

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more hospitals in rural or urban Saskatchewan.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come mainly from the Arcola and Kisbey areas of southeast Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present on behalf of farmers in Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to demand that the federal government work with Saskatchewan to put in place a farm aid package that provides real relief for those who need it and that the provincial government develop a long-term farm safety net program as it promised to do when it cancelled GRIP against the wishes of farmers.

The communities involved in the petition, Mr. Speaker, are Marchwell and Langenburg.

I so present.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise again today in this House to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and I'll read the prayer.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks from Assiniboia, Glentworth, up into Central Butte, Riverhurst, all across the southwest, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

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

Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of 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.

Those who've signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from all over the province.

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 Estimates

**Deputy Clerk:** — Mr. Whitmore, Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates, presents the committee's fourth report which is hereby tabled.

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move, seconded by the member for Melfort-Tisdale:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates now be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you a former member of this Assembly, a cabinet minister, a MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Melfort, a former mayor of Melfort, a wonderful person, and a very good friend, Carol Carson, who's behind the bar.

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

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, there's a group of people, Mr. Speaker, sitting in the east gallery that I would like to introduce to you and they're from Melville.

Now you may be wondering why I'm introducing some people from Melville. It's because the member from Melville is busy working on their behalf in Melville today and he couldn't be here so he's asked that I introduce them.

What we have, Mr. Speaker, we have 43 grade 8 students from St. Henry's School in Melville. They're accompanied by a

teacher, Fulvia Breda, and I hope I've pronounced that right. Mr. Speaker, these students have travelled a long way to see the proceedings here today and I hope they'll find it interesting.

I understand that Mr. Osika has provided for them to have a drink and hopefully a lunch on his tab, Mr. Speaker. But I will say as well that Mr. Osika has . . . or the member for Melville, Mr. Speaker, has said that tomorrow or the next day he will be going to the school in Melville, if they will permit, to talk to these groups. And at that time, I think maybe it would be appropriate if the students would ask him to go for the milkshake, hamburger route then at a local establishment in Melville. So you can tell him I said that.

I hope you enjoy your visit here today, and look forward to Mr. Osika, the member from Melville, visiting you in the next day or two.

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

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Shooting at Taber High School

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, just one week ago and one day, members of this House stood to offer our prayers and sympathies to the people of Littleton, Colorado, over the horrific events that occurred in a high school in that community.

Today, sadly, we must stand again to offer our thoughts and prayers to another community, only this time it is one that is much, much closer to home. Taber, Alberta is mourning the death of one of its youth in another high school shooting which also saw a second student seriously injured.

This shooting has left our entire nation shaken and has every one of us asking what we can do to prevent this from happening in any other schools. This is a very difficult issue that comes with no easy solutions. However every one of us in this Assembly and every parent and teacher in this province knows that it is a question that must be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I want to express our deepest sympathies to the family of Jason Lang and to all of the teachers and students of W.R. Myers High School in Taber, Alberta. May time help heal this community and let us truly pray that we will not be called upon to repeat statements of this nature ever again.

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

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — The government and all members of this Assembly express our sincere condolences and sympathy to the families, parents, students, school staff, and community of Taber, Alberta. This tragic incident tells us that no matter how much we would like to believe we are immune, no community can guarantee itself against a senseless act of violence.

Preparing to face a senseless act is next to impossible, but we pledge to work together to do all we can to make our communities safe and to make our schools' halls of learning models of societal decency.

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

### AgrEvo Canada to Develop Hardier Wheat

**Ms. Lorje:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Allan Blakeney government announced the creation of Innovation Place in Saskatoon many years ago, the doubting Thomas's of the day made all the expected noises about white elephants and government waste. Of course they were wrong then and they're wrong now.

We were given another example yesterday of how important Innovation Place and its residents have become to the economy and the innovative image of Saskatoon. AgrEvo Canada and the Economic Development minister announced funding for a research project to develop new methods of breeding hardier varieties of wheat. This research will be similar to earlier products which led to stronger varieties of corn, canola, and a number of other crops.

This project is being assisted by the government's strategic initiatives fund, to encourage the development of new technologies and research capacity. This is exactly what Innovation Place was designed to accommodate.

Mr. Speaker, AgrEvo employs more than 60 people, has another 60 or so on contract, and hires 40 students for field work every summer. In one project we have high-tech research leading to a value-added product, promising greater income for farmers which is already providing valuable employment. I congratulate them, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Pending Closure of Gravelbourg Elevator

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, Louis Stringer, a town councillor and member of the Gravelbourg-Hodgeville rail-line committee is among the many residents of rural Saskatchewan who are worried about elevators in their area.

The Wheat Pool and Canadian Pacific have told him that the Gravelbourg Pool elevator may stay open. Producers and residents of the area would like to see a commitment in writing. But both companies so far have refused.

Terminals are being constructed and other facilities are being expanded nearby. So Mr. Stringer fears for the future of Gravelbourg's Pool elevator. In the event that the elevator closes, the people of Gravelbourg would like to know that they'd be given a chance to buy the elevator without conditions rather than see it bulldozed.

Mr. Speaker, communities like Gravelbourg are asking for this government's help to make keeping elevators a priority. The Liberal caucus has a plan to stop the bulldozing of elevators. We want to give them a chance to purchase them, and to assist them in this decision by providing financial assistance and help for feasibility studies.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have a plan. It's time the NDP (New Democratic Party) started planning to help communities like Gravelbourg dodge the bulldozer blade. Thank you.

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

### **World Impact Team Builds House in Mexico**

**Ms. Stanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to tell members an inspirational story about some youths from my constituency of Lloydminster.

On March 31, 22 members of the Northern Lites Youth World Impact Team left Canada on a mission. That mission was to help the less fortunate in the small village of Puente, Mexico, and the surrounding work camps. The team helped out by delivering food, clothing, toys, and personal items.

But the most impressive accomplishment of the team was to build a home in just two days. It was built in the village for a family of four . . . I should say a family of six with four young children.

The team returned April 11, tired but very proud of their work. They made many friends in Mexico but also saw the harsh reality of poverty. Many of the young people said they would gladly make the trip again to help more people.

Members of the World Impact Team come from Turtleford, Saskatoon, Lloydminster, and even from Alberta and British Columbia. I'd like to congratulate the team on their successful mission and wish them luck on future endeavours. This is the youth of our province.

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

### **New School for Kennedy**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning my colleague from Moosomin and I were able to participate in a very pleasant occasion. Finally, the government has relented and provided some good news in my constituency. This morning the Broadview School Division, the local Langbank Kennedy school district, along with the Minister of Education announced plans to construct a new K to 12 school at Kennedy.

This is an investment in the future of the youth in the area and a much appreciated investment. The children of the area as well as the entire community stand to benefit. Schools are important centres of community life and the new Langbank Kennedy school will help maintain a vigorous and thriving community in Kennedy.

I and the member from Moosomin congratulate the people of Kennedy and district as well as the Broadview School District on an investment in their future.

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

### **Battleford Resident Master Winemaker**

**Ms. Murrell:** — Mr. Speaker, the Battleford area is not widely known as a wine producing centre, but one local resident has spent the past 40 years producing exotic wines from his home-based wine cellar. If you can call more than 40 years of winemaking a hobby, then Joe Degenstien is the ultimate hobbyist.

I'm pleased that my good friend, Joe, was recently featured in a full page article in the North Battleford *Telegraph* community newspaper. The article was entitled, "Turning water into wine."

The article states, in part, when Joe Degenstien made his first bottle of wine he never thought it would become a lifelong hobby. However, throughout the past 47 years the Battleford resident found himself teaching winemaking at Mistikwa College and winning many awards throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, Joe Degenstien turned 83 years of age this January. It has been more than 30 years since his health forced him to retire from his very successful farming operation south of Battleford. And in spite of having many serious health challenges over the past 30 years, Joe has remained an active member of his community. He served for many years on the Battleford town council and as a representative to the Yellowhead Highway association and on the regional health board. And Joe and his wife Irene also found the time to raise 10 children.

I'm sure Joe would agree with me in attributing his continuing good health to an occasional glass of fine wine and the competent professionals in our health care system.

Congratulations Mr. Degenstien on your many accomplishments and best wishes for a successful winemaking for many years to come.

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

### **Aboriginal Careers Expo**

**Mr. Kasperski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleague, the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, helped to launch the second annual Aboriginal Careers Expo here in Regina. This year's expo, Mr. Speaker, is called "Planning Tomorrow's Success Today." This expo gives teens from grade 7 to grade 12 the opportunity to get a taste of different career fields through various exhibits.

Tourism, science, and the trades are some of the career choices on display. These are also areas, Mr. Speaker, of particular growth here in Saskatchewan. In fact, as we all know, tourism is the fastest growing industry here in the province.

It is really a great time to be a young person in Saskatchewan choosing a career, and this career expo is unique because it has specific, it has a specific Aboriginal audience in mind highlighting Aboriginal heritage and cultural experiences.

Some of the major sponsors include Tourism Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative, the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Saskatchewan Indian Training Assessment Group.

I'd like to congratulate everyone involved on their valiant effort to make the expo a success, and I'd also like to wish all participants the best of luck in choosing a career. Thank you.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Planning for School Safety

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

Mr. Minister, everyone in Canada was shocked and saddened yesterday upon hearing the news of the tragic shooting at a high school in Taber, Alberta. Taber is a small prairie town not unlike Humboldt or Kindersley or Melfort. And just like they were doing in Taber yesterday, we all went home last night and hugged our children a little closer than we normally do.

Across Canada, parents and teachers and students are wondering about how safe it will be at school today. The terrible tragedies at Littleton, Colorado and Taber force us to confront the reality that it could happen here too.

Mr. Minister, what processes are in place in Saskatchewan schools to identify and assist emotionally troubled students who may be at risk of harming others in the school? And what steps are being taken to address the concerns of students, teachers, and parents who may feel that our schools are not safe?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to take the answer . . . or take the question on behalf of the Minister of Education. First of all our government, as we said earlier, wants to express sincere sympathy to the family and the parents and certainly to the students and staff in Taber.

I think it's a tragic fact, Mr. Speaker, that no community can guarantee absolute immunity to a tragedy like this. But we have been in discussion as recently even as this morning with the teacher's federation and with the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) on this very issue. And they feel that we do have adequate measures in place right now, but there is always more that we can do. And we're, on an ongoing basis, working with the teachers and with parents and students with respect to counselling, so forth.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, as a former school principal and teacher, I understand the challenges that teachers face every day. Teachers are asked to do much more than just teach our children. In many cases, teachers also assume the role of coach, social worker, mentor, and even a counsellor. The reality is that teachers are on the front lines when it comes to dealing with the emotional and social challenges of their students. And while nothing can replace the love and support of parents, our schools do play a critical role in the development of our children.

One way we can support this process is through the co-operative efforts of teachers, trustees, directors of education, and the parents to recognize troubled kids and then to assist and support them. No child should be falling through the cracks.

Mr. Minister, would you support this kind of co-operative structure as a first step in helping at-risk kids and reassuring everyone that our schools are safe places to learn and work?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would say to the member that there is a lot of work that currently does take place. It certainly is our view that issues like this are not solely the responsibility of the schools, but in fact the entire community needs to deal with difficult issues like this.

I would highlight for the member just a few of the programs that currently exist in schools. As an example, the health education, life transitions, and guidance courses are core curriculum teaches skills that help our students deal with conflict resolution, getting along with others, self-esteem, respect, peer pressure, anger management, gang behaviour, breaking cycles of violence, and problem solving.

There's much more that is taught in the schools. And certainly we need to compliment our teachers and our staff and the community for the work that they do in trying to prevent tragedies like this.

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

### Neutrality of Judiciary

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, one of the fundamental principles of our judicial system is the neutrality of judges. Could you explain how this principle is upheld, and specifically, do you think that it is appropriate for judges to attend conferences and criticize government policy?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have stated before on a number of occasions in this session, we're part of a democracy that includes the legislature, executive branch, and the judiciary. And when we work within that democracy, we all have roles that we are to play. Part of the democracy includes discussion between these various branches, and that continues in many different ways.

But I think the key thing to remember is that we all have roles that we are to follow.

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, recently Provincial Court Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond spoke at an FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) conference. She said at that conference that Indian leaders are being unfairly blamed for accountability and management problems on reserves.

Instead, she says, the fault lies with the federal government due to inadequate budgets and poor legislation.

Mr. Minister, these are very political statements. Justice Turpel-Lafond is clearly taking a side in a very contentious issue. Mr. Minister, do you think these are appropriate comments to be made by a provincial judge?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — As I stated before, there are particular roles that we all have within a democracy, and part of that includes discussion. When the judiciary speak at conferences and other places, they end up commenting on various things

that they do. But we also know that they understand and respect their roles as judges and that they work together in dealing with these things, to deal with them on a national basis, on a provincial basis. I think that it's important to recognize that in all of our roles that we have within a democracy, that we should follow and do those things which enhance the discussion within democracy, but do it within appropriate roles.

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Minister, if a case involving the alleged mismanagement or misappropriation of Indian band funds came before Justice Turpel-Lafond, would she be able to deal with it in an impartial manner? She has clearly staked out a position on this issue by saying the fault lies with the federal government and not the band leaders. At the very least, the perception of neutrality has been compromised. And as you know, our justice system must not only be fair, it must seem . . . be seen to be fair.

Mr. Minister, hasn't Justice Turpel-Lafond compromised her neutrality? And what steps are you taking to deal with this matter?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, within our democracy we have ways of dealing with complaints about judges. Those complaints can be made by any citizen if those are concerns. In Saskatchewan, we have the Saskatchewan Judicial Council; we also have the Canadian Judicial Council. All of those places are appropriate places if people have concerns.

Our role within the legislature, or within the executive branch, is to recognize the independence of the judiciary and recognize their very clear role in our society.

So, if there are concerns of a nature, well then there are appropriate places where those concerns can be addressed.

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

#### **Agriculture Income Disaster Assistance**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's again, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Minister, AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) is a useless program — hardly anyone qualifies. And because of you, those who do qualify will only be getting up to 42 per cent of their cheques. Normally they would be getting 70 per cent upfront. But you haven't got around to signing the agreement.

One farmer says it's like standing in front of a wall waiting to be shot and the governor says, I'll pardon you but I'm just too busy right now.

Mr. Minister, clear the colouring books off your desk, pull out your big red crayon, make an X on the dotted line. Why on earth haven't you done this and what on earth are you waiting for?

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I've been around this legislature for about 13 years now and I take pride, take pride in the honest answers that I give to questions. But what I get really sick and tired of are accusations

that are unfounded.

You and your leader yesterday were saying that the reason farmers are getting 40 per cent is Saskatchewan hasn't signed the form. The first time I heard the accusation or saw it was through the media because we don't have the form. The form wasn't through the federal cabinet until the day before yesterday. Every other province is in the same position. Our money is on the table.

The question that you should be asking, is why only 42 per cent? Why isn't the federal government giving more money upfront? That's what you should be asking.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, yesterday you didn't even know you hadn't signed the agreement, let alone that you didn't have the agreement. You were caught off guard, Mr. Minister, because you were not paying attention, just as you weren't paying attention when you should have been fighting for Saskatchewan farmers, and you reneged on that too.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday a reporter asked the Ag minister if an acreage payment would have been better than AIDA. The minister said, anything would be better than this — anything. Mr. Speaker, that's the way the farmers feel about the Ag minister — anything would be better than you.

Mr. Minister, why weren't you at the table making that point when the program was being negotiated? Will you admit that you failed by not getting an acreage payment for Saskatchewan farmers?

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

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Why don't you apologize . . . Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the member apologize for misleading the people of this province — misleading the people of this province.

The forms got through cabinet the day before yesterday. None of the provinces have the forms. And it's got nothing to do with stopping the flow of money — it's got nothing to do with stopping the flow of money. The federal government could put as much money as they wanted out. Our money's on the table, in the bank. All they have to do is bill us.

For you to mislead, for you to mislead . . . Mr. Speaker, for this member to mislead the public in this manner is disgusting in my books — disgusting. And instead of trying to play his cheap politics on the back of farmers in this province, the question he should be asking of the federal government is why are you only putting 42 per cent up?

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — I'm sorry, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, but there's only one thing disgusting to farmers in this province and it's sitting on that side.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Order. Order. Order, order. Order. I guess the Assembly may not be aware but the long-standing traditions of parliamentary democracy do prohibit guests of the Assembly from participating in the proceedings, and the Chair humbly requests the co-operation of our guests who are here today.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, why in this province do we always have to be last? You say no one signed the program in Canada. Why can't we initiate it? Call Mr. Vancilief, get the program out here, sign it, and maybe our farmers that finally do qualify will get some money.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said this program was going to be bankable, and now we find out many farmers — most farmers — don't qualify. And those that do are only going to get 42 per cent, and the minister didn't even know that until a reporter told him.

Mr. Minister, where have you been? Maybe after you've finished clearing the colouring books off your desk, you could find your phone, call Mr. Vancilief, get the program out here, and sign it. Let's get some money for the farmers of Saskatchewan who desperately need it. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, the member says, the minister said the bankable program — alluding to me. He knows that's not true. What he means is the federal minister. But there again, the shady side.

And you can attack me personally. You can attack me personally if you like — that doesn't bother me. I understand your lack of ability — I understand your lack of abilities in being an effective opposition, but look it: taking it out personally on me won't help the matter . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . He still alludes, Mr. Speaker, to the . . . he still tries to allude to the point that something . . . there's a relationship between signing the program and farmers getting their money. This is not true — not true. The federal government could put up as much as they want. Our money's on the table.

So for him to continue to try to mislead the public, Mr. Speaker, is not right. It's not right. I know the member has had a pretty fair reputation in this House. I'd ask him to try to continue that reputation and try to ask questions that you know are a little more truthful.

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

**The Speaker:** — I think . . . order. Order, order. Order. Now I think the hon. minister will recognize that in his final statement he's gone beyond the breach of parliamentary debate. I remind all hon. members that character attacks are not ever acceptable, and I'll . . . Order. And I will ask the minister to withdraw his final remark.

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — With due respect to this Assembly, I withdraw my remarks.

## Closure of Grain Elevators

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, the community of Dollard has a simple request — it doesn't want to become a ghost town. It doesn't want to become a memory. It wants to be part of the province's future.

Mr. Speaker, if the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has their way, Dollard, along with 170 other communities, is going to have its heart ripped out. The Wheat Pool wants to close or bulldoze the grain elevator. But Dollard and its area farmers want to fight back. They want to buy the elevator rather than see it bulldozed. They've written to Sask Wheat Pool and they've written to CP (Canadian Pacific) Rail.

Mr. Speaker, today the Liberals will introduce a Bill to stop the senseless bulldozing of elevators and give communities like Dollard a chance.

Mr. Premier, will you support this Bill and help rural Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems interesting that a provincial Liberal would bring this question to us. I hope that they are talking to their federal Liberal government.

First of all, our government is doing what it possibly can out there. And certainly the government urges the federal government to implement a process which we have done on options for elevator closures, one of those being the viability of local proposals to assume ownership. The current and future need for specialty crop storage — the ultimate community use.

But I want to tell the member opposite that just yesterday, because our province has been proactive, that there was a meeting with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; with an interlocutor, Mr. MacKay; with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), which are meeting . . . or have met just yesterday to look at these issues.

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

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Wheat Pool has a plan to close 235 elevators in 170 communities. People across Saskatchewan are deeply opposed to seeing good elevators bulldozed, and the Premier knows that.

Mr. Speaker, in our platform Liberals put forward a plan that would preserve rural Saskatchewan and rural elevators. In a recent letter to the Liberal caucus, Leroy Larsen, the president of Sask Wheat Pool, said he opposes our plan to save these elevators from the bulldozer. He opposes the Liberal plan which would require companies like the Pool to offer these elevators for sale to local groups without conditions.

Our plan also includes a financial help for these communities to conduct feasibility studies and to provide for arbitration over issues like price.

We know the Wheat Pool's opposed to the government stopping the demolition of grain elevators. The question is, what about the Premier? Does the Premier support the Liberal position to allow communities to keep their elevators, or is he content to see the destruction of Saskatchewan rural life?

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

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the member opposite heard what I had said . . . But I should just remind him that the province is playing a very active role in this. And as I said just yesterday, there was a discussion of the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order! Order. Order. Now it does not serve the purposes of question period well to have members shouting across the floor, and I refer to members on both sides . . . Order!

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — As I was saying, just yesterday we had SARM, SUMA, the Wheat Pool were sitting down with an interlocutor to have meaningful discussions around this type of issue. But I'd like to ask the opposite Liberals, provincial Liberals, this is federal jurisdiction . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Order. The Chair has just asked hon. members to not be shouting across the floor to enable the minister's response to be heard. And the Chair asks for the co-operation of all hon. members.

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — We've got a circumstance that we're facing which is a direct result of federal Liberal policy, a policy that took out the Crow benefit in which you have branch line abandonment and of course therefore we also have had elevator consolidation.

And I'd like to ask the member opposite what proposals he's put forward to the federal government? Has he talked to Ralph Goodale today? The responsibility of where the grain companies will be has got a lot to do with all of the grain transportation issue.

And when we look at what we're doing in this province with our short-line advisory unit, with helping with short lines, helping communities — we are working with the communities in this province and we have one successful branch line that's moving from Pangman to Assiniboia. It's a short line that has two Wheat Pool elevators that have been reopened.

We are working with communities as we can. What we need is changes at the federal . . .

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

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, on December 15, the municipality of Limerick saw its Wheat Pool elevator close. Although the Pool has made an application to demolish the elevator, it's still filled with grain.

Limerick has another elevator operated by N. M. Paterson, a company based out of Winnipeg. Paterson wants to build a grain terminal in Limerick on the site of the former Pool elevator, however CP (Canadian Pacific) rail will not guarantee it will continue to operate a line into Limerick, but it will

guarantee operating a line to within three miles east of Limerick.

You knew since December this was happening to Limerick, but so far you've offered no help whatsoever. Mr. Premier, your Minister of Highways promised in November to get grain companies in local groups to discuss options about this very elevator, but that was almost six months ago and you've done nothing.

Will you finally step in and help communities like Limerick — help them — or are you committed to see rural elevators go the way of rural highways with nothing but holes where the roads and the elevators used to be?

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Speaker, this is so interesting. On the whole it's jurisdiction . . . the federal jurisdiction, but this province is doing everything it possibly can.

Yesterday, I was just in Swift Current in the southwest area. I met with a group there and they certainly are appreciative of what our province is doing. And do you know what they're saying? How can we get changes at the federal level? They agree with our position. We are doing what we can to get the attention at the federal level.

What I'd like to know is if the provincial Liberals are calling . . . Are you calling Ralph Goodale? Report to us in this House on what you're doing.

I'd also like to just add, when I was first made minister and I met with federal officials about these very issues I said, and what did you see in place after you're going to deregulate, after you take the Crow benefit out? Do you know what they said? Well we thought we'd see what happens. That's unconscionable. Either they knew what was going to happen or if they didn't know what was going to happen that's irresponsible also.

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

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, while the situation in Limerick is bad, the situation in Stenen shows that this government's lost their ability to care. The good people of Stenen have secured rail access from CN (Canadian National). They have that in their hip pocket. What they don't have, Mr. Speaker, is a way to buy their soon to be demolished elevator.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows we've lobbied the feds to do something. Don't tell us this matter is their responsibility. Don't blame somebody else. Mr. Premier, take responsibility for yourself and help these people out. Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have a plan to help rural communities save elevators. Mr. Premier, where's yours?

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

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, in every one of these areas that we've been out in they've been very appreciative of the short line advisory unit that also advised on their branch lines, on elevators. And every single place that we go that we discuss this with, they said how do we get the attention of the federal government? This is a jurisdiction of the

federal government. This province is doing everything it possibly can to get that attention.

In the review on Estey we asked for a moratorium on branch line abandonment. That didn't proceed. The Liberals, it's their jurisdiction at the federal level. If these provincial Liberals would certainly try to help get their attention, we would certainly work with them because we know the impact that this is having on communities. We're doing everything possible that we can to support our rural communities.

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

### Education for Special Needs Children

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, we've all heard your government say that children are the most valuable resource in this province. In fact the UN (United Nations) The Convention on the Rights of the Child stated disabled children have the right to special care and training designed to help achieve self-reliance and a full and decent life in society. Our province signed that document.

Mr. Premier, the system set up by your government is failing our special needs children. Your government had a two-year task force on special education policy and now it's just seen as a make-work project because the government is not obligated to put any of those recommendations into effect.

Mr. Premier, will you commit to living up to article 23 on the rights of a child and will you start to address the requirements of the 2,800 school-aged children in this province with special needs?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Education, I would want to say that we . . . she is correct. The review has been released and is out. And we certainly will be working with the communities and with the schools on the very critical issue that she raises. And shortly, I believe that report will be available.

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

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 205 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1999 (Justice System Review)

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 205, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1999.

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

#### Bill No. 208 — The Referendum and Plebiscite Amendment Act, 1999 (Constitutional Amendment Referendum)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of the Bill No. 208, The Referendum and Plebiscite Amendment Act (Constitutional Amendment Referendum).

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be

read a second time at the next sitting.

#### Bill No. 227 — The Grain Elevators Sales Act

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 227, The Grain Elevators Sales Act.

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

#### Bill No. 242 — 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. 242, The Crown Corporation Managers' and Permanent Heads' Salaries Act be now read a first time.

**The Chair:** — Order. The Chair seeks the co-operation of all hon. members to allow the House to hear and the Chair to hear the introduction of Bills — on both sides of the House.

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

#### Bill No. 243 — The Crown Corporations Disclosure Act

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 243, 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. 41 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1999

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 41, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1999 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

#### Bill No. 42 — The New Generation Co-operatives Act

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 42, The New Generation Co-operatives Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

#### Bill No. 43 — The New Generation Co-operatives Consequential Amendment Act, 1999/Loi de 1999 apportant des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The New Generation Co-operatives Act

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 43, The New Generation Co-operatives Consequential Amendment Act, 1999 be now introduced and read for the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be



read a second time at the next sitting.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — If I could, ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, seated in your gallery, a couple of important people, Chris and Jeannie Brewer, who are with us here today. Of course Chris has been ... is the past president and executive director of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association.

Chris has been involved for about 14 years, and Jeannie as well, giving a hand in making sure that the snowmobile association is working properly. And today of course we're dealing with some legislation that Chris and his association have been very involved with.

And I welcome them here to the Assembly today.

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

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 25 — The Education Amendment Act, 1999/Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last few days I've had the opportunity to receive a number of phone calls; I've had the opportunity to talk with a wide range of people about some very important issues regarding the education Act that is before us.

While about two-thirds of the Act is very straightforward, as I indicated before, there seems to be tremendous amount of confusion as to what is actually being stated in the first portion of the suggested amendments.

I have indicated to the Minister of Education that I would like to meet with him prior to moving the Bill on. And I have been unable to meet with the minister at this time. I have contacted the minister's office, and we have a suggested meeting that will take place very, very soon, but it hasn't taken place yet.

I've had the opportunity this morning, Mr. Speaker, to raise concerns on behalf of a number of individuals with different people in the legal system as to what their interpretations might be of various sections of all of the Acts of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

You have to remember that The Education Act was created at the time that the province of Saskatchewan was incorporated. So we have ordinances when this province was not in existence; there was a territory. There was the constitution of Saskatchewan that came into being in 1905. And now we have The Education Act.

And we're trying to look at all of the concerns that have been expressed. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, a number of individuals have raised previous court cases that have set precedent, and we're still trying to figure out exactly what those court cases have indicated.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of questions that have to be asked and I'm looking for the opportunity to be able to ask those questions.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on this Bill today. As my colleague was pointing out, there are a number of areas of question and difficulty that need to be dealt with before this Bill proceeds. There needs to be some consultation with the Minister of Education as well as with people who understand and read the law.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

#### Bill No. 30

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 30 — The Cemeteries Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, from what we can see so far, is very positive. We will have some questions in committee but at this time are willing to let it pass on to committee.

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

#### Bill No. 31

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 31 — The Funeral and Cremation Services Act** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The same with this Bill; I think we find it positive at this point. But we will have a number of questions that we want clarified when it's in committee and be willing to let it pass to committee at this time.

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

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 11 — The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 1999

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present to the House for second reading The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 1999.

The labour-sponsored venture capital program has been very successful since it was introduced. Labour-sponsored funds have made substantial equity investments in small- and medium-sized businesses, some \$44 million since 1989. And they've helped employees of those businesses create and preserve jobs, nearly 1,000 since 1989.

Members of the Assembly will be aware that there are three types of labour-sponsored venture capital funds under the program. The most popular by far have been employee funds, where individuals invest in the companies where they work. Those investors have protected and created jobs, realized greater job security, and enjoyed more job satisfaction as a result.

Pool funds represent the second type of labour-sponsored venture capital funds. These raise funds from people across the province and invest in businesses across the province. Late last year I had the privilege of helping announce the golden opportunities fund, the first of these funds. This partnership between Saskatoon's Westcap Management Ltd. and the construction and general workers' union, local 890, provides yet another financing mechanism for Saskatchewan businesses.

The third type of fund is one that is federally registered under the federal income tax regulations, and there are two of these funds currently operating in Saskatchewan: working ventures Canadian fund and Canadian medical discoveries fund.

The amendments that we are proposing to the Act are mostly technical and of a housekeeping nature. They, along with other minor policy amendments, are intended to provide some consistency between federal and provincial programs. And they are also intended to maintain a level playing field between provincially registered and federally registered funds.

The main beneficiaries of these changes are investors who will have greater options for investment and have fewer restrictions on their investments into eligible Saskatchewan businesses.

The main policy amendment is removal of one section in the Act regarding redemption of shares in labour-sponsored venture capital corporations. Under this section, individuals who redeem shares in any given year were restricted from claiming tax credits for the purchase of new LSVCC (labour-sponsored venture capital corporations) shares during that year of redemption and in the following two years.

Our removal of this section brings us in line with a similar policy change made by the federal government last summer on federally registered funds. This amendment should encourage individuals to continue investing and reinvesting in LSVCCs; continue investing in businesses that create jobs for Saskatchewan people.

The other amendments to this Act are technical, as I noted earlier. Of those amendments, one allows for registered retirement income funds to hold and redeem eligible equity

shares of LSVCCs.

This amendment is primarily designed for investors who are retired or over 69 who have held equity shares through their RRSPs (registered retirement savings plan). Previously those investors would have been required to liquidate those equity share investments at age 69. Now they have an option of placing those shares into registered retirement income funds.

This amendment once again demonstrates our commitment to flexibility for investors, a commitment to more choices on how they can manage their money.

The other technical amendment of note is one that moves the reference in the Act to the maximum annual limit of investment in a type A fund — moves it from the body of the legislation into the regulations.

(1430)

The existing type A fund is the pool fund I spoke of earlier, the broad-based fund that invests in a variety of businesses, not just a single company. The current annual maximum on equity shares is \$10 million per corporation. Moving reference to the maximum limit into the regulations helps improve the future efficiency of these funds.

Federal funds have no limits on the amount they can raise. We may therefore need to make changes to our provincial funds if a cap of their monies raised places them at a disadvantage relative to federal funds. We can make those changes to maximum investment limits more easily when those limits are in the regulations rather than in the body of the Act itself.

Mr. Speaker, the technical and policy amendments I've outlined today address a number of small issues in the LSVCC program, issues that by and large were identified when we were developing the first Type A or pool fund.

As I've noted, the amendments ensure consistency between federally registered and provincially registered funds, and a level playing field between the two. They provide more scope, more flexibility for investors. They ensure LSVCC funds work even better in the future to help Saskatchewan businesses, to help those businesses create jobs and opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

And it is in that spirit that I move that The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 1999 be now read a second time.

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

#### **Bill No. 37 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to give a second reading speech as it would relate to The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 1999.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that after much consultation with the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, Tourism Saskatchewan, and other interested organizations, we are

amending The Snowmobile Act to establish a fund that will pay for the construction and the maintenance of an enhanced system of quality snowmobile trails throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, a percentage of the fund will also be used to support what's important — a safety program in the province for snowmobile and snowmobile operators.

I want to stress that this change to the legislation is being made at the request of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association.

The amendments will also allow the snowmobile association to collect permit fees from snowmobilers who use these established trails throughout the province. Mr. Speaker, the snowmobile association will then use the money to help snowmobile clubs around the province to build, maintain, and look after the trail system for the benefit of the snowmobilers in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, one might ask why the snowmobile fund is being established, but I would like to say that it's important to know that not only will it be established but it will be self-sustaining as well. Mr. Speaker, we estimate that snowmobilers will provide funding of at least \$275,000 annually to the association through the purchase of trail permits.

The establishment of an enhanced system of trails in this province has two main benefits. First, the trails will increase tourism and economic development in the province, in Saskatchewan, in our communities. Secondly, these trails will help improve the safety of snowmobiling in our province. The fund will take effect at the start of the season, 1999-2000. And I want to say that SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) has provided interim trail funding for the previous two snowmobile seasons.

And, Mr. Speaker, during this past year's snowmobile season, about 6,200 voluntary \$25 permits were sold by the association to people using the trails. Permits will now be mandatory at a cost of \$45 each for snowmobilers who use the trail system. It is expected that even more permits will be sold in next season, thus providing adequate funding for the association for trail construction, maintenance, as well as a safety initiative program.

Mr. Speaker, administration and enforcement of the permit system will be the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association. Mr. Speaker, the association volunteers will not have peace officer powers, but will serve as public relation officers convincing trail users to purchase these trail permits.

Offences identified by the association volunteers will be documented and reported to local law enforcement agencies. Under these amendments, the enhanced system of trails as well as the snowmobile fund will also be administered by the snowmobile association of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to maximizing the economic benefit of the sport of snowmobiling for all the people in this province. The sport is already one of the leading generators of tourism dollars during our winter months.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that an enhanced system of trails will provide an even bigger economic boost to the tourism related businesses in Saskatchewan during the snowy winter season. And I might add from personal experience in using some of these trails, that many of the small businesses in the towns along the trails — hotels and restaurants used extensively by the snowmobilers — will be the main beneficiary of the new increased trail design and building.

In addition to the economic benefits we believe an enhanced system of snowmobile trails in Saskatchewan will help improve snowmobile safety and reduce negative environmental impacts.

I want to say as well the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to making the sport of snowmobiling as safe as possible in this province, both for the snowmobiler and the general public in the areas where these machines are operated. We're confident that an enhanced system of trails will reduce snowmobile-related accidents and fatalities. The trails will be constructed and regularly maintained with the safety of snowmobilers in mind and I want to say that a groomed and signed trail is in fact a safe trail. The establishment of an enhanced system of trails will also help reduce snowmobile traffic on other land reducing any negative environmental impact in those areas. I want to reiterate that this initiative is totally self-supporting and will have no financial impacts on the provincial government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in closing my comments, this is a win-win situation for snowmobile users, property owners, and taxpayers in general. And I want to move second reading of this amendment Act.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to respond on behalf of the official opposition in regards to Bill No. 37, the Act to amend the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Act.

Mr. Speaker, certainly my colleagues and I have had the privilege of meeting with many different snowmobile clubs across the province and certainly with the provincial organization. And we've been . . . we're pleased for the input. And we're also pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we've been . . . in talking to government about this and about a number of the concerns and issues that have been raised, that the government has been listening. And I think this is a clear example of where MLAs can bring forward ideas that can be constructive to the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're all aware of the fact that we've moved from snowmobiles that used to just crawl along to very powerful machines out there right now. And it's certainly imperative that we have in place some guidelines that the different clubs across this province can put into place as they try to build a safer environment for all the snowmobile enthusiasts who enjoy the trails that they create.

And I can say that certainly in the Moosomin area this past winter, the Moosomin snowmobile club working together with communities like Rocanville and Spy Hill opened up a series of trails. And I understand if you get on the trail at Moosomin you can basically skidoo right up to Hudson Bay and be on trails all

the way. And that's just one; there's trails all across this province.

And certainly I appreciate the input that I've received from clubs in my area that have been asking for some of these things; and pleased to see, as noted by the minister, some of the changes that are being brought in . . . into this Act and the fact that the Act will carry it itself. And it gives the snowmobile association a real opportunity to provide an enhanced set of trails that are safe and that snowmobile enthusiasts can certainly appreciate and enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, it'll be our pleasure to just direct a few direct questions, just to get a little more clarification on some of the clauses as we get into Committee of the Whole. So at this time we're just more than prepared to move this through to committee.

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

#### **Bill No. 38 — The Litter Control Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And after my remarks I will be moving the second reading of The Litter Control Amendment Act, 1999.

In 1988 the province, through a partnership with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, SARC, established the provincial beverage container program, SARCAN. SARCAN has been extremely successful in creating an effective, province-wide deposit fund beverage container . . . refund beverage container collection and recycling system for non-refillable containers. This deposit fund refund program has a greater than 90 per cent return rate and helps protect the environment by significantly reducing the amount of solid waste entering our provincial landfills.

Mr. Speaker, in 1997, after less than 10 years of operation SARCAN celebrated the recycling of 1 billion beverage containers in Saskatchewan. This means hundreds of thousands of tons of waste has been diverted from our landfills. Furthermore, what was formerly considered waste is now routinely being recycled all across the province.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, SARCAN employs more than 300 people and 80 per cent of those are disabled or were formerly on social assistance. SARCAN provides these people with meaningful work opportunities and financial independence.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is amending The Litter Control Act to address a major problem the beverage container collection and recycling program is having with out-of-province containers being imported to claim a deposit from SARCAN.

The cross-border trafficking of beverage containers has become a major concern for SARCAN, for its customers, and for this government. SARCAN has attempted to stop the problem and has established and maintained adherence to internal policies such as limiting customer returns and setting operating guidelines for bulk return customers. In spite of these measures, cross-border trafficking continues to be a problem.

SARCAN depots throughout Saskatchewan face blatant abusers of the Saskatchewan deposit system, which they are unable to prevent. In a growing number of communities with SARCAN depots, organized rings have formed a network to circumvent SARCAN return restrictions.

These importers are straining the SARCAN program, causing significant lineups and delays, particularly at depots along our east and west borders. They are costing the province an amount estimated at over \$1.5 million a year in payments of refunds on containers which no deposit has been paid in Saskatchewan.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are introducing legislation under The Litter Control Act which will make it illegal for a person to claim a refund from SARCAN if the refundable deposit and environmental handling charge have not been paid to the province. The amendment authorizes SARCAN depot operators to set up return rates, rate limits, to request identification of customers, to refuse payment if they have reason to believe the environmental handling charges and deposit have not been paid.

In addition this amendment provides finance revenue officers, RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and municipal police officers, as well as SERM's (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) conservation and wildlife officers with the authority to stop and inspect vehicles and to seize containers believed to have been imported in violation of the Act.

This amendment provides for penalties including fines of not more than \$25,000 or imprisonment for a term of not more than three months, or both the fine and imprisonment. Those convicted of violating this Act may also be required to pay to the Crown an amount equal to two times the amount of the refundable deposit, an environmental handling charge the person would have paid had the designators' containers been purchased in Saskatchewan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this amendment also ensures enforcement efforts target the blatant abusers of the SARCAN system. Small, incidental returns from out-of-province travellers which have a minimal overall impact on the SARCAN program will not be affected. Only bulk importers, those who import to Saskatchewan more than 100 empty, designated containers at one time will be affected.

We will be working closely with SARCAN to ensure that the cross-border trafficking of containers is eliminated before it causes serious damage to the collection program.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is about the ongoing stewardship of the environment and respecting the four R's of waste management — reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover.

The SARCAN program truly embodies these principles and also recognizes and respects the dignity of individuals with disabilities who wish to enjoy an independent lifestyle. SARCAN has improved the quality of life for many people with disabilities. This amendment reconfirms the province's commitment to this program.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Litter Control

Amendment Act, 1999.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few comments before we allow this Bill as well to move to committee, because I think we'd be able to ask our questions more directly there.

Number one, Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of the fact that SARCAN certainly has provided a real opportunity for disabled individuals across this province to gain full employment. And when you take cans into a SARCAN depot and just to see the individuals and the pride they take in receiving those cans is something else. And it's certainly a well worthwhile project.

I'm pleased to hear that the minister as well is addressing some of the concerns. Concerns regarding a number of containers that are available that consumers purchase that are just getting thrown into landfills because SARCAN has no way of refunding. They haven't been recognized, especially milk containers and some of these other containers. And because of the fact that there hasn't been a refund, people haven't made that extra effort to recycle those products. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's appropriate that we address that concern.

As well I believe the minister made a comment about cross-border movement of product. When we get to the debate in committee, we certainly are pleased to see that. We also want to raise the fact that as we have along the eastern side of the province, there are many people who live right on the border actually, but live in Manitoba, but do the majority of their shopping, because of the proximity of the communities and the shopping areas, in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so I think . . . and something we want to clarify there is to make sure these people aren't discriminated against. Because they may spend most of their grocery dollar in our province, that they at least have the opportunity of taking advantage and recycling product or cans within the facilities that are closest to them.

But those are questions, I think, Mr. Speaker, we can raise with the minister directly in committee. And make sure that we have a program, that once it's implemented, once this piece of legislation comes into play that really addresses the need out there, addresses the abuse, and something that SARCAN can work with that facilitates their needs as well as meets the needs of the environment and the population of Saskatchewan.

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

#### **Bill No. 39 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After my remarks, I will be moving the second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 1999.

In Saskatchewan, where so much of our economy is based on our natural resources, maintaining healthy ecosystems is necessary if we wish to stop the loss of species and their

habitats. Today, Mr. Speaker, I will summarize The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act's new features.

The amendment recommends the removal of 5,227 acres of land as a result of extensive consultation with lessees following the 1992 amendment to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act which added lands to the Act. An appeal process was initiated after that amendment to deal with lessees' concerns which arose out of these additions. Some of the lands being removed from the Act by this amendment are to become available for purchase by farmers and ranchers who require these lands as an integral part of their operations.

Mr. Speaker, this Act conserves some of Saskatchewan's best remaining natural areas while protecting and managing Crown lands for agriculture use and wildlife protection. The government remains committed to conserving and managing habitat lands while recognizing and respecting the role ranchers, farmers, and property owners have in conserving wildlife habitat. In total, 5,227 acres of the 3.4 million acres under the Act will be removed to accommodate the interests of farmers and ranchers.

Secondly, this amendment also adds 2,680 acres to the Act. One area covering approximately 1,440 acres is adjacent to the provincial forests and is identified as important habitat for wildlife. The other area covering 1,240 acres is referred to as the Fur Lakes area and was part of a land use planning process which recommended these lands be included under the Act.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendment deals with administrative housekeeping. In some cases, incorrect land descriptions were listed in the schedule. These amendments will provide the correct legal descriptions.

In protecting a total of 3.4 million acres of government-owned land, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is the most cost-effective habitat program this province has ever implemented. It is less expensive to conserve our natural areas than it is to try to restore them later.

By accommodating and balancing the needs of agriculture along with the responsibility to manage and conserve valuable natural habitat on public lands for our native plants and animals, we create a win-win situation.

These natural areas are valuable to wildlife and to those who enjoy them, and they can be protected at very little cost to the taxpayer.

This government recognizes the importance of wildlife to Saskatchewan people and in turn is committed to working with landowners and lessees to conserve wildlife habitat on private and Crown land.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 1999.

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

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

**Bill No. 32 — The Corporation Capital Tax  
Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 1999.

This Bill reduces the corporation capital tax rate for small financial institutions from 3.25 per cent to .7 per cent. Saskatchewan now has one of the lowest capital tax rates in Canada on small financial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, every province in Canada has a capital tax on financial institutions. A small financial institution is defined as a small . . . is defined as a financial institution with taxable, paid-up capital, including all of its associated corporations equal to or less than \$400 million.

Mr. Speaker, resource corporations are subject to a resource surcharge in addition to the normal corporation capital tax liability. There are often significant corporate income tax benefits if resource corporations do not claim certain deductions in determining their corporation capital tax liability.

This Bill permits Canadian exploration and development expenditures to be elective deductions by the corporation rather than mandatory deductions from paid-up capital. Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to work with the resource industry to improve the fairness and integrity of the income and capital tax system in this province.

This Bill also implements a new corporation capital tax deduction for research and development corporations. Scientific research and experimental development expenditures will be allowed as deductions from paid-up capital to the extent that the expenses have not been deducted for income tax purposes. Mr. Speaker, this initiative is in keeping with this government's targeted support for research and development in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Corporation Capital Tax Act.

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

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

**Bill No. 33 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise to move second reading — which I will do at the end of my remarks — with respect to The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 1999.

As everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, in the recent budget we reduced the provincial sales tax from 7 per cent to 6 per cent. This Bill essentially ensures that the overall cost of tobacco products does not drop as a result. The reason being that smoking and tobacco products continue to pose a real threat to thousands of Saskatchewan families and young people.

We do not want to decrease the cost of a package of cigarettes or loose tobacco, Mr. Speaker. We want the price to remain the

same.

It is estimated that 1,600 adults in Saskatchewan die every year as a result of smoking. And in addition, between one-third and one-half of Canadians who now smoke will die prematurely as a result of their tobacco use. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, lowering the cost of tobacco products would send the wrong message about the health risks associated with tobacco use.

And tobacco use also has major implications for the health and well-being of non-smokers. Environmental tobacco smoke is a significant risk for all Canadians, regardless of age, gender, income, education, or race.

So to offset the sales tax decrease, which if we did nothing would make tobacco products cheaper, this Bill increases the tax on a package of 25 cigarettes from \$2.10 to \$2.15 effective March 27, 1999. The tax on one gram of fine-cut or pipe tobacco goes from 5.5 cents to 5.7 cents.

The changes contained within this Bill are effectively revenue neutral. We don't get more money out of the sale of tobacco products. The tobacco tax is collected at the wholesale level while the education and health tax is collected at the retail level. The decrease in the education and health tax is offset by the increase to the tobacco tax.

Mr. Speaker, these changes will not affect the margin of return for either retailers or wholesalers of tobacco products and the cost to the consumer basically remains the same.

The tobacco tax increase is expected to yield an additional \$3 million in this fiscal year while we will lose an equivalent amount or a very similar amount from education and health tax revenue collected from tobacco products.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to amend The Tobacco Tax Act, 1999.

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

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

(1500)

**Bill No. 34 — The Education and Health Tax  
Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to move second reading of The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1999. This Bill continues our promise to bring sustainable tax reductions to Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, our record on tax reduction is clear and there is a pattern for all to see. Since the budget was balanced in 1994-95 by this government provincial taxes have gone only in one direction in Saskatchewan and that is down.

For example in 1995 and 1996 we reduced personal income taxes which resulted in the tax being eliminated for 6,000 Saskatchewan people — 6,000 people, Mr. Speaker, taken off the income tax roles of that time. In 1997 we cut the sales tax rate to 7 per cent and in 1998 we reduced the personal income

tax rate from 50 per cent to 48 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this Bill reduces the Education and Health tax rate a further percentage point from 7 per cent to 6 per cent effective March 27, 1999. This is the lowest rate of any province that has a sales tax. And, Mr. Speaker, we charge the sales tax on far fewer things than other provinces that have a sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, many provinces apply the sales tax to family essentials like children's clothing, home heating fuel, and electricity. This includes three of the Atlantic provinces which have chosen to become part of the federal government's harmonized tax scheme.

I might add in this regard, Mr. Speaker, many people may not be aware that under the previous Conservative government in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan had passed a law prior to the election of our government to harmonize the PST (provincial sales tax) with the GST (goods and services tax).

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, when we took office the PST had been put on children's clothing, used cars, lottery tickets, reading materials, restaurant meals, and it was the plan of the Conservatives to extend the sales tax to all goods and services that the GST is on, effective January 1, 1992. And fortunately, Mr. Speaker, in October of 1991 Premier Romanow and our government came to office . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, now the minister will recognize of course that it's improper to use proper names in the House and that the only recognition of members should be in the context of the authorities and the responsibilities they have in the House. And I'm sure that he'll want to conduct himself in his debate accordingly.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should have said the Premier and our government were elected in 1991 and one of the very first things that we did, because we did want to have tax relief for families, was to undo what the members opposite had done in government in the sense that first we did away with the expanded sales tax. They had put the sales tax on the children's clothing, the restaurant meals, the used cars, the lottery tickets, and so on. And their plan was, on January 1992, to extend the provincial sales tax to all goods and services, Mr. Speaker. But what we did, unlike the Atlantic provinces under the Liberals and Conservatives, we did away with that notion, and we reduced the sales tax.

I'm happy to say now, Mr. Speaker, we're taking the provincial sales tax, effective midnight on budget day, to 6 per cent — the lowest it's been I think since 1986.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — So that's what we're trying to do in contrast to the policies of the members opposite. So, Mr. Speaker, we've taken 3 percentage points off the sales tax in three years. It's gone from 9 per cent to 7 per cent down to 6 per cent.

This means, Mr. Speaker, \$300 million a year — \$300 million a year, Mr. Speaker, put back into the hands of families,

businesses, municipalities, educational institutions, school boards, and health boards right across the province. And I'm proud of that, Mr. Speaker, because it stands in such contrast to the policies, the taxation policies, the higher tax policies of the members opposite.

Now during pre-budget consultation, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people clearly stated they wanted to see continued tax reduction, and that their priorities for tax relief were income tax and sales tax. They were equally adamant that tax reduction should not proceed unless and until it is affordable. And here again we contrast ourselves to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, because we will reduce taxes, but not at the expense of running deficits and debt — which is of course the Tory policy — because we've seen, Mr. Speaker, that when we follow the policies of the Conservative Party and the members opposite, the next generation ends up paying the bill.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the people in the province have arrived at a consensus — that we don't want Tory debt and we don't want Tory deficit and we don't want increased Tory sales taxes. No, Mr. Speaker, we want to continue a balanced approach of balanced budgets, paying off the debt, and lower taxes. That's what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this Bill helps us do in a very sincere, honest way. Unlike the doublespeak we see from the members opposite who are of course telling people that they're going to reduce taxes on the one hand and increase spending on the other which of course they have no intention of doing, Mr. Speaker. And I'm constantly reminding people never listen to what the Conservatives say, only examine what they do and compare the records, Mr. Speaker.

What we saw under the Conservatives in the 1980s — and they're proposing it again — was deficit, debt, and ultimately higher taxes because it's the only way that you can pay for that.

What we're proposing, Mr. Speaker, is continued gradual tax reduction in a way that will let us keep the balanced budget, not have a deficit, and not increase the Tory debt, Mr. Speaker. That's what we want to try to continue to do. I think that's what Saskatchewan people want us to continue to do. And I hope that the opposition, Mr. Speaker, will support the reduction of the sales tax. We'll be looking to see whether they support this, Mr. Speaker. And it's a step in the right direction.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to move that an Act to amend The Education and Health Tax Act be read a second time.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before we move this Bill into committee, I think it's imperative that a few comments be made about the Bill. While the minister talks about reducing the sales tax, the minister neglects to tell the people of Saskatchewan . . . to become open and truthful with the public. But the fact that it was his government and it was this Premier and this NDP that increased the sales tax — they increased the sales tax to 9 per cent since they formed government. They brought in a flat tax, Mr. Speaker.

He also neglects to tell the people of Saskatchewan that they increased the income tax. And another thing he forgets, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that everyone in Saskatchewan is complaining today about the other indirect taxes like the property taxes that have gone up and certainly with regards to education. And we saw yesterday a number of groups finally standing up and saying enough is enough.

Mr. Speaker, as the Saskatchewan Party has in its platform a sales tax reduction, a fair and affordable sales tax reduction. And for that, Mr. Speaker, we agree with the minister and we thank the minister for taking our advice and reducing the sales tax because the people of Saskatchewan are just taxed too much. And the people of Saskatchewan are also asking for reduction in tax so that they can put more money into providing for their needs. And as they spend more money in the province of Saskatchewan it eventually ends up in the hands of the Minister of Finance to provide the goods and services. So, Mr. Speaker, we agree with the minister.

We believe at the end of the day we're going to have to go further. That's why our party has set out a policy that calls for meaningful tax reduction and in that regard we can agree with the minister here; but we just find it disreputable that the minister continues to blame somebody else for his actions and the minister is always pointing to somebody else rather than pointing to himself and realizing that he's just trying to undo what he did in the first place.

So having said those few words, Mr. Speaker, we will address some of the concerns directly in Committee of the Whole.

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

#### **Bill No. 40 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move second reading of a Bill to amend The Income Tax Act. This Bill continues our government's commitment to improve the efficiency of our tax administration in order to reduce the compliance burden of Saskatchewan businesses.

As announced in the budget, the Saskatchewan manufacturing and processing profits tax reduction program will be incorporated into the overall corporate income tax system which is administered on the province's behalf by the federal government.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, we have for several years been administering this ourselves because we have not been able to obtain the agreement of the federal government to collect it. To the extent we can, we want the federal government to handle the income tax system, the administration, so we don't duplicate efforts. That's what this does in terms of the manufacturing and processing profits tax reduction program which itself is designed to encourage more manufacturing and food processing in our province.

This Bill also introduces amendments as a consequence of the reduction in the education and health tax rate from 7 per cent to 6 per cent. The Bill also contains a technical amendment to The Income Tax Act which is necessary to ensure effective

administration of our income taxes by the federal government.

I might say in this regard, by way of explanation, Mr. Speaker, that what this Bill does with respect to the manufacturing and processing tax advantage that we offer, that had been a 7 per cent advantage when manufacturers and food processors were paying a higher sales tax; like others, it will now be 6 per cent that they will pay and the program is adjusted accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, fiscal responsibility by governments involves finding a balance between the provision of government programs and the level of taxation that will provide the necessary funding for the programs that people want, including areas such as health, education, justice, and highways. Our government is committed to a comprehensive strategy to lower taxes, improve key provincial services, and pay down the rather large provincial debt which we have.

However, a key consideration is that these objectives must be accomplished while continuing to maintain a sound fiscal position for Saskatchewan. In other words, we shouldn't be making rash promises that we can't keep, Mr. Speaker. We should be proceeding in a reasonable, responsible, balanced way.

This strategy that we've been following has resulted in five consecutive budgets of lowering personal and business taxes. In 1995 and 1996 we implemented a reduction in personal income taxes that saved Saskatchewan taxpayers \$55 million a year. In 1997 we reduced the rate of the provincial sales tax from 9 per cent to 7 per cent, saving Saskatchewan residents about \$200 million a year.

It is important to note that the sales tax reduction benefited both families and businesses, not to mention, Mr. Speaker, organizations like school boards and health boards, because they pay a great deal of sales tax and when we cut the sales tax it helps them, too.

The 1998 budget reduced the basic personal income tax rate from 50 per cent to 48 per cent of basic federal tax, implemented in 1998 and 1999 and providing annual savings for provincial taxpayers of \$45 million.

The 1999 budget lowered the education and health tax rate from 7 per cent to 6 per cent, providing annual tax savings of over \$100 million for all Saskatchewan families and businesses, school boards, health boards, municipalities, and so on.

With this latest tax cut we have succeeded in reducing the provincial sales tax by one-third since 1997, putting \$300 million a year back into the hands of families, businesses, municipalities, educational institutions, school boards and health boards all across our province.

These tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, are responsible and sustainable. The budget remains balanced. We're avoiding deficits and debts. And our government is committed to ensuring that these tax cuts are here to stay and that they will be followed by further tax reductions as we can afford them.

(1515)



Mr. Speaker, provinces have been working with the federal government for several years towards finding ways to provide greater flexibility in the determination of provincial personal income taxes in order to achieve the social and economic objectives of individual governments.

The federal government recently agreed to allow provinces to convert their existing personal income tax structures which calculate provincial tax as a percentage of federal tax to a system which will calculate provincial tax as a percentage of taxable income. This new approach to determining provincial income tax is commonly referred to as "tax on income".

As I announced in the budget, our government is committed to a review of tax on income over the course of the upcoming year. This review will consider whether Saskatchewan should move to a tax-on-income system, and will examine a whole range of alternatives available under the tax-on-income concept. The review process will include public consultations to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan have an opportunity to share their ideas on the design of the new income tax system for the province.

So to recap, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will bring about changes to The Income Tax Act, but there are many other changes that we think we should be looking at. We're going to review them.

To recap our record: 1995 and 1996, income tax cuts; 1997, sales tax cut; 1998, income tax cut; 1999, sales tax cut. And we're going to keep going forward, Mr. Speaker, in a responsible, balanced way.

And I know that the members opposite are going to get up and probably complain about our taxation record. But our record is clear and can be contrasted, Mr. Speaker, to the higher debt, higher deficit, higher tax regime, we had under the Conservatives which they're proposing to impose upon the people of the province again.

I know that the members opposite will get up and say something in response to that, Mr. Speaker, but I will stack up our record of balancing the budget, getting rid of the deficit, paying off the debt, and gradual sustainable tax reduction against their record any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

And I predict that when the people of the province in the next election compare our record to the record of the members opposite, they will endorse our record, Mr. Speaker. And with that, I'm very pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Income Tax Act.

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

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

#### **Bill No. 36 — The Animal Protection Act, 1999**

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has substantially rewritten The Animal Protection Act. Revisions to the Act will: better define the definition of animal distress or neglect; will rename peace officers to animal protection officers to better reflect their role

to broaden the Act's investigation, enforcement, and penalty provisions; to allow animal protection officers to take mistreated farm animals to caretakers who have the proper facilities to care for them; and recognize the role of the livestock industry in defining the conditions or codes of practice for raising and marketing farm animals.

Before I move second reading, I would like to provide you with some background. The Act was established in 1972 to protect animals in Saskatchewan. At the time, Mr. Speaker, the Act empowered peace officers to deal with and remove distressed animals from premises where animals were being mistreated.

Over the years deficiencies in the Act became apparent as the Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals investigative services peace officers became highly trained and involved in more difficult cases. The peace officers were limited in their course of action to relieve farm animals in distress and to prevent further suffering.

Mr. Speaker, times have changed. Farmers now raise more than horses, cows, and pigs. We now have bison, elk, and wild boar on farms. The SSPCA (Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) investigative services do not have the facilities to handle these types of game animals.

A major defect in the previous Act that has over the years created problems is that peace officer was left with the broad definition of distress as being "undue or unnecessary hardship, privation, or neglect." The interpretation left to the individual officer was too subjective.

Over the years problems were created due to the lack of uniform standards for charges under the Act. Those suspected of inhumane treatment of animals could be dealt with differently depending on the interpretation of the individual peace officer. Distress is now clearly defined as deprivation of adequate food, water, care or shelter; injured, sick, in pain; suffering, neglected, or abused.

We are renaming peace officers to animal protection officers. The new title, animal protection officers, more appropriately defines their activities. The revised Act broadens investigation, enforcement, and penalty provisions. In our consultations with humane societies and the SSPCA it became apparent there was a need to strengthen the investigation and enforcement provisions of The Animal Protection Act.

Section 7 in the revised Act, Mr. Speaker, updates standard search and seizure. The section which complies with constitutional law ensures the animal protection officer, with a warrant, can seize carcasses for investigative and pathology evidence. In cases where the animal protection officers suspect suppression or removal of evidence, the Act permits them to take a specialist or a veterinarian with them for assistance to carry out a search or seizure, or diagnosis of an animal in distress.

To ensure this government's position on the humane treatment of animals is followed, the Act identifies and increases the penalties. Previously the Act stated a person guilty of an offence was fined not less than \$100, nor more than \$1,000, and in default of payment could be imprisoned for up to seven days.

Under the revised Act, for a first offence a person found guilty could be fined not more than \$5,000, imprisoned for not more than three months, or both. For second and subsequent offences the penalties double.

The revised Act makes provisions for animal protection officers to move mistreated animals to safety to individuals identified as caretakers who do have the appropriate facilities in which to keep and care for animals in distress. The animal protection officer will make appropriate arrangements to transport animals to the appropriate caretaker when necessary. Caretakers will look after these animals until they are back to health.

An animal is not considered to be in distress if it is handled in a manner consistent with a standard or code of practice in accordance with accepted animal management. Over the past number of years we have consulted with the Saskatchewan Livestock Association, cattle feeders association, Heartland Livestock Services, and others in the livestock industry regarding this matter.

The livestock industry has been writing codes of practice for the raising and marketing of farm animals. Their codes of practice define how animals are to be managed, what practices are acceptable, and what is not acceptable.

The revised Act, Mr. Speaker, recognizes the role of the livestock industry to define the conditions or codes of practice. This is important because the codes of practice written by the industry define in specific terms what is and is not humane treatment of animals. It means in essence the industry policing itself.

Animal welfare is a priority with our government and the livestock industry. This is an important issue that impacts on our future trading prospects in the global community. Our trade partners want assurances that as a government and livestock industry we're serious in Saskatchewan about the humane treatment of animals.

Mr. Speaker, the livestock industry and the public fully support our government's revision of The Animal Protection Act. Comments on our revisions to the Act from the livestock industry and humane societies in the province were positive.

So I ask the members of the Assembly to support this Act, and I therefore move second reading of Bill No. 36, The Animal Protection Act, 1999. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Yes, Mr. Chair, the officials with me today I believe are — yes — the same officials as last time. Sitting beside me is Glenda Yeates, the deputy minister. Seated behind Ms. Yeates is Bonnie Durnford, the assistant deputy minister. Seated behind me is Bob Wihlidal, the executive director of financial management. Seated beside him is Phil Walsh, the executive director of income support. And seated behind Mr. Wihlidal is Richard Hazel, the executive director of family and youth services.

### Subvote (SS01)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And welcome to the minister and to your officials. As you're probably aware, Mr. Minister, over the past number of years there have been quite a number of concerns raised by families about Social Services intruding themselves into the homes of various families. And I have on my desk in my constituency office probably a half dozen of those that are moderately serious, I would believe.

And so what I have here is a compilation of questions that don't deal with any one of those specifically, but are questions that are general enough that I believe they cover probably all of those situations, and as a result, you should be able to answer those without getting involved in any specific family difficulties.

The first question I have is: what legislation guides Saskatchewan social workers with regards to the visitation of families in child protection?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — The Child and Family Services Act, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Does the department follow any other legislation than what you've just outlined?

(1530)

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, that Act deals with all child protection matters.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And so I'll draw from that answer that there is nothing else that relates to that kind of a question.

With regards to child protection investigation, could you describe for us please the full routine from start to finish from a report, investigation, conclusion that would probably take place?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, generally speaking once a report is received by the department that a child is in need of protection, we investigate the report. If in our opinion, in the opinion of the worker at the time, there is in fact a child that is in need of protection, then we offer our services to the family to help them deal with the issue, with the presenting problem.

We try to get agreement on services that should be offered to the child or to the family that will enable the child to stay with the family. If the risk is too great in the opinion of the worker, the child may be removed from the family. When that happens,

one of the first things that we try to do is to contact the extended family and to see if the extended family can play a role in terms of caring for the child, and also in resolving the issues that caused this matter to be brought to our attention in the first place.

After a period following the apprehension, should there be an apprehension, the worker has to apply for a court hearing within seven days. If the court finds the child to be in need of ongoing protection services, the judge can order a number of things.

Supervision: the child is returned home and a caseworker provides supervision for a specified period up to a year.

Temporary committal: the child remains in the care of the minister for a specified period up to six months.

Persons of sufficient interest order: a child is placed in the custody of a person having a close connection to the child such as an extended family member.

A long-term care order: the child becomes a ward of the minister until age 18 but the parents retain guardianship.

And permanent committal: the child becomes a ward of the minister until age 18 and the parents lose all rights and the child may be placed for adoption.

That in general terms, is the process we follow and the specific terms, those are the options that are available to the courts when these matters are brought to the courts.

**The Chair:** — Order, order. Why is the member on her feet?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — To ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — Thank you very much. In the west gallery I have 38 students, 38 grade 4 students from Hugh Cairns V.C. School in Saskatoon. The teachers with them are Dena Miller Racicot — hopefully that's right — Lesia Bondarenko and chaperons Dan Favreau David Udchic, and Todd Jarvis. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

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

**The Chair:** — Why is the member on his feet.

**Mr. Whitmore:** — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I too would like to welcome the kids from Hugh Cairns today. I've had on two occasions the opportunity to be at Hugh Cairns when citizenship court has been held. And I've certainly enjoyed the program that the children have put together and certainly hope at another time that I'd be able to attend. But I simply want to congratulate them and their teachers for the programs they put on during those citizenship courts. Again thank you very much.

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

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

#### Subvote (SS01)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Mr. Minister, as you stated the answer you gave was sort of a general overview of that and my question relates somewhat to that. Can a citizen of this province have access to all the specific protocol and steps that social workers are to follow in their investigations? And if they can have access to those steps and that protocol, who would they contact to get that information?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, any citizen who is interested in this information in terms of the process, first of all with respect to the child abuse investigation protocol, which is a joint protocol which has been developed with the police, we can provide people if they're interested in that information, in that process, we can provide that information. Similarly, if there's aspects of our policy manuals that are germane to a certain process that a person's concerned about, we would also provide those. I would certainly encourage people to call my office.

What we cannot provide, of course, is any specific client information that may be on file. But as to the process, as to how our people do their work, either as departmental officials and/or in conjunction with police departments, we can certainly give that information to people if they want to contact my office.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. The next one . . . question gets close to what you intimated but I think it's a slightly different direction. How would a Saskatchewan family gain access to files a social worker keeps on them — so the family's asking for files about their own specific situation, not anyone else — or an investigation?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, The Child and Family Services Act does provide . . . or sets out a procedure in which information may be provided to a family on which we maintain a file. The form of that information is subject to my discretion. It may be because in part we are concerned that those who bring information to us which instigated a certain process or investigation, that those people also be protected.

So the answer is yes, information can be made available upon application to the director. But the form in which it's released may be circumscribed. So I don't know if that answers the member's question fully. But yes, information can be released. But we also need to ensure that, in releasing that information to a family, that we do not implicate others.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. I believe you answered that question very fully when you used the word may, which meant that essentially there isn't a hope in anything of most families getting any of the information they want to find out. Because by the time that information gets sifted through your bureaucrats and through your desk — and I've experienced that myself contacting your office — there isn't a hope of them finding out

anything about what your department is doing with the families and the kids in this particular province.

It's an arrogant attitude that your department has, that you know the best what should happen in every particular family. You know the best what should happen to the kids. And you'll take any excuse to go ahead and have your department work and intrude themselves into the families of this particular province. And that's a concern that I said at the very start that I had with your department.

(1545)

Another question. Is it department protocol to forward concerns on to local police or RCMP if no charge is made, if after the investigation the children of the family are not classified as in need of protection?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, when we receive an allegation of child abuse whether it's physical or sexual, we notify the police immediately and we do our investigations together. That may be the RCMP detachments throughout the province. In the case of the city of Regina and the city of Saskatoon where we have municipal police forces, we have also set up special units so that we have the same police officers that tend to be involved in those investigations, and develop some familiarity if you like, with these issues. So as I say, we do the investigation together.

If there's insufficient evidence with respect to criminal charges, there may still be an ongoing need for involvement on the part of my department. Because even if the specific circumstances don't suggest or do not suggest they're criminal charges, there may be conditions which lead us to believe that there may be future problems for the children.

There may be issues of neglect if not abuse, and so my department may continue to be involved even if the police do not continue their involvement because there are no specific . . . or there is not the kind of evidence that lends itself to criminal charges at that time.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. Very interesting answer. What you've essentially said, that when you find no evidence you can lay no charges, you will continue to harass that family looking to see if you can find something. Very much as if someone gets a ticket going down the highway and the policeman just goes right after him and keeps on following for the next two days to see if he can catch him at something else. That's harassment, and that's what your department is doing in a number of families.

One more question and I'll turn it over to my colleague. What is the department's view with regards to corporal correction?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, I just want to say at the outset that my department has zero tolerance when it comes to child abuse, and I trust that this is also the member's attitude. We tend to err on the side of the safety of children, so that when allegations are brought to our attention we want to make very sure that we do not in fact have conditions, even if the specific conditions at that time do not suggest criminal charges, that we satisfy ourselves that there are no conditions that may lead to

abuse. So that there are no, if you like, other circumstances that may suggest neglect or other reasons that we should be involved.

So again I just want to emphasize that we have a zero tolerance when it comes to child abuse and we tend to err on the side of that. Even if there are no specific criminal charges at that time, we tend to err in that way.

And as to the member's question with respect to corporal punishment, I'm not quite clear and I wonder if he might restate his questions.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Well I think I'd rather make a comment than try to restate the question because the question was very simple, and that was asking your position. And you waffled on that answer, sir, which tells me exactly what you intend to do. You will use that opening that you've allowed yourself to go ahead and continue harassing families in this particular province with their views on disciplining and raising kids in this province. And you think you know better than they do. And that's the problem that's come through in a number of high-profile cases in this province recently that have hit the media, and a lot of other ones that haven't hit the media and should have.

Over to my colleague.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — If I might, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's comments, but again I just . . . With respect to corporal punishment — if that was the question that the member asked previously — when it comes to our foster homes or our adoptive homes, we do not tolerate corporal punishment.

But again, Mr. Chair, I just want to make it perfectly clear — perfectly clear — when it comes to the question of abuse of children — abuse of children — whether it's physical abuse or sexual abuse, we will always err on the side of the child; we will always err on the side of safety, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister and officials, I have a number of questions in different areas today, but I'd like to start with the caseload numbers and the concerns that we're hearing through the media and directly from social workers who are talking about the number of people that they are responsible for, the number of people that . . . increasing number of caseloads that they have and the fact that they feel that at the end of the day they can't do their job. They aren't able to fill the morals that they feel they should have, and even the Social Services ethics, the commitment they made when they became workers.

The number of people on welfare that are able-bodied is increasing. And at the end of the day we have workers who are not feeling good about what they are doing, even though they study very hard to be caregivers and help people.

So I'm going to start by asking about caseworkers, and if you can give me the idea . . . an idea of how many caseworkers there are, not including managers and supervisors — actual caseworkers — for the departments of income security, child protection, and young offenders.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chairman, I want to provide

the answer for the member. In family and youth services, that includes all child protection, adoptions, foster care, also includes ... well a number of different programs all under family and youth, the number of workers is 392 ... or not workers but full-time equivalents. It's actually 392.1. And in addition thereto there are 61.6 full-time equivalents who are classified as supervisors.

In the income security area, total income security workers or full-time equivalents is 242.3, and 34.2 FTEs (full-time equivalent) as supervisory.

Now in addition to those figures some of our caseloads are also administered by some northern bands, and I don't have the numbers for that. Some of our caseload might be administered, for example in the case of Regina, by the Regina Mental Health Clinic.

And some of our caseloads have been centralized in our administrative component where ... For example, caseloads where there is very little change from month to month — it might be, for example, someone who is in a nursing home or personal care home; it might be some of our clientele who live in group homes or, for example, live in Valley View — where the circumstances don't change from month to month and really no social work component is required but it's a matter of administering support each month, that might be in the administrative component.

(1600)

And so if, in terms of looking at total caseloads and then looking at the number of workers, one may not be able to form a very accurate picture sometimes of the number of cases per worker.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Chairman. To the minister: you have of course gone into the ... My next question is the number of caseloads. And I understand with 392 family and youth workers, my next question is how many cases are they looking after?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — I just want to point out to the member that to talk about average caseloads may in some ways be quite misleading. Because you may have one worker whose responsibility it is to deal with foster care and a certain caseload might be appropriate or manageable. Someone else might be doing adoptions, and a different kind of caseload because of the intensity of work that might be required there. Yet another worker might be working in the area of therapeutic foster homes where the caseload is very, very small, given the intensive nature of the work that is required.

Having said that, we try to use the advice of the Child Welfare League of America in terms of arriving at, if you like, standardized numbers and to allow for comparisons. And prior to November 1998, the average caseload in the child welfare area was 36, and the average caseload now is thirty-two and a half. So there's been a reduction of three and a half cases, roughly 10 per cent if you like. But again it depends on the kind of caseload, depends on the worker.

But there has been a reduction as a result of the addition of staff

during the course of the last fiscal year — I believe it was 50 staff in total — even though some of the caseloads I think did increase. Nevertheless the additional staff has meant an overall reduction in the number of child welfare staff ... or in child welfare caseload.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So you gave me a breakdown of 32 cases, and that is with everyone so it's a little more difficult to look at it in the kind of context that I wanted to. Maybe you can give me an idea, do you have it broken down in an area like Saskatoon? Can you tell me how many caseload workers there are in Saskatoon versus the number of cases, and in one specific area, let's say the youth workers?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, we do not keep statistics such as this on a regional basis. However, we were sensitive to the needs of regions when we added the 50 new staff. We asked the regional managers at that point for a breakdown of their caseloads and the staff that they had available to handle that, and at that point we added staff to the regions where we felt there was the greatest need.

We normally, or not normally, we ask our regional directors to manage the caseloads and to — whether that's child protection caseloads or whether that's social assistance caseloads — and to manage the regions that they have if they feel that their ability to manage that, given perhaps increases in their areas as opposed to other areas of the province. And we're sensitive to that and we try to respond to that as we did in terms of adding the additional child protection staff.

And I hope that answers the member's question.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, no it doesn't. There is a lot of gobbledegook and nothing really said.

And I think this is one area where the people of this province are looking to see some leadership and looking to see some real results. And if we ... Every once in a while we get some statistics out from your department and they are always ... the numbers are never the same as the ones we are hearing from other places.

And I think it's really disappointing and it's hard on your department and the morale of the people working in there if they can't hold their head up high and say that they feel like they are actually doing what their job tells them or what they're supposed to be doing.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me what ... Income security probably can't be as complicated as some of the other areas. Can you give me an idea of how many caseloads each income security worker has?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chairman, first might I say to the member that if she has statistics from other places, don't hesitate to share those statistics with us and to give us the source of those statistics so that we might be in a position to respond.

I know that for example there are some statistics and some interpretations of those statistics that are being floated around Saskatchewan, particularly by the member's own party, where

they have said that there's been a large increase for example in social assistance caseloads in Saskatchewan, and that that increase is solely due to the policies of the present government when the facts are something different than that. The fact of the matter is that although there tend to be fluctuations which are related usually to the economy and also to depressions and recoveries from depressions, these do not tend to be great variations.

What we have seen in Saskatchewan as we've seen in other provinces in Canada was that as a result of changes, unilateral changes I might add by the federal government and changes which are your party supported at the time, where the federal government decided to reduce the kinds of entitlements that were previously available to people in receipt of Employment Insurance, where they added to the requirements to receive Employment Insurance. All of that tended to have a great impact on Employment Insurance figures in Canada.

And I think that all of those who are listening will know that the federal government at this time has a very great surplus in their Employment Insurance fund, in part because they've tightened up their eligibility requirements to make it tougher for people to receive Employment Insurance. And they've reduced the benefits that people receive on Employment Insurance if they do qualify.

All of that has tended to put pressure on the provincial governments and has seen a large increase in social assistance caseloads in the provinces. And that increase is attributable to the change in federal policy with respect to Employment Insurance.

There was also another change in federal policy which happened in I believe 1993 and has also had a major impact on Saskatchewan but less of an impact on some other provinces, and that was the change with respect income security for First Nations people off reserve. That also tended to add to the caseload numbers in Saskatchewan.

So what we saw in a period between 1991 and 1994 was a very rapid increase in income security caseloads, but since that time income security caseloads have declined in Saskatchewan because of the state of the Saskatchewan economy. Caseload numbers per worker, the cases per worker in December of 1997, the average number of cases per worker was 178, and the average cases per worker as of the end of December 1998 was 168.9.

So there was a decline from the end of '97 to the end of '98. And that's part of a decline, as I say, that has been occurring since 1994. I believe there's been a 14 per cent decrease in caseloads since that time.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you again, Mr. Minister. The decline that you're talking about, I was hoping and I would think that your department and most of your workers were hoping would be larger than that with the government's announcement last year of the national child action plan and the fact that there was an opportunity for families to actually be working and still receive some of the benefits of Social Services.

There was a tremendous amount of money spent on it. There

was a tremendous amount of hype around the whole idea of being able to get families off Social Services and get them into the workforce. And if I'm seeing this type of decrease, I believe it's far below the expectations that your government must have had when the plan came into effect.

(1615)

So it's not always right to just look at numbers; I know that. I understand that in cases of Social Services, numbers are people and we've got to look at them on individual basis. But as individuals, what we have to see is an increase in their living and their ability to actually have a life as opposed to just living. And if we're only seeing this kind of a decrease at the beginning when people are . . . should be very interested in maybe making their life changes, I'm more than a little bit disappointed.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me . . . I am aware, because of some calls I've been getting to my office, that your department actually does some contract work. If there's areas where you don't have a hired worker and you need some specialized help for a young person, an older person, whatever, you actually do some contract work to individuals.

Can you tell me how many contracts were let last year and the amount of money that was spent on these contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, first of all I just want to deal with the member's initial comment with respect to the impact that the Saskatchewan Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan employment supplement is having on Saskatchewan families.

This year over last year there are 1,800 fewer families in receipt of social assistance. We attribute the redesign in social assistance, that is the building independence program, as having an impact on about 1,100 families.

I might say, though, that the Saskatchewan Child Benefit, in addition to those that are not on social assistance, and the intent of the program was not necessarily to reach people on social assistance per se, but to put more money in the hands of poor families. And there are many low-income families who were not on social assistance, are not on social assistance, but who are being supported through the National Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan Child Benefit.

At this point there's approximately 49,406 low-income families who are being supported through the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. That reaches approximately 103,000 children. The impact of the National Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan employment supplement will be significant for some low-income families who may never have been on social assistance, and therefore won't have any impact on caseloads for people in my department. But the intent of the program was to get money into low-income families to support those families in the job of raising their children. And I think we are having an impact there.

With respect to contracting, we do contract with a number of community partners both in the area of, for example, group homes for mentally challenged people. We also contract with

transition houses to provide services. We contract with child hunger organizations such as the REACH (Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger Inc.) organization in Regina.

I believe . . . yes the figures I have that approximately \$19 million is expended on a contractual basis for family and youth organizations. That might for example be such as the group home, the Tapwe-ci group home in Regina. And another 39 million is provided on a contractual basis to agencies that provide either residential or other program services through our community living division for mentally challenged people in Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you again, Mr. Minister. Do you have at your fingertips the information on how many contracts were given out to smaller firms for doing counselling for young people, or any people I guess, if you don't have a hired social worker within the system right now?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, there are number of areas where we would contract out with individuals or individual agencies, for example, in alternative measures in our youth work if there are special conditions. It might be that there is some community agency that provides a culturally appropriate service where we might contract with that agency to provide that service.

There are other instances too where in the area of I guess child protection where there might be some agency that provides a service that we may not be in a position to provide at that point where we contract with an agency. I don't know if that answers the member's question.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, I knew what some of the areas were. My question was: how many of these contracts do you have and how much money?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, we'll undertake to try to provide an answer for the member's question. We don't have that information that she's specifically asking for with us. These things change and fluctuate from time to time.

It might be, for example, that our staff take into care a child who has been sexually abused and that child will be put into a foster home. But if we feel that we don't have the counselling support or skills to be able to help that child at that time that we might contract with some agency, some outside agency, to provide the appropriate support. But having said that, we'll endeavour to provide the member with the information and get it over to her as soon as we can.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Minister, thank you very much for that commitment to give me the information.

Mr. Minister, I think that the Saskatchewan Party, the official opposition, has great concerns with the fact that we are hearing about the caseloads of the workers; the fact that they are overworked; the fact that the numbers on social services aren't really decreasing as quickly as I know you would like to see them decrease, especially not as quickly as the people who are on social services would like to see them decrease.

And I understand the contract last year that was settled with a

number of your workers agreed on the money, and yet at the same time, there was a letter of understanding or some sort of commitment that you were going to deal with the real issues of social workers much like the real issues of nurses, and that is overwork, overload, the fact they can't even do their jobs properly, because to do an assessment to allow someone to get out in the workforce is going to mean extra time that the workers don't have.

We're talking about the same kind of scenario that nurses have when they can't do their real job because they don't have time for patient care. They just run around like crazy doing the real technical stuff and filling out papers. And we can't get either the social workers or our health system back in line if people aren't able to treat other people like human beings.

Now I have a number of other questions, but I'm going to ask you to respond to the commitment to social workers that you are going to be looking at the issues that were outside of their wages, so that they could actually go to bed at night feeling like they had done their job; and that the people of this province would understand that they do count, that they do have an opportunity to get off welfare, and they can some day in the very near future become a viable part of our society and not have to wait for a weekly cheque from the government just to keep food on the table.

That's not what we need in this province if we're actually going to give people a sense of well-being and respect and honour.

So, Mr. Minister, can you tell me what is your commitment to the employees of Social Services to make sure that they can start doing their job so that the people of this province can benefit.

(1630)

**The Chair:** — Why is the member on her feet?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — With leave, Mr. Chairman, to introduce guests.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to have the opportunity — I see they almost missed it; they're leaving now — to welcome students here from St. Mark School on Pendygrasse Rd. in Saskatoon. Fifty grade 6 students have made the trip to be with us this afternoon and I'd like to ask my colleagues in the House to give them a warm welcome here today.

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

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

#### Subvote (SS01)

**Mr. Hillson:** — Good afternoon, Mr. Minister. I understand

that there is going to be a review of our youth centres, the youth detention centres, and I want to ask you if that is just in relation to the recent incident at Kilburn or if it is in relation to youth detention centres generally, including the North Battleford Youth Centre?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chairman, let me first deal with the answer to the question from the member from Kelvington-Wadena who asked me some questions concerning workload.

Yes, the department and the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) and CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) did sign an agreement to try to find solutions to workload issues. In December of 1998, SGEU withdrew from that process. We remain committed to dealing with workload issues. For example, we did add the 50 new staff.

We would appreciate their involvement as to evaluating the impact of that, and how that has worked out; also how improved training will assist staff; changes in policy, how that will implicate staff; and we like to work with them to get their feedback to assist us in dealing with these issues.

The SGEU, of course, has mounted a public campaign. They have, what I might say, a very radical approach to these issues. They believe, for example, that joint management and union committees should be able to make binding decisions as to staff allocations. That of course, takes away the power of the members of the Legislative Assembly; that would take away your power to make decisions about what are the appropriate resources in the area of social services as opposed to other areas or even within social services, Mr. Chair. And we, of course, cannot agree to that.

At the end of the day, it's the government that puts forward spending estimates in the Legislative Assembly and it's the members of the Legislative Assembly that are in a position to give approval of that. And we do not normally give powers to third parties to set things, such as worker numbers, and have those binding on the government and on members of the Legislative Assembly.

I might say that I very much appreciate the concern of the Saskatchewan Party in these issues. I just wish that their predecessors, the Saskatchewan Tory Party, had had the same concern in these matters because federal governments might not have acted the way that they had if the members on that side had not, Mr. Chair, laid down and let the federal government make these changes in the areas of employment insurance — would have had a very, very great impact on Social Services and the people who work in that setting.

And I'm just going to sit down, and then I'm going to answer the question from the other member, if that's in order here.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Yes, I'd understood the member for Kelvington-Wadena was finished. I apologize. But if the minister is familiar and doesn't need the question restated, I would appreciate his addressing that now.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, the member speaks of the, I believe, the court ruling with respect to Kilburn Hall.

Even while that court ruling was being provided, there were policy reviews in progress and in place on three matters related to the court's judgment.

There was, and still continues to be, a provincial committee with representation that includes the Children's Advocate that is reviewing restraint policy including the types of restraint used and when and why we use them. We are anxious to find better alternatives to the use of restraints and improved restraint mechanisms.

Secondly, the use of segregation and confinement is also being examined. We're also looking at alternatives to isolation for the control of behaviour within facilities.

Thirdly, a multidisciplinary team is reviewing all aspects of policy, practices, programs, and resources used to manage serious violent behaviours within custody facility. The team is asked for solutions for the prevention of incidents, the reduction in the likelihood of injury and psychological impacts, and effective monitoring of incidents.

In addition there too, we also want to make service delivery culturally relevant and sensitive. And we are working with Aboriginal governments and communities to develop Aboriginal design and control of services. And we're doing that, not only with Aboriginal governments, but also with the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union.

And this is a system-wide review. It just doesn't pertain to Kilburn Hall itself but is intended to cover all of our facilities in the province, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Mr. Minister, can you then tell me how long you anticipate this review will take, when you expect a report can be placed on your desk, and whether that report will in due course be available to the general public?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, these reviews are ongoing. They are internal but we do try to involve others such as the Children's Advocate in these reviews. When we do make changes we would not normally communicate policy changes to the general public. We would just simply implement those.

**Mr. Hillson:** — In the early years of the youth detention centres under the Young Offenders Act, we of course had a rather distressing record of escapes. And I want to know are we now within what would be considered an acceptable range in terms of escapes from the youth centres?

I know that's maybe a subjective question in the sense that there will always be some, but say, comparing it to the adult system are we now within the expected range and what we . . . in what happens in the adult system? Or do we still have a significantly higher rate of escapes from the youth system than we have in the adult system?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, human ingenuity knows no boundaries and . . . but there is no acceptable range for those things that you talk about. We're always working to try to reduce breakouts and to ensure the safety of the community. And every time that there is an escape we try to learn from that and to minimize that in the future.



**Mr. Hillson:** — I'll rephrase that. Is the level of escapes from the youth system still significantly higher than the level of escapes from the adult system? Or is it now closer to being on par?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, we don't have those kind of comparisons. We're dealing with two very different systems. For example, in our young offender system we have both open and secure custody, and I don't know if we have anything comparable to that in the adult system. So we're not in a position to make comparisons.

But again, any escapes trouble us and we try to learn from that to minimize that in the future.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Well I would suggest that the minimum security of a place like the Battlefords correctional centre is analogous to open custody. But a few years ago there was some discussion as to the future of the North Battleford Youth Centre and the various open custody facilities for North Battleford.

Can the minister assure me that the North Battleford Youth Centre is an ongoing and permanent facility? And where do we stand in terms of the open custody facilities in the Battlefords area?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, given the current demand for secure custody facilities and for open custody facilities we anticipate continued use of the North Battleford facility and of the Drumming Hill open custody facility. We see no change in this. My own preference, as I'm sure it is the member, that we would have no need at all for secure custody facilities, but given the increased demand for those facilities we see continued use of the North Battleford facility.

(1645)

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, and your officials. Mr. Minister, in a recent federal government press release indicating that there would be changes to the Young Offenders Act, it was stated that \$17 million would be given by the federal government to the provinces to be put towards community justice committees for rehabilitation and reconciliation initiatives. What has your government done to see that these committees are being established in Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chairman, we do have some community justice committees that operate on an informal basis in some of our communities. We are very anxious to know the parameters of the federal funding and how that might affect Saskatchewan. And once we have a greater understanding of that we will want to develop more of these community justice committees to assist us in the young offender process.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, has your department not entered into discussion with the federal government on community justice committees? And have you in fact put forward some of your proposals and thoughts and ideas on community justice committees, and how they could be established here and assist our young people?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — I'm informed that those

discussions are ongoing. They're not yet complete. We have put proposals to the federal government to . . . We've called on them to provide additional funding for Aboriginal youth and we would hope they would be sensitive to that. But again these discussions are ongoing and we do expect though that they will come to a conclusion at some time so we can proceed.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, just one more question to you. And I put this to you on behalf of a citizen in Regina who is a senior citizen and has indicated to me that young offenders are being asked to serve some of their time, I guess, for retribution or to pay off fines, by assisting seniors in their homes or in their yards. This particular senior, Mr. Minister, told me that she had about a thousand dollars stolen from her home while young offenders were supposed to be there assisting her in her work.

She has spoken to the appropriate authorities and she said that there is no help coming to her. In fact she suggested that possibly the young offenders could take a polygraph test and the authorities instructed that no polygraph test be taken. She wants to know what protection seniors have in cases like this. What can they do, where can they go, and how can they be protected against these things happening? And what kind of insurance do they have if in fact some of their property, their money, or their belongings are stolen from them?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — The only advice that I can offer at this time is that in the case, as in the case of any theft, that the person should contact the police and report it and ask them to investigate it and to see what can be done.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Minister, I just have to put this forward. She did call the police and from what I understand there is the North Centre Community station or something of that nature in Regina and she put forward her complaint to a Mrs. Sutton and a Mr. Cox there and they were not being very helpful in giving her any further assistance. So she just doesn't know quite what she should be doing in this instance. So she has talked to the police I think as far as I understand.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — I'm only guessing here, but given the explanation that you've provided me, it may well be that she's not communicating very clearly with the police that in fact a theft has occurred. And she should very clearly communicate that.

The last time I checked, if people in Regina have thefts and they report those to the police, the police will investigate. At least that's my experience in Regina, and I don't know why it would be any different in this case. So again I would encourage her to report that to the police.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister, I just have one question to ask, and then I feel that we . . . we probably won't be able to get many answers because the questions that I ask seem to be skated around, and I was disappointed. When I became critic for Social Services and I met with you, we discussed the fact that whenever there was a real question to be asked, if we could keep politics out of it and actually start trying to help the people of the province, we'd both be better off. But when we hear the political statements, like the debt of the '80s, that's not helping us move forward.

So, Mr. Minister, the one question that I have to ask you is: what are you doing about the community home operators that would like to see an association started?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, I certainly don't want to talk about the debt of the '80s — those are the obligations of today. But I would just simply say with respect to the community home operators that they have expressed an interest in forming an association, and we would support them in doing that but we don't feel that it's our role to organize that for them. But we'll certainly assist them in anyway that we can.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, thank you very much to your officials, and I look forward to the next time that we get to discuss this. There'll probably be a different set-up in this room and probably a different vision in this room, so thank you very much to your officials.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, might I say that I would never underestimate that member's wishful thinking, but having said that I want to thank her and the other members for their questions and also thank the officials for their participation. They've assisted me greatly as the members will know.

Subvote (SS01) agreed to.

Subvotes (SS02), (SS03), (SS04), (SS05), (SS06), (SS07), (SS09) agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1998-99  
General Revenue Fund  
Budgetary Expense  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

Subvotes (SS02), (SS03), (SS04), (SS05), (SS06) agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund  
Environment and Resource Management  
Vote 26**

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

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with us today, deputy minister, Stuart Kramer to my right; behind me, Dave Phillips, assistant deputy minister of operation; and next to him Dave Tulloch, team leader of corporate development unit; and Bob Ruggles, assistant deputy minister of programs.

**Subvote (ER01)**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the minister and his officials here. You can see my paper isn't very big. I don't have a lot of questions. That doesn't mean they may not take some time.

Mr. Minister, outfitting is a very important industry in

Saskatchewan, and generally though, outfitting for big game is limited to northern Saskatchewan. I know that there are groups that have been approaching you to expand that into southern Saskatchewan. What plans do you have in place, what discussions are you carrying on to allow the expansion of the outfitting industry in big game outfitting into southern Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, the outfitting industry is very important as the hon. member points out. We are in the process of working with the outfitting industry to allow them more self-control, self-administration of the industry. And this is taking place. The process probably will not be completed for a year or two yet, and at that time we will perhaps re-look at outfitting in the South. But our advisory committee has clearly pointed out they do not want big game outfitting in the southern part of the province at this time.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Who would the advisory committee be comprised of? I know that there are some groups that have been holding discussions with your department about allowing big game outfitting into southern Saskatchewan.

In fact they informed me that the discussion had included an idea called community-based outfitting, which would be, as I understood it or as they understood it, would be operated by government agencies in southern Saskatchewan rather than by independent outfitters, as outfitting is currently carried on in the northern parts of Saskatchewan.

Is this what you're looking at, or what directions are you looking at going at in that area? And I really would like to know who's on the advisory committee.

(1700)

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, the advisory committee, the wildlife diversification task force which we worked on about three years ago was made up of around 24 different individuals — from agriculture groups, to SARM, to wildlife organizations, outfitters themselves. And at that time the decision was that we are not prepared to allow big game outfitting in the South.

And in respect to your community-based outfitting proposal, I am aware of it, and it certainly has not been totally shelved. But we're waiting until we get through this next phase of outfitting reform and we will . . . this obviously will be coming forward again. But for the current time we will not be expanding outfitting of big game animals in the South.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Well, Mr. Minister, certainly not my community-based outfitting. This is a suggestion that the outfitting people I've been talking to suggested it was coming out of your department. I don't want government involved in it as the operators of outfitting. Government is there to regulate, not to control and operate.

Mr. Minister, though, I wonder if you can give us the names of the individuals and the organizations that are on your advisory committee. And did I understand you to say that this report decision was made three years ago?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — That's correct. It was the committee established by the previous minister, so it'd be perhaps four years ago. And it was called the wildlife diversification task force, and we will get you a complete list of the members of that committee.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. From my understanding of SERM, the previous minister didn't do all that great a job. In fact, as we had a good antelope herd here before he became minister and now we have very few antelope, so I think that's an indication of the performance of that particular minister.

Mr. Minister, I think we do need to take a very serious look at expanding the opportunities in southern Saskatchewan for outfitting. We have a great deal of potential, and I think we're foregoing business opportunities and growth in the southern part of the province by not allowing outfitting to take place. And I think the department should be very seriously considering having a look at that, and I look forward to receiving that list. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to the minister and good afternoon to your officials. And I'd like to say a special good afternoon to Mr. Callele, who is with you today. Mr. Callele happens to be a friend from out Bruno way, and it's nice to see you.

Mr. Minister, I just wanted to know what kind of projects does SERM engage in, in Mexico right now?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — I believe the hon. member is referring to the Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, and that's a Crown. It's closely tied with SERM, and it was established to implement the North American waterfowl management plan.

The corporation has expanded into partnerships with groups in the United States as well as Mexico. And this is basically following the migratory birds — many of them nest up here. There's key migration stopovers in the States that we're working with the Americans, or they're working with us, to protect. And of course the wintering areas in Mexico are very important. And we're working with the Mexicans to protect these areas — I guess, tell them about the nesting habitat here in Canada.

So that is the partnership agreement that we have with Mexico.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So what would one of your people do if they went down to Mexico? What would their interest be? I understand it's nesting habits and so on, and looking at marshlands that may be there.

But I'm wondering what the interest is for the people of Saskatchewan for us to be expending . . . or spending, rather, quite a lot of money on sending people down to Mexico. And what in goodness' name could they effect there that would be so very valuable?

The way I see it is that if we pay attention to our nesting habitat and our wildlife habitat here in the province, that should be our responsibility, and what the Mexicans do should be their

responsibility.

This sort of a mandate appears to me to be getting right out of control. And I don't know whether again the taxpayers of the province would be feeling very good about spending a lot of money on this when we have so many severe problems in health and education and highways.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, the project which the hon. member refers to, we simply cannot go blindly about doing our work up here. So when our people do go down there perhaps once or twice a year — and the Mexicans have been up here — to see the habitat, to see the problems that they are facing, and in many cases our problems are the same. We can learn from each other.

And the funding for the international projects is all outside money and largely from the US (United States) Fish and Wildlife Service and other foundations in the States. So it's a team effort. We wish to learn of their problems, offer them ideas, and we pick up ideas as well.

**Ms. Julé:** — So, Mr. Minister, are you saying that the funding for this project does not come from the provincial coffers?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — The funding for the Saskatchewan Wetland Corporation has remained at the same level. In fact it was reduced a couple of years ago to 500,000. Virtually all of the money used in out-of-province international projects is outside money, and the 500,000 which is used here is basically spent in Saskatchewan on stream bank programs — the Chaplin and the Quill Lakes area for an example.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I have to just make this comment because it's a bit amusing to me, but also an observation that really does make me wonder how money is being spent. And I'm glad that the money is not necessarily coming from provincial coffers. Because I happened to meet one of your people on an airplane coming from Mexico. And he was expounding about how much time he had for holidaying, and he did a little bit of work in between.

So I think that we want to make sure that if there are provincial taxpayers' money going to this project, or any project out of our country, that we ensure that the time is well spent and that people here don't have to wonder about what kind of activities government has engaged in.

Mr. Minister, I notice that your government seems to claim that they really do support the conservation of prime habitat for . . . prime habitat land for enhancing an environment for wildlife and maintaining the beauty of natural surroundings.

Mr. Minister, I brought the specific issue I'm going to mention to you to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and I would like to have your comments on it also.

Now near St. Brieux in Saskatchewan in my constituency, there have been a number of people there who have written letters and petitions to you as the Minister of the Environment and Resource Management, and also to the Minister of Agriculture. And they're requesting that a parcel of Crown land there, which is prime habitat land for wildlife, be preserved as such. This

land is not in any way or form suitable for agriculture purposes. This land is full of rock, marshland, and natural grassland other than that.

The people in . . . the person, rather, at St. Brieux that was leasing that Crown land recently received a letter indicating that he must have this land fenced in and it must be used for cattle grazing.

Now, Mr. Minister, why in the world would you not ensure that prime habitat land like that is in fact left as prime habitat land for our wildlife? And why would the Minister of Agriculture go to the point where he saw that this gentleman's lease was revoked by the Department of Agriculture and Food? This gentleman that was leasing this land has paid local taxes and all of the leasing agreement fees, and has been doing this for some time.

Now if we were truly trying to preserve these wildlife habitat lands, why would we not make sure that people that are concerned about wildlife and Crown land that is engaged in wildlife habitat, not be preserved as such?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The hon. member raises an issue which I am aware of. It's a half section of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act land. This is agriculture Crown land which is used for grazing, haying in some cases.

The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, brought in in the 1980s — which we certainly support — provides for the land to be grazed, but it cannot be cleared; it cannot be broken up; it cannot be drained. And we believe that there is certainly room for cattle to graze on some of these lands. And we are still in the process though. If the local community feels strongly about it, we would consider looking at this.

But the land is basically protected. Nobody can break it up, drain it, or clear it. It cannot be sold. So we are aware of the situation. And we're working with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, to see what we can do to accommodate the interests of the local people.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Minister, who determines that that land has to be grazed? Who determines who is going to put cattle on there for grazing? If this has not been done up till now, how is it that the government can indicate that it must be used for grazing when in fact there may not even be anyone in that area that wants to put cattle on there for grazing?

Or was the lessee a person who gave you an indication when he leased the land that it would be used for grazing? Is that the case? Or . . . like I'm wondering who determines if that land should be grazed?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — The land has been grazed in the past albeit the last couple of years the individual who was leasing the land has paid the taxes. And my understanding is somebody else saw that this individual had access to this Crown land, was not using it, and perhaps that individual wanted to put some cattle in there, and that's why it came to our attention.

So the Department of Agriculture determines if the grazing will occur, how many animals, and through the critical wildlife

habitat Act we ensure that the land will not be sold, broke, drained, or cleared. And in that way we are protecting the habitat.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Minister, does the provincial government get anything, any monetary compensation or any benefit from insisting that the land be grazed?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — The Department of Agriculture would collect grazing fees from the individual with cattle on the land.

**Ms. Julé:** — So, Mr. Minister, is this going to be a sort of new and ongoing practice? You're going to be looking at lands that have been preserved for wildlife habitat, and if there's a possibility that the government can gain some funds from having cattle grazed on our lands that are wildlife habitat, that you're going to make sure that that's happening, and it will be turned over to the purview of the Department of Agriculture and Food?

Because that seems to me that you're doing that specifically to have money coming into provincial coffers. And I'm not too sure whether or not that's going to be really good for the wildlife, the wildlife of our province.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, the lands in question are agriculture grazing lands. They total about 7 to 8 million acres in the province. And we've identified about 3.4 million as being very important to wildlife. And we do not want to kick the cattle off of all of these grazing lands. We believe that agriculture and wildlife can coexist. And our idea is to allow grazing, sustainable grazing, but we will not allow the land to be sold and we will not allow someone to go in and bulldoze the trees off, drain the wetlands, or break up the native prairie and seed alfalfa.

So in this way I think we've come up with a good balance. And on the other hand the wildlife development fund lands, which the hon. member may know, is purchased through hunting licence fees. Grazing is not permitted on these lands.

(1715)

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I just wanted to have a bit of a discussion with you on the forest . . . the recent announcement on forest management.

I know there's a number of people in this province who are quite thrilled with the whole announcement that was made because it will in fact produce some economic activity and private economic activity which is looked at favourably. And in one sense I agree with that; however on the other hand, Mr. Minister, there are a number of people that are concerned about the boreal forest in northeast Saskatchewan and whether or not that is going to be endangered by extra harvesting of the trees there.

From what I understand Weyerhaeuser has made a commitment to give up some of its cutting rights, or whatever it's called, and that they are going to be moving into more densely populated areas — areas more densely populated.

So can you tell me whether or no there is a danger to that boreal

forest? And are we going to have to look back in a few years and realize that in fact the whole ecosystem has been terribly disturbed?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — I certainly appreciate the comments on our forestry industry, Mr. Chairman. The forest is very important to us all, both economically and environmentally, and for ecotourism and many things. And for the past number of years we've been doing an in-depth inventory on our forests and we firmly believe that we can sustain an increased harvest.

Currently we harvest about 20,000 acres, or the size of Greenwater Provincial Park. This is one-tenth of one per cent of our forest base. Now if all of these announcements that were made earlier this week come to, or are fulfilled, we would be harvesting two-tenths of one per cent of our forest. Now on the same token one and a half per cent or 15 times more acres of forest burn on average each year than are harvested.

The other important thing that we are doing now which we did not do earlier, we are 100 per cent reforestation. Back 20, 30 years ago this did not occur, and we are still grappling with that. We are committed to reforesting areas but we believe that we have a sustainable forest industry and there will . . . we will have independent reviews and audits by outside experts from the scientific community to ensure that we are not going too far or we need to back off in some areas in cutting our forests. It is our full intention of a sustainable forest industry while accommodating ecotourism, northern residents, outfitting, snowmobiling, and other activities.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, at this time I'd like to bring up a situation that was brought to my attention about an incident that happened at Moose Mountain Park in southern Saskatchewan.

I understand that there are people from the United States that do come up into Saskatchewan to harvest antlers that have fallen off of deer. And these people came up as they have in many years past and were picking up antlers. Ended up being taken by conservation officers from what I understand. And I must say this is hearsay on my part because there has been nothing proven. But I want to bring it to your attention because it's a really important matter on how we treat our tourists and how we treat people coming from other countries into Saskatchewan.

Now as I've said, they came to harvest these antlers. I was told that there was conservation officers who had side arms, who put them in handcuffs, put them into a holding cell in one of the towns, and ended up not having the right basically to phone anyone or do anything in their defence. There was no RCMP officer at the scene. And in fact these people ended up being fined, I understand, \$20,000 or something.

I'd like to know a couple of things, Mr. Minister. Who would that kind of a fine go to and to what extent of authority do conservation officers have? As it turns out, these people went back to the States, and I understand that one of them is the publisher of quite a significant magazine in the States about hunting and so on. And I know that we wouldn't want to have bad relations between our US counterparts and ourselves.

So if you could answer those two questions, what extent of

authority do conservation officers have if they believe that someone is breaking the law?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, I am not familiar with the specific case the hon. member raises, but if she could give me more details later on we'd be glad to check into it. We do know that poaching and trafficking in wildlife parks is a very major problem here in Canada and the United States. Our officers have the full peace officer status. They can enforce all laws in Saskatchewan.

So I don't know about this particular case but in order to pick up shed antlers or purchase them from some kid that's found the antlers on his farm, we require that the individual have a permit so that we can track this. And it also is required . . . for the American to enter back into his country, they have to determine where these antlers came from.

So wildlife trafficking and poaching is a big problem and we deal with it very seriously. At the same time, we want to be dealing with people fairly. So if the hon. member has any further information, please send it to us later on.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, these people did have a permit from what I understand and they have indicated to me that they are going through a legal process if need be and they're consulting their lawyers about this. If in fact anything does come of this and they notify me, I will let you know, but I would assume that you would probably be notified before I would if they proceed with legal action.

Mr. Minister, just one more comment and question. Last year I brought up to you, I believe in estimates, the problem of herbicides present in every water supply in Western Canada. The national hydrological research centre in Saskatoon has determined that dugouts in Saskatchewan contain pesticides, sometimes as much as 1,000 times more detectable than European water supplies. And there is danger to farmers and custom applicators as far as pesticide residues that they assimilate while spraying.

We know that the effects of pesticides on rural residents is very bad. We don't know enough about it because funding for research in this area is quite tight.

Now, Mr. Minister, this is the responsibility of the provincial government and I'd like to know what forward-looking steps you are taking as a provincial government to concretely and effectively develop methods to address the problem?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member raises another very good and important area and that's the whole use of pesticides, herbicides in Saskatchewan. And because of our large agriculture base, there is a lot of chemicals used.

First of all these chemicals have to be licensed federally and they do go through stringent tests before they are licensed. And locally in Saskatchewan here, the Department of Health and Sask Water will do tests for any drinking water samples required. And I am told that by and large the amount of chemicals, if any, in drinking water is certainly minimal. However, none would be preferable. But there are so-called safe limits or acceptable levels in our drinking water but we

certainly want to stay well below that level if at all possible.

But it is an issue, and if contaminated water is found obviously the people that may use that water would be notified. So we are working with communities, farmers, to test water on a regular basis.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, and welcome to the minister and his people. I have a comment and then a question that I'd like to pose to you.

First of all, recently, as you're aware, Saskatchewan got a mark from the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) that was substantially lower. I would hope you don't take much consideration of that, and make decisions based on what the people of Saskatchewan want, not some multinational group that wants to tell us what to do.

The specific question that I have is relating to an item called the old Simpson timber mill site, and I'm sure your officials will probably know what that is. There's apparently a cleanup taking place of this old Simpson timber mill site.

And I guess the question that I have has two parts to it: is the government paying for that cleanup; and if they are, why was the cleanup not tendered?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, with a contaminated site, if there is any ability to identify the source of the polluter, it's a polluter pay.

So we do not have the specifics on this case but we would definitely get back to you on this particular Simpson timber site to let you know what, if anything, is being done on that site and who's paying for it.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, just a few short questions on surveillance in your department. I'm wondering, in your budget, is there a set amount of money that you have allotted for surveillance operations such as monitoring illegal activities and the likes?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Certainly the surveillance and enforcement of laws — game laws, pollution laws — is very important. And we do have a fixed amount that goes into this budget or that portion of the department every year. And in fact last year, we added an \$11,000 pot for aerial night lighting surveillance.

So yes, there is a regular amount of money for conservation officers' work. And if need be, we try to find a few more thousand dollars to prop it up a bit if we see a problem in an area.

**Mr. McLane:** — Do you try and have a set amount for a particular surveillance operation if it involves a small group, an individual, or something like that as opposed to a major operation where you're continually monitoring surveillance for night hunting? I guess what I'm asking, do you have a set amount that you would try and adhere to for a single surveillance operation?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — I believe the hon. member is leading towards the special investigation undercover work. We do do

some of the that — averages around 12 cases a year. And it's a matter of perhaps 10 to \$20,000 that we would spend on that. Again it would depend on the size of the undercover operation. But we are definitely involved in some of that activity.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you. Minister, at whose discretion is the amount of time and money allotted to any individual case come under? Is it of the man in the field or does it have to be sent down from the top? Or how is that determined?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — The assistant deputy minister of operations is the official person who determines whether money will be spent on an investigation in this province. And often these investigations are interprovincial-international smuggling-poaching rings, and RCMP are often involved as well. So it's a team effort but we would determine it in our head office here in Regina.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you. What kind of leeway would your members in the field have, say on a surveillance operation for the poaching of an illegal deer? What type of money would he be allowed to spend on surveillance in airplanes, helicopters, other officers, in following that?

And is there a particular — I'll ask you the second part of the question — is there a particular time frame that officers are allowed to pursue a particular surveillance operation, or does that . . . is that his discretion or does that have to come from the assistant deputy minister as well?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — It's sort of a case-by-case issue, Mr. Chairman. If it's one individual poaching a deer, simply the officer would deal with that.

However, if it's an organized ring which involves more than one or two people and is ongoing and there's trafficking involved and other jurisdictions, then that's when we take a more, I guess, broad look at the issue, how serious it is, and then we would direct as many resources as we could towards that. If it included aircraft work, we would certainly find that money to achieve that.

(1730)

**Mr. McLane:** — Minister, would the department allow a substantial amount of money, say, maybe a couple years time frame, a week or two of surveillance by an airplane, several officers involved, for a single person or two in the illegal hunting of a deer?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Again, it's the severity of the issue. If it's again one individual that's gone out and shot a deer or perhaps half a dozen deer and is trafficking them around town, the officers would simply do their job. However, if it involves other jurisdictions, the officers obviously would report to their . . . the people higher up the ladder in the department until it got to the top and then we would see what we'd need to do. And certainly the officers' ideas, input, and recommendations would be clearly used to determine how we best break this poaching ring or smuggling ring and the resources that would be required.

**Mr. McLane:** — Minister, is it legal under the legislation for your department or your members to monitor an FM radio

band?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, I don't have the specific answer on that — the radio. But our officers are full peace officers. Any resources available to, example, RCMP officers to enforce the law are available to our officers, and bearing in mind that both groups would have to abide by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So we can certainly check on the use of monitoring FM radio stations.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Minister. If you could give that to me in writing, I'd appreciate that.

I guess as you guessed, I'm alluding to a specific case where I'm coming to. And it seems to me that all of us want to preserve the wildlife in the province as best we can. And it seems to me one of the best ways to do that is to have our members out there and to be visible. I'm sure the RCMP who you've just mentioned take that attitude and prefer to be visible and prevent an actual crime before it takes place.

And I think that's important for our members in your department to understand that once the crime has been committed, and the officers knew it was going to be committed and were watching and waiting and monitoring and letting the wildlife be depleted and then moving in to get the charge, I think is causing your members some problems in the field in doing that.

As I said, once the crime is committed, the wildlife has had it, whatever it may be, whether it's fishing or whether it's birds or large, big game animals.

So I'm wonder, Mr. Minister, if you could address that issue just a wee bit for me and let me know what the plans in your department are to look into this, and if that is the policy of the department to be visible as opposed to trying to entrap someone into committing a crime.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Obviously the hon. member knows exactly what we want to do as well. Let's solve the problem, or try to nip the problem in the bud.

And we have a number of ways of doing that. For an example, one out of five people in Saskatchewan have now taken a hunter safety, education, and conservation course. We have our TIP (Turn in Poachers) line which works very well. People will phone in suspicious vehicles or anyone that they think may be doing stuff and they shouldn't be.

And we obviously do try to get to the crime as quick as we can. But at the same time, somebody has to break the law before we can act. We can monitor and keep tabs on things.

We agree with what you're saying. Rather than let something get away on us, we try to get at it as quickly as we can.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I'll take that a step farther I guess. Is there a way that we can ensure that this is happening to your members out there in way of education through your department, or in way of — and this is maybe

being a little simplistic — in the way of a memo saying that we'd much prefer the members to be visible driving down the road or driving around where the hunters and fishermen are as opposed to hiding behind a bin or hiding in a row of trees waiting for someone to exceed their limit or to do an illegal act.

Is there some reassurance that people of Saskatchewan might have from your department that that indeed is the role that the minister is handing down to his people in the field?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yes, getting our officers out, getting them visible, whether it's visiting in schools or walking through one of our park sites, and certainly out during the hunting season as well, we are happy to report that we have got more money for our conservation officers to drive more miles for an example this year.

So the member makes a good statement, observation. We need our officers out and about where people will see them, where they're accessible to the public, where would-be lawbreakers may think twice about committing a crime.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you. Is there something that the public will see that will give them that sense of security that that indeed is happening? That they're going to be trying to be the visible law enforcement officers as opposed to the people hiding behind something, a building, or you know, binocularing from three or four miles away. We have great technology these days.

And I have no sympathy for the people that are breaking the law. But I do think in many instances, as with our police force in the province, that being visible prevents many more crimes than are committed if the officers are there. If people know they're there, they may be wanting to be doing something that's wrong, but if they see that member out there and they know he's in the area, they're going to say, uh-uh, it's not worth it because I know they're around.

But if they're hiding behind a bush waiting to pounce on someone, it does two things. It leaves ill feelings for the members and it leaves ill feelings for the department who the members are a part of. And that's certainly something that I think we've seen an increase in over the past few years, and I think it's something that I want to see turned around and try and create an environment of where the people actually want to help the officers in maintaining the law.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, certainly we would much prefer the upfront, public approach as well. But obviously if the officer is waiting to see if somebody commits a crime, he has suspicions, or somebody's reported that this individual is breaking a law. And sometimes you have to wait and catch them in the act simply to have charges that will hold. So I appreciate what you're saying.

**Mr. McLane:** — Minister, I think back to the original line of questions that I was pursuing with these individual cases. There is an individual case where I think upwards of two years of surveillance went in. Air surveillance was used; monitoring of the FM crystal was used; a lot of money was used as well through a number of members pursuing this particular case.

And it was really quite a minor case and it involved really a single animal. And it had nothing to do with trapping, it had nothing to do with a ring, it had nothing to do with anything other than some people hunting.

I will be coming to you with that case and I hope that you're receptive to hear about it. And I think there was a considerable amount of money lost and spent in an area that didn't need to be when indeed we were losing truckloads of animals in the northeast to out-of-province hunters.

So I will be bringing that case to you on an individual basis and I hope that you and some of your officials, that we can sit down and discuss it and see that maybe money is spent in places where it probably should be.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, I will be glad to meet with the hon. member and get the details of this particular case.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in closing I'd like to just comment to the minister that in view of the fact that the member from Arm River has brought up the situations that he has, and I have also been notified of people that are in our province and outside of our province, really concerned with citizens being entrapped. I think that it's up to you as minister to look into this very serious allegation and make sure that that does not happen. Thank you.

**Mr. McLane:** — Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I forgot one or two questions that I wanted to ask. I hear the members saying short questions. If, you know, if you'd rather adjourn and come back we could do that, but I'm prepared to stay here and ask these questions.

Mr. Minister, it's on the big game hunting for this coming fall. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about what you expect to see in terms of seasons for the big game in the province, the antelope — whether we're seeing the numbers increase or are we going to have a season of white-tailed deer?

I believe that there's some changes in the particular area that I live in and across the province, and certainly to do with the moose and elk population in the north, west, and east.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Mr. Chairman, there's very little change in big game quotas for this coming year. Antelope season is still closed. Mule deer is about the same as last year. White-tailed deer has been reduced from two to one tag in some of the zones in the south-central area.

There are still some two deer zones. And moose and elk are about the same. There's pockets where the moose is down a bit and perhaps elk is up a bit, but by and large they're the same. And the new hunting guide is officially out now for anybody who would like to obtain one.

**Mr. McLane:** — Last question, Minister. In particular in zone 56, the moose populations for that zone.

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Zone 56, Mr. Chairman, is much the same as last year. We're offering 100 tags.

Subvote (ER01) agreed to.

Subvotes (ER02), (ER08), (ER15), (ER04), (ER09), (ER10), (ER05), (ER07), (ER03), (ER11), (ER14) agreed to.

Vote 26 agreed to.

(1745)

**Supplementary Estimates 1998-99**  
**General Revenue Fund**  
**Budgetary Expense**  
**Environment and Resource Management**  
**Vote 26**

Subvotes (ER01), (ER08), (ER04), (ER09), (ER10), (ER07), (ER11), (ER14) agreed to.

Vote 26 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.



