

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise again today in this House on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to present a petition. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks from Archerwill, McKague, Tisdale, Melfort, Frobisher.

And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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 in the province. And 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 this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Langenburg, Churchbridge, and Yorkton.

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I present petitions requesting that the unsafe and confusing entrance to the city of North Battleford be changed by moving the intersection of Highways 40 and 16.

Your petitioners this afternoon come from Richard, Meota, St. Walburg, Cochin, Debden, Cut Knife, Battleford, and North Battleford.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the petition presented at the last sitting has been reviewed and found to be in order. Pursuant to rule 12(7) the petition is hereby received.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature, I'd like to

introduce one of my constituents, Mr. Gary Carlson, who's in the west gallery.

Mr. Gary Carlson is a member of the citizen's advisory council on the Saskatchewan anniversaries, planning for the year 2005 — well 2000 and 2005 — and I'd like all members to welcome him here to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Prairie West Regional College Graduation

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday night I had the pleasure of attending a graduation in the community of Outlook. The graduates were from many surrounding communities and were graduating from a number of courses sponsored by the Prairie West Regional College. About 50 students graduated from such programs as pre-employment welding, office education, agriculture machinery technician, emergency medical technicians, truck driver training, and bridging to the workplace.

Some of these students, Mr. Speaker, will now have the necessary skills to move into the workplace. Others will use these skills to enhance the business they are already in. Either way, Mr. Speaker, these folks should be commended for furthering their education and I wish them every success in their endeavours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Violence Against Women Awareness Week

Ms. Stanger: — May 3 to 9 has been proclaimed Purple Ribbon Violence Against Women Awareness Week. This week was requested by the Saskatchewan Battered Women's Advocacy Network — SBWAN for short. It is fitting that this week ends on Mother's Day. The purple ribbon campaign commemorates women who are experiencing violence or have died at the hands of their partner, and it encourages the public to eliminate violence.

SBWAN is a provincial group that looks at addressing the needs of abused women and children, especially rural and northern victims of domestic violence. SBWAN will be holding a purple ribbon awards dinner in May in the year 2000. Those who have made an outstanding contribution to the issue of violence against women will be recognized.

Studies show that almost half the women in Canada feel unsafe while walking in their own neighbourhoods. Many are worried about being at home alone in the evenings. And women have every reason to worry for their safety. Almost everyday we hear of violence against women from friends or family, or in the news. The numbers are staggering and unacceptable. Violence in any form should not be tolerated. Keeping communities safe is a priority of this government. That is why we were the first in North America to proclaim The Victims of Domestic Violence Act.

Our work in government has changed to address issues more holistically. In 1997, Saskatchewan developed . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise on behalf of the official opposition in recognition of Violence Against Women Awareness Week. In light of recent events from Taber and Littleton it's becoming more evident that violence in our society is increasing. Over the past couple of weeks members in this House have spoken on the importance of children's safety in schools. This also true for women and children who do not feel safe in their own homes.

Mr. Speaker, too many Canadian homes have become places where women and children suffer physical abuse and emotional trauma. Domestic abuse is a leading cause of injury to women in our country, and it occurs among all racial, ethnic, religious, and economic groups. This violence too often extends beyond the home and into the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, violence in the home is prevalent, unforgivable, and often deadly. For too long domestic violence has been swept under the rug, treated as a private family matter that was nobody else's business.

Fortunately that is changing. More and more women are getting out of their abusive situation and going to shelters where they can receive treatment and education on how to cope with abuse. But there needs to be a review of the home studies that are utilized for custody and access proceedings.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage any man, woman, or child who is currently in an abusive situation to get help because no one should feel unsafe in their own home. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with my colleagues across the floor and in the official opposition to say that one of the good developments in society the past two years has been our sensitization to the issue of violence in the home.

However, that said, we have to all concede that the prevalence of violence in our families and in our communities is still all too frequent, and we have to all commit ourselves to its total eradication.

I think this is a good day for us to offer our congratulations and best wishes to those who dedicate themselves to the women's shelters and other programs in our community to end family violence.

Both genders and all age groups have to commit themselves to this issue. It has to be a zero-tolerance issue for us all. The ending of violence in our homes and in our communities has to be a major priority.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Forestry Development Program in Zenon Park

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, last Friday my constituency got some more good news about the forest. Following the big announcement last week about the expansion of our forest industry, I was happy to be present with the Economic Development minister when he announced an \$8 million investment that will create 300 jobs.

The announcement was of a partnership between Suntec Products of Zenon Park and James Smith Cree Nation in my constituency. The partnership will build a new sawmill in Zenon Park and a value-added manufacturing facility at James Smith.

Mr. Speaker, when the new forestry development program was announced, we stressed that local people and local companies would play an important role. We pledged that the First Nations people would be both planners and workers. This part of the strategy will give much needed employment for James Smith members and it will keep many more jobs in our local communities.

I congratulate Suntec Forest Products and the James Smith Cree Nation for the exciting partnership.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Dean Appointed at College of Law

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize and congratulate one of the many brilliant minds at the University of Saskatchewan.

Professor Beth Bilson, a long-time faculty member of the College of Law was recently appointed to a five-year term as dean. No other woman has ever accomplished this feat before at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) College of Law, Mr. Speaker.

But Beth Bilson is certainly qualified to take on this job. She's been with the faculty since 1979 and has a degree in Law, a Bachelor and Masters in History, and a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) from the Faculty of Laws at the University of London.

Upon becoming dean in July, Beth Bilson has a number of goals. She realizes that the legal profession is changing and she wants the college to change with it. For example, she'd like to see a broader range of programs for students since not all lawyers work in the traditional law firm any more. She also thinks that a work study program would benefit students.

Beth Bilson was up against tough competition from across the country, but in the end a 10-member search committee chose to recommend her to the U of S board of governors. Congratulations to Dr. Bilson on your appointment to this prestigious position, and we wish you much success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Goodsoil Highways Employees Redesign Vehicle

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have very good news from Goodsoil. Mr. Speaker, Edward Stoebich of Goodsoil used to be a seasonal employee with Saskatchewan Transportation and Highways. It wasn't that Mr. Stoebich didn't want to work in the winter, the problem was that he just couldn't. Ed lost his right hand and forearm in 1974 in a work-related accident. This loss meant that he could no longer manoeuvre all of the levers that he used in winter driving.

But Ed's co-workers came up with a plan so that he could work all year long. They encouraged employees at the Prince Albert Highways repair depot to redesign a vehicle for his use. Derald Sewchuk and his fellow mechanics set to work on the project and installed push buttons to do the same work on the levers. They mounted a control box in the cab to operate the box-lift, sander, snowplow, snowplow wing. There is now a foot clutch to put the vehicle in gear and it shifts automatically.

Ed is happy to be out on the road during winter even though he says it's harder work than during the rest of the year. I'd like to congratulate all of the people involved in this project in Goodsoil, and the Department of Highways staff. And I wish Ed the best of luck with his work in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nipawin Students Compete in Skills Canada

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the team of Ashley Price and Buck Scarf, two students from L.P. Miller Comprehensive School in Nipawin, who recently won the Provincial Ford CAA Student Auto Skills Competition.

This is the third straight year that automotive students under the guidance of instructor Tim Paetkau have brought home provincial honours to L.P. Miller school. This winning duo also marked the first time that a female automotive student, Ashley Price, had been among the competitors.

Ashley and her partner, Buck, will now represent Saskatchewan at the national competition in Toronto next month. In fact this team will try and repeat L.P. Miller's national championship of last year. The Skills Canada competition allows students to demonstrate skills in technologies and trades. Students are able to test skills against industry standards and peers. Winners and runners-up of the provincial competition progress to the national competition.

Mr. Speaker, I would again like to congratulate everyone involved at L.P. Miller on their show of dedication and excellence in winning their third straight provincial Skills Canada competition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

today my question is for the Minister responsible for the Sask Water Corporation. Mr. Minister, it has been reported in the media over the last two days that Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation's gone into receivership.

The Royal Bank froze their accounts, and KPMG was appointed as receiver. In plain English, Mr. Minister, that means the company is broke. In all likelihood it means bankruptcy. It also has the potential to cost taxpayers a lot of money thanks to the NDP (New Democratic Party).

Mr. Minister, only three months ago the NDP lent Lake Diefenbaker potato company 5.8 million of taxpayers' dollars. Now the company is broke.

Mr. Minister, is this \$6 million investment going to turn into another Channel Lake? Will the taxpayers of Saskatchewan have to ante up another \$6 million to pay for another disastrous NDP deal?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I want to be absolutely clear that the Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation is a privately held corporation. And it is our understanding to this point in time that discussions are currently still ongoing between the secured lenders and the Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Minister, that is not what seems to be being reported in the news today and in the information we get.

Mr. Minister, just last Tuesday the Saskatchewan Party asked you what status the NDP's investment in the Lake Diefenbaker Potato company. Do you remember what you said, Mr. Minister? You said everything was fine, a few cash flow problems, but otherwise everything was fine.

Wrong again, Mr. Minister. Now we find out that Lake Diefenbaker Potato company is broke, going under, and the NDP's \$6 million investment is in jeopardy.

Mr. Minister, how is the \$6 million gambled in the Lake Diefenbaker Potato company secured? Is it true that the Royal Bank and the federal Farm Credit Corporation have claim to the company's assets ahead of Saskatchewan taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I don't know if the member had the opportunity to listen to the news this afternoon but there were corrections the media made this afternoon. The reports this morning were not . . . the reports, Mr. Speaker, this morning were not entirely accurate and I'd again say to the member that discussions are still ongoing between the secured lenders and Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation which is a privately held corporation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Minister, it looks like you sold some billings to Lake Diefenbaker company by loaning them \$6 million — and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Minister — and if we understand right, no down payment, no security on

the loan, and now it looks to us like the company may be bankrupt.

If so, it looks to us like the Royal Bank gets its money, Farm Credit gets its money, but Sask Water may get nothing. So thanks to your NDP government's mismanagement, Saskatchewan taxpayers may be out \$6 million. And it would be just another bungled NDP business deal, Mr. Minister.

First, Mr. Minister, we had Guyana; then we had Channel Lake. Mr. Minister, is this another Guyana/Channel Lake deal where the taxpayers of Saskatchewan will lose \$6 million?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, again I'm going to remind the member this is a privately held corporation, but there are discussions taking place between Farm Credit Corporation, the Royal Bank, and we have one observer there on behalf of Sask Water as well. But the Farm Credit Corporation, the Royal Bank, and the owners in Lake Diefenbaker Corporation, to the best of our knowledge, are still involved in discussions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, then explain to us how this works because you tried the other day and we thought you had. How are we secured? How is this money secure? Is the Royal Bank ahead of us? Is Farm Credit ahead of the Government of Saskatchewan? Explain to us how our \$6 million is secure and that the taxpayers' dollars of Saskatchewan can be retrieved if a bankruptcy is in the works. Explain that, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Minister, Sask Water, and through the SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) division, has always believed and the people in the Lucky Lake-Riverhurst area believe that we should get involved in the potato industry. There was a large infrastructure developed there — some \$120 million of irrigation infrastructure. Roughly 80 million . . . roughly \$65 million, I should say, that was built by their government in the 1980s.

It seemed only logical that you become involved in some other crop other than I should say wheat or canola. Anyway, now that there's a crop out there we believe that we should work with the growers out in that area to try and find a resolution to this problem.

But again I say to the member that the Farm Credit Corporation and the Royal Bank are still involved in discussions to try and find, to work out to the best of our knowledge.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, I agree with you to a point. We hope that they are not bankrupt. These people have worked hard on this project and we hope it is not going under.

But, Mr. Minister, you still did not touch on the question I asked. If by possibility, they are going under, hypothetically going under, according to you, how are we secured? Is the

Royal Bank going to get their money before we do as the Government of Saskatchewan? Is the Farm Credit Corporation ahead of us on the list?

Are we last, Mr. Minister? It's a very easy question — just explain to us how the security works on the loan for \$6 million that you made to these people.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The buildings are secured by a mortgage and a debenture. And it still is premature to speculate as they're still . . . as the Royal Bank and Farm Credit Corporation are trying to work this out, it's premature to speculate on what the outcome might be.

But the province holds security by way of a mortgage and a debenture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, unless I do not understand at all what you're trying to answer here — what you did . . . what you're saying is we have no security. We have a debenture and a mortgage, and we're last on the list. And what that tells me if this bankruptcy actually is going to happen and is happening, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan are out very close to \$6 million.

And that's not a hard question to answer, Mr. Minister. All you have to explain to us is are we at risk of losing \$6 million.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat: this is extremely speculative. The discussions are ongoing between the Farm Credit Corporation, the Royal Bank, and the main stakeholders in the Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation, and to speculate on what the outcome of that might be at this early date is just not appropriate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, they say a week is a long time in politics. Last week you were telling us everything at SPUDCO was just fine. You said the NDP's \$6 million investment in Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation was safe. But just seven days later the company may be in bankruptcy and the taxpayers could be out \$6 million.

Now let me get this straight, Mr. Minister. The NDP built some potato storage facilities for \$6 million. Then you sell the property to Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation with very little or no security. Within a few months the company is broke and the NDP government and the taxpayers may be out \$6 million.

Can you explain that, Mr. Minister. Is it another Channel Lake? Is this another case of the NDP's uncanny ability to make bad business deals. How is it possible seven days ago the investment was sound, and today the company may be broke.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, we have always said that we're prepared to work with the growers in the Lake Diefenbaker area. And the member again . . . I mean this truly is the month of May because he keeps referring to may, may, may.

I repeat that the Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation is working with the Farm Credit Corporation, with the Royal Bank, and we have an observer there as well. But it's premature to speculate on what the outcome of this may be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I guess then a follow-up would be, is the government, are you, Sask Water, willing to put more money into this project to keep it from going under? Are you willing to sink more taxpayers' dollars in what may be a venture going down already?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, Sask Water is prepared to consider any reasonable option. We support the growers and the farmers out in that area. If somebody comes forth with a reasonable proposal, and I understand, as I've said earlier again, work is being done between Farm Credit and the Royal Bank to try and find some resolutions to this problem. So if there is a reasonable workout that can be arranged, we are certainly interested in considering that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Milgaard Settlement

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, we understand that a compensation settlement has been reached between your lawyer and David Milgaard's. Can you confirm if this is the case and if so, what are the terms of the compensation package?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All I can confirm is that discussions are ongoing as they have been for quite some time now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Well hopefully these discussions will go further than discussions in the past while have gone.

Mr. Minister, David Milgaard spent 23 years in prison for a crime he did not commit and no amount of money will ever fully compensate him for this injustice. And you owe him to find out what went wrong. You owe it to every Saskatchewan citizen to ensure this can't happen again.

When Donald Marshall's wrongful conviction was overturned in 1990, the Nova Scotia government held a royal commission into the matter. Now that you appear to be on the verge of a settlement with David Milgaard, will you hold a public inquiry into the wrongful conviction of David Milgaard? Will you commit to do that today, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the commitment around an inquiry was made in July, 1997, and that commitment still remains.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Treatment Centres for Gambling Addiction

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

question is for the minister responsible for Gaming. Madam Minister, your government VLTs (video lottery terminal) are taking hundred of millions of dollars out of families' pockets. Still you have no real plan for dealing with the serious problem of VLT addiction.

Madam Minister, I recently received a call from a women in my constituency, distraught and struggling with VLT addiction. This person recently lost her entire paycheque, about \$700, in just three hours.

She realizes what this addiction is doing to her and her family. She is crying for help. She wants to go to a gambling addiction treatment centre. She called your gambling help line; she tried calling both Health ministers' offices. She has been told that there's no gambling treatment centre in Saskatchewan and she can only go to an out-of-province centre through a referral from your Health department.

Madam Minister, why is your government making it so difficult for VLT gambling addicts to get help?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I thank the member opposite for the question. And I want the member to know it's totally incorrect that this province is doing absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, when we looked at developing a VLT program for Saskatchewan, we took this issue very seriously. There were many hours of debate and there was much presentation to us on the fact that many people were going outside this province to use the VLT machines. They were coming back with the same kind of addictions the member spoke of. So very quickly we realized that we had to develop a comprehensive approach to gaming addictions in this province.

With that in mind, there are many things the Health department is doing in conjunction with community people and supports . . . to offer supports to the young people and their knowledge and information on gaming and those people who have addictions.

Mr. Speaker, we have one of the . . . according to the recent CanWest report, one of the highest per capita commitments to gaming addictions treatments and programs anywhere in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Madam Minister, the subject is treatment centre. There is no specific treatment centre for gambling addicts in Saskatchewan. Addicts are often referred to district drug and alcohol treatment centres, and that's if they are available. And these treatment centres do not really provide the type of treatment needed to people addicted to VLTs.

Madam Minister, do you have a specific process for referring people to out-of-province treatment centres? How many referrals do you make every year? And wouldn't it be more effective to provide more of these services within Saskatchewan?

Madam Minister, the NDP created the problem of VLT addiction. Why aren't you doing more to solve the problem of

VLT addiction?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, gaming addiction is like many of the other addictions in that we have, through studies and other results across Canada, known that an addictive personality may have one or more addictions.

Unlike other addictions, Mr. Speaker, this one doesn't require removal from the drug or the alcohol or whatever pervades the person's system. This requires treatment within the community to be most effective.

Mr. Speaker, we have community-based programs and we have those developed through the community approach, close to where the people live so they can access those. We have found no results anywhere that show that taking someone away from the activity or away for inclusion in some type of a treatment facility is at all effective. That person needs to have the ongoing supports of community counselling and the availability of the services provided with their own health district. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Retention of Nurses

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mary Schmidt of Regina wants to know just how the Health minister is going to get more nurses. She says that in her unit one nurse is going to North Carolina and another is off to Alberta, and that's in addition to the two or three nurses who are due to retire this summer.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has ignored the voice of nurses. The nurses have said loud and clear that unless their workplace drastically improves, they are quitting or leaving.

Madam Minister, nurses have seen your offer and are voting with their feet. Don't you realize that nurses don't trust you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well thank you. Mr. Speaker, the member may not know this but I understand from reports from Manitoba that the Manitoba nurses' association recently signed a tentative agreement which gives their nurses a little over 13 per cent.

As the member may know, we have a memorandum of understanding signed between the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) that indicates that over the next three years nurses in this province will be entitled to a compensation package of about 13.7 per cent. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have made a significant commitment to implement pay equity with a minimum of 8.5 per cent of base payroll or \$20 million, and that begins in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, districts across the province have numerous recruitment and retention strategies. As people will know, in the Regina Health District they have recruited 106 nurses. And other, other health districts are actively involved in recruiting and they're bringing people in from various parts of Canada as

well as the US (United States).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that this issue is more than just about money. It's about many other things — working conditions to say the least, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, the list just keeps on growing. We recently talked to Karen Luepke, a coronary care nurse at the Pasqua Hospital. She's heading off to Australia. Mr. Speaker, Karen has been a nurse for three years and already the NDP health care reforms and the wellness model are driving her out of Saskatchewan.

She told us that she is working a lot of overtime and can't see it getting any better. She says there are so many nurses in their late 40's and 50's who will be quitting soon and doesn't see how the NDP will get the nurses we need.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister. Madam Minister, if you're not prepared to improve working conditions and give nurses what they need, why should they stay and work in a province where the NDP have little or no respect for the nursing profession?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring a stable and secure workplace for registered nurses and RPNs (registered practical nurses) as well as other health care providers.

Mr. Speaker, in the memorandum of understanding, there were three significant commitments. And in that commitment there was . . . or in that memorandum of understanding, there was a commitment to convert casual to full-time jobs; secondly, to go to a seniority system where minimum qualifications were met; and third, to have binding, independent assessment committees that would make recommendations that were binding on the employer when it came to nurses' workloads and nurses' work duties.

Mr. Speaker, I think that those are significant. They are significant in improving the workplace for registered nurses and RPNs in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, it's not just in Regina, nurses in Saskatoon are getting fed up as well. Maureen Ryan from Saskatoon has told us that if the new contract doesn't solve the problems, then she is off to Alberta. A nursing recruiter at Capital Health has told her that Alberta is trying to recruit between 700 and 1,000 nurses.

Maureen already had a job offer from Edmonton, and the way she sees it working as a nurse in Saskatchewan will only get worse.

Mr. Speaker, she tells us that many of her friends have already left the province, and unless the contract they get addresses their issues instead of those issues that the government has, even more will go.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister admit that nurses are leaving Saskatchewan for better working conditions elsewhere?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, all the member has to do is scan any newspaper in Canada, whether it's *The Edmonton Journal*, *The Edmonton Sun*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Calgary Sun*, or *The Winnipeg Sun* or the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Just go across the country and every single health authority in this country has a problem. And I would just say to the member that it doesn't matter where you go RNs (registered nurses) in this country, and RPNs in this country have issues in the workplace.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a threatened strike as they do in Alberta. We have a memorandum of understanding that deals with recruitment and retention, deals with binding independent assessment committees, deals with seniority, deals with the conversion of casual to full-time jobs.

And, Mr. Speaker, last year we made a commitment to increase the workforce by 195 RN positions and we did that, Mr. Speaker. We are just seeing that happen in other parts of the country. Mr. Speaker, we also increased the number of training spaces in our post-secondary institutions and other countries — or other provinces are just beginning to do that.

We think that we're a bit ahead of the game, we know we have a long ways to go, Mr. Speaker, but we think that we can dramatically improve working conditions and workplace issues and the pay for nurses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health would have us believe that because of her NDP's heavy-handed treatment of nurses, the nursing crisis is getting better. Even as the NDP was turning our nurses into criminals, the minister was crowing about the latest nursing recruits to Regina. Well if the minister wants to talk about numbers she could talk about how many nurses have retired or quit. Or how many nurses have switched to casual in the last few months to avoid mandated overtime. Or even how many nurses the NDP laid off since they came to power.

Madam Minister, the nurses we talked about today are just some of the nurses that are trying to escape your health reform.

Madam Minister, if you're doing such a great job why are so many nurses trying to leave the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remind my Liberal brother that if he were to read newspapers in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, or Nova Scotia where there are Liberal governments, they face the same questions, point number one.

Point number two, I want to remind my Liberal friend — if he's not my brother, my friend — that it was the federal Liberals that cut \$200 million out of transfers to the province for health care and post-secondary education.

Now this year they're started to return some of that money —

this year, some three years later. But we're not going to get back to the amount of money that was cut by his Liberal cousins in Ottawa.

I know it's very easy to stand up and be a critic, but you need to look at what your Liberal governments are doing elsewhere in this country, including Brian Tobin who sent nurses back to work, Mr. Speaker, and with not much of a contract.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. In 1995, Mr. Premier, you said the pain would be gone after health care reforms were completed during your first term. People trusted you then, but the pain is still there.

You said there are no more rural hospital closures, yet you are at it again, this time calling it conversions instead of closures even though the results are the same. Mr. Premier, you said you'd virtually hired 200 nurses last year. But hospital beds are being closed this year because of nursing shortages.

You retroactively cancelled GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) even though you signed the contract.

You said you would create 30,000 full-time jobs but fell far short when you ran out of patronage appointments.

In effect, Mr. Premier, your "trust me" ranks up there with "read my lips," as one of the big political whoppers of the last 10 years.

Mr. Premier, nurses have seen your past record. After all of this, why on earth should they ever trust you now?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to that member opposite that when it comes to standing up for health care, we know where the Liberals have been historically. Those of us who have been around for a while know that when medicare was being established it was the Liberal opposition of that day that fought tooth and nail against medicare.

But I want to talk to him about another Liberal flip-flop. You remember the days of Otto Lang and Jean-Luc Pepin when they were shutting down the rail lines in rural Saskatchewan — shutting down the rail lines by the year 2000. The members in the official opposition remember those days, the meetings. They announced the shutdown of the rail lines.

Then in their platform they have an article that says now that the Liberals federally have shut down the rail lines, we demand you keep all the elevators open. Well you think about that. Think about that for a moment, of a political party that's full of flip-flops. And I'll tell you the reason you'll stay as third party in Saskatchewan, is because of the inconsistency in your platform.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, order. All hon. members may want to save some comments till tomorrow. We don't have to cover it all today. Order.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask leave of the Assembly to move first reading of Bill No. 44, The Midwifery Act.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 44 — The Midwifery Act

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'd move that Bill 44, The Midwifery 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ward: — Convert for motion debatable, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Item no. 1, question 65 is converted to notice of motions for returns (debatable).

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Precedence of Business — Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by my colleague from Regina Centre:

That notwithstanding Rule 8(3), the order of precedence of business after the daily routine on Tuesday, May 4, 1999, shall be as follows: Written Questions; Motions for Returns (Not Debatable); Government Motions; and Government Orders.

Motion agreed to.

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.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to stand today and make a few comments on this Bill. It is one that I think there's many people around this province watching because though it looks like a small, rather insignificant Bill, there are some possibilities of changes in there that could bring a lot of contentious issues forward.

When we're talking . . . we look at the Bill, it talks about changing the word "supporter" to "taxpayer." And when we look at section 53 of the amendment, it is definitely talking

about the establishment of a school division.

I know the members opposite are aware that in my constituency we had a new school division established last year, and it was a separate school division with a Protestant faith.

And it is one that the people of my constituency were proud to have established, and they feel very strongly that it is their right to do so. And this Act definitely allows a separate school division to be established on a faith basis.

But what we are rather alarmed about is that part of the amendments also talk about a prescribed form for allowing a taxpayer to have a support given to a school division of his choice. And we know that through the municipality Acts, that all it takes is for a taxpayer to come into the municipality and ask for the declaration so that he can change his support after the school division has been established.

So we see that in many cases people will decide to send their children to a separate school because that is what they prefer; that is their choice in raising and educating their child.

There has been a number of people brought forward . . . their fear that what will happen is this prescribed form will actually mean that the taxpayer has to declare the religion that they are at that time, rather than the supporter of that school division.

So at this time we're looking at the ideas that people are bringing forward to us. We are getting many phone calls from different people saying, is the government trying to do through regulations what has not been intended in the Act? Is it something that has to be clarified? And we feel strongly that it's something that the government should be looking at.

I would like to speak to the Minister of Education, and we have an appointment to do so. And so before we have this opportunity to discuss it further, I ask that this motion be adjourned for this time.

I move that this debate be adjourned at this time.

Debate adjourned.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 41 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 41, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1999.

As members will know, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act establishes the level of provincial assistance to be allocated to both urban and rural municipalities. Accordingly these amendments give legal effect to decisions announced in the 1999-2000 budget. The Bill provides for a method of calculating the funds available this year to both the urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool.

The Bill provides for an increase this year to the total amount available for the urban revenue-sharing pool by \$7.5 million

and for rural revenue sharing by \$2 million, which builds on the \$3 million increase to the rural revenue-sharing pool last year. This represents an increase globally to urban and rural municipalities of 18 per cent over last year's amount.

The \$10 million increased funding, including \$500,000 for northern municipalities, will go toward a new municipal infrastructure program. When the northern share of the infrastructure program is added to the \$1 million for water and sewer infrastructure announced in the budget, the total amount of provincial funds available for northern water and sewer infrastructure is \$1.5 million this year.

The new infrastructure funding represents the province's portion of a provincial municipal infrastructure program to be cost shared on a 50/50 basis by the province and municipalities. The program will result in \$20 million of new municipal infrastructure spending annually, which will create an estimated 400 seasonal construction jobs.

My officials have been consulting with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) on program implementation. These discussions are nearing completion and grant application forms will be sent to all municipalities very shortly.

With respect to the unconditional revenue-sharing grants for urban municipalities, it has been decided to maintain the grants at their 1998 levels. In other words, each city, town, and village will receive the same grant amount as last year. This distribution strategy is supported by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association.

For rural municipalities, the normal distribution formula for unconditional equalization and road preservation and construction grants will be applied. This distribution strategy is supported by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. Amendments confirming the ability to specify funding distribution in regulations make up the remainder of this Bill.

In closing, the total revenue-sharing funding of \$60.1 million represents a significant level of financial support to Saskatchewan municipalities. I urge all members to support this Bill.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 41, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1999. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1999, having been introduced before, we've had an opportunity to make contact with various municipal associations to try to figure out exactly what financial implications there would be for municipalities.

The feedback thus far that my colleagues have received has been of a positive nature. And we have a number of questions that we want to pose regarding very specific sections of this

Act, Mr. Speaker, and that will most definitely be much more beneficial to the minister and to us if we do that in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, we know that Saskatchewan has generally a high taxation load, but nowhere is that more dramatic than in the case of property taxes where our property taxation is the highest in Canada.

And I don't think that this Act is going to do anything to alleviate the pressures we have for very high property taxes, and I'd like specifically to encourage the minister to look at one group that I think is key to some of the future prosperity of our province that I think is being ignored in this Act. And that is that there has been a move in the last 10 years for younger, retiring people to build permanent residences at our lakes.

Traditionally those people have tended to leave the province and of course take their money with them. Now they are building in the Qu'Appelle Valley, in Long Lake/Last Mountain Lake, and in Jackfish Lake and in the northern lake country.

This is an important economic engine for our province and we want to encourage these people to remain where they are.

However just before I came into the House, I received a call from one of these people, a younger retired citizen who has built a permanent residence at Jackfish Lake, and his taxes are now 2,500 a year. And for that 2,500 a year, he is required to put in his own septic tank system, he is required to haul his own water, he is now required to haul his garbage and to pay tipping fees to whatever municipality he hauls it to.

There is a volunteer fire department at a village 20 miles down the road, and when he called it once he was charged \$800 for the call. And there are police services that are half an hour, 45 minutes away. There is also a road which has not been much improved since the days of the buffalo and the Red River cart. In short, he's paying \$2,500 city taxes for which he receives little or no service.

Now I know the minister has told us many, many times that property taxes are not directly related to services. But it's . . .

An Hon. Member: — *Ad valorem*.

Mr. Hillson: — *Ad valorem* system, that's right, Madam Minister. But it seems to me that in some general sense, all taxes must bear a relationship to services. I mean why else do we pay taxes if not to finance the public services.

And that relationship between taxes and services has now been totally lost sight of for property taxpayers in those areas for which they receive virtually no services whatsoever. And of course they're also taxed something called a view tax. They are taxed for the fact that their homes overlook a lake and a valley. Something for which this minister cannot take credit.

So I think that if we want this province to grow and develop, one of the things we're going to have to do is to encourage people to remain here. Having the highest property taxes in Canada acts as a disincentive. We want these people to build at our lakes, we want them to retire in Saskatchewan rather than,

say, retire to Vancouver Island. The policies of this government are acting as a disincentive.

I think also that it is important that taxpayers feel they are being dealt with fairly, and when they pay \$2,500 in property taxes and receive no services, they do not feel that they are being treated fairly. And I think this is an issue that the government must seriously address, that they must bring taxation back to a level which reflects those municipal services they are paying.

And that in turn requires that this government take its fair share of responsibility for the education tax load. They can no longer push education costs down onto the municipalities because that, Mr. Speaker, is leading to a backlash against property taxes and even against education. So if we want to strengthen the education system in this province, the only way it can be done is for the provincial government to assume its proper share of responsibility.

These are the real issues in property taxation and I am afraid that, Mr. Speaker, these issues have not been addressed in this amendment. This is tinkering, this is band-aid. There are some very, very serious issues to do with property taxation but they are not being addressed in the legislation before us.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The New Generation Co-operatives Act. This new legislation supports innovation for our strong co-operative movement. It provides co-operatives with new tools and a new legal framework. It represents the first step in continued consultations with the sector on legislation for the new century.

As all members know, Saskatchewan co-operatives have played a key role in the development of the province. Co-operatives are an important part of our economy, controlling over \$9 billion in assets. They are some of our largest businesses, as well as some of the smallest.

The sector has grown to over 1,500 co-operatives; each is the creation and the reflection of the members who own and control it. They are involved in virtually every area of our economy from child care and community clinics to retail and financial services.

But perhaps nowhere, Mr. Speaker, do co-operatives play a more important role than in rural Saskatchewan where agricultural industry is so important. Roughly 400 co-operatives are based in this sector with the overwhelming majority of them operating in rural Saskatchewan. Virtually everywhere agriculture has developed, so too have co-operatives.

Mr. Speaker, today's changing market economies and globalization are forcing organizations, including co-operatives, to examine and if necessary change their structure and function. The internationalization of markets and increased competitions are forcing producers and co-operatives to rethink their roles.

Today many producers and co-operatives are looking for ways to integrate themselves into a global economy to create and capture greater returns for themselves and their members.

(1430)

The agricultural industry is continuously evolving and changing, bringing with it new challenges as well as opening up new opportunities. Agriculture today is very different from agriculture 20 years ago.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, co-operatives involved in agriculture are also changing. They are changing in order to face the new challenges being presented to them. But they are also changing in order to benefit from the new opportunities the agricultural environment is creating.

Mr. Speaker, our government is introducing this legislation to assist our producers and agricultural co-operatives to adapt to rapid changes taking place in that industry.

Simply put, this legislation represents another way Saskatchewan producers can co-operate under changing economic conditions to create businesses that benefit their communities. It is designed to provide the capacity for new co-operatives to emerge in agriculture-related activities including short-line railways. That is why this legislation is targeted to the agricultural community.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is rooted in Saskatchewan's existing co-operative legislation. In addition, the approach taken in this Bill is consistent with that found in the new federal and Manitoba co-operative Acts. It will not affect co-operatives that are incorporated under the existing Co-operatives Act unless they choose to continue or amalgamate under this legislation.

This legislation establishes the legal framework and safeguards that will help create an environment conducive to the development and operation of these new generation co-operatives. This legislation also will set out the governance rules pertaining to these co-operatives and enhance their ability to organize and function effectively. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it will ensure that these co-operatives observe the co-operative principles as stated by the international co-operative alliance.

The objectives of this legislation are to enhance access to non-member capital and non-par value shares, protect the rights and interests of members and investors, ensure appropriate accountability and reporting practices, allow for flexible and efficient business operations, and provide a clear range of alternatives regarding their optimal capital structure to best serve the needs of their members.

As just noted, a key new feature in this legislation centres on access to capital. In some instances, co-operatives may find themselves requiring capital that is beyond the capacity of their members to provide. This legislation will provide co-operatives with the ability to access non-member capital. This feature will enable co-operatives to rethink the range of their business, renew their current business, and take advantage of new opportunities.

As a result, the capital structure of these co-operatives can

consist of two types of shares: common shares and preferred shares. As well, a special class of preferred share issued only to members is highlighted in this legislation. Common shares will be issued solely to members whereas preferred shares may be issued to non-members. Extensive new provisions will provide the legal framework and safeguards to support non-member capital.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we have taken steps to ensure members maintain ultimate control of their co-operative. Under this legislation, only members can approve the issuance of preferred shares to non-members; only members can enact and change the by-laws; only members can allow directors on the board who are non-member shareholders. Non-member shareholders may have a maximum of 20 per cent representation on the board. Members and non-members will vote separately. And if non-members are given the right to vote to elect directors, then no one person can hold more than 10 per cent of the issued preferred shares.

Mr. Speaker, these features protect the democratic nature of co-operatives and ensure that the membership maintains control. At the same time, these features allow members the ability to access capital to meet their needs. The assumption that share transactions take place at par value is sometimes seen as limiting. By providing for non-par-value preferred shares, members may benefit through the increased value of their shares.

Another distinguishing feature of this legislation is a special class of preferred share that can be issued only to members. This special share, Mr. Speaker, is associated with the unique character of these co-operatives. These shares entitle or oblige the member to market a portion of their product to the co-operative.

Mr. Speaker, because this legislation allows for greater organizational and capitalization flexibility, there are also provisions that provide both members and non-members with voting rights and remedies. The effect of such provisions is to require that the directors of a new generation co-operative secure the support of members and shareholders for fundamental changes to the organization or its capital structure. Existing businesses will also be allowed to amalgamate, continue, or register under this legislation provided that they operate on a co-operative basis and engage in agricultural activities.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is designed to allow co-operatives to choose the tools they consider necessary to compete in a global agricultural marketplace. We will continue to work with the co-operative sector to review, update, and improve The Co-operatives Act, 1996, to address the needs of all Saskatchewan co-operatives. This legislation is only the first step in that important process. The development of new legislation will take place over the next few years in close consultation with the co-operative sector.

Mr. Speaker, I noted earlier that co-operatives have a long history in this province. They have helped shape the Saskatchewan society we enjoy, and they have allowed Saskatchewan residents to respond innovatively to many needs and opportunities. This government wants to ensure

co-operatives have a supportive and enabling environment that encourages their continued growth and development. With the guidance and participation of the co-operative community, our government presents this Bill today.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act respecting New Generation Co-operatives and making consequential amendments to other Acts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise and comment briefly on The New Generation Co-operatives Act.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly is true and we concur completely when the minister said that co-operatives have played a very significant role in the development of our province. Over the years we've seen co-operatives take a leadership role, initially it seemed in rural communities providing services to the people of their community in a large number of areas. From retail and fuel and financial services, all of the areas that were essential to the growth of many, many rural communities, we've seen the co-operatives be very instrumental in that development.

Mr. Speaker, as times changed in our province we have seen the co-operatives move to larger urban centres and to be very competitive and successful in that area. And indeed not all that many years ago we've seen the co-op take major leadership roles in development of heavy oil and a number of major projects in this province that have helped secure the economic future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, it's also true that the world is changing. And new alliances and strategic alliances and business partnerships have to be allowed in order for the co-operatives to move forward. And hence we have seen the move towards what have been called the new generation co-operatives.

And we support that very, very much, Mr. Speaker. And we believe that while this is a fairly massive bit of legislation that does a lot of work in creating a new framework for co-operatives to operate in, the feedback we've received to date has been very positive, and any of the concerns that have been raised to us are more of a technical nature and we feel very confident that we'll be able to address those issues in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole 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 am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The New Generation Co-operatives Consequential Amendment Act, 1999.

This legislation introduces amendments to bilingual legislation

that are a consequence of the introduction of The New Generation Co-operatives Act. These amendments, Mr. Speaker, will ensure that co-operatives incorporated, continued, or amalgamated under that Act are treated like any other co-operatives.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to make consequential amendments to The Co-operatives Act, 1996 and The Interpretation Act, 1995 resulting from the enactment of The New Generation Co-operatives Act.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 35 — The Land Information Services Facilitation Act

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me today Ron Hewitt, who is the assistant deputy minister of registry services division; as well as Darcy McGovern from legislative services.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I have a number of questions on this. I think the concept of putting the whole program together, and as it's called, it's a facilitation Act, is going to be welcome by most people in Saskatchewan who spend lots of time wondering why their land titles wasn't going through the system as they hoped. So I think the idea has full support, but we do have some questions about the project and how it's been developed and how it's travelling along.

So to start off with, what was the original budget for the land title's computer project, the original budget?

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. Originally the first computerization project for land titles was sometime back in the mid 80s. But I don't think you were asking about that particular budget because it never ever did get off the ground. But the most recent project is the one that we've been working at since 1995-96, and all of the amounts have been set out in the *Estimates* as we've gone along.

About a year and a half ago or so it was decided that this project should have a broader scope which would include more than the land titles. It would include the Saskatchewan geomatics and all their geographical information system as well as some of the base for some common services. And so the project as it related to those particular parts did expand the cost of the project.

Also when we were looking at those things, it became clear that the project would make more sense, when we're taking part of Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and tying it in with part of Saskatchewan Justice, that we would use a Crown corporation.

And so in light of those expenses, there was an increase in the

original estimate which it did only include land titles.

(1445)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and I guess you managed not to answer my question because I asked what the original budget was. So I'll give the first two figures and I'll ask for the third one.

This project started off, I believe, as some 20 million and then moved up to some 30 million. And I guess my next question is, and I hope I can get a dollar figure on this one, what is the current budget for this project?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay, I think the question that the member's asked relates to the cost that was there. And that cost was approximately 31 million when we put the various parts together.

That cost has now gone to 45 million. And that includes one-third of the cost, about 15 million, relates to the actual system, another third of the cost relates to the conversion of the paper into electronic form to be part of the system, and then the final third relates to the staffing costs and the actual building to house all of the documents and do the conversion work.

Mr. Heppner: — So it's gone from the 20 to the 30 that you mentioned to the 45. And can we expect that this now is going to be as high as the cost is going to go and that it's not going to go past \$45 million?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's clearly what the plan is, that these latest estimates are the ones that are the goal.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I hope this plan works out a little better than the first two did.

One of the explanations that's been put forward for this overrun is the cost of inflation. And I guess the question then comes, are we to understand that the government expected the rate of inflation to be lower than the 1 per cent that it has been?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What we do know from this particular project, and I think that the gist of this question, if I understand it correctly, relates to the fact that when you're dealing with these information technology projects, you have to incorporate in there some money that relates to the demand on the professionals and the kind of services that are there. And so practically, yes, there is a factor involved in the project that relates to the demand on many of the professionals involved. As we know, the demand in this whole field as it relates to the Y2K (Year 2000) issue has also been part of this because there are many people who are working on that project, which then increases the cost for all information technology services.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you for that answer. It didn't get anywhere near the question that I had which asked whether the cost of inflation had been used as a factor in this. But if you want to talk about the people that are involved in it, you were also caught off guard, as you already to some extent mentioned, by the high cost of computer experts needed to get this project going.

You're probably the only ones in the world that didn't know that computer consultants were a little bit pricey because they've been a pricey item for probably the last half-dozen or dozen years. I guess can we then assume the government didn't do a lot of research in it before plunging ahead with this project, or they should've known that computer experts were an expensive item.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What we know in dealing with this particular project is that the planning that is required involves many people and many parts of a project, so that what we're doing in this particular one does try to recognize the various demands. But also we're very keen on using Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan businesses as we do this work; that's also part of what we're working, and we're pleased that we're working with the SHL group who are working out of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I would just like to continue with some of the questioning that was put forward by my colleague.

Mr. Minister, we are told by people in the legal community who have a good knowledge of the problems over at land titles that this project is not going smoothly and that the cost overruns may be much higher than even you are admitting to, perhaps as high as up 50 million going back to when the project was first conceived. Will you confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This project has been worked through every year in estimates and there's been questions involved. The project has evolved and changed as the technology has changed and also as we've decided what other parts should be included in this. Practically our estimate now is that it will cost 45 million as I explained before. We don't anticipate any huge increase in that cost as we continue to work on this project.

I would say that part of our difficulty that we've had in dealing with the legal profession involves the old system which was a paper-based system, and as we've gone into a transition we've had to take some of those people to work on developing the new system.

What I would say is that we've very pleased how closely we have worked with lawyers, especially the law society and the Canadian Bar Association. And we're happy to have them on board as we work to develop a very good system for Saskatchewan citizens, which includes all of the lawyers who work with us.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, other provinces have had their land titles systems computerized and you have stated here today that some of the perceived costs were not accurate because of this, this, and that.

Did you ever consider simply using the technology that was already in place in other provinces instead of starting from scratch in Saskatchewan? That would have been less expensive, don't you think, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well the simple answer to that question is that we did look very carefully at all of the other provinces and their systems, but we made a decision not to use some of those

systems because they were based on technology and the systems that would not serve Saskatchewan people well. And basically what we were dealing with is the next generation of information technology to provide the information that people need.

And now with our tie-in to the geographical information system we will provide something that other provinces are actually coming to us and saying, what are you doing, and they're quite interested in looking at what we have and what we are developing. And it's our hope that eventually, especially some of the provinces on the Prairies might come and use what we're doing.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, how many consultants have you hired to work on this project and at what cost?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Right now we have about four people who are consultants to the project. We have our own staff from within Saskatchewan Justice who have also been working on the project. We're going into the next stage with the contract with EDS Systemhouse, but that hasn't started yet. But right now the answer is four outside consultants and then our internal staff that have been seconded to the project.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, we understand from some fairly reliable sources that your main consultant has recently left the project on stress leave. Is that true? And if that is so, has it set the project back and added to the huge cost overrun?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This rumour doesn't seem to have any basis in fact at all; we don't quite know what you're talking about.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, we've also heard that the head of SPMC's (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) mapping division has resigned in protest over this project. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No.

Ms. Julé: — Well, Mr. Minister, can you tell us who from the Department of Justice has been put in charge of this project? And what are their qualifications as far as their knowledge of computer systems?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm very pleased to say that the person from Justice who's in charge of this is Mr. Ron Hewitt, who's here with me. And his work in the whole registry services business for quite a number of years gives him a broad-based understanding.

Also what we're basing a lot of our work on is the very successful program that we developed in the Personal Property Registry services, which I'd have to say is the envy of every province in Canada — what a good system we have here. And Mr. Hewitt was the person in charge of developing that project.

He has many people who have broad computer skills working with him and we're quite proud of the team of people that we have working on this.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister what will be the budget of this new Crown corporation that you're setting up?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — In the next . . . or in the first full year of the corporation we anticipate the annual expenditures to be around \$16 million. So that's for next year and over the 10-year sort of plan, it looks like there'll be a couple of years where the expenditures will go up into the low twenties — 22 million — but over the longer term it's about 16, 17, 18 million.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, just one more question. How many employees of the Justice department and SPMC will be transferred to this Crown?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There'll be about 270 employees — 50 from Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, geomatics division, and about 220 from the Saskatchewan Justice land titles operation.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 35 inclusive agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I do that, I'd like to thank the officials who are here with me today, and also all of the officials in Saskatchewan Justice and the geomatics division of Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation for all of the hard work that they've done so far. I look forward to the continued hard work as we continue building this project.

And with that, I would move that we report this Bill without amendment.

Ms. Julé: — I'd just like to thank the minister also and his officials for answering our questions today. Thank you.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1500)

Bill No. 30 — The Cemeteries Act, 1999

The Chair: — Same minister but new officials so I would get him to introduce his officials please.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The officials that I have with me today are Linda Ens, who's here on my right, senior policy analyst in legislative services; and behind her is Andrea Seale, Crown counsel in legislative services; and over to my left is Mr. Al Dwyer, who's the registrar of the consumer protection branch.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry, I'm having trouble following my line of reasoning from some chirping from the sidelines. However, I am reminded . . . I am

reminded of former Premier Blakeney's famous comment that the cemeteries are full of people who have predicted the demise of the Liberal Party. So I think those are very wise comments for us all to keep in mind this afternoon.

I would like to ask the minister, though: I've had a number of calls on the issue of frankly old abandoned cemeteries where there has been no interment for many decades and those cemeteries are falling into disuse and now there aren't even really any families left. Is the department looking at the issue of what we do about maintaining those cemeteries which no . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. The hon. member has . . . Clause 1, which is a general discussion clause, has been agreed on and we're into clause 2, which is very specific. I would assume that the member would like to go back to clause 1 and a general discussion. Now I'm going to ask leave of the committee to allow that, but . . . Okay, I will ask . . . I will let the question go, then. Did you catch it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question because it is a very important question in Saskatchewan. If you'll note, section 35 of the Act deals with abandoned and neglected cemeteries. And the basic plan under this new legislation is to make it easier for municipalities and other concerned parties to identify some of these cemeteries. Some of them are abandoned. Then those will . . . we'll arrange for them to go to the care and control of the municipality or other organization that may want to do that. The neglected ones we will have some rules like present municipal government legislation which allows for cemeteries to be cleaned up and then the cost charged to the owner. So it's much like we do on the municipal tax base. And there's quite a number of rules around that particular issue, but the basic plan is to do it in a way that allows for the local community to have some say and some control on these cemeteries.

But that was clearly part of what the process was here. And if you have members or others who are concerned, I would suggest that we'll be continuing now to work on the regulations that more specifically deal with some of these issues; and if you could encourage these people who contact you to contact our department, then they can be participants in how we develop the rules in their area.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 93 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 31 — The Funeral and Cremation Services Act

Clause 1

Mr. Bjørnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome, Mr. Minister, to your officials this afternoon. Just really one question I need some explanation on, Mr. Minister, and it's to do with the viewing of the body prior to cremation. What was the need here? What were you trying to fulfil by changing this in the Act?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the main issue here is to be

absolutely certain in this age when more and more bodies are being cremated that there is a visual identification of the body. And so practically, I think the important part to note is that in the legislation it confirms that there should be clear visual identification but it doesn't say that it has to be done in a funeral home with all of the trappings of that. It can be done at other points in the process.

But as long as there's clear visual identification by somebody who actually knows the person or sometimes it could be done by a doctor or somebody else.

But the very important point is that bodies wouldn't be cremated before they've been identified properly.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess the concern that was brought to us in a number of cases about this provision that it was mandatory, and I think the people that were bringing this concern to us was that a member of the family may have to identify someone that has been badly mutilated in an accident of some kind or other and, if I understood you right, you said maybe possibly even a doctor as long as someone like that identified the body. And I think that would satisfy the concerns that have been brought to us if that was the case.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, it is possible for family members to nominate somebody else to do the job for them, and for exactly the reason that you've raised. And clearly, if there are some concerns around that area, well please let us know. But the way the legislation is set up, it's set up so that this can be delegated to somebody else to save the family the trauma of that kind an identification process.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's all the concerns that we have at this time. Mr. Minister, I just want to thank your officials this afternoon.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 121 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will make that motion in a minute. I would first like to make a special thank you to the members of the working group on funeral, cremation, and cemetery legislation because one of the reasons that we are able to come forward with very comprehensive legislation in this area is the hard work that all of these groups have done. And I think it would be appropriate to mention them here in the legislature and for the record.

First we have consumer groups: the Consumers' Association of Canada, Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism, Regina Council of Churches, the Memorial Society of Saskatchewan, Senior Power, and the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society. And we have industry people and organizations: Saskatchewan Funeral Services Association, Western Canada Cemeteries Association, Prepaid Funeral Services Council, Saskatchewan Crematoria Council, Dignified Transfer, The Loewen Group, Arbour Memorial Services Inc., Remco Memorials Ltd., Yorkton Memorial Gardens, and National Selected Morticians.

And then some specific parts of government who are very much

involved in part of this working group: Saskatchewan Association of Urban Municipalities, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Saskatchewan Health, Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing, the Last Post Fund, and last but not least the main coordinating crew which were the people from Saskatchewan Justice including those people here but some others also that have been working within the department.

And I would like to thank all of these people for their hard work as we have updated the industry legislation for funeral services, cremation, and also cemeteries. I think it's important to note that it was 1936 for some of the funeral services legislation and this is an update that will help that industry.

And with all of that I would like to move that we approve this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1515)

Bill No. 37 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 1999

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chair, before I introduce my official, I would if I could have leave to introduce two people in the Speaker's gallery.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Before we start, I would like to introduce Chris and Jeannie Brewer who are with the snowmobile association for the province and welcome them here for the working of the committee.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 37 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairperson, I would like to introduce the staff who are with us here today: Anna Lapierre from SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), the assistant VP (vice-president) of licensing and registrations, seated to my right; also on my left, Bob Herbison, who is a program specialist with SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), seated right to my left; seated immediately behind me is Elizabeth Flynn, SGI lawyer on the litigation issue; and behind me and to my right, Bruce Kush, with SGI, manager of vehicle registration.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your officials. A few questions regarding the Act and the very specific sections, Mr. Minister. But I guess before I begin with that, we've been talking with the snowmobile association — and no doubt your department has

been as well — for a number of years. And there's been different positions taken by the snowmobile association, by individuals who represent various snowmobile clubs. I know I've had the opportunity to talk with the snowmobile club in my area responsible for a particular portion of the trail, and they've had concerns for a number of years now, Mr. Minister.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, this seems to be a bit of a compromise, and probably maybe a much more beneficial one. But could you indicate how you arrive at this form of trail fees versus . . . I think the initial intent a couple years ago was to look at registration and look at trail fees that would be incorporated into registration.

We've moved away from that now to a voluntary permit fee. What kinds of things have taken place to move yourself and your department in that direction?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the issue the member raised is an important one. Because I think there has been a lot of debate on the issue of how do you fund trails, and it has been a moving target.

But I think what has happened here is the process has been very excellent, and I just want to thank the member opposite. Because I know members of your caucus and members of the Liberal caucus were involved as well in meeting with snowmobile associations. And I must say that this is a very, very well organized group throughout the province.

Sometimes we think of it particularly in the forest belt where you don't get the wind as much, where snowmobiles are used extensively for recreation. But really when you think about it, you really can go from one border to the other in the province on groomed trails.

But what was arrived at after a great deal of discussion and debate — and I know the member opposite was involved at various levels — was a system whereby those people using the trails would pay the fee.

And in fact as a result it's a true user-pay concept. Those who use the trails will pay the fee, and those who might not want to use their snowmobile in such an endeavour, don't have to pay the fee.

So when it came down to fairness as to how you would apply the fee for the trail grooming and marking, it was based on those people who actually go and use the trail and not those who choose to use their snowmobile in a different manner.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, as you've indicated, snowmobile owners and the snowmobiling industry is a very strong industry in this province. It contributes a great deal to the economic conditions of this province. And I know in my area we're very glad to see the organization of snowmobile clubs and their continued livelihood.

Mr. Minister, in your comments when you introduced this Bill, you indicated that when it was a voluntary program, approximately 6,000 voluntary fees of \$25 were made over the last year or two. And now you've indicated I think in your remarks that the fee is going to be \$45.

Two questions, Mr. Minister. Who set the fee from 25 from 45? And do you still expect the same number of voluntary contributors, now that we've seen such a tremendous jump from 25 to 45?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member is correct. I think it's a good . . . a good question to put is on a voluntary basis, how many people do you think will actually be involved?

But I think if my recollection in talking to the association when it was planned as a mandatory program, I think they had set a goal of about 4,500 people that they expected. Then when it was changed to a voluntary program, actually they ended up with more people coming on board and that's where the 6,000 came from last year at \$25.

What I want to say and it's interesting that the \$45 fee is not in regulation or in legislation. This is something that's arrived at by the snowmobile association. And actually on their numbers they're expecting more than 6,000 volunteer payments to be made next year.

I don't want to go out on a limb and say what kind of a percentage increase, but I think if you were to talk to the association, they're expecting something in excess of 6,000 voluntary permits to be sold at \$45.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. For clarification, Mr. Minister, I know your department and the snowmobile association is interested in safe, quality trails and so is everyone in Saskatchewan. And I guess how we would arrive at that would be to see more people on those trails paying a permit. And I wonder if \$45 is not going to create the opposite.

And the second part of my question, as I look in section 20.4, it says that the trail manager is responsible for the setting of the trail permit fee. Okay. So I understand this Bill, you have created the position called the trail manager for the province of Saskatchewan, and that person will be responsible for all trails. And it says that he will . . . or he or she will set the trail fee.

Mr. Minister, is that true? And secondly, do you expect then to see different permit fees in different parts of the province because this trail manager may decide that an area that is not being used as much may need a higher trail fee or a lower trail fee, whatever the case may be?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I think what might be a little confusing to the member opposite, and I don't say that in a disparaging way, because it's confusing a little bit to myself, but there is only one trail manager for the province. It's not that there'll be a trail manager in each zone or region or each club. And the trail manager, while the description, the job description says that their description is establishing trail permit fees. Obviously this will be done and enforced by the trail manager, but it will be done as a resolution, as I understand it, of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association. So it will be a consistent fee throughout the province on all of the trails and arrived at only after a great deal of discussion and debate.

And the \$45 while, I mean, I agree with the associations that they would probably sell in excess of 6,000 next year, I think that only time will tell. But my view is that \$45 to travel on a

well-upgraded and improved trail when you're running a 5 or 6 or up to \$10,000 machine, really is not very much money when you consider what you're putting into the quality of machines that we have or the clothing that we use on the trail. And I think the signage as well is hugely important. That has to be paid for as well.

So when you think of all the other things that go into snowmobiling, \$45 for your permit that will go towards paying for the condition of the trail and signage and the safety aspect is probably not onerous when you consider that, in some cases, you will have more than one person paying the fee in terms of families.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if we see a fund of somewhere between 275,000 and \$300,000, if your estimates are correct, snowmobiling association estimates are correct, that's a significant amount of money that is going to be in this fund.

Couple of questions. Will the trail manager assign portions of that fund to the local snowmobile clubs for the actual operation of a section of trail that they're responsible, or will this be done from a centralized maintenance team where the trail manager's responsible for all areas of the province? That's question no. 1.

And secondly, you did mention that the fund is not only to deal with trail maintenance but it is also to deal with safety. Has your department . . . or has there been a recommendation from the snowmobile association regarding the percentage of the fund that should be spent on the trails and the percentage of the fund that should be spent on the safety program.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I'll ask the second . . . answer the second half first; but as it relates to the percentage on trail upgrading and grooming versus signage, that's totally at the discretion of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association.

And I just want to say, as it would relate as to how the money will be allocated, it will depend on project development and what kind of projects each of the various regions or clubs are designing. So this will be something that will be negotiated.

For example, if you had a very aggressive development of trails in your area versus my area down in the southwest part of the province. You would then probably see a bigger expenditure going to your area versus an area where there's no development of trails.

So it would depend as well on the aggressivity of the development program in a given area as opposed to a per capita basis. So this will be worked out through the snowmobile association. And again I say this is very much self-monitored by the association and we try to keep as little red tape and government regulation or government control in the program as possible which I think reflects the view of this government trying to remove the amount of regulation and red tape for individuals.

And I mean I say this sincerely. This is only going to work if the snowmobile owners and associations are in control of it. I personally believe that this is not a kind of program that would be well run out of an office in Regina.

(1530)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. While I agree with you that the snowmobiling association is probably the best group that can give you advice and can enforce this program, I guess a couple of questions that come from your response just now is, who will administer the program? I notice you talk about volunteers not actually acting as police officers but volunteers at the local level reporting people who do not have the permit.

Will there be a fine system in place or will it be a system of I guess an honour system that says please pay, please pay, and at the end of the snowmobiling season if the person hasn't, will that just be forgotten about or will there be an enforcement mechanism? Will there be a fine system that will be put in place to deal with this?

The other part, Mr. Minister, is very specific to an individual snowmobile club and I'll use the Preeceville Snowmobile Club as the example. If for some reason they're looking to ensure that they can operate their groomer and operate all the things necessary for that area, will they have to apply to the trail manager of the province to be able to say we require X number of dollars to maintain the portion of our trail or will they be applying to your department or will they be applying to the snowmobile association who in turn puts it through the trail manager? How will an individual snowmobile club make application and receive funding?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The process is as follows. Now the association will have sold 6,000 or 8,000 or 10,000 memberships or fees or collected fees, they now have this pool of money. They have established a criteria whereby your local association now makes an application or a request to the provincial body and then the funds would be delivered or given out. And it would be based on a formula of number of kilometres of trail, kind of upgrades, and the amount of signage that would be done in any given area.

As it relates to the policing aspect, you're right. In the Act the power is not given to the association to levy fines or penalties. But I know, as well, living in a rural area and watching how enforcement of some of these things goes on, that if you're out there riding on the trail and you don't have a permit, there's moral persuasion that is very, very effective in dealing with your neighbours and friends. And I think in the vast majority of cases, it will be an honour system.

In those rare events — and I think it will be rare — where you have continuous use by someone who doesn't have a permit, what can and, I think in those rare occasions, will happen is the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) can be notified by the association and under the summary offences Act charges could be laid for use of a trail where you haven't got authority to ride.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, do I understand the Bill correctly to say that unless it is my own private land, that any snowmobiles on these registered trails or these trails that will be created in the province must be snowmobiles that are registered? And if that's true, then the permit is . . . well I guess in terms of \$45 versus the registration of a snowmobile is relatively inexpensive in comparison.

Will there be a problem, or does the snowmobile association in this province see that there might be a problem with snowmobiles who will obtain a permit but not have a registered snowmobile? Or is that of any concern to the department?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well if the member remembers the issue of liability and collision, the two parts of the insurance, what will be mandatory is the liability side, not the collision side. And of course this is for the safety of the operator but also others who may be using the trail.

The issue of liability is an important one because we feel when it comes to the effect on family or individuals, it was important to keep that in place, and therefore we have maintained the need and the position that liability is mandatory if you're using the trails.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the second part though is that will . . . do you expect that people will be travelling on the trails with the permit only and not having a registered snowmobile — that is, one that is carrying liability only.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — This would fall into the same category as somebody riding without a permit — not the same section but another section. They would be monitored, they would be told that they needed to be registered. And if they failed to do that, the individuals from the association would not have the power to fine but they would have the power and authority to recommend to the RCMP, and the RCMP would have the power to enforce that portion of the Act.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, would conservation officers have that same power as the RCMP? Will that be able to be reported to the conservation officers?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — There would be a slight discrepancy here in that if they have peace officer status, they would have the authority to enforce the law. So it's not that everyone would be able to, but if they have peace officer status then they would have the authority to enforce the Act.

Mr. Krawetz: — A couple of final questions, Mr. Minister. Will SGI or any other government agency or department obtain any revenue from any of the collection of the fees or any of the revenues that you see coming through in the fund?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — No, there's no impact on government in terms of a revenue source; it would all go to the snowmobile association.

Mr. Krawetz: — Good, thank you very much. Mr. Minister, obviously the fund is to ensure that we continue to improve our trails, and continue to ensure that snowmobilers have a place to travel safely. The goal of course is to have, I think, a cross province-wide trail system in place very quickly and to ensure that we attract the kinds of tourists from other states, from other provinces, that will obviously spend their money here.

Do you think, Mr. Minister, that the introduction of this trail fund will bring about a completed system in this province? And I'm asking a very hypothetical question, Mr. Minister. I'm

asking you to look into the crystal ball. In your consultations with the snowmobile association, how many years do you think will it take before we have in place across Saskatchewan, a trail system that will be the envy of all of the other provinces and states?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The issue of snowmobile trails is a very, very important one as it relates to tourism. What we do know is that in some areas in the United States — for example in the Yellowstone area which had been an area for snowmobile use, there have been many, many restrictions put on individuals who use that area. And they are looking for areas in Canada to run their machines, and Saskatchewan is seen as one of the best.

I'm not going to name particular parts of the province, but you'll realize this is why the trails are being developed quickly because many of the communities see this as a lifeline for some small communities, restaurants, motels.

It really is a booming industry, and one that is, I think, little understood by those people who aren't involved in the actual industry itself.

And that's why this is so important for you and I to communicate to the public. Because many areas of the United States have simply taken the option of moving away from snowmobiles which I think will not benefit their economy.

So when these people come to your part of the world or to the areas in the province where we have some excellent, excellent snowmobiling, they will be charged the same fee as residents at the present time. But because it's such a new system, there may be reciprocity agreements. And that's probably not the right expression, but whereby if one jurisdiction, for example in Manitoba, had a higher rate than ours, we may charge them the same rate as their province over time.

But at the present time, the flat fee of \$45 would apply to residents and non-residents, and as I understand it, that would apply to non-Canadians as well as Canadians from other parts of Canada.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one area that I didn't touch on a few minutes ago and I should have, is I've had a couple of comments from individuals regarding the section that deals with the trail manager, and I want you to clarify.

As I understand the Bill, the minister will appoint the trail manager. In other words, then he is an employee of your department and not the snowmobile association, and therefore is I guess not going to be paid by the snowmobile association. Will the payment of this individual's salary for the year, will that be coming out of other provincial revenue or will it be coming out of the trail fund?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It's my understanding that the trail manager will be able to access expenses from the fund — not from government, but from the fund. But in terms of an actual salary associated with this, this is not a salaried position. So this is a position that will be . . . a person that will be appointed to do the operations of trail manager. But it's not seen to be a full-time job, this aspect of it. And while expenses will be paid

from the fund, there is no salary associated with it.

Mr. Krawetz: — Are you then expecting this person to be a volunteer and receive no remuneration? Or are you suggesting an honorarium as being part of an expense even though it's part-time. I find it strange that you're going to have someone in charge of a \$300,000 fund, and that person is not actually going to be receiving any remuneration?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — There is the provision to be able to pay a salary if that were to be needed and the individual did not have another salary. But it's the kind of situation where we expect that this is not a full-time job or that there will be a full salary scale needed. And in the initial phase we believe that probably paying expenses is what it will take to get the job done.

(1545)

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, I need a couple of other questions there. You're going to have a person who is going to be in charge of seeking applications from snowmobile clubs in the province. How is that person going to determine whether or not they're going to allocate the \$25,000 requested by the Preeceville Snowmobile Club? And I just throw that out as an example.

I mean I think snowmobiling season starts in this province, you know, on November 1 or earlier. We're looking at least five months, maybe six months. That's not full-time, yes, but I think during that period of five months, it's going to be more than full-time if this individual is indeed trying to ensure that we have correct signage on all trails, that he has communication with all the volunteers who have volunteered to act as administrators of this program.

I mean I think that this is going to be more than a full-time position, Mr. Minister. And I guess when you're saying that he's entitled . . . he or she is entitled to expenses, if that person claims expenses of \$5,000 for an honorarium for the month, is that acceptable to you and will that be paid for the period of five or six months that this person is on the job?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The issue here is that the decision-making process is that the snowmobile association has an executive director. That's a paid position and that is a full-time job. They also have a board of directors and advisers who are paid their expenses for going to meetings. And many of these people work extremely hard in terms of work they do with the association.

And so the new person that we're talking about, the trail manager, when that individual is appointed, will be seen to be in the same ranking, I would expect, as a board member who gets their expenses. But there will be a lot of volunteers.

Or on the other hand, it may be somebody who has an income and doesn't request an income supplement. But on the other hand, if it were an individual who had no other source of income, it's certainly within the purview of the fund to be allowed to pay some salary for a period of time during the busiest part of the year. So this will be . . . because it's such a new organization and new operation, much of this will have to

be worked out.

But I know in the past we have had organizations, for example, the Provincial Action Committee on the Economy, which I established when I was first appointed Minister of Economic Development in 1991, which was a very, very high level group of people who at our first meeting when we were talking about per diems and as a board of directors that passed a motion saying they didn't want any.

And believe it or not in this day and age, as strange as it may seem, sometimes people just do things because they think it's the right thing to do.

And at this given point in time, while there is the ability to pay remuneration to people for the work done at this point in time, only expenses are talked about.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I did not want to in any way downplay the number of volunteers and the number of people that work very hard in this province and including the members of the snowmobile association. We know that there's a tremendous number of volunteer hours that are put in. And I'm sure there are many people on boards of directors who meet occasionally.

The distinction that I'm trying to make is: I think that this position is one that is going to be full-time for the period of at least five months, and that we shouldn't cloud this over by suggesting that somebody is going to volunteer for the entire five months of the year and do all these kinds of things and not be looking at some sort of cost.

I guess, Mr. Minister, my final question will be connected to that. It's indicated that you're appointing the trail manager. Will you be relying on the snowmobile association for recommendations, for advice on who that person might be who understands the snowmobiling association, who has a good relationship with all parts of the province, and who can do the job? Will you be relying on the snowmobile association for advice in that appointment?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I just want to make it clear because I think in setting this up and because we haven't appointed how this will exactly work, I think you might conceive that this will not be an individual but the term, trail manager, could actually be an association.

And so without saying who that association might be . . . And I'm just . . . I'm not being coy at all, but I'm just saying that the thought of the snowmobile association being the manager in legal terms is a very open possibility.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I think that answers all of the questions that I had on behalf of individuals in this province who have communicated with the official opposition. I want to thank you and your officials for providing us with those answers.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask some questions on a matter which is, I think, related to the scheme of the Act, but perhaps not directly addressed. And that is that without an effective registration system, importation of

snowmobiles from out of the province in a tax-free jurisdictions is a serious problem. Recently the major snowmobile dealer in North Battleford had to close and relocate to Lloydminster. And it was simply because of the sales tax issue.

Now I want to know what is the government doing to track the purchase of snowmobiles in Alberta coming into the province? I am told that at one time we were even paying insurance claims on snowmobiles for which no sales tax had ever been paid. How are we going to track the importation of snowmobiles? And how are these registration provisions going to help ensure that snowmobiles in the province have paid the provincial sales tax? My concern is here not so much for the revenue of the government as for the fact that it is very, very difficult for dealers in the western edge of the province to compete at all.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think the issue here is an important one. And to the member opposite, obviously this is an ongoing problem with goods and services, or goods in particular where the sales tax applies, being brought into the province, and the fee . . . or the sales tax not being paid.

But first of all, I just want to say, and I don't mean this in any political way, but the sales tax going from 9 to 6 per cent certainly gives less incentive for people to purchase out of province. And when compared to Manitoba at 7 per cent on that side of the province, there's no incentive. So getting the sales tax down is a huge important part of that, and we're moving I think as a community in the right direction.

Having said that, when we talk about the registration process, all of the machines that are registered — the 6,000 — will have the sales tax paid. So the argument from the snowmobile association is the higher they can get the permit level, meaning the machine running on the trails has to be registered . . . The registered machines aren't the problem — they will have to have the sales tax paid. So that's presently at 6,000; if we can move that to 8 or 9 or 10,000, what we know is those machines will have the taxes paid.

Having said that, I think it's very, very important that the association, along with SGI and the Department of Finance, work very, very closely together to see that our small business, the people that you talk about who sell machines, are not put at a disadvantage with their counterparts — and here I'm talking particularly in Alberta — to not be put at a disadvantage for the payment of the sales tax.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you. Can the minister tell me if there is any attempt, however, to track the implications of snowmobiles into this province from Alberta. And as you've correctly said, that's now really the only border at which this is an issue. Is there any attempt to find out the extent of the problem, how many snowmobiles are coming in from Alberta, and to inform those people who are bringing in snowmobiles that the sales tax is owed on those purchases?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — On the issue of sales tax collection, these are probably questions better asked to the Minister of Finance but I mean I can take a shot at it. I was just told that at the present time 20,000 snowmobiles are registered in the province. So when I say 6,000 bought permit fees, for sure those are a block that we know about, but in total we have

20,000 machines registered and are tax paid.

Now again, in the Department of Finance, we have ways and means of checking goods that are brought into the province to make sure sales tax are paid. And while this is a difficult problem, snowmobiles and Sea-Doos are easier and more visible to enforce sales tax than other goods that we may deal with.

But this is an issue that we work on on a constant basis and Finance has the ability to be pretty vigilant — especially on a commodity like a snowmobile — to be able to enforce the sales tax provision.

Mr. Hillson: — Seeing as you have an official from SGI here, may I ask if it is standard procedure before any insurance claim is paid on snowmobiles to check to see if in fact the sales tax has been paid on that machine?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It's almost the reverse onus. In order to be registered, the sales tax would have had to have been paid. So in fact if there is any claim, it could only be on a machine that was registered and that sales tax had been paid.

Mr. Hillson: — Are you saying that you cannot insure a snowmobile which is not registered, because of course not all are required to be licensed?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes. This is an issue again that comes up in the general insurance side as it would relate to someone insuring a washer and dryer or any commodity. At the present time insurance companies do not have a system of reporting whether or not sales tax has been paid, although it's an interesting argument that you put forward.

I'm not sure whether or not we would want to go in and start that process of another level of investigation or checking out the residents of Saskatchewan. But it may be something that warrants a look at. And I'm not quite sure whether you're urging that to happen or whether you're saying it's an option that you may look at yourself if you were to be in a position of power in the province.

But it's an interesting concept, but one that we haven't . . . certainly haven't agreed to move on at this point in time.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to say on behalf of my constituents that we do indeed appreciate the sales tax coming down to 6 per cent level and that does make it easier for businesses in the western part of the province.

However I say the issue of competition as opposed to taxes, the one that actually concerns me the most, and the reality is that it is very difficult to be a snowmobile dealer in the western part of Saskatchewan today. And I would ask the government to ask their officials to be more creative.

Maybe the suggestions I've raised are not the best ones, but I ask the government to be more creative in coming up with ways that will preserve business in western Saskatchewan when they are up against this unfair competition of the provincial sales tax. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I couldn't agree with the member more. I mean it's sort of . . . having the second lowest sales tax in Canada which we have in Saskatchewan at 6 per cent, it still leaves a problem for those people — and I come from the southwest corner of the province on the Alberta border — there still is an issue enforcing the sales tax in that area. And it will be for the next while because when you have a province like Alberta with 90 per cent of Canada's oil, with advantages that other provinces don't have, and I say this quite sincerely — it doesn't matter whether you're a Conservative, Liberal, or NDP — when you stack up against the province that has 90 per cent of the Canada's oil, life is just a little bit easier.

It's sort of like being left with 10 sections of land by your father and then a young individual competing. I mean it's not easy.

But having said that, bringing the sales tax down from 9 to 6 per cent has helped. But I couldn't agree more that being vigilant to make sure that our small businesses are protected in those areas where they're vulnerable because of that unlevel playing field is extremely important.

And I can make the commitment to the member opposite that your idea — and I say this sincerely to you — we'll check out ways and means and maybe in a private time we could even have an arrangement where you might want to talk to people in SGI to explore this option further.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 14 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1600)

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

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

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me today Stuart Kramer, deputy minister of SERM; and behind me, directly behind me, Steve Arnold, environmental engineer from the environmental protection branch; and next to him Victor Chang, acting director of environmental protection.

Clause 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome once again, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials once again. Mr. Minister, I was quite amazed how quickly this Act came into play after some discussion in the House not too long ago about the bootlegging of cans from Manitoba into Saskatchewan. However, I'm very happy to see that you did put an amendment on an existing Act to take care of this as much as possible.

Mr. Minister, I notice in the amendment part that there's an indication that there will be some enforcement officers in place that will be guarding against the bootlegging of cans from Manitoba into Saskatchewan. Are there going to be extra enforcement officers put in place or are you intending to see that existing people at the depots are in fact those enforcement

officers?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the hon. member's questions, our conservation officers will be enforcing this legislation. RCMP, municipal police, and finance officers that are patrolling for tobacco smuggling and such like will also have the ability to enforce this legislation.

Ms. Julé: — Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. That is indeed very interesting. You named about four different groups of people, I think — four or five — that will have the authority to enforce this legislation. And so I'm wondering how they have been given direction to carry out their duty to guard against the bootlegging of cans? Has there been specific guidelines given to them? Have there been specific areas for any of them to guard against the bootlegging? How will this take place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, our conservation officers will lead on this — the enforcement. And basically the containers coming in from out of province, half-ton trucks piled up with cans and whatnot, is fairly obvious. Up until now we have not had the ability to stop the containers from coming in. SARCAN has been able to put on \$50-a-week limits on individuals bringing containers in, and bootleggers would simply get more and more people involved in this ring.

So it'll be a public education process with a \$25,000 maximum fine. Hopefully this will deter some of the bootleggers, and at the same time families coming back from holidays with a couple dozen empty cans in their trunk don't need to worry about being harassed.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in as far as enforcing this, if conservation officers, for instance, notice a truck coming in with numbers of cans and they may be coming from any individual area of Manitoba . . . Say, for instance, if there's a follow-up truck with more cans coming from the same area, how are the conservation officers going to be determining what kind of, I guess, travel into this province with these trucks carrying these cans is taking place at any specific time? Or how are they going to determine their observation to make sure that, for instance, the truck doesn't come in today at 10 o'clock in the morning and then possibly again at 5 in the afternoon?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, because of the problem being around for several years, our SARCAN depots have a pretty good idea who is bringing containers in and also even the rings that the bootleggers are establishing. \$50 a week is about 500 cans. If the same young person brings in \$50 worth of cans every week, it's obvious that the cans are coming from somewhere. So we have a pretty good idea who the bootleggers are, and we will focus on these individuals.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, how much does the province lose each year in revenue to bootlegging of this type?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We estimate over one and one-half million dollars this past year have been lost due to cans from out of province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And with the new enforcement officers having the authority they do, do you have a financial estimate of how much the province will actually

save, I guess you could say, or how much financial benefit the province will gain back?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We envision very little additional money being spent, perhaps as little as \$10,000. These officers are obviously on salary already and so we'll be focusing, perhaps \$10,000 extra money to curtail this trafficking.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, how much onus is being put on depot operators to make sure that this enforcement takes place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Quite a bit. Actually the SARCAN organization, the depots have flagged this for a number of years and we'll be working very closely with them to bring the situation under control.

Ms. Julé: — Well I guess I want to know how much consultation has gone on with them over this specific Act and the way the Act is formulated.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We've had extensive consultation. In fact, this legislation is at the request of SARCAN. They've had input in drafting it and they fully endorse the process approach that we are taking.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I only have one more question at this time to pose to you regarding this Act.

In the Act there's an immunity clause. And there's an immunity clause that shields the minister or the enforcement officer, but the depot operator is not mentioned. Should they not have been also protected by immunity since they play such an important role in the Act?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I believe that we're talking about the legal enforcement of the legislation, Mr. Chairman. And obviously employees at the SARCAN depot cannot be directly involved in laying charges. They can provide the information to us and we will follow up on it.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, we had the opportunity to meet with the SARCAN board as a caucus. And we heard very clearly from them that of course the Manitoba, east side of Saskatchewan, seems to be where the most problems occur. And indeed, as you've indicated, they have identified various sources and they know that the people are coming in.

Has your department been in consultation with Manitoba? And is there the development of maybe a western strategy — and by western I'm referring to Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan — where we could be all on the same page, and then we wouldn't have to worry about enforcement of regulations and rules because we would all have the same type of policy and we would all be able to ensure that, you know, deposits and the like.

We were led to believe that Manitoba in fact, because they're trying to meet certain levels of recycling, were actually wanting Saskatchewan to provide them with the numbers of Manitoba cans that were recycled in Saskatchewan so that they could get

credit for that.

And I find that, you know, rather unusual for a government to be looking at saying, well we're happy that Saskatchewan is paying the 10 cents but yet we'd like to also claim the credit back in Manitoba. I think we have to push for a western strategy. And I wonder if your department is pursuing that and whether we can be looking forward to that kind of a plan in the very near future.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member certainly raises a good point. And we have in fact . . . I've personally been to Manitoba to meet with the minister there and the minister has been here; in fact we had him tour the Regina SARCAN depot. The province of Manitoba has chosen to recycle their waste materials in a different way simply by levying a surcharge on everything from soup cans to newspapers, and that includes the pop cans.

We pointed out that we have over 70 depots, over 300 people, many of them with disabilities, employed, and how good this program is working. And it is working good because we have 107 per cent return in our cans.

But we have tried to get Manitoba to see the way we are doing it, but they have chosen — not be critical — to pursue another path in recycling waste materials.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just wanted to take a moment to thank the minister and his officials for coming in and answering our questions. Thank you.

(1615)

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

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

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I have with us again Stuart Kramer, deputy minister; and behind me, Dennis Sherratt, director of fish and wildlife.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Welcome to the minister and his officials. This isn't a very long Bill but it has some interesting aspects to it. And there are certain parcels of land that are being removed and certain parcels that are being added. And I guess a general question, why these particular parcels . . . like what consideration was taken into place . . . took place to say these are the ones we'll take out or these are the ones that we will add.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for the question. Each year or periodically we get appeals from people who have land within The Wildlife Habitat Protection

Act. This process was put in the legislation . . . For an example if an individual had a quarter section next to his deeded quarter and that leased land may have his water supply, he may feel his operation would be more secure if he is able to purchase that quarter section of leased land to round out his private holdings. And we do have that appeal process in there.

And we certainly want to work with landowners. And the land coming out of the Act is basically all part of the appeal process where individuals for one reason or other have applied to have the leased land taken out of the Act. And similarly the land going in has been deemed as important wildlife habitat. It's vacant Crown land right now and so we've put about 2,600 acres into the Act.

Mr. Heppner: — What kind of consultation was done with provincial bodies, basically wildlife bodies of different sorts, in determining this switching that you've done? And if you could also sort of list the bodies that you consulted, if you did any consultation.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, the appeal process that we have was designed with groups like the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Nature Saskatchewan, stock growers' association, and they concur . . . When somebody approaches us to appeal or to purchase a quarter, this process has been approved by these organizations. And basically they are onside wanting to help the individual landowners, at the same time protecting the wildlife habitat.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'm a person that's always concerned when we have out-of-province bodies come in trying to tell us what to do in Saskatchewan. Was the world wildlife federation one of the bodies that you were involved with consultation on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — No.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I must say I'm glad to hear that and I hope you keep that up.

As you mentioned, this amendment adds some 2,600 acres to the Act, and part of the reason behind it is that it's less expensive to conserve our natural areas than it is to try to restore them. Do you have a figure or a general cost number that you have to say it's cheaper to go ahead and conserve that than to try to restore it?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the member is probably aware that this is Crown land to begin with and The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is very unique. It does not displace the existing agriculture uses such as grazing and haying. At the same time, the Act does not allow us in most circumstances to sell the land or allow breaking, clearing, and draining. And the lessee can continue to graze and hay these lands and at the same time to provide a very important role for wildlife. And in fact some of the best habitat in Saskatchewan is on these Crown lands.

So we already own the land and by simply policy and management we're able to preserve the habitat while at the same time accommodating the interests of agriculture. So that's why it's a very cheap process financially at least, to secure these

lands. And it's very well received by public across the province.

Mr. Heppner: — I have a general question dealing with the management of these lands. Traditionally our native lands had a lot of animals roaming there that would do a lot of what you said pasturing, particularly the bison that we had in Saskatchewan. And if they didn't sort of keep the grass down, do some work on it, our famous prairie fires from a century or three ago would go across the land and clear that off.

Presently we have neither one of those two natural things occurring on a lot of this land where it isn't pastured and, you know, we try very hard to control the fires from not going across there because of damage they may do to adjoining lands.

Could you comment on the effect that has on the land when we no longer have those two main or important aspects taking place on that native land?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well certainly with the advent of settlement, prairie fires are almost a thing of the past, thank goodness. But to accommodate lessees on these lands where trees may grow up, we allow for the clearing of, I believe it's a 50-foot or perhaps 80-foot fence line around the property so that the trees falling over aren't knocking the fence down.

We also allow for the use of large mowers to go around the existing poplar bluffs, cut off the sapling so that the whole quarter doesn't turn into an aspen grove. And of course mowing the hay would also keep the shrubbery from expanding and taking over the remaining native grassland.

So that type of management is dealt with on an individual basis. And if a lessee would like to do some of this, all he needs to do is contact us and we are quite flexible in that regard.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, once again.

Mr. Minister, in reference to the whole wildlife habitat preservation, you've made some comments today, and so has my colleague, about the best way to use land. He's made some references on this side of the House, he's made some references to what kind of animals would graze naturally. Buffalo are not here but we know that deer are in place. Unless a piece of land is fenced off where deer cannot pass through, I think in some areas of this province there is a number of deer that do graze on these lands.

That's just a comment. And I don't have as much a concern about that as far as fires go as some of the people in this House might because of what you've mentioned — you know, the lessee being able to use a mower, etc. — and that, in addition to wildlife grazing, I think does . . . certainly protects that land.

Mr. Minister, is it possible for a specific area of wildlife habitat that exists right now to be turned over to the wildlife . . . fish and wildlife development fund if there is a dispute, for instance, on how that land is being used and there's no resolve. If there's a request for it to be turned over, would that be considered by your department?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Generally it is not, but certainly if there's

individual cases we will consider it; and if there is an active case in the St. Brieux area of a half section which we are working with the local people as well as the Department of Agriculture to see how we might best accommodate the local communities' interests.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm very happy to hear that there is ongoing consultation with that group of people because from what they explained to me, the area that they're talking about is suited very well for wildlife habitat.

And I think it's important that when there is a drive for economic returns only going on throughout the world, that we do look closely at preserving our wildlife habitat and making sure that we have got a place in this province where wildlife can feel secure and where we can have some beauty surrounding us.

So I thank you, Mr. Minister, that's all the questions I have today.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Ms. Julé: — I want to just take this opportunity to thank the minister and his officials. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Chairman, I too would like to thank the very competent and capable people in our department for the great job they do; and I would also like to thank the hon. members for the very constructive questions.

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

The Deputy Chair: — I invite the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me to my left is Mr. Darcy Cherney, who is the director of investment services in the Department of Economic Development and Co-operation. And behind him is Mr. Bryon Burnett, who's the assistant deputy minister of that department. And behind me is Mr. Marv Wisemiller, who is the senior investment analyst with that department.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Minister, and officials. Mr. Minister, in the statement that was released when the second reading of the Bill was introduced, there were referrals to the fact that this Act and these amendments are required in order to respond to changes that had been made in federal legislation, that created an unlevel playing field, if you like, in terms of the venture capital programs across the country.

Could you outline in summary what changes were made to the federal legislation that made these amendments required?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I'm advised, Mr. Chair, that the amendments that are necessary to be consistent with federal legislation would be the amendment to clause 5(c), the amendment to clause 5(c.1), and the amendment . . . which is a repeal of subsections 13(3) and 13(4).

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, it was mentioned as well that over the past 10 years some \$44 million has been invested through this vehicle in projects in the province. Can you update us in terms of the status of those projects at the current time? And I'm thinking in a general sense, are they continuing on or are they in existence? Have some not succeeded a general overview of the status of the projects?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I'm advised, Mr. Chair, that of the pooled funds there were approximately seven projects, and about five of those are in place. One has been redeemed and one was sold. And then of the employee funds, there have been approximately 20, and 10 of those remain in place. And the majority of the rest have gone beyond the five-year time limit at which point they can be wound up without any tax liability. That is not the projects being wound up but the status of the investment that is held.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, can you tell me, was the *Free Press* newspaper a part of . . . operate under one of these plans?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. It operated under a pooled fund.

Mr. Gantefer: — Can you tell me then, Minister, as we hear the fact that the *Free Press* newspaper organization has wound down, can you tell me what the status would be of that impact on the investors?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that the working ventures fund which invested in the *Free Press* also invested in many other projects. And as a matter of fact, despite the failure of the *Free Press* venture, the share price recently went up.

I mean obviously it would have some effect on the value of the shares but not so much as to negatively impact them. They still have actually gone up in price.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, can you bring us up to speed as well in terms of the current status of the fund? What I'm thinking of . . . are there enough eligible projects for the fund to invest in; is the fund looking for increased investors or have there been restrictions placed on the investment pool because there is a shortage of eligible projects in the province — those types of statistics?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that the working ventures fund had gone out of the market voluntarily in 1996 because they had more money than projects to invest in. But they have now entered the market again as they have other projects in mind for additional investment and they're looking to raise more funds for investment.

Mr. Gantefer: — From your answer, Minister, I take it that there have been further projects come forward that are requesting investment by the fund — would that be fair — and as a response to that, the fund is now seeking further investors?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Minister I appreciate the answer to our questions. We certainly agree that this legislation is mainly housekeeping in nature, and encourage investment in businesses and worthwhile projects in the province.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the officials from the Department of economic development and co-operation for their assistance today. And I'd also like to thank the member from Melfort and the opposition for their co-operation with respect to this Bill.

And with that, I'd like to move that we report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 35 — The Land Information Services Facilitation Act

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

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

Bill 30 — The Cemeteries Act, 1999

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

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

Bill 31 — The Funeral and Cremation Services Act

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

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

Bill 37 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 1999

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

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

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

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

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

title.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1645)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Vote 37

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated directly to my right is the deputy minister, Dan Perrins. Directly behind him is Lily Stonehouse, the assistant deputy minister. Seated directly behind me is Mae Boa, the executive director of finance and operations.

In the back row is Brady Salloum, executive director of student financial assistance branch; Margaret Ball, the assistant director, facilities planning; John Biss, executive director, university services branch; and Jim Benning, president and CEO (chief executive officer) of Saskatchewan Communications Network.

Subvote (PE01)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and all of your officials. I look forward to, I guess, just getting warmed up in the remaining time that we have before we recess, but we'll gladly continue this later on.

Mr. Minister, as I look at your department and I look at the expansion that your department has undertaken as a result probably of the federal transfers of responsibility for the apprenticeship program — responsibilities for job training and skills training — to the provincial government, I see a department that has almost doubled in size, Mr. Minister, noting that the year before, your full-time equivalents were about 223 and now we're sitting at around 434.

Could you tell the people of the province and ourselves as the opposition the numbers of people that you have added to your full-time equivalents? Were these transfers from various federal departments? Were there expansions of your existing

departments? And how much further expansion is needed to deliver a proper post-secondary program?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you. First of all, your observations are correct that there has been some major changes in our department as a result of the changes in the training part of my portfolio actually with the federal government getting out of training as of January 1 of this year. It has largely been handed to the provinces.

First of all, as of January 1 we took over 114 staff from HRDC (Human Resources Development Canada). That is the training part of the federal government's training programs. And also we rolled into the Department of Post-Secondary Education, 74 staff from the New Careers Corporation.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, as far as the responsibility is concerned now within your department for the skills training and the programs that were previously under the federal government, have you taken over complete responsibility? Are we looking at any further enhancement to the program to enable us to do what the federal is no longer funding? Or are we already completely in control of all of the skills training and related programs?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Yes, largely we are in complete control now — the provinces are — of the training with the exception of the Employment Insurance payment. That piece remains with the federal government. The skills training . . . the skills piece and the training is all under the responsibility of the province now.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, when we take a look at the number of opportunities that now are available for Saskatchewan students, could you give us an idea as to the number of training and employment opportunities that we have for Saskatchewan students? How many people are actually involved in the opportunities that your government has now set forward?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — If I understand your question accurately, 26,700 would be the number of students . . . the number of training opportunities.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, we note that in the revenue side of government, of course there is a significant amount of money that's transferred from the federal government in the CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfers) and equalization factor and others. Is there any portion of monies that we, as a province, obtain from the federal government that is still transfers for post-secondary education?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — This money has been withdrawn so quickly by the federal government that it's hard to keep track. We believe — well, not we believe . . . Accurately there is only 37.2 million that we receive under the Labour Market Development Agreement.

To be absolutely clear, this isn't for skills training — just because your question was around skills training — it's solely program money. So it's money delivered for programs, not for the actual skills training.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You must have been reading my notes because my next note indicates a question about the Labour Market Development Agreement.

Could you explain how that agreement was put into place and what role Saskatchewan now is going to play in administering, you've indicated, \$37 million that has been transferred to Saskatchewan for the development of this program? What will students be able to see in this program in enhancing post-secondary education?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Okay. Specifically the LMDA (Labour Market Development Agreement), the agreement doesn't enhance any programming. What it does is it provides income support; it subsidizes employment and provides career and employment counselling and career searches, if you will.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I notice in the *Estimates* you had a section referred to as strategic initiatives in the '98-99 *Estimates* and there is no such allocation of any funding in that area. How will this affect what used to take place, and what kinds of things will no longer be able to take place because of the removal of funding for strategic initiatives?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — First of all, it was a three-year federal-provincial program funded largely for projects — that three years is obviously completed now — and from those projects we've learned a great deal of things. But we've incorporated largely into our career and employment services those projects that we found to be beneficial so it's now . . . it now largely falls under our career and employment services.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the other departments that you have indicated that was being phased out over the last couple years, of course, has been the New Careers Corporation.

And we also note that of course the funding of four and a half million dollars has also been moved into various other sectors. You've also indicated in my . . . I think the first question that I asked you that the employees from New Careers Corporation have also been transferred into the existing departments.

The question is much more general in nature, Mr. Minister. New Careers served a great need in many parts of Saskatchewan. I've had contact by individual communities who have said that New Careers Corporation was responsible for providing the trainees for job sites in various communities.

And I've heard from school division boards who've had projects that have been completed; I've heard from communities who've had playground equipment constructed. Facilities, in fact, have been constructed that used New Careers Corporation as the entity, even though the bills and the expenses of that corporation were paid for by the local level.

What has replaced that, Mr. Minister, and is there something that communities in the province of Saskatchewan can count on from the post-secondary and job training and skills acquisitions areas very similar to New Careers?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Most of the programs and more will be

included, largely in our Can-Sask career and employment services centres.

The Deputy Chair: — Order. It now being very near 5 o'clock, the committee will recess until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

