. But as the member from Canora knows, it has always been the responsibility and the role of the local school boards to negotiate the agreements, not only with the sports staff but issues that are pertaining to other responsibilities that educators perform today within their school divisions.

And it would not be my expectation or intent to either involve the minister or the department in the process of working out the individual arrangements of which school divisions have for years and years traditionally held in sorting out the levels of benefits that teachers would have outside of the provincial agreements. And that would continue to be the position of certainly the ministry today, and I expect would be the recommendation I get from the department.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Minister, could you clarify whether indeed your predecessor at any time had indicated that additional monies would be made available to boards who would look at the possibility of amalgamations?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I think only from two areas: for grant protection, I expect that there was a commitment made; and for some funding for the transitional piece in order to assist boards with their amalgamation process.

I think if there was a commitment and I don't . . . I wouldn't know . . . I don't know right off the top, but I would expect that it would only be in those two areas that the ministry would have made any kind of a commitment to school divisions.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's my understanding that a number of years ago the Minister of Education offered a sum of money to existing school divisions to look at extra costs that would be incurred if they were going to amalgamate. It wasn't a large amount of money, but it was a small amount of money that was suggested that boards of education could use.

As I pointed out, and I'm pretty sure that we're going to hear the very same answer from all the other eight amalgamated areas, that additional monies are going to be needed to put in place an amalgamation process. You've indicated that you want that to occur at that local level, and that you want that contract to be negotiated at the local level with the teachers and with the support staff, and I agree with you.

But what's happening is we're placing an additional financial burden on the taxpayers. And maybe that's the kind of financial burden that is scaring away the people of Saskatoon (West) to say if it's going to cost us — and they're talking about a much larger concept than the Crystal Lakes concept — if there's an additional \$150,000 needed to bring about . . . or 140,000 I think is the number that the director of education has quoted here. If that's what's needed as additional monies in Crystal Lakes, what amount of monies might be needed in this new concept surrounding Saskatoon (West)?

Is that kind of thing scaring boards of education and the public at large from saying no, don't touch this; we don't want to be part of putting up additional monies to be part of a larger picture and lose that kind of autonomy.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I think, Mr. Chair, it's my sense that when school divisions come together to have a discussion about amalgamation they would clearly have an appreciation of what the disparities are between each other. And so . . . Because it wouldn't be any different today than if they were negotiating on an individual basis with their employees.

What they've done of course is now made a decision that they would bring two or three school divisions together and collectively . . . and they're doing this on a voluntary basis. And so their understanding of what their needs might be in terms of financial commitments, I think, are obvious.

I don't share the same view that this is an extra burden to the taxpayer. This would be on the other side of that, in my view. Amalgamations are intended to provide some relief to the tax base, if I might consider it that way. Because what we would see of course is that there would be clearly some efficiencies in the amalgamations.

As I pointed out to you, the unfortunate feelings that I have regarding the Saskatoon (West) position, because there you actually did see a large chunk of money that would make its way back into the front lines in the delivery of educations in the classrooms.

So it's not an extra burden in my view to the taxpayer. What it is, it's a reflection of what the savings might be to the taxpayer at the end of the day because those dollars would be redirected into the front lines of providing better, higher quality education to our students.

Now just in completing part of your other question, and that was the understanding that you had that there might be some chunk of money that would have been available to school divisions on amalgamation. I expect that what it really is, is the \$15,000 that was made available — and still is — to school divisions to assist them with their transition process. And that commitment is still there, and we've made that commitment to each of the school divisions that have been involved in the amalgamations that we talk about today.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess in speaking with board members in the Crystal Lakes School Division, they are very aware of course that that has been a shared entity for many years. In fact at the time that I still was at the Canora board level we were already sharing a

director of education, a secretary-treasurer, the office, and on and on and on.

The amount of savings that will be incurred by this amalgamation process in Crystal Lakes is going to be very limited because over the years they have saved those hundreds of thousands of dollars of reducing those costs. So we're going to see different kinds of things in the province, Mr. Minister, and that's the point I'm making.

In one area like the Crystal Lakes, they will have to find additional new monies to put in place a new contract. It won't be found in the efficiencies because they already saved those monies years ago. Yes, maybe in Saskatoon (West) and in that area, if it's a larger concept, there is the possibility of saving significant dollars and that will be.

The point that I'm making there, Mr. Minister, I think that your department and your minister's office has to be able to assist, and it may have to even assist financially to address the extra costs that boards of education are going to incur, or else that whole voluntary concept that your predecessor so aptly spoke about is just not going to happen. Boards of education need to have some benefits at the end of the day to be able to look at the concept of amalgamations.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well I think that what we should keep in mind here — and the member identifies it, I think, Mr. Chair, quite correctly because that's how I view it as well — and that is that when we go to promote amalgamations across the province today, part of it is that we're hoping that we might be able to capture some efficiencies within the system and then be able to redirect them into the front-line delivery of education across the province and the schools of which education is provided. That's part of it.

I think the other part of the amalgamation piece of course is to look at how we might in fact enrich the quality and equity of the system across the province. And you're correct, that it varies from different parts of the province. And in the Crystal Lakes School Division, by pulling together two school divisions, at the end of the day we might not see a significant cost or efficiency that would be redirected. But what you might then see is an enriched level of shared services within the two school divisions that would enhance the quality of delivery in that particular area.

And so when we're talking, I think, about the benefits of amalgamations, they're far broader than just what might be found in the financial piece of the process.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Maybe we'll leave voluntary amalgamations alone for a minute or two.

Mr. Minister, in your Saskatchewan Education report, the report of 1998, there was mention made of course of the testing results across Canada, and specifically Saskatchewan. And I recall last year the Minister of Education, then minister of Education — as a result of the levels of testing and the results of Saskatchewan students in the area of mathematics — that a commission or a group was put together with some significant funding to identify what had happened in the area of mathematics. Was this just a small glitch or . . . you know to I believe report back

to the minister of Education as to what we could do in the area of mathematics to improve our skills?

Could you inform the House and the public at large as to where we are with that study? Is it complete? Has the monies allocated — and I believe they were \$200,000 — have those monies been spent? And where are we regarding change in terms of developing new concepts and new programs?

(1630)

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair, to the member. First of all, I want to indicate to the member that I'm looking at the Provincial Auditor's report, the fall report, volume 2, the 1998 version of his report, and in the conclusion portion of his response he says this:

The Department of Education used best practices and succeeded in gaining and maintaining key stakeholder commitment to the tracking and reporting of education indicators. In doing so, the Department has demonstrated leadership in reporting.

So I think it's important for the record that we indicate the significance of the auditor's report in the process of the testing results.

When you ask the question about what it is that we're doing with indicators that have come our way as it relates to the mathematics issue, and I can outline for you what our action plan has been and I can provide a copy for you as well if you'd like. But these are the number of things that we've implemented to ensure that this process meets the kinds of expectations that I think we have in administering the department.

We've done this: two additional provincial consultants are providing leadership today; a team of more than 50 mathematics teacher-leaders are helping to deliver in-service; we have a new and innovative mathematics material are being evaluated collaboratively by the western Canada protocol process; we have a new assessment, and evaluation tools are being developed; we have far greater parental involvement in the process today; we have the University of Regina is now completing a mathematics instrumental time across the province and the study will ensure curriculum use in the province.

So those are the five or six bullets that really address the action plan that we put in place to try to address the issues that were identified for us.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Good. Thank you, Mr. Minister. First of all, I do want to say that the *Saskatchewan Education Indicators* document is a very good document in terms of providing necessary information to the people of Saskatchewan. And I wasn't in any way implying that the indicators document is not a good document, as the auditor has agreed.

But I do want to indicate that — I believe it's on page 32 — one of the statements there said that at levels 3 and 4, Saskatchewan 13-year-olds achieved lower than the Canadian profile.

And that's my question, Mr. Minister. You've indicated that your action plan has involved, you know a number of teachers,

curriculum people; you've talked about two additional people in Saskatchewan to act as curriculum coordinators. Has there been a need to change the curriculum at that level?

The question that parents are asking as a result of those tests, was there something wrong with the curriculum, was there something wrong with the way it was being taught? Or, you know, has your action plan determined what needs to be changed at that curriculum level?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member. I think it's important . . . In his question he identifies an area that's absolutely correct. And that is that when you look at the implementation of the mathematics program across the province, at the time in which the testing was completed, the new curriculum was not fully implemented.

And so today, now that we have the curriculum fully implemented, I think if we were to do the same kinds of testing today with the kinds of supports that we've built into the system, we're likely to see a much different result.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, under your leadership now, there are two other sort of studies that are being done. One is to deal with the exceptional children and how that fits into our school system, and the other one of course that you most recently announced was the role of schools and how we're looking at that.

Let's deal with the first one, Mr. Minister. Could you tell us where the committee is regarding its public findings or its public discussion around exceptional children and the special needs that so many students bring to classrooms? When do you expect the report? What kinds of things do you see happening as a result of that particular body that is doing its work at the moment?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member. As you know, when I arrived in the ministry in September, the special needs report had already been engaged to the credit of the minister of Education prior to me — the member from Saskatoon Broadway. Not Saskatoon Broadway.

**An Hon. Member:** — Nutana.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Nutana. Saskatoon Nutana. And so the process was well on its way. The committee had already been identified and the committee members had been identified and they were doing some very good work when I had already arrived.

I've had the occasion now to meet twice with the committee. And I want to say to you that the public portion of the consultation process is now completed, and currently the committee is busy working with the individual stakeholders within the education system and around it. And expect that this process will likely provide some interim information to me this summer, early September, with the final recommendation on the document and their work . . . or of a document of their work likely in December of this year.

As you well know, the issues around special needs in this province have grown dramatically over the last several years.

And on a daily basis there are many, many pressures within our school environment today and a growing number of special needs.

And accordingly, it's our hope and certainly our expectation — and that's why the committee is in place today — that it will provide us with some direction as to how in fact we'll deliver special needs programs across this province in the future.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And of course without indicating, you know, what your solutions might be, I guess you can't indicate that to us until you see the report.

The whole situation with special needs, as you've indicated, has been growing over the years. There are many more requirements of the education system to deal with needs of all kinds of children. And that I think, Mr. Minister, is tying directly into the role of schools. People are asking the question: should the school be dealing with this and this and this?

And that's the question that I know that you've put in place, and I think that dialogue is going to occur and it's going to occur at a most appropriate time. The time frame is a little long and I've mentioned that to you before, Mr. Minister. But what is going to have to happen, Mr. Minister, is that you're going to have to have the leadership from the various government agencies.

We saw the report of 1992, supported by every agency that was involved in that symposium, whether it was Justice, whether it was Health, whether it was Social Services. All of those departments said it would be terrific to have an integrated model whereby the school roof would have under it . . . one component would be education but all of those other things would occur as well. Great concept, but did not occur because of course Health funding did not follow.

The requests of the Health department to provide health care officials to come into a school system and administer medication is turned down. Those are the kinds of things that were recommended in 1992, and I know that you weren't the minister and that concept hasn't been dealt with.

And I wonder, Mr. Minister, depending of course on what you see happening in that dialogue, what would your position be at the moment regarding an integration of school-based services and allowing other types of government agencies to put in place the funding necessary to bring help to people of Saskatchewan?

You know, and we start to look at boards of education having to cut back. We know that guidance programs, we know that counselling programs have been eliminated in a lot of the schools. And, Mr. Minister, I do want to indicate that in some city schools and many inner-city schools, great things are happening, okay. There are programs that are being developed with Justice officials, with Social Services people, and you know maybe there is a sharing of the financial burden.

We do know that of course Education dollars are being spent to deliver those non-educational needs, and I think that's what was starting to bother not only board members, but also the parents. Who is going to pay for all these things that are required in the classroom setting?

You know, we saw the horrific example of a disaster in Colorado just a couple of days ago. We need to ensure that we provide financial assistance, whether it's through Education or whether it's through Health or Social Services, we need to ensure that we provide the kinds of dollars necessary to put in place the people to be able to assist.

I ask for your response.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member opposite. I have now had an opportunity to hear the member on a couple of occasions as it relates to the whole integrated piece. And I know that in 1992 there was a good deal of work that was done by the Saskatchewan school trustees with the interest of course of promoting a model that would have an integrated model or integrated system tied to it.

And when I had the opportunity first to look at the broader piece of what's happening in education today, and I come from . . . I come from this from a different perspective of course than which you do. You have come through the system as an educator and have witnessed firsthand some of the pressures that are involved in the education system, you know, having been a teacher and a principal and a board trustee, and then later the president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. You have seen it internally.

I want to say to you that my route has been a little bit different in that I have practised in the area of social services for many, many years and have witnessed the kinds of responsibilities and programs in which we were responsible to administer from the Department of Social Services or Justice, and we have a huge dependency on the school system to try and deliver many, many of those programs in that environment.

And so from my perspective, the role of the school is really to examine how much more this institution is prepared to take on or can take on, because as you and I both know, that schools don't have an option. Because when children arrive at their door today and are asked for particular services, then the school system simply provides the services. They simply do it.

And they don't reject anybody. They don't say, well I'm sorry today because you're here and you're an abused child or today you don't have any food in your stomach, we're not going to take you today. They don't have those kinds, they don't have those kinds of options.

And so school divisions and school systems have taken on all these responsibilities over the years. And so the role of the school is to examine very, very broadly . . . and this is a public dialogue with, in my view, no preconceived notion about what we'll want to see at the end of the day, because I think the public needs to tell us how in fact they want to see their school systems operating into the future.

Do they want to be an environment with an eclectic group of services in them, today where you have hot lunch programs, and you have within that environment, single parents and that you have daycares and that you have preschool programs and you have child education counsellors and you have justice workers and social workers? Is that what we want our schools in the future to look like?

And to some degree you'll find them today in some environments across the province, as you already say. So we're integrating some of those services.

And so I want, I want a dialogue in this province that, first of all, is led by a group of people who make up that broad perspective of interest; people who are from Social Services and people from Justice and Health and Education, so that as they go around the province and check the wisdom of the people of Saskatchewan; that in fact they'll be able to craft a solution at the end of the day that will reflect what Saskatchewan people in fact want to see their schools be.

And maybe then we're on a process to change the way in which we have to fund them. Because as you point out, and I think rightfully so, that today we have the Departments of Health and Social Services and Justice who have great, great expectations of our school system and maybe should be greater involved in how we fund those things into the future, which I think is a different piece in my view. Because once we get some consensus of what we want our school environment to look like, then I think we need to start addressing how it is that we're going to sustain them into the future from a financial perspective.

And so I've engaged in some discussion already with the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association about looking at how that process might work. And they aren't isolated. It isn't the Department of Education and the SSTA who alone can make a final decision on how we fund into the future. I think we need to include our partners who are at the municipal level — both at SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) — because they have a huge investment as well because their communities are very concerned about what happens to schools in the future.

And I've cited this example on a number of occasions, as you can well appreciate, because I'm sure you've been there on many occasions — I know you've been there on many occasions on your own — where I've witnessed what happened in the Fort Qu'Appelle, or the Qu'Appelle school division, which was raised I think by one of your members recently, where you have the school division who's at the front of the room talking about the importance of consolidating a high school in that particular area because it makes good sense from the point of view of quality of education and accessibility and maybe — maybe — even efficiency.

So in the wisdom of the school trustees, they're busy trying to accomplish that. And then the clip on the television channel switches, and you have somebody from your urban government or your municipal government standing at the microphone saying you can't do this because at the end of the day you're going to kill my community.

(1645)

And so I think we need to have that discussion as a partnership today, because you can't be calling on school divisions to do a different job or a better job in delivering education. And then you have another member of your community who is an elected leader saying you can't do this because we don't support it.

So part of my discussion will be to try to promote some common theme and dialogue in that process when we get to talking about funding.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You've highlighted a couple of very good things, Mr. Minister, that I think we have to be very, very careful with.

We have seen what has occurred in the health system regarding the extra burden on nurses, and of course the whole question of nursing practices. At the same time, I think we're starting to hear that very, very slightly in the education community as well when we start to see all of the requests that are being placed on the school.

The teachers are feeling that stress and they're feeling that burden to say, is it our job to provide the lunches? And you're very, very accurate to say that teachers will provide whatever they can; if they have . . . you know, if they have their own lunch bag along, they'll share it with the people if they recognize that indeed a child has come to school hungry and is unable to learn because of hunger. So those kinds of things have to happen.

And when we go through this dialogue process, Mr. Minister, I think what we have to ensure that at the end of the day, if we're changing course, if we're determining that there's additional monies now that are going to come from Health and Justice and Social Services to implement programs, we have to ensure that there is . . . that program is implemented province-wide.

There has to be accessibility in rural Saskatchewan to the same kinds of things that there are in downtown Regina. When we look at the availability of police officers in the schools that I visited here in Regina . . . You know, I mean they're next door; they're the neighbours; and it's very easy to get them in. In rural Saskatchewan, without funding to be able to ensure that those kinds of services arrive at the school, they don't necessarily get there. And I know you're from rural Saskatchewan and you've seen those kinds of things happening.

So if you hear it in the dialogue — and I'm sure you will — from parents and teachers, I hope that we're looking at a province-wide program, not just to highlight what is a problem in some city schools, but also in rural Saskatchewan as well. And I look forward to your report and I look forward to the kinds of things that will happen.

Mr. Minister, if you want to comment on that a little later, that would be fine. But I'd like to turn directly to the budget of course and the estimates in Education as time is slipping by.

You know the first thing, Mr. Minister, that I'm sure startled the school trustees association — and it did me — is the fact that the budget for K to 12 education overall, last year to this year has dropped by \$9 million. And I know . . . I'm sure you get the school trustee magazine. The trustee magazine has right on their front page the fact that the budget for K to 12 education overall was 558 million last year . . . sorry, this year. And last year it was 567 million — \$9 million less.

Mr. Minister, I guess you lobby as a cabinet minister with the Minister of Finance. Why did you allow \$9 million to leave K

to 12 education?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well I'm . . . I was tempted to spend some time talking more about the role of the school. But now you've encouraged me to move to the other piece, and I will move to it quickly.

I want to say to the member opposite that the sheet that you're reading from is the one that I've had some opportunity to read from too. And as you look at it and examine it, you can see that clearly the reductions this year in the K to 12 system are directly related to the pension reduction. And that's where the reductions are.

Now I think that it's important for us to examine . . . And I know that over the last several days you've been certainly asking me to pay attention to some of the issues that are happening around the province and some of the things that are being said by school divisions across the province as it relates to the level of funding. And there are some pressures out in Saskatchewan land as it relates to the education system.

And I don't dispute that for a moment. And so part of my exercise is to do some of the things that I think might fix that into the future. And certainly, as I've already identified, the role of the school will be one of those so that we can identify collectively across the province what it is that we think schools should be doing and how we might enrich them into the future, given that there are other partners and players that need to be involved in that process.

But clearly, when you look at the kinds of pressures that we have within the government overall, that the government was expected to deliver on this year, and you allude to the concerns on a daily basis on your side of the House that we have in health, and we made a huge commitment this year as you well know — \$195 million to the Health file. And at the end of the day after you take the 195 million out of the pool of new money that you have, it doesn't leave you with a great deal of additional resources.

So what you do of course then is you apply them to all the other departments across government. And this year we made the decision that we would put an additional \$13.5 million into the Health file or into the Education file — excuse me — and then for operating grants. And then added another \$24 million onto the capital piece.

So today across the province I know that school divisions are saying we wish you would have done more. And I say to you: I wish we could have done more. But the bag of money is only so large and this year our bag, of course, had to be shared with a great many players within the system. Thank you.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You know, Mr. Minister, I need to ask you to clarify a comment you made and I was going to do that today during question period but the time did not permit me. You've stated two days ago when I asked you a question on education, you indicated that there were 300,000 additional people in Saskatchewan. And I'm wondering, were we at 700,000 in 1991 and today we're at a million? Or were we at a million in 1991 and today we're at 1.3 million? Because 300,000 people must be hiding, because I

don't know where you found that we have 300,000 additional people in this province since you took over office in 1991.

Your comments, please.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — If you were to examine the events in Saskatchewan under your old administration, what you'll see in Saskatchewan is that you will have seen that through the years 1991 . . . or 1982 to 1991, you had a massive exodus of people from the province of Saskatchewan. And when you do the numbers from 1981 to today, you're going to be very, very close to 300,000 people because the census in this province is extremely lower.

So I think what you should do in this province is examine what happened in our exodus of people between 1981 and 1992. And today of course what's happened is that we have the largest population in this province over the last 20 years.

And we have an additional 10 more people, the member from Kindersley says, that's moved into his community. And that's always good news — that we have more and more people who are moving into our province and people from Alberta obviously coming back into Kindersley.

So we have significant growth in, we have significant growth in this province today and it is very much a good news story.

And accordingly, when we have more people coming to Saskatchewan, as you very well know, we're going to be able to . . . there'll be more people employed in this province as there are today. And we'll continue growing the economy in this province and, accordingly, have more money for education into the future because this is what this province is about — growing our economy and population.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you ask your officials to answer this question for you, because I'm not sure that you have the answer at your fingertips. You stated in the response to me that we have more children going to school than during the time of the late 1980s. I understand from the report that I received from your officials that our current enrolment in Saskatchewan is about 191,000 students plus. What was the enrolment in the province of Saskatchewan in the time that you came to office, 1991?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I expect that if I were to examine the full perspective of how many students today we have attending not only K to 12 but post-secondary and community colleges in this province, we probably have a significantly larger number of students today who are attending our educational systems than they were in 1991.

And I think when you . . . it's a bit of a stretch, I would suggest to you, to suggest that we would have more students today in the K to 12 system than we did in 1991, or the years in which you have in question. Because today, as you and I both know, that our enrolments have been declining, and today we have, I think, 191,000 students that are in our K to 12 system. And our hope would be that we would see some of that growing.

But over time as our economy improves and as we continue to promote the economy of this province and jobs and industry,

then we'll see more people coming to Saskatchewan, and it's my hope that we'll see additional students attending our schools.

And as the member from Melville this morning or earlier today suggested, he is involved or his family is involved in making greater contributions to this province. So we already know that we have one additional person coming to the K system probably within the next five years.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if I could request from your officials — and it's for the purpose of understanding how the enrolments are changing in Saskatchewan and whether they're changing more significantly in rural Saskatchewan as I'm assuming they are — if I could ask your officials to provide a chart that would indicate the enrolments in school system for the 1990s and up to the current year, that would be appreciated, so we can see where we were and where we're headed, I guess, in terms of enrolments.

Mr. Minister, you did mention capital funding. Capital funding, Mr. Minister, is a vital part of the amount of money that boards of education receive. And over the last couple of days as you're aware in this legislature, I've tried to ask you questions regarding the total funding package that goes out to boards of education, and I've used comparison documents of the 1990-91 to current date.

We look at operating grant, and of course back then there was a conditional grant in the early part of the 1990s called the educational development fund, and there is the capital grant. Those three components are the money that is transferred to boards of education.

That money that was transferred to a board of education, to all the boards in the province, in the 1991-92 school year was about 452 million. And of course it's dropped ever since then. What has occurred this year is we see a number of about 427 million, still \$24 million less than you provided to boards of education in '91-92.

The area of capital is even of much greater concern to boards of education. We know from talking with the facilities department that they have as much as 400 applications before them for capital.

You have indicated, Mr. Minister — and I'm reading from one of the articles that you indicated — you expect six major projects to be approved and possibly as many as 100 smaller projects within the entire province. That leaves probably 300 projects still on the list.

You have reduced, Mr. Minister, if we look at the capital grant, you have reduced the amount of money in capital from 32.5 million last year to only 30.1 million this year. You've also allowed \$2.4 million to be cut from the capital budget.

How do you expect boards of education to handle their capital requirements if, number one, you are about \$40 million less today than you were in 1991-92, real costs, and at the same time you in fact have cut \$2 million from last year. And the projects continue to pile up. Capital is of great concern, Mr. Minister. And I wonder how you explain that to boards of education.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — First of all, Mr. Member, the new capital this year stayed the same. The interest costs are what went down this year. So I think when you reflect the numbers then what you'll see, you'll see that the interest costs have actually been reduced, and the amount of capital that we put into the system today is exactly the same. We're at \$24 million.

I think what's important to recognize is that we know that we have some pressures within the capital system today. And we're going to enrich the capital amounts over the next little while as funding resources are available to us. And so I think we need to, we need to stay tuned for the capital piece as we move along over the next couple of years.

The committee reported progress.

#### **BILL WITHDRAWN**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with leave, I would want to ask for the removal of Bill 221 — apparently there was a printing error on the Bill — and for reintroduction later. I would move, with leave, that we could do that.

Leave granted.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS