

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again this afternoon I present more petitions from citizens of the northwest requesting that the dangerous and congested entrance to the city of North Battleford be improved with the intersection of Highways 40 and 16.

Your petitioners this afternoon come from North Battleford, Gallavan, Glaslyn, Meota, Battleford, and Maymont.

I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition today on behalf of concerned Saskatchewan residents about our highway system. And the prayer reads:

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

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

And the signatures on these petitions are from Nipawin, Carrot River, Mendham, Burstall, Biggar, and other small communities throughout the province. Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring forward petitions today in regards to Swift Current regional hospital. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will every pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have hundreds of signatures here again today mainly from Swift Current; but also from Maple Creek, Stewart Valley, Shaunavon, Senate, Gull Lake, Val Marie, Gouldtown.

I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise again today in this House to present a petition on behalf of the people of this province. 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 fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so that Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs and that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks in the Maidstone and Paynton areas.

And I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan who are demanding a review of parental rights. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Debden, from Luseland, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege again to rise on behalf of citizens concerned about some of the most vulnerable in our society. And I'll read the prayer:

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

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

The people who have signed this petition today, Mr. Speaker, are from Debden, Saskatchewan and the fine city of Prince Albert.

And I present on their behalf with pleasure.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

Standing Committee on Communication

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, the chair of the Standing Committee on Communication presents the third report of the said committee which is hereby tabled.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Special Committee on Regulations

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move, seconded by the member from Estevan:

That the first report of the Special Committee on Regulations be now concurred in.

Before officially moving that, I just want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, just to acknowledge the work of the committee, and specifically to extend a special thank you to Mr. Garnet Holtzmann, who came on as . . . filled an interim role as the Law Clerk in the Assembly.

And certainly, Mr. Holtzmann, our committee want to extend a special thank you for the expertise and the way he served the committee immediately upon resuming his position in his office of having to dig into a number of regulations and bylaws that had been on the books for a number of years. And, Mr. Speaker, we want, as a committee, to just say publicly how much we appreciated the work, the effort, and the expertise with which he performed his duties. Also a special thank you to all of the members on the committee for their involvement and commitment to serving on this committee.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we just want to acknowledge and let the Assembly know how much we appreciated the ability to host a number of delegates from Australia, the Regulations Committee of the Parliament of Victoria, from June 13 to 16, in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, for most members in this Assembly, a number of jurisdictions outside of this country certainly have a different way and form of running their regulations committee and it was very informative for the committee in Saskatchewan to sit down with members of another jurisdiction and go through the format and discuss how their jurisdiction deals with regulations, and we certainly appreciated that.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Estevan:

That the first report of the Special Committee on Regulations be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 39 ask the government the following question:

How much did it cost to produce the annual report for SaskPower for the past five years; and to supply a breakdown of any outside consultants or suppliers who were commissioned in the production of this document?

I also wish to give notice of motion, Mr. Speaker, on four individual Bills, if I may read them all at the same time.

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 19, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 22;

I give notice I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, No. 20, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 56;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 21, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 52;

And I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 22, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 310.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it's a great privilege for me to introduce 32 bright and active students from grade 8 in Rosetown who are our guests in the west gallery today. Rosetown has had a long tradition of bringing grade 8 students to watch the carryings-on here and to be impressed by the good behaviour of the members. And I want to say that I have run out of grade 8 students in my own family; but the ones who are with us are as sharp and beautiful as all the ones I have presented, and I'm delighted that there are 32 of them here with us today.

They are accompanied by their teachers Miles Bennet, Arlene Lunde, and Richard Berezowski, and by chaperones Bob Clothier and Linda Kilford. Welcome — and I ask all members to join me in giving a warm welcome to these Rosetown students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, 13 very brilliant grade 11 and 12 students sitting in your east gallery from St. Isidore School and from the community of St. Isidore-de-Bellevue. The students from Bellevue are accompanied by their very capable teacher Mr. Terry Gaudet and I look forward to meeting with all of you a little bit later on for some discussion and a visit. And I ask the Assembly to issue a warm welcome to the students from St. Isidore-de-Bellevue.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, 16 grade 6 students from Shoal Lake School.

The teachers that accompany the students, Mr. Speaker, are Ivy McKee and Darren McKee. Chaperones are Dora Young, Amelia Stone, Walter Bear. And Elton Whitecap is also with them, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to tell you a little bit about Shoal Lake. It's a First Nations community just off of Highway No. 55, east of Carrot

River.

And I know the students, and probably the teachers too, are looking forward to their brand new school which is underway. And we're all looking forward to that too. Maybe someday we can even improve Highway No. 55 that gets to your community.

Mr. Speaker, they have the greatest graduation at Shoal Lake. When they graduate the grade 12 students, they also graduate the kindergarten students into grade 1. And it's just a wonderful experience and a great party.

Welcome to Regina. Come back again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask leave for further notice of motions of first readings of Bills.

Leave granted.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 4;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 13;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 37;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 36;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 18;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 19;

I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 2.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, an introduction of guests. I'd like to join my colleague from Carrot River to welcome the students from Shoal Lake. It's always good to see all people, especially Aboriginal folks come to visit the Assembly, and as an Aboriginal member of this Assembly . . .

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I also request leave to revert to notice of motion of first readings.

Leave granted.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, thank you to the House. I give notice of first reading.

I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, No. 7, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 4.

And also I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, No. 8, An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 40.

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Returning to introduction of guests, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, a gentleman in the west gallery, George Woolridge, a young man in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency who is very interested in rural transportation issues, and politics in general. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. With leave to return to notice of motions and questions please.

Leave granted.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act (No. 3), An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 19.

I give notice as well that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act (No. 4), An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 44 which is half gravel.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act (No. 5), An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 42.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 36 move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act (No. 6), An Act to rename provincial Highway No. 15.

As well, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day no. 39 ask the government the following question:

How many full-time, part-time, and casual registered nurses were employed in each of the health districts on April 15, 1999; by district, how many full-time registered

nurses had been hired between April 1, 1999 and April 15, 1999; and by district, how many registered nurses had quit between April 1, 1999 and April 15, 1999; and by district, how many registered nurses that were employed full time had requested to be casual employees between April 1, 1999 and April 15, 1999.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Expansion at L & M Wood Products

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to join my colleague from Saskatchewan Rivers on telling the Assembly about a forest economic development in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency.

Yesterday I toured L & M Wood Products with the Minister of Economic Development. L & M Wood Products is in the middle of a program to expand and rebuild their facility. The expansion to the saw mill will allow them to handle an increase in the amount of wood they're harvesting from 60,000 cubic metres to 120,000 cubic metres.

Mr. Speaker, the rebuilding of the pressure treatment unit will allow for an 80 per cent increase in treated products being produced.

Mr. Speaker, the expenditure by L & M of \$2 million will create over a hundred direct and indirect jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. With this capital investment, Mr. Speaker, L & M Wood Products is saying that they are here for the long term.

The Minister of Economic Development said this project is an expression of confidence in Saskatchewan's economy by communities and industry.

Mr. Speaker, I say that this is good news for Glaslyn and area. My congratulations to L & M Wood Products. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada World Youth Program

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recently received a letter from a young constituent of mine, Mr. Paul Gareau, from the community of St. Isidore-de-Bellevue. Mr. Gareau has just returned home after a six-month participation in the Canada World Youth program. Canada World Youth was created in 1971 and has developed strong ties in more than 42 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and in eastern and central Europe.

The main objective of that program, Mr. Speaker, is to give young people and community members the opportunity to share an educational experience that will increase their awareness of local and global developments. It is hoped that the program will be a starting point for a life of active community involvement.

And part of the exchange time is spent in Canada, the other portion is spent in the exchange country. Paul Gareau and an

African youth spent three months with a family in St. Georges de Beauce, Quebec. They spent their time working with mentally handicapped people and helping a family rebuild a garage destroyed during the ice storm there.

In December, Paul travelled to Lokossa, West Africa. And in Paul's words, Mr. Speaker, the whole adventure was a super experience. He says, I came back having more confidence in myself, appreciating my family and community more, and with a whole new outlook on the global world.

Mr. Speaker, this is a positive story about the youth of today and it is a fine tribute to what our youth are doing in their community and in the larger global world.

Congratulations to Paul Gareau.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Innovation Place in Saskatoon

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week my colleague from Saskatoon Southeast mentioned the importance to Saskatoon of Innovation Place while announcing new agricultural research taking place there. And yesterday the Minister for Economic and Co-operative Development officially opened the new Concourse Building at Innovation Place, cutting the ribbon with a laser beam.

This 800 square foot building was constructed to meet the demand from existing tenants for expanded space and new businesses coming to Saskatoon. Currently the building houses 12 information technology firms employing 200 people.

One benefit hard to quantify but already noticed is a synergy of ideas and discoveries that transcends individual disciplines. Like minds in similar projects spark off each other, and innovation happens at Innovation Place.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the current managers of Innovation Place and commend Allan Blakeney for his vision and principle in risking public investment to establish a fundamental new and now fully successful provincial resource at Innovation Place in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre in Kenaston

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Sunday my wife Bev and I retreated to a murder mystery in the community of Kenaston. No, the community didn't lynch their MP (Member of Parliament); however, it was close, as Booby escaped with severe wounds.

With nearly 250 people in attendance, a fantastic show, a scrumptious meal, and an evening full of surprises and friendship delighted us all.

Mr. Speaker, the Kenaston players put on a fantastic play and provided many hilarious moments as the mystery unfolded. Bev and I would like to thank the people of Kenaston and area for their hospitality with a special thanks to the actors, the workers,

the coordinators, and everyone involved in making the dinner theatre a huge success.

The money raised will be put to good use, Mr. Speaker. And my hat is off to the community of Kenaston for a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Awards Banquet for Students Against Drinking and Driving

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday the Deputy Premier and I attended one of the most positive and upbeat events that we've been to in some time.

Riffel High School hosted the 11th annual Students Against Drinking and Driving awards banquet and dance.

The school was filled with music, laughter, leadership, and enough energy and enthusiasm to keep everyone going into the wee small hours of the morning. The message, Mr. Speaker, was very clear and repeated often, "Friends don't let friends drink and drive."

Many awards were presented for leadership and team building, for memorial scholarships, and inductions into the SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) hall of fame.

I want to congratulate everyone involved in organizing this truly wonderful event. With a special thanks to Jennifer Banga and Shauntel McCall. SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) should also be recognized for their work in team building, and the Royal Bank for their leadership awards.

Mr. Speaker, if as we believe the future of this province is young people, then judging by what we experienced last Saturday, the future for Saskatchewan is very bright indeed. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Health Care Record

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if we need any more evidence that the government which gave us medicare has abandoned it, look no further than the latest pamphlet by the member from Regina Centre, entitled simply *A Record of Success*.

The document which went out to homes this week reviews the government record through the first three pages. But where is health care? The only mention of it is buried on the last page where the NDP (New Democratic Party) promises to use \$75 million in additional health dollars to shorten waiting lists, improve cancer care, and create a better working environment for health care professionals.

Why is this NDP government hiding any mention of health care until the last page? Well the obvious answer is, they don't want to remind people of how bad they fouled up the system they set out to reform almost eight years ago.

Mr. Speaker, they say actions speak louder than words, and

while the Health minister does double backflips on almost every question put to her, the rest of the NDP caucus know the real score. They know not to put anything about their health care record on the front page, and if they have to mention it at all, make sure it's buried in the back where hopefully nobody can find it. That's because the NDP record in health care speaks for itself and demands to be hidden before any election is called.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prince Albert YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The YWCA in Prince Albert operates a residence for women and children. They also develop and deliver programs that provide opportunities for women and their families to invest in their own future.

Last night the YWCA sponsored the 10th annual fundraiser recognizing women from Prince Albert at their Women of Distinction banquet.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make special mention of the winners, of the award winners. In the arts and culture category, the award winner was Cecile Miller. Carol Beck won in the health, sports and fitness category. The business and professional category award went to Barbara Elaine Hazelwood Gustafson.

The community enhancement category, the winner was Elsie Devries. And the young woman of distinction in science and technology and receiver of the winner . . . and winning the Saskatchewan Power Roberta Bondar Scholarship was Carla Angelski.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all the recipients and the board members. The keynote speaker spoke about success. She spoke about her own success and having achieved the distinction of being the first leader of a political party in Saskatchewan, the member from Greystone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Polonia Dance Ensemble in Concert

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure to attend the annual Polonia in Concert performance this past Saturday evening. It was the 11th annual presentation by the Polonia Dance Ensemble of Regina, demonstrating the rich cultural heritage of Polish Canadians. The show consisted of junior and senior dancers and guest performers, the Balaton Hungarian Dancers of Regina.

Polonia Dance Ensemble and its related organizations, the Polish Canadian Cultural Club and St. Anthony's Parish have a well deserved reputation and tradition of community activity and involvement in the city of Regina.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Polish.)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Political Advertising

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. A week ago the Saskatchewan Party began running television ads, positive ads about the Saskatchewan Party plan. Obviously our ads are still being aired and must be working because yesterday the NDP responded. The NDP is now running American-style attack ads designed to smear our leader, Elwin Hermanson. It's a clear admission the NDP can't talk about their own record.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has chosen the high road, the NDP has chosen the ditch. That's not too surprising. No one wants to drive on an NDP road, not even the NDP.

Mr. Premier, how worried are you? Are things looking so bad for the NDP that you have to run American-style attack ads?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite that there's an old adage, the truth hurts. And I want to say to the member opposite that what people across the province are saying in the past week when they watch the ads very carefully of your leader Mr. Hermanson leaning against the tractor or with the tractor, and they compared it with 1982 of the then leader Mr. Devine leaning against his combine, and the overexpenditure that was taking place and promised at that time. The public has been saying for a week it just doesn't add up. That's what they're saying.

And the people of the province also look at the members of your party, many of them who ran for the Conservative party and many who went to the convention and saw the same old, tired Tory faces supporting your party, they believed this is the Tory Party. And you'll have to excuse the public and ourselves for confusing the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, you can almost understand the Premier's dilemma. He probably walked into an ad agency and they told him, you've been Premier for eight years. You should talk about your record. Can we talk about taxes? No, can't talk about taxes. Can you talk about job creation? No, can't talk about job creation. Can you talk about health care? Gosh no, don't talk about health care. How about agriculture? No, don't say anything about agriculture. Well then why don't we slam Elwin Hermanson? And the Premier said, that's a great idea.

Mr. Premier, is that what happened? Are you so ashamed of your own record that you have to run these American-style attack ads?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that reducing the sales tax from 9 per cent to 6 — we talk a lot about taxes. But I want to say to the member opposite it's pretty clear who is running from their record in this exchange. It's pretty clear who's running from their record. A record of \$15 billion in debt, a record . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now hon. members will

recognize the Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the answer being provided because of comments . . . order . . . because of comments coming from both sides of the House . . . Order! The Chair asks for co-operation from members on all sides of the House.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again it's pretty clear who's running from their record — the people who change their name in the dead of night in order to avoid their record.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from an individual who I have a lot of respect for — my father, who's 82 years old. And he says very clearly to me, he says: look, if it has a stripe down its back and it walks like one and smells like one, then whether it's called a skunk or not, it's still a skunk.

And you can change your name, you can run from your record, but I want to say to you, you're Tories. Everyone in the province knows it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier invited us to keep running our ads. I hope you do the same thing, Mr. Premier.

Because you're not just attacking Elwin Hermanson. You're also attacking 10,000 people who have now joined the Saskatchewan Party and tens of thousands more who plan to vote for the Saskatchewan Party, women and men from all parts of the province, all political backgrounds including the NDP. People like Fred Thompson, Mr. Premier. Remember him?

So you just keep running your little ads, hope that people forget about your record — high taxes, zero job growth, lousy health care, crumbling roads. But I think voters will choose our message of hope over your message of gloom and doom.

Mr. Premier, will you admit that your own polling shows that you can't run on your own record?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite that we are extremely proud of the last eight years and the record of this government — extremely proud.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, we are so proud, we are so proud that we're not going to change the name of our party. Announce that today — we're not changing the name.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — And, Mr. Speaker, why the members opposite, why the members opposite are being accused of running from their record and tying themselves to the Tory Party comes here from "The Saskatchewan Party Names Interim Leader." This is from a *Leader-Post* story which says "meanwhile" and I quote: "Krawetz says he welcomes endorsement of people like former premier Grant Devine and

former cabinet minister Grant Schmidt.”

Now I know you don't want to associate with the Tories of the past, but, sir, realize you are Tories. You are Tories. You have the record of the Tories and you're going to have to defend it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cost of Closure of Plains Health Centre

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before I walked in, I received a phone call from an NDP supporter in Regina who phoned about the ads and said his party, the NDP, was stuck in the past, afraid of the present, and no plans for the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, in 1996 you told Saskatchewan people the Plains hospital closure was on budget and on time. On budget and on time — you seemed to say it at least 50 times. And now it turns out that when you made those statements you already knew the Plains closure was over budget and the costs were growing.

Now the costs have grown by about \$45 million over budget because of your mismanagement. Mr. Minister, why did you say the Plains closure was on budget when you knew full well that it wasn't true?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I can indicate to the member, as was indicated to Mr. Weidlich yesterday, the former Minister of Health was advised by the Department of Health that the project was on time and on budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Finance, who seemed to be very emphatic and very nervous about the questions because he repeated it about 50 times — on budget and on time.

Mr. Minister, the NDP has changed the Health ministers several times since that minister made his famous statement. But one thing remains the same: they're all committed to blowing millions of dollars over the Plains closure and they're all committed to hiding those cost overruns.

A few weeks ago the Saskatchewan Party tried to launch a special auditor's investigation into the cost overruns at the Plains. We wanted to see if anything could be done before the NDP wasted even more money on this project. And of course, the NDP government refused. They didn't want anyone actually reviewing their health care spending just before an election.

Madam Minister, you now know the NDP has been misleading Saskatchewan people about the cost of this project since 1996. Isn't it time for an independent investigation by the Provincial Auditor into the Plains closure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what the member may not realize is that Project '98 was the consolidation of services at the Plains into the Pasqua and the Regina General. And it has been indicated that the original project was to cost about \$83 million, and as a result of inflation, building code, and site requirements, move costs, and so on, the site ... the consolidation cost \$95 million.

In addition — in addition, Mr. Speaker — the Regina Health District added services that were not contained at the Plains. Let me give you examples. There is now a MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) that is located at the Regina General. Regina didn't have a MRI; it is now there.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there is a new mental health facility and, as we know, this is Mental Health Week and people have access to nice facilities in the southern part of Saskatchewan.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are enhancements to this project and we think we now have a state-of-the-art facility in Regina for southern Saskatchewan and there are added services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, your Project '98 is a typical example of NDP mismanagement and poor planning. In fact you've ended up with a number of unauthorized expenditures there. It's time that changes were made.

Since the Premier is not prepared to make the necessary changes in the Department of Health, it's time to remove Garf Stevenson as the head of the Regina District Health Board — your appointee to that board — for his illegal over-expenditures. When will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what I want to say to the public is that we now have increased the number of ambulatory care spaces from 20 to 50. This means more outpatient and day surgery and minor emergency and pre-admission areas.

In addition, we have space for a new spiral CT (computerized tomography) scan and we have accommodations for new technology.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have the beginnings of a women's health centre which is extremely important, given our government's new initiatives in women's health. And as everyone knows, we need to have initiatives in women's health.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have one of the nicest facilities in this country for people who suffer from mental health problems. And we think that is also important, Mr. Speaker.

As I've said before, and I'll say it again, Regina has one of the state-of-the-art facilities with some of the most up-to-date equipment and we think that's important for quality health care for southern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Sask Water.

Mr. Minister, yesterday we found out about another blown NDP deal; another business disaster that will cost Saskatchewan taxpayers millions.

Yesterday in question period the Saskatchewan Party asked you about the bankruptcy of Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation. Of course you told us yesterday there wasn't a big problem. You said we shouldn't judge too quickly.

Then you spoke to the media and confirmed two things. You said Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation owed the government \$8 million. And you said there is absolutely no guarantee the NDP will recover any of it.

Mr. Minister, why would the NDP loan \$8 million of taxpayers' money to a company you knew was in serious financial difficulty?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd say to the member opposite if he is suggesting that diversification in agriculture is not a good thing, I would ask what he would suggest we should do.

In the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, that government invested some \$65 million in infrastructure by way of irrigation equipment. Prior to that, there was an additional, approximately 55 or 60 million, for a total of about a hundred and twenty million dollars by way of irrigation infrastructure. The price of wheat is down, the price of canola is down. It only makes sense that we look at developing some other industry.

And we're still very, very interested in working with the Farm Credit Corporation, with the growers out in that area, and with the Royal Bank to try and work our way through the future in potatoes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, diversification is great. We like it. But handing taxpayers' dollars out like drunken sailors is not great and you're getting famous for it.

Mr. Minister, the long and short of this latest NDP disaster is that you've blown \$8 million more taxpayers' money. The brain trust at Sask Water spent \$5.8 million to build two potato storage facilities. Then you sold the buildings to Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation for a \$3 million junk bond and a \$2.8 million mortgage that you aren't even the preferred creditor on. Now the company is in receivership.

Mr. Minister, that means that taxpayers will be out \$8 million. The Royal Bank will get paid. Farm Credit will get paid. But the Saskatchewan taxpayers are not going to get paid.

Mr. Minister, what is your government doing to salvage at least

some of the \$8 million taxpayers have lost on your latest business venture.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly, I would suggest, inappropriate for that member to be suggesting about who should be spending like drunken sailors if you look at their record, Mr. Speaker.

I want to quote, I want to quote from one of the partners, the Farm Credit Corporation, that is, a spokesperson on behalf of the Farm Credit Corporation, Terry Kremenik, who says this, Mr. Speaker. He says, that if potato prices had been a lot different the situation could have been a lot different for us and for them. That's from the Farm Credit Corporation — one of the partners.

The Royal Bank, as well as a partner, believes — like we do — that we should be working with growers in the area because we all believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is a future in the potato industry, especially with the infrastructure that exists out there.

Budget for Highway Maintenance

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Liberals have brought up the deplorable working conditions of nurses time and time again. And we're going to bring it up again this time. Except this time it's a home care nurse and her deplorable working conditions are the pothole-ridden roads of this province. So the Health minister can relax, this one is for the Highways minister.

Every day, Carole Smulan of Lemberg travels between Lemberg, Melville, and Grayson. And in her words, deals with the frustration of the deterioration of the roads, wear and tear, abuse, and constant challenge of veering around all the erosions, gutters, obstacles, and craters in our highway.

On Thursday last, Carole Smulan was driving on Highway 22 when she swerved to avoid a pothole. She missed one pothole on one side, but on the other side, hit a big chunk of pavement, heard a bang, and her tire was flat. Later she found her tire rim was damaged beyond repair. She has to wait until a new rim arrives from the States. Her work is delayed, her patients suffer because of the pothole-ridden roads.

The NDP skimmed 135 million from gas tax and use it to pay for hacks and flacks. Mr. Speaker, Carole and Brian Smulan are very angry and are asking, where is your road tax going? Madam Minister, why aren't you putting all the tax back into the roads?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that there was a time in the province of Saskatchewan when near a hundred per cent of the road tax went to highways. And that was a period before 1982 when the money you collected for taxes could go to roads, and the money you collected for income tax could go to programs.

But as you know, as you know, over \$750 million out of this budget goes to interest costs. So out of the taxes, a large percentage has to go to pay interest. And I want to tell the

member opposite that when you talk about roads in Canada, I have here a report from *The Globe and Mail* which says: "17 billion fix sought for crumbling highways" in Canada. And it says, aging roads are falling apart and the problem is worst in Alberta and Ontario, says Scotty Warren.

And I want to say to you, sir, that you should give Mr. Chrétien a call. Because this is the only country in the western world, the western world, where the federal government refuses to pick up their share of responsibility for inter-provincial highways. And, if you're serious, today you'd leave this room — the Assembly — you'd get on your phone to your leader in Ottawa and get some money for the highways here in the province.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, there has already been a commitment made by the federal government to address that issue.

What people can't understand in this province, is why the NDP government, who are responsible for the taxpayers of this province have all kinds of money to globe trot, then invest in Chile, Guyana and all over the place, nothing to spend here.

They collect \$370 million in gas taxes and only put 235 back into highways. That's a rip-off. But when that 235 million doesn't make a difference, that's a pathetic disgrace. And that's what's happening. Nothing is being fixed.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP, if they don't get serious, the NDP don't soon start maintaining and repairing the highways, many roads will have to be rebuilt entirely.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party in its Priorities '99 plan has committed to spending all of the gas tax on the roads of this province — every penny. I'd like to ask the minister, does she agree with the Liberal plan to spend every single penny collected from the road taxes on roads?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member is brighter than he pretends to be. He knows full well that the interest on debt has to be paid out of the taxes. You know that. And so a percentage of the sales tax, the gas tax, the income tax is absolutely necessary to pay for that party's debt that's changed its name from the Tory Party to the Saskatchewan Party. You know that.

But let me tell you one other thing, sir. You know that back in the 1970s your federal minister of Transportation, Otto Lang, — you remember what farmers said, the only two four-lettered name in Canada, Otto Lang — decided to shut down the rail system in this country.

And I want to tell you that today you stand there sanctimoniously after the Liberal Party dismantled the rail system in this province, withdrew the western transportation funds and the Crow rate, and you have the audacity to say two things. Where's the money for roads? And to the Wheat Pool, keep the elevators open on those branch lines that we abandoned.

Can you imagine anything so ridiculous as you standing here criticizing us for what your federal government did to Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University Tuition Fees

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, well then I'll address it to the Premier.

When your party was first elected in 1944 under Tommy Douglas you were elected on a platform of abolishing university tuition fees. That's what you promised. You repeated that promise in several subsequent platforms.

Is that still the policy of your party? Is that still the promise? If so, why have tuition fees skyrocketed under your leadership. Why have tuition fees doubled since 1991 and they're set to treble in the professional colleges?

Please don't tell us it's because of Ottawa. The other nine provinces have the same federal government as we have and somehow they managed to keep their university buildings from crumbling and being condemned. Mr. Speaker, the future of Saskatchewan is a priority. We will provide — the Liberal Party — \$1,000 for every first and second year student post-secondary . . . (inaudible) . . . what will you do — what will you do to make university education accessible and affordable?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, my first words to the hon. member from North Battleford are to say welcome back to question period. And I hope that all is well in your progress now because we missed your voice. And I'm sure that's a feeling shared across the House.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is very simple and it's been said over and over again and it happens to be the absolute truth. When in 1995 the federal government cut back \$6 billion on block transfers, two major programs were affected: health care funding, and post-secondary education. We back-filled every penny that Ottawa took away from us in health care. And we back-filled 97 cents — almost a full dollar — for every penny they took away from post-secondary education.

This year we had an increase in operating budget to the university system. This year we've committed money to the kinesiology building, Thorvaldson Building, and are continuing adding to the funding of university. We believe that the future is in learning — life-long learning. Or as Marshall McLuhan described it, "learning for a living." And as our economy grows, and as we strengthen, and as we improve the financial picture, there will be more for the university.

Second point I want to make before I take the Chair, don't forget the \$750 million lost like that interest payments thanks to the Sask-a-Tory party; every day.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, a few years ago we were laying off nurses and forcing new graduates to leave this country to find employment. Now of course we find we have a nursing shortage.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the same thing is about to happen with our teaching profession. The College of Education is graduating at least 35 per cent fewer graduates today than a few years ago. The number is dropping just at a time when the teaching profession is entering a time of high retirement and many teachers will be leaving the profession.

Mr. Speaker, why can't this government get it right? Why is the government so short-sighted? Why can't programs be related to work requirements? Why are the needs of our young people so low on the NDP's list of priorities? Where will the future leaders of our province come from if education and training is not a top priority of this province and this government?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it is a top priority. This budget that the Minister of Finance introduced has an expenditure of \$1.1 billion for education, second only to health care of \$1.92 billion.

You talk about your particular platform. You take a look at your particular platform and you will be spending, by my quick calculation, something in the order of \$356 million, new spending offset by, according to your own platform, offset, by your own platform, an estimated \$70 million savings.

This platform doesn't make any sense. You don't say one word about eliminating the debt or reducing it. You don't say one word about tax reduction. Even the Saskatchewan Tory Party over . . . the Sask-a-Tory party over there has put together a budget which tells you at least that we're going to be \$1.8 billion in debt over four years. But at least they tell it like it is.

You simply can't spend everywhere, everywhere, everywhere without telling us where you're going to cut. And without getting your federal cousins, the people who are supporting you, the federal Liberals, getting into the game. Tell them to get in the game, to join us to put the priority in education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 244 — The Children's Law Amendment Act, 1999

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 244, The Children's Law Amendment Act, 1999.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 44 — The Midwifery Act

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise today to move second reading of The Midwifery Act, 1999.

In many countries across the globe, midwives have a long and proud heritage. Women have come to value their experience, their warmth and compassion, and the individual . . . that midwives can provide.

In these countries midwives play a vital role not only in the birthing room, but also throughout a woman's pregnancy and in her first days with her new baby. In our society, midwifery has

only begun to mature as a health profession. This is true in many provinces including Saskatchewan.

This greater maturity and status does not come without strings. It carries a responsibility, a responsibility to regulate the profession and to ensure a consistent high standard of quality and safety for the women of this province.

With this legislation we're meeting the responsibility, Mr. Speaker, and we're doing so in partnership with midwives and other health care providers. In 1994 this government appointed the Midwifery Advisory Committee. Its role was to assess the need for midwifery services in our province. The committee found that most women are very satisfied with the maternity services currently available, but some would like to have a midwifery as an additional option. We will open the way for that option and we will do so in a manner that ensures the highest standards of service.

Mr. Speaker, in 1997 this government announced our intention to legalize and regulate midwifery as a health profession. We knew that this would be a complex task. We knew there were plenty of questions to be answered. We have seen from the experience of other provinces such as British Columbia and Ontario.

To ensure that we could benefit from the views and the expertise of our partners in the health system, our government established the Midwifery Implementation Working Group. The group includes midwives, consumers, health providers, and health district representatives. It's worked extensively to create this Act as well as the necessary bylaws to go with it.

The Act is very similar to statutes in other provinces. It is also consistent with newer legislation governing other health professions in our province. At the same time, it has many unique features.

For example, it recognizes that the profession is just starting out in terms of its members and resources. It establishes a college to oversee and regulate the profession and it recognizes that the college will need some help in its formative years to carry out its mandate.

A transitional council comprised of midwives and other key partners in the health system will be established to manage the college. Saskatchewan Health will also provide initial support to the college. When the college's membership grows to the point where it can support itself, members will elect a permanent council to phase out and replace the transitional body.

Mr. Speaker, The Midwifery Act also includes a registration process which takes into account the varying qualifications of midwives. We recognize that early on the majority of midwives who apply to practice in this province will have received their training through a number of different avenues.

(1430)

We need an assessment process to ensure that these midwives have adequate skills to safely practice in our province.

To assess their skills, the college will use a standard list of competencies similar to what's used in other jurisdictions. This process is a temporary measure. As midwifery education programs continue to develop and mature at Canadian universities, the college will know that graduates of these programs have a consistent level of skill and training.

While The Midwifery Act does respond to these unique circumstances, it is in many ways similar to other, more recent, professional statutes in our province. For example, there are a number of measures to ensure public accountability. And while the college will have the power to make bylaws to govern midwives, bylaws that may impact the public will require the minister's approval.

The transitional council, and later the permanent council, will include representatives of the public. The college will also submit an annual report on its activities to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, as with any health profession, it's also important to have a mechanism to handle public complaints and this process must be open and transparent. People need to feel confident that complaints about professional misconduct or incompetence are dealt with in a fair manner.

Mr. Speaker, this Act establishes a mediation process as an option to handle these kinds of complaints. It also allows for discipline hearings and ensures that these hearings will be held in public. Complainants will be able to attend those hearings and receive a report on the outcome. Similar to other professional bodies, the college may apply a variety of penalties, including remedial training, suspensions, expulsion, or fines of up to \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, The Midwifery Act will reserve the title "midwife" for members of the college. The Midwifery Implementation Working Group is developing the necessary regulations pertaining to what midwives can do such as performing diagnostic tests or prescribing certain drugs. The Act and key bylaws have provided to our partners in the health system including the Midwives Association of Saskatchewan, Friends of the Midwives, the college of physicians and surgeons, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and health districts through the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations.

In general, Mr. Speaker, all are supportive of the Act. They will have an opportunity for further comment on the bylaws and regulations before this Act is proclaimed.

Mr. Speaker, our government has listened very carefully to what women in this province have said. And what they've told us is that they want an option of using midwives. We've listened to our partners in health care who have many sound ideas on how to make this option a real reality. And we've done so in a way that ensures public safety, ensures those who wish to practice as midwives are properly trained, licensed, and regulated.

In doing so, we will ensure that midwives in our province take their place as respected health professionals in our province

who provide a safe, high-quality maternity option.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly. And I therefore move that Bill No. 44, The Midwifery Act, be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to hear the minister speak of this Bill. My colleagues and I are very supportive of this Bill and the opportunity that women will have to have a choice. They can have the midwives around them during the pregnancy, which is a very important step towards making sure that pregnancy is looked at as the wonderful experience that it can be and not a disease as it was for years.

So I am delighted to talk to not only to the minister but to some of the members that have been sitting on this committee and discuss the concerns that they had and some of the obstacles they had as they were working on this Bill.

We are a little dismayed that the government has decided that they will not be covering the costs of midwifery. For some of the people that will be able to . . . will want to use it may be not be able to keep these . . . use the services because of the cost, much like the chelation from last year where the government recognized it but did not cover the costs of it.

But I'm sure these are issues that can be dealt with later on. I have some questions on some sections of the Act and I will be discussing that in Committee of the Whole. I just would like the members opposite and the women . . . families that brought forward this Bill to know that the official opposition is supporting this Bill, and we will ask the questions when it comes up in Committee of the Whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I realize it's somewhat unusual for a private member on the government side to stand up on second reading of a Bill. But I do want to say that this particular Act has been one of particular concern for me for many years, and I am so very pleased that the government has now decided after a fairly extensive consultation with potential service providers, the advocates for midwifery, and also with the SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) and the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) to proceed with the midwifery Bill.

For anyone who has been fortunate enough, as I have, to witness the miracle of home births at first-hand, I can tell you that watching a midwife and a new mother interacting and bringing a new human being into this world at home is a truly momentous and inspiring — awe-inspiring — experience.

And I am very hopeful that as the province gains more experience with the services of midwives, that more and more women will be able to avail themselves of these services and that we will see it become a regular part of our medical services in this province.

I do want to congratulate all the many women and a few men who have been working to bring midwifery services to this province and I thank them for their patience and their diligence. And I look forward to seeing bigger and better services from the midwives of Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The Deputy Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I'll invite the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right is Doug Morcom, who is the director of grants administration, and behind Doug is Grete Nybraten, who is the policy manager, both from the Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thanks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Welcome, Madam Minister, and your officials this afternoon.

Madam Minister, I believe the infrastructure fund that you've set up for this year, the additional monies you put into Municipal Government is a 50/50 split here. And I'm just wondering, Madam Minister, do you have any idea how many municipalities out there will be in a position to even apply for money from this program being . . . taking into consideration that many of those municipalities are going to have to raise their mill rates just to hold the status quo on their infrastructure and road building? Do you have a feel for how many are going to be putting in for this money?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the application forms are not completed yet, but we have had consultations with both the . . . with the municipal organizations, and obviously the money doesn't have to be put . . . or the subject of the application doesn't have to be some new project in addition to what they might have already planned.

So it certainly shouldn't result in any tax increases. In fact, the opposite should be true as they have this additional assistance from the province to complete or to add to their . . . to projects they might have already planned.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I think you kind of touched on my next question, but what hoops does a municipality have to go through to apply for this? You have said the forms are not ready yet, but what do they have to go through to qualify to have a project put under this program?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite

will be aware of the two phases of the Canada/Saskatchewan infrastructure works program that has just wound up. And in that, we learned a great deal about how to adjudicate application forms and how to make that process run smoothly.

And while the federal government is not a participant in this particular program, we'll use this same approach where there will be a panel for the rural projects, a panel for the urban projects, and they'll be representation from the municipal associations on that and they will set criteria and adjudicate the applications.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you put \$10 million into this program for this year. I believe the breakdown is seven and a half urban, two rural, and a half northern.

Can you maybe tell me, Madam Minister, how you came up with those numbers; how you decide whether urban gets X number of dollars, rural, and so on? Is it population, or what do you go by to break that money down?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — It is roughly population. If you take the . . . not population by municipality, but if you add up the population in the urban municipalities, meaning cities, towns, villages, you will get approximately 75 per cent of the population. The northern population is approximately pro-rated to their share of the pool, and likewise with rural municipalities.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess that concerns me somewhat, Madam Minister. Because if we stick to that theory in how we fund municipalities out there, you know as well as I do that the infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan, if you added it all up, is probably far greater and more costly than urban infrastructure is, just because of the vast majority of roads out there to keep up.

And I'm afraid if we strictly go by population, and you know what is happening out there as well as I do, that our population is moving from rural to urban, we're going to end up with probably 10, 15 per cent of the funding in years to come for rural and about 80 to 85 probably per cent of the funding will go to urban Saskatchewan.

And I'm not trying to take away, Madam Minister, the needs of urban Saskatchewan. They have many needs there too. But I'm worried, if we stay with that trend all the way through, what's going to happen out there to rural Saskatchewan.

Do you think, Madam Minister, that down the road we're going to have to find some other way of splitting up this money that takes into consideration the vast number of road networks out there in rural Saskatchewan to look after?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned in my previous answer about the shares, that it's roughly based on population. But there are other factors to be taken into consideration. Like for instance last year we gave rural municipalities a \$3 million boost in the size of their revenue-sharing pool where the urban municipalities didn't get any corresponding increase.

So we took that into account when we made this year's

allocation. That in total this \$2 million addition would represent a \$5 million increase over the last two years to rural municipalities. So it is not quite as uneven as it might seem when you just look at it in isolation.

And then of course, so much of the Highways budget is spent in . . . not in rural municipalities but in rural Saskatchewan. And there are, depending where they're situated, a number of rural municipalities that are bisected or, you know, traversed by provincial highways that are kept up at provincial expense. Some are not so fortunately located and have no provincial highways within their borders — for them, it's difficult. But it's not a lot of money, but I think — and they have acknowledged that they'd like to have more — but it's a good first step.

(1445)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I guess — and it's probably not a fair question, but do you expect the \$10 million to all be used up this year? And I guess my other question then would be, if it is not all used up, because this is the first year of the program, will the excess, if there's \$2 million left over, will that be thrown in the pot for next year and be able for municipalities to reapply next year with next year's allotment, plus the money left over from this year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, what we have said, or what the Finance minister said in the budget, was that this is not a one-time allotment — the \$10 million — for this budget year only. That it's a permanent infrastructure program to be contributed to on an annual basis. And while we haven't made any undertakings to that, I guess the hope is that at some point in the future that contribution could even be increased.

So it's not as if it's a one-time thing. You know, it's got to be accessed right now or it's gone. And I do, in answer to the other part of your question, I certainly do expect it to be fully subscribed. And roads and transportation are not the only projects that are eligible, but we assume they'll be the major ones.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, is there a maximum on any project that any municipality, whether it's urban or rural, can apply for? Is there a set number that's the maximum you can put in for?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I'm told that SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) has requested that for rural-based projects there be a maximum of \$50,000 per project. And the urban municipalities have not asked for a maximum on the size of their projects. But we would want to . . . Once we receive all the applications, I'm sure the panel that reviews them in the essence of fairness will want to make sure that one large, for instance, in an urban setting, one large bridge project could eat up the whole pool. And I'm sure that the panel that is making the approvals wouldn't let that happen.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you said that the application forms are really not ready yet. I'm wondering if they are, they'll probably . . . I imagine they're going to be ready very quickly here. But how long is this going to take to process because we're already getting into

spring on into summer, and I think that's where my concern came in with the \$10 million being used up, because a number of these jobs will have to be tendered and go through the hoops. By that time, we may be too late to complete some of these projects this year.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the first step of course is to pass the Bill which is before us and that's what we're considering now. Then there's the regulations will have to be approved, the subsequent regulations, that give us the authority to have the money and make the structure and so forth.

I'm told that the applications will be, along with the regulations and so on, will be mailed out either the end of this week or early next week with the request that applications be returned by May 28; and it's expected that all the approvals will be in place by the middle of June. So that should leave enough time for an appropriate tendering process and to get the work complete.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, thank you, Madam Minister, and if it hinges on getting more money from municipalities on passing this Bill, I'll quit asking questions right now. Let's get this Bill on the road and let's get that money out.

Thank you to you and your officials, Madam Minister.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'm very pleased to have with me this afternoon Brent Prenevost from legislative services in Saskatchewan Justice; Monte Curle, the deputy director and deputy registrar of the corporations branch, Saskatchewan Justice; Mitchell Demyen, right behind me, manager in Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food; and then to my left, Dion McGrath, policy analyst with Saskatchewan Economic and Co-operative Development.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the minister and his officials — welcome. I'm looking forward to raising a few questions in regards to the two Bills before us. And, Mr. Minister, I believe Bill No. 43 basically is just addressing some of the bilingual aspects of Bill 42, so in that regards, the questions I'll be raising are basically related to both Bills so that we won't be raising questions separately in regards to the two Bills.

I note from your second reading speech, you mention about . . . And I'm going to quote from your speech:

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.

Mr. Minister, I think in Saskatchewan we're quite well aware of the co-operative movement. We're very well aware of how co-ops have . . . co-operative ventures have worked through the past number of years as we've had co-op stores, and retail outlets, and fuel distributors, and fertilizer — many enterprises. Sask Wheat Pool basically is a co-operative.

In fact even on a smaller scale, while they're not necessarily called co-operatives, the Weyburn Inland Terminal too in all respects was sort of co-operative in venture . . . or venture of a group of local farmers who were looking at a different means or a new method of trying to move product to market and trying to put a few more dollars in their pockets.

As I look at the present Bill before us and certainly it has a number of clauses. And I haven't — to be honest with you — I haven't had the time to go through all of them specifically. Considering all the legislation that we've seen in the Assembly to date, nothing even compares. I think we could put about 25 Bills together and still not have the same amount of paper tied up in this specific piece of legislation.

But I'm taking it, from this Bill No. 42, The Act respecting New Generation Co-operatives that the Bill has . . . Some of the intent is to make co-ops more competitive in not only in the Canadian scene but certainly in US (United States) markets making rural businesses more organized and competitive. We see that Saskatchewan has lost business since Manitoba and North Dakota introduced co-op legislation. And I believe this also addresses some of the tax implications for people when they set up businesses.

So I guess the first question I would have, Mr. Minister: am I on the right track when I talk about the tax incentives and the need to become more competitive? And as well, Mr. Minister, in designing this piece of legislation we have in front of us today, who would you have consulted with over the period of time in putting together this piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that the summary that the member has given is a good summary of the intent of the legislation and the purpose of the legislation, which is to enhance the development of the co-operative movement and allow it to work in a new age and a new time. The specific key policy features in this are the fact that the new generation co-op model or plan allows for access to non-member capital while retaining the membership control. And that's a key feature when you get into very large projects where your members don't have enough capital to do all of that.

There are other features that relate to non-par-value preferred shares which have some floating value in a market. Also the fact that some of your non-members can be board members, only up to 20 per cent. Also there's ability to dissent in the operation and also we're expanding some of the opportunities for flexibility when co-ops are wound up.

It think you've correctly identified that this is very consistent with federal legislation and Manitoba co-op legislation, and we've learned things from what they've done and are improving and expanding it. It's also a first step as we look at co-operative legislation in Saskatchewan over the next few years.

You asked who had been consulted and there are quite a number of people have been listed, but I will list a specific list that will help you get a flavour of the people who've been involved.

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan; Federated Co-ops . . . Co-operatives Ltd.; Credit Union Central and their members; Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Federation of Production Co-operatives; The Co-operators; Co-operative Trust, Dairyworld Foods, which is Dairy Producers Co-operative, and the Community Health Co-op Federation. Those are the specific groups that we've talked to within the co-operative sector.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, when this Bill comes into effect and becomes law and is actually allowed to begin to function, where do you see it being utilized firstly? Are you perceiving that we're going to see initiatives taken in the agricultural sector; what types of sectors you identified. Short line rail is one area that it may have a role to play.

And I'm wondering what fields of this nature that your department is anticipating this piece of legislation would be a benefit to, in groups whether it's producers or individuals or even companies, corporations, getting together to enhance business opportunities in this province.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. There have been specific groups that have been interested in this legislation and primarily in the agricultural sector. So this legislation actually is directed to the agricultural sector, and in that we have included the short-line railway option. The various agricultural parts that have been interested have been the bison industry, the durum people, the wild boar, herbs and spices, even some in the chicken and poultry, that area as well. Those are the ones that have specifically asked at this stage.

But what we do know is if we give the tools, then our Saskatchewan people are innovative and imaginative and they will use the tools to develop new businesses as well.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you mentioned bison. I'm not sure if there are other organizations like the elk industry or the fallow deer, some of those industries, if you've had any inquiries from those associations in regards to this specific legislation to get information to see whether or not it might be something that would be a benefit to their associations.

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We've had some very preliminary inquiries from those industries, but practically it's open to all agricultural industries and related industries.

Mr. Toth: — Where do you perceive or see the biggest profit margin coming as far as co-operatives being set up in the

province under this piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to that question is that our producers in Saskatchewan will gain a greater percentage of the profit from what they produce if they also can have an interest in the processing part of it. And so the real advantage of this legislation is: allow for our producers to participate in new generation co-ops that then process what they have actually produced or their neighbours have produced and allow them to participate both in the production profit as well as the processing profit.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, you're probably aware, maybe your office is aware as well, we talk about agriculture and value added. In the southeastern part of the province and North Dakota, there's been a lot of discussion over the last almost two years regarding a pasta plant. Now I'm not certain to date if a decision has been finalized on that, but I know that in the past while anyway, at least since last fall or summer, they basically — the group that were discussing this — had ruled out setting up the plant in Saskatchewan, looking more at Manitoba and North Dakota.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if that type of initiative is something that would fall into — or if indeed if they haven't moved ahead with plans for a pasta plant — if indeed it might be the type of enterprise that would qualify; that this piece of legislation might give the investors a real option to take another look and revisit Saskatchewan as a possible location for this plant?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I have two very good answers to your question. One of them is that the prairie pasta producers consulted with our government officials as we prepared this legislation, so they're very interested in the legislation and they are supportive of the legislation. We take that to mean that they may also be interested in actually using the legislation to further their business in this Manitoba-Saskatchewan-North Dakota triangle area. And it would be clearly our hope that they would decide to use this legislation and set up their business in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, since this is somewhat of an economic development type of tool, I think I'm going to use that terminology, what factors are you looking at in regards to, say, revisiting what the current . . . this legislation once it's passed, whether or not it's meeting its objectives and review of the legislation to see whether or not it should be enhanced or reviewed or maybe some changes made to the legislation down the road. Have you got a process in place to re-evaluate it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We will be evaluating the legislation on an ongoing basis. Because this particular legislation is the first step in evaluating and renewing the co-op Act and co-op legislation generally.

So practically the response of the co-operative sector to this particular legislation and also the new groups as they use the legislation will be taken into account. And if there are changes that need to be made or adjustments that need to be made, well we'll be making those as soon as we hear about them.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, are there

any cost benefits in regards to the piece of legislation? Are there any financial costs to the department in bringing forward this legislation, or down the road? Or is it just . . . the legislation itself just gives authority for groups and individuals to form co-operatives — there will be no economic costs to the department or to government as a result of this piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd have to say that there are no additional costs. The corporations will be registered through the corporations branch, which already exists. The Economic and Co-operative Development department will have one more tool in their quiver, I guess, or in their tool bag. When they go to businesses to say to them, set up business in Saskatchewan, they can use this.

So practically it's something that provides opportunity, but it isn't going to cost the government or taxpayer a lot of money. We hope that actually it will benefit taxpayers by bringing new businesses here.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I think most people in this province hope that it may be just one of the tools that down the road we certainly can look at individuals looking at Saskatchewan as a place to invest or to move to or to become a part of. Certainly I think . . . personally I believe that this province does have a lot to offer. A lot of good reasons why this is a good place to live despite all the rhetoric and the problems. We have problems like everyone else, but it still has . . . there are many good reasons why we should look at opportunities.

Unfortunately large corporations haven't looked very favourably in reality at settling in Saskatchewan, and most of the businesses we do have, have actually come about as a result of somewhat co-op-like ventures. And so we're certainly hoping that this may be the case with this legislation as well.

In regards to the legislation, I note that when a co-op sets up a board of directors, does this Bill . . . are you providing for adequate insurance for directors if for example . . . and just a case in point, just the recent situation at Lucky Lake and the potato co-operative there and the bankruptcy. Now we haven't heard of anyone suing, but it would seem to me when you set up a directorship, you decide to set up a corporation, for example, someone decides to put a co-operative together and buy up a short-line rail system and you have a number of people investing in that system. If something goes wrong and it doesn't pan out, bankruptcy is declared. Are there provisions in the legislation to protect the directors of that co-operative when it is put together?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — In this particular legislation we've incorporated the standard director's liability provisions that are in the corporations Act and The Non-profit Corporations Act, 1995, and so it's the same standard right across the board. No special protection for these people but, practically, a reasonable and prudent director shouldn't have to worry.

Mr. Toth: — So can you just give us an example, Mr. Minister, of what mechanisms have been put into place to adequately protect the liability of directors?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Perhaps you're interested in looking at

page 70 of the legislation just where you can see that section 180, liability of directors — and there are quite a few provisions there but it also has the indemnification section which is section 181. And practically, what these sections do, as I said before, they provide for the standard protection of directors who are involved in corporations like this. Most often directors who are part of a corporation or business venture also would then purchase director's liability insurance which would make a full protective package with the provisions in the legislation.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess when it comes to setting up boards of directors, whether it's just a church board or a local co-op board or whatever, we all . . . each group and organization would hope they would have the most qualified persons available around that would be willing to put their names forward to act on a board and get involved with a co-operative.

And I guess one of the concerns certainly would be an issue that may come forward as a result of the liability that may hinge on a board of directors. And corporate governance models ensure that the board of directors know exactly what the roles and regulations are and how they must be adhered to. I take it, from sections 181 and 182, you feel that you have enough of a framework set up in this Bill that would certainly give directors of any co-operative that is set up under the legislation, that they would have adequate protection to put their names forward to act as a director and to give leadership to that specific organization. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes.

Mr. Toth: — And one final question before we go. Clause by clause actually could take quite a while. I think we could be here for a little while, so I won't ask a lot more questions. I'm assuming the Chair's going to call for maybe part by part rather than clause by clause.

It's indicated the Bill allows for new co-ops to emerge in agriculture-related activities as well as short-line railways. What is this based upon, since over the past few years many railways have been abandoned to elevator closures?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm not sure what the question was. Perhaps you could repeat it because we're not sure what you're asking.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What we're looking at here . . . You mentioned about short-line railways, and I guess one of the concerns we have when you talk about short-line railways, in many cases, what we're finding, groups over the past number of years — and we have one running south of Moose Jaw; I believe there's one running in the Swift Current area — some organizations have come forward, have put short-line railways in place, and those have actually worked out fairly well because they were able to get their short-line rail in place before companies had actually closed down elevators.

One of the concerns we have is the fact that many companies are moving very quickly right now to remove the physical plant from off a rail line. And I guess the concern is, this legislation may come forward, the opportunity to form a short line, but it may be too late because the elevators are already removed.

Nobody's going to, I think, form a short line if an elevator's already removed.

So I think those are . . . that's the question we're trying to get to, and whether or not there's been some discussion with groups who are certainly looking at this Bill as a means to set up a short-line rail. And the fact is will they be able to get their short-line rail co-operative set up in time and have access to the elevators that are currently on the line?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that clarification. I think the question is, is what is the time line and how quickly can this be done.

Our plan is to pass the legislation now. They're working on the regulations, hope to have them in place by September, some time in September. We already have some short-line groups that are around the province who are aware of this legislation and are looking at it, and they would hope to use that that quickly.

(1515)

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 356 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, to you and your officials we just want to say thank you for taking the time to come and address this lengthy piece of legislation. We certainly hope that it meets some of the goals and objectives that you perceive in bringing forward the legislation in dealing with inquiries by individuals regarding economic development of this province.

**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**

Clauses 1 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I make that motion I would like to make a special point of thanking the officials that I have here, along with a team of other officials within the various departments, who have worked on this project.

They have done an excellent job of pulling together the kinds of legislative examples and precedents to prepare legislation for Saskatchewan which we think will provide a new economic development tool. We very much appreciate the hard work that they have done and we'd like to thank them.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — 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. 42 — The New Generation Co-operatives 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 No. 43 — The New Generation Co-operatives
Consequential Amendment Act, 1999/Loi de 1999 apportant
des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée
The New Generation Co-operatives Act**

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Justice
Vote 3**

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, welcome.

Mr. Minister, a question that I'm sure possibly your office and no doubt every MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) office in this province receives time and time again has to do with maintenance. And I have some information in front of me that has arrived, I'm not sure, April of '98 from the province of BC (British Columbia). I believe they were bringing forward some new amendments in regards to maintenance, support, and some of the benefits.

But the question that I want to ask today has to do with especially fathers having access to their child. Now the reason I'm raising this is not just because it happens to be one of the issues that comes before me time and time again. But one of the major concerns of recent note that has been brought to my attention comes from a young couple that have remarried, and they have past spousal partners.

In the one case, the wife hasn't received a cent from her ex. In the other case, the young gentleman, he's been paying faithfully but what he finds is two things. Number one — while he's been paying he's had a job change, he's gone to try and get a reduction in his maintenance agreement that would be a little closer to what he's receiving as far as wages, and what really irks him is the fact that he just is denied access time and time again. And this is a question that has been going on for an awful long time.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what your department has

been doing to address the inequities when it comes to maintenance, maintenance enforcement, making sure that especially when we have partners, one lives in one province like we have in the specific case I'm talking about, but I'm sure you're aware of many cases where spousal partners, when they're divorced, one may settle or move to another province and you're dealing with different jurisdictions, what is the department doing to address the inequities out there and to make sure that people are treated a lot more fairly under maintenance agreements?

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well thank you for that important question because I know there are many people who become frustrated as they try to sort some of these things out.

One thing that I would say though is that in Canada we have the Divorce Act of Canada and most marriages that end, end up with an order or a judgment under the Divorce Act, and that is enforceable right across the country without a lot of difficulty.

We also have child support guidelines that are part of a national initiative so that the guidelines around child support are on a national basis, but each province has input into that.

We in Saskatchewan have, over the last couple of years, been working in a parallel fashion with the federal government on the issues of custody and access because we know that there are the kind of concerns that you register on behalf of either a constituent or somebody that you know.

And part of what we did in Saskatchewan was a study, and we have a report from that, which we had last fall, and we're continuing with that.

We're also waiting for the federal Minister of Justice to respond to the House of Commons Justice Committee report which was filed last, I think, December around some of the issues related to the changes to the Divorce Act and changes around custody access issues.

And we understand that the federal minister's report will be coming this month and we're looking forward to the kinds of suggestions they have so that we can continue to be part of the dialogue so that we can raise exactly the kinds of issues that you've raised here.

So there are quite a number of things that are happening right now but there are I think better ways that we can deal with some of these problems and we're trying to do that.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, what you have said is all fine and dandy, but I find that people on an ongoing basis continue to feel and find frustration in regards to the whole maintenance enforcement program.

For example, in a specific case that was brought to my attention, we have maintenance threatening one individual with either losing his licence, or having his licence confiscated. I believe Manitoba hasn't but I'm not positive, I know some jurisdictions have talked about it. Certainly in British Columbia we've talked about it and I believe actually here in

Saskatchewan we had some discussion on that last year — either garnisheeing wages, garnisheeing pension income, or if there's nothing there then taking away your driver's licence.

And the unfortunate part there is when you remove a driver's licence, if the person happens to be a trucker like the one case, then you take away their ability to drive any income and how do you . . . and then the harassment coming from the maintenance office to continue to provide your maintenance payments to your spouse and look after your children.

And then on the other hand we find when an individual goes to maintenance to ask for the maintenance agreement for the funds that are supposed to be coming to them such as the one situation I have, maintenance just seems to throw its hands up in the air. So I don't know why on one hand they can seem to like rule and threaten and then on the other hand not do anything. And then a spouse is left there trying to raise children and not receiving any income and basically the income . . . they fall on social assistance rather than being able to at least derive some income from their ex-spouse and those are some of the concerns that need to be raised.

Now you talk, Mr. Minister, about waiting for the federal government to release its report that it had done. I guess in regards to some of the comments I've just made, did your department . . . did you make a presentation to this federal committee in regards to the amendments that they are looking to make regarding maintenance and divorce? And also, Mr. Minister, I guess I would hope that you really spoke out quite strongly on some of the issues that need to be addressed.

So, number one, did you make a presentation of the basis of what was . . . your presentation made? As well, Mr. Minister, have you looked very closely at the British Columbia Act and this information that I have from the Minister of Attorney General reports and publications, information and assistance for parents — BC's new child support clerks. I'm wondering if you could comment on those questions I've just asked, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay, you've raised a lot of issues. I think what I would say is we'd have to be very careful to identify issues around maintenance enforcement and then maintenance variation. I mean how you change the maintenance order, and as the orders for maintenance are primarily made through court orders, it's the courts that can vary or change the orders.

But as it relates to our maintenance enforcement office, and I gave some of this information last night and I'm not sure if you received some of it, but in the last year, April 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999, the maintenance enforcement office processed payments of \$27,950,000 on behalf of Saskatchewan people. They also are now at a point where 80 per cent of the orders are being enforced and paid. That's as opposed to 20 per cent when we started this program.

You make comments about some of the changes that are being made in British Columbia. We've looked at those changes and basically they are catching up with us in every area except for one, and that one area relates to tracing money into and through corporations as you try to enforce a maintenance order. And we're actually looking at the provision that they're suggesting

as something that we may want to add in our system.

So I guess what I would say is that we have a very effective maintenance enforcement system and we use that once the orders are made. When you want to deal with the variations of the orders or changes to orders, then that should be done through the courts and it's in that area where the federal laws are important because most of those orders are made under the Divorce Act.

And we are continuing to participate in all the joint federal/provincial/territorial meetings that discuss changes to legislation. It's a topic at our Justice ministers' meetings and I have been a participant in making sure that we try to address some of these concerns for people. Because practically when people feel frustrated by the Justice system as it relates to their family law issues, it also affects their whole perception of how the law works.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I think you rightly did point to the fact and I believe we've chatted before on some of the issues, different issues, that have come forward in regards to having maintenance agreements somewhat changed. I believe a person would have to go back to the court where the maintenance was awarded in the first place.

And I'm not sure if they would have to appear before the same judge or if that judge would make a change, but one of the frustrations . . . and I'll just read a little bit of a letter I've just received.

Now that the husband that I have now has been dragged through court numerous times to get child support out of him, told by the judge to get a job or go to jail. I believe that my ex-husband should be taken to court also and told to get a job.

Sometimes I think some of the frustrations that people face, Mr. Minister, is when they get to court they're belittled for being in the court and either threatened or chided. And it's a major concern, Mr. Minister, that people feel that the court is there to act on their behalf and at least protect their rights. And a feeling of frustration that some judges may not be somewhat sensitive or even listening to the reasons why they're back in the court, Mr. Minister.

So I think that's an area that we need to address as well because some of the complaints we get from individuals may be directed at a specific person on the bench. And while we say judges are independent that's true we believe they are, but there's no doubt that each and every one of us has opinions on different matters. And while that shouldn't interfere I would have to say that it's pretty difficult sometimes to not let your opinions not interfere.

So how do we talk to, or get, people to understand and get the system to work for them so that the concerns they have and the frustrations they raise will eventually — and I would hate to use the word eventually because it sounds like it's way down the road — but those concerns would be addressed and that they would feel that they're now being treated with fairness, that they're being listened to, that there is at least a body that is somewhat sympathetic and is beginning to understand the

situation they're facing.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — You've identified an issue that we in Saskatchewan Justice, and I think other parts of the country, have been attempting to address. And basically it relates to the issue of what education people have about how the courts work, how they can make the changes that they need to make and do various things. We have an education program within the court structure that attempts to teach people about what they can expect when they're in court, what kinds of things that they need to do. And this works in conjunction with the lawyers who are involved in cases as well. Because often, as we know with any activity we take in life, it's the expectations versus what actually happens that becomes the big issue.

And I guess what I would say is you asked some questions around judges and how you deal with that. One of the things that we do have in our common law system is a system of appeals and also the use of precedent, and especially in the family law area, courts do listen to each other. They do end up with appeals where Courts of Appeal make policy choices around specific fact patterns which then provide information to other courts.

And we have over the years developed some fairly clear policy in most of the very contentious areas. But the difficulty is that no matter how imaginative a lawyer is, or how imaginative a judge is, there's always some new situation that a client's in that once again requires a judicious review and a decision. And that's why we have the independent judiciary that we do have.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, you talked about an appeal mechanism, and just most recently we've had Mrs. Milgaard talking about appeal mechanism too. And I've had the privilege of standing in this Assembly and debating a number of issues in the area of the Justice department and justice with former colleagues of yours who held the role of ministers of Justice.

When it comes to appeals, I realize we do have an appeal process within the judicial system. The unfortunate part is, Mr. Minister, I think one of the problems with that is, is that appeal process is strictly made up of people from the legal profession. And I don't see a real means where the common person is really represented there.

And I have to agree with Mrs. Milgaard, that maybe an appeal mechanism totally removed from and outside of that — could be a body that could have some opportunity to at least sit down with — might be an avenue, whereby people would feel that their concern is being listened to a little more sympathetically.

I find it very difficult to think and very hard to think that when you've just . . . having people within an organization acting as their own board, that you're going to get a sympathetic ear. We have that problem with regards to Workers' Comp and some of these other issues.

And I know we'll probably never reach that point where you have an appeal process outside of the legal community that has individuals who don't have a legal background being a part of that appeal mechanism that might give more of a feeling of independence to an appeal mechanism. But that's something

that I feel is down the road. We maybe should look at so that the public in general can feel that they're going to a committee that really is independent — it's not tied to and not protecting the body or the judiciary that it is part of.

But in regards to maintenance, I'm not exactly sure myself how we address all the concerns and questions here. And it's one of the suggestions that we've raised and talked with former ministers in the past, is a body before we reach the courts, some kind of a mediator — a mediation process and I believe the former minister, Mr. Mitchell, at one time talked about having some kind of mediation in place. Then if the parties just find that mediation doesn't work and they want to push it into the courts, well that's fine. That's a choice they make.

But it would seem to me that in some ways, despite all the legal opinions in the room we have today . . . I think we can always find a way to argue as to why you should go to court; it's a costly procedure. But I think if we can help people avert the court system, it might create more amicable relationships.

And having said that, Mr. Minister, just some personal thoughts here and I hope that we can arrive at a workable solution that addresses the concerns that continually fall on your desk and my desk as a result of people facing the problems associated with maintenance enforcement.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I especially appreciated your last comments about having some other process, because I'm very proud to say that we in Saskatchewan have one of the best mediation processes within our court structure.

(1545)

And right now . . . it originally started as a project in Regina and Swift Current, it expanded to Saskatoon, and as of yesterday it had expanded to Prince Albert as we move to a province-wide mediation process that is exactly what you were talking about, where a lawsuit is started, there is an attempt to go and talk about it with a mediator before it proceeds through the court to address some of the concerns that you have.

And so I appreciate the opportunity to let you know that as of yesterday that we now have that process available in Prince Albert.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a couple of questions for you in an area related to your department and that is dealing with C-68, the Firearms Act. I'm wondering what is happening with the court case and exactly where it is in procedures at the present time.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I can give you an up-to-the-minute report. Basically the parties to the particular reference to the Supreme Court of Canada have filed their briefs. The interveners have not yet filed their briefs. They should be filed this month. We were thinking that there was a possibility that we'd get a court date in June, but now it looks more likely that it will be September because the interveners' briefs have not yet been filed. But that's the current status of that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe you said last fall or early winter that the province of Saskatchewan

would not be carrying on any charges against anyone under C-68, the registration portions. Has anyone in Saskatchewan been charged under that Act?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As far as we know, no.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If there were charges that were laid under that Act, would they be dealt with through your department or would they be perhaps dealt with at the federal level going through Court of Queen's Bench and federal prosecutors?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — In most circumstances they would be handled by the federal prosecutors. We can imagine a situation where there might be a Bill C-68 charge that was lumped together with a number of other charges that would be part of a provincial prosecution, and that would be the only time that we would be involved.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't know if you're aware of this court case, Ray Korpus, which was just in the news here a couple of weeks ago, maybe a month or so ago. Did that in any way, shape, or form relate to any charges under C-68?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is no, that it didn't relate to Bill C-68. And I can't make any further comment because we think it's still within the 30-day appeal period. So it's possible that there could be an appeal in that matter.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would certainly encourage you to carry on with the court case in opposing C-68. I think the people of Saskatchewan are counting on it, and in fact demanding that their provincial government carry on with this particular legal action in opposition to C-68.

C-68 does not represent the wishes or desires of the people of Saskatchewan, nor does it serve the need that supposedly the federal government was trying to implement in bringing that forward; that there are much better ways and means to deal with this. And we have certainly seen that the cost structures that the federal government was talking about nowhere near match reality, and that the costs are significantly greater for no benefits, Mr. Minister.

So I would encourage you and the government to carry on with that fight.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that encouragement and support. And we will continue to keep you informed of the progress as we know of it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. And welcome to all your officials, some of whom are acquaintances, and perhaps may assist in addressing some of the questions that I have.

I want to start mine off by referring to a situation that people in rural areas are very concerned about, and if this question has been dealt with previously, forgive me. But it deals with our policing services in rural areas, which appear to be on the chopping blocks for many of our smaller detachments.

And I'm wondering if this . . . what kind of an impact, and if we can deal with some specific areas where there will be some significant cutbacks. In particular, maybe just globally, do you have a number or a figure on the number of members of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) that are short? Not short in stature — that's not the way I meant to say it — not under 5 foot. But the numbers that are not up to what the provincial requirements have been, to what extent are they less than what we would normally expect or should have to meet all the policing commitments and responsibilities for our rural areas?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. This whole area is an area of concern for me. You asked specifically what the number is that is a shortage in the RCMP positions, and our best estimate is around 70.

As you know, last week the Minister of Justice in British Columbia registered his concern publicly about the fact that there were 400 . . . a shortage of 400 in British Columbia. Both the minister in British Columbia and I, and I know some of the other ministers across the country, have registered a concern with the federal Solicitor General around the fact that they've closed down the depot and the training, because it's very difficult to hire the people that you need when you don't have the people being trained. And so we're continuing to work with the federal minister to see if we can get more attention paid to the fact of the training and then supplying the people.

Now one of the concerns you've raised is about the province in general, and I think for sure as it relates to the southwest corner of the province, because there's been some concern there. I know that my officials were again down meeting with the people in Eastend and Climax and some of the other communities last week. And there's no intention of pulling police officers out of that area. Because practically it's a very vast area and not a lot of people live there, but it's an important area that we need to police, and it's not our intention to pull out of that area or any other area of the province.

One of the things that I would also say is that we have been able to develop some very positive new relationships with some of our communities in the North, the New North communities. And the RCMP are part of the process as we go and talk with the community leaders about how the RCMP can provide policing which meets the needs of those communities, which is somewhat different than perhaps those parts of southern Saskatchewan where the policing is provided.

So I guess what I would say is that the RCMP are committed to a community policing policy and they are working with us, with the local communities as we try to discern what is the next generation of policing in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm going to make an assumption that the reductions are as a result of probably what's affecting a lot of areas — dollars and cents. Am I correct in making that assumption?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. I think there's been a federal government reduction or hold on the amount of money available for the RCMP, and that's the difficulty.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you for that again. Is there a determination by your department, Mr. Minister, as to what level should our police force be at province-wide to meet the needs of the whole province — smaller communities and some of those urban centres that we police?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As I said before, we have about 70 vacancies in the RCMP policing in the province, and we're very concerned about that. As I said, we're going to work with the federal government to see if they can't redirect their focus around the fact that there aren't enough officers trained to supply all of these places across the country.

Our provincial budget for the RCMP has increased the last two years. In '97-98 it went up 1.4 million, and in '98-99 it went up another 1.2 million. But we're having some difficulties as we try to work with the, I guess, hold that the federal Treasury Board has placed on the Solicitor General and the RCMP.

Mr. Osika: — I guess when this whole issue of concern about some areas of the province having less than adequate police services brought to mind that somewhere along the way, whether it's federal government or provincial, are forgetting the original purpose of having sent out the North West Mounted Police to the western areas to protect the settlers. And I don't think anything has changed.

I think, as a matter of fact, what we should be striving for is adequate policing, perhaps more policing than less. The constituency that I represent, some of the small communities have a grave concern that the cutbacks result in delayed police reaction or responses to situations that are serious in a lot of cases. So that is a concern.

And I wonder, Mr. Minister, when you are dealing or meeting with the people from Ottawa, the federal government, I know that it was the issue of Bill C-68 was raised earlier and — although I'm not convinced that people disagree totally with everything that's in that Bill — I know that there's strong opposition to the registration aspect of firearms for the Prairies. And I support very much and agree that this province should do everything possible to try and ensure that we are not burdened with a costly exercise that may not meet the objectives that perhaps were intended.

I guess what I'm saying is during your discussions with the federal people, does that come up? The topic of the costs that will be involved in a national registry which could be better put to use for additional police officers, additional mounted policemen and police services particularly in the Prairie provinces, particularly in Saskatchewan and in those smaller communities?

I've been there, Mr. Minister, as you know, and I know how essential it is for the smaller communities to be able to rely upon responses from a police officer within a reasonable period of time and not having to go through a third party; to be able to talk to a member from their local area who might be familiar with or acquainted with the situation, the territory, and the terrain.

It distresses me to hear that our detachments will be closed down and members not be expected to live within those very

communities that they're required to police as well. And I'm not sure whether that's being addressed during any negotiations as well. I think it's important for people to see their people who are offering police services within their communities, to become part of the local hockey teams or the baseball teams and the coaches for young people that are growing up, and in the schools. So hopefully those are the types of issues that are being addressed and discussed.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — You've raised quite a number of issues and I'll try to address some of them as well as I can.

You raised an issue around the cost of dealing with the gun registration. We have been very diligent and vigilant in talking with the RCMP and with the federal government to make sure that we're not paying for the part that relates to the Bill C-68, registration. And how they've done that, in response, is to have the people who are involved in that, who the RCMP actually are the contractor working with the federal government on the particular registration part — all of those people report to the northwest region rather than to F division, or the Saskatchewan troop, so that they can keep the budgets separate.

(1600)

And we keep asking them about that. Because I agree with you, that the last thing we want is for this huge, expensive registration system to suck all the money out of policing so that communities, whether they're large or small . . . And we have to acknowledge the RCMP work in serious crime — drugs and national criminal issues, as well as the local, community issues — we don't want the money taken away from there and concentrated on something we don't think will work. So that's one particular issue.

Another concern that we have and what's happened is the PricewaterhouseCoopers, a national accounting firm, is actually doing an audit or review of the RCMP and their expenditures; and we have asked to participate in that and we are being given a role in that along with some of the other provinces so that we can ask questions around provincial policing issues as they relate to the federal policing.

And so as that review continues I think you can expect to see both public reports . . . or if you would ask us we can share information with you, because exactly some of the questions and issues that you've raised are the ones that we're raising in light of a national policing policy. Is there one? What does it mean? How does that affect what happens in provincial policing and then also in the local community policing?

So all of those things are a concern and we're attempting to address those.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I'm sure that that will be comforting to people to know that these very serious problems that are facing the province are being addressed.

This question may or may not be fair. In the event that the situation continues to deteriorate as far as the availability and perhaps cost, would your government consider a provincial policing contract with a provincial police force other than the Mounted Police?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this time it's not our plan to do that because we have, with all of the frustrations that we have sometimes with the administration of the RCMP, we have a very good relationship with them.

Regina, we say, is the "Home of the RCMP." And it is. So we're very supportive of the RCMP and their role in provincial policing, but we're continuing to participate with them to make it a better police service for local communities province-wide and as a national police force.

So I guess I would have to say is no, we're very supportive of the RCMP and we don't plan to change that perspective.

Mr. Osika: — I'm very happy to hear that. And given that this is the 125th anniversary of the trek west, which will be re-enacted in the coming months, I'm pleased to hear that there is no immediate plans or at least any consideration for changing the "redcoats on the prairies" saga, as it hopefully will continue.

I thank you for those responses as far as our policing services are concerned. I'd just like to shift gears a little bit and now move on to something in the area of our courts, particularly with respect to courthouses.

Mr. Minister, since the closure of some courthouses, particularly the one in Kerrobert and the one in Melville, has there been any follow-up as to the effects of those closures? I still have some concerns that I'd like to share with you, and I was just wondering if you had done any follow-ups subsequent to the closure — the impact; the effects on judiciary, on the legal community — as far as how cases are now being handled, particularly in my community, or even in Kerrobert?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, I think it's an ongoing process that we're involved in and we continue to monitor the caseloads in various parts of the province. And that will continue.

We know that, for example, in Melville there's been some difficulty with some of the space that we've been able to use and we need to find better space so that it's accessible to everybody, and some of those things. So as we work through these things, different problems arise in different parts of the province.

We know for example that the workload in the courts in the northern part of the province is increasing, whereas in other places it's fairly static or going down, and so we end up having to ask questions around resources of where we're actually placing all of our personnel. But that changes from year to year. So we continue to monitor it and make decisions based on these statistics.

Mr. Osika: — I believe, you may recall some of the concerns that I expressed around the facilities that are being used to hold trials in Melville up to this point, and they continue to exist and prevail. As an analogy, I would hope that we're not waiting for something serious to happen before we put up a stop sign type of thing.

My concern has always been the security of the facilities in Melville — the protection, privacy . . . for the protection and privacy for the judiciary as well as the legal attorneys that need

to speak with their clients, need to speak with witnesses. That's a serious issue, and I keep hearing that there needs to be something more adequate than what's in place right now, Mr. Minister.

I was wondering if that was in the works in the immediate future. Again, it seems like we keep putting things off and then we say, golly, we should have done it earlier before this thing happened or that thing happened; we might have prevented it. I just wondered if there was anything in the immediate future.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well all I can say about Melville is that we're continuing to work with local people in the city of Melville and other places to see if there is a space that's more suitable. One of the concerns that happens is that when you do find a space, and we only use it for two days a week, for example, there may be somebody else who will come in and use it for five days a week and then we have to find another space. And so that's always a concern right across the province as we retain day space.

But I do know that in Melville, there is a continued discussion around space. And I think that if you have some suggestions or ideas, you can either bring them to me or I can have some of the officials contact you directly about further suggestions.

Mr. Osika: — Well thank you, I appreciate that. Would you consider reverting back to the way we were before and having our Court of Queen's Bench returned to the provincial courthouse that was in fact remodelled and renovated to accommodate the court services. Perhaps that might be in the future a consideration.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well unfortunately, or I think perhaps fortunately, Melville and area is quite a law-abiding area. And so the demand for the courts, especially the criminal courts, is not such that we would consider that this year. But like I said, we're continuing to evaluate this and there may be changes, and I guess that we always have to see what possibilities there are.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Perhaps by doing that it might ease the pressure on some of the other surrounding areas — that's what I had in mind. I'm always willing to help and offer some advice in that respect.

Could I now ask . . . go on to another issue. And again, I apologize if this question was asked before — I should be aware of it — but how many, could you tell me, Mr. Minister, how many lawyers are available through the legal aid system for individuals that cannot afford to get their own?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Approximately 60 lawyers.

Mr. Osika: — And roughly, would you have any idea, what their caseload per lawyer would be?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We actually went through this discussion last night, so I have the numbers right in my head; I can tell you. It's just over 300 cases per lawyer if you divide the total number of cases for a year by 60. There's just around 21,000 . . . 20 to 20,000 cases a year for the total legal aid system, and then there are 60 lawyers.

Mr. Osika: — Okay, thank you for that, and I can review the records of what happened before.

Okay, going on to something else, then. Can we talk a little bit about what's happening in the field of corrections. Are there any intentions or any plans to increase correctional facilities, remodel, in the very near future?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This year there was . . . we reopened the White Gull Camp, which is north and east of Prince Albert, and that provided some added space. There are some renovations and work in the process for the Regina Correctional Centre, but that's basically to replace space as opposed to expanding space. Clearly, we don't want to expand correctional space unless we absolutely have to.

Mr. Osika: — And I agree that, hopefully we shouldn't have to. The current accommodations, are they in fact adequate enough at a level which is tolerable, which is acceptable?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think over a year they are. There are some peaks of population throughout the year that put some pressure on the system, but we have various ways of trying to manage that. And sometimes it depends too, I think, on the numbers in remand. But basically we do have enough space on a normal year basis.

Mr. Osika: — Just to clarify a question that from time to time is asked and is asked of me by folks that aren't familiar with programs and the system within these centres. Are the inmates . . . are people who are in these institutions given an option to work or not to work during their stay?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The inmates themselves have a choice to participate in some of the work programs or the educational programs. And I think many people do take advantage of that, but they're not forced to do it.

Mr. Osika: — Are there any incentives offered to those who choose to remain the status quo, but may in fact if they had some incentive to work, that their sentences would be shorter perhaps or their stay would be shorter? Is there anything like that in place?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's exactly the program that's there. So if you participate in the program, it's part of the analysis of whether or not you would get a remission at the end of your sentence. And so that's very clear incentive to participate.

Mr. Osika: — Okay. Thank you for that. As far as going from the correctional centres now to youth facilities, do we have adequate facilities for young people that are in trouble and require supervision in our institutions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well this is an area where Social Services is in charge of the youth facilities and so we don't have all of the statistics and information there. Our role in the youth justice area is the courts, the youth courts. But we know that there are some pressures on that. But I don't have all of the details in that area at all.

Mr. Osika: — Okay. Thank you. I'm sorry to encroach on the other department. However, it would seem to me that for young

people and programs that there would be some exchange of ideas or some discussion between Justice and Social Services.

So getting away from the facility aspect, are there new programs being developed between your department and Social Services for the benefit of young people that may be committed to these institutions? And could you perhaps just give us a thumbnail sketch of what they might be.

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's a very good question. Part of what the youth criminal justice Act, the new federal legislation, has started further discussion in exactly this area around alternative measures. What we do have for young people and also adults, because we know eventually that some of them may end up in some of the adult corrections, is a fair discussion between the two systems as to how some of these programs should go ahead.

I can speak briefly about some of the youth facilities that are alternative-measures based. And some of them are similar to our Regina alternative measures program which is run through Saskatchewan Justice which includes some of the face-to face meeting between the victim and offender with various workers, or some of the family group conferencing type of things that the police get involved with.

There are quite a number of interesting things happening right across the province, and the attempt is to see how all these things will all fit into the new federal legislation. That's an ongoing discussion and it's something that's important, and I think it's something that we absolutely need to do as a community, as a society.

Mr. Osika: — I thank you for that also. I know that we oftentimes talk about the need for more facilities. And as we've said in this House many times, it's bricks and mortar whether it deals with health or deals with some of these other issues. The more important is to concentrate, I believe, in my humble opinion, on meaningful programs that at the end of the day will result in people becoming productive and contributing citizens. I guess that was the reason for my question as far as programs.

Are there programs that are perhaps more strict or more serious for the more serious youth offenders, and of what nature? Is there a disciplined environment, a separate one that would point them towards something similar to what's happening in other places — the need to accept responsibility, and at the end of the day see the benefits and the fruits of their labour as an incentive to become creative during their stay rather than just to be monitored and given free rein type of thing. I just wondered if Justice and Social Services had been talking about any stricter programs, if you wish, that are presently in place.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Most of the discussions about new programs will unfold as we start looking at the youth criminal justice Act and its effect on the whole system. And that's why we're continuing in our discussions with other provinces and with the federal government around that.

I think that some of the kinds of institutions that you are talking about are part of the array of options that are being discussed

right across the country. Here in Saskatchewan, I think some of the specific questions that you have would be better served by going and speaking directly to the people who are involved in the youth corrections in Department of Social Services, and I just don't have all that information with me.

Mr. Osika: — I thank you for that again. Just to go back, there was one question we were talking about — access to legal aid services. There must be a criteria, or what position would a person have to be in in order to qualify for assistance?

From time to time I hear from people that are saying, hey look, I just really can't afford it and yet I've been rejected or turned down. I wonder . . . and if this has been asked before, please enlighten me again.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't have the exact information, but basically it's provided for people who have income at a social assistance level, and basically the criteria . . . there's three tests for determining eligibility for legal aid services.

The first one is financial. Either you're receiving income from social assistance or your personal financial resources are at social assistance levels or the costs of obtaining the services of a private lawyer would reduce the financial resources to social assistance levels. So there is some possibility of somebody who is a low-income earner, that they would contribute something and then be able to qualify for legal aid.

And the second question is, what range of services are provided. Your law problem would have to be either a family law problem or federal criminal matter, adult and youth, all indictable matters or some reconviction matters, only when there's a likelihood of jail. So those are the kinds of cases.

If you take the third question, is sort of a professional assessment of the merit of the case. Some or all of the following issues are considered.

Is the case one that a reasonable person of modest means would commence or defend? Are the legal costs of commencing or defending an action reasonable compared with the relief that's being asked for? What's the seriousness of the legal or economic outcome of this case? Is there a possible defence to the charge? Like if there's no defence, that'll be a factor. Has the client been co-operative such as keeping appointments, keeping in touch? In other words are they really serious about defending their case, especially in a criminal case. And are they willing to work with the lawyers and other people giving advice in a reasonable way?

So those are the factors that are used. So you sort of have three different areas that you have to look at and assess before somebody would be qualified for legal aid.

Mr. Osika: — Is that done by way of an application by an individual? That's my first question. And then the second would be, to whom would that application go? Would it go to a tribunal? Would it go to an individual? And what is the normal time period of processing such a request?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Normally you would go to a legal aid office and fill out the form right there. Sometimes there's

another appointment where you actually have an interview. If you are turned down, there is a process for an appeal ultimately to the head of the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you again. Are there specific law firms or attorneys that are appointed to offer these legal aid services? I'm thinking about ensuring that there are accesses to this type of service throughout the province and not just in the larger urban centres.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically the way the legal aid system works in Saskatchewan is that we have a staff lawyer system; 95 per cent of all cases are covered by the staff lawyers.

There's a 5 per cent caseload that's farmed out to the private bar and these are farmed out all over the province. Lawyers who are in private practice have to apply or let people know that they're willing to take these cases. The rates are not like large payments, and so that practically there are lists in every area of the province, of people who will take the cases. But sometimes they'll say, well I'll take one or two at a time because they don't pay as well as some other cases.

Mr. Osika: — Okay, thank you. Mr. Minister, there's a question that also preys on people's mind as a result of ongoing investigations and trials that have been going on in recent months with respect to former members of this House. And the question is always raised, well what is this costing us as taxpayers or what has it cost to this point in time? Do you have any handle on that figure?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The information provided to me by the department is that between July 1991 and February 1999, the estimated costs incurred: the RCMP, 630,000; public prosecutions, 588,700; court services, 105,100; the total of \$1.32 million.

Mr. Osika: — That's a lot of money that unfortunately had to be spent, but I guess that's the way of life. Do you anticipate any additional costs in this ongoing issue?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There's no possibility that I can talk about cases that are either before the court or future prosecutions.

Mr. Osika: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. And I just want to conclude by saying that I do take comfort and I'm sure that the people that have been listening and perhaps hearing us talk about our policing services in rural Saskatchewan will take some comfort that you are very diligently monitoring the needs for policing services in rural Saskatchewan. Having been there, I know and I feel sorry for those people who see their detachments becoming smaller. And the accessibility to their policemen — their police people, men and women — is less and less accessible, less and less accessibility.

So I hope and I encourage you and I appreciate your commitment to continue to work with, discuss with the federal government what our real priorities should be on the Prairies and particularly here in Saskatchewan. That we do not need to have honest citizens registering firearms but we do need money to spend on additional police forces, police people in our rural areas. They need protection and assistance and comfort as much as people anywhere else and in urban centres. And the redcoats

have always supplied that to all people that came out here, all the settlers that came out to the West.

And I just want to end by saying that I'm very proud to have been part of that great organization, and it disturbs me to see it sort of dwindle from the Prairies. I don't want to see those redcoats disappear, and I'm sure the people of this province don't either.

So thank you, and thank you to your staff.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few more questions in regarding the fraud charges that have been laid on past members in the Conservative Party. And I was wondering if there was any more ongoing fraud cases that you haven't dealt with as yet.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As I said before, there can't be any comment about either present cases or future cases.

Mr. McPherson: — Can you then tell us, is your department doing any monitoring of the PC (Progressive Conservative) metro fund with the two and a half million dollars that was set aside to ensure that the Tory Party, the Sask Tory Party, doesn't have access to it at this election?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The policy of the department is not to comment on any investigations or any other matters, and that's the position that we would take here.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, I wasn't asking about any investigations. I'm asking you if you have a system in place where you're monitoring what's happening to these funds to ensure that the Saskatchewan Party, the Saskatchewan Tory Party now, can't use this money in the upcoming election. So it's just a monitoring process. Are you doing that?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What you're referring to is the role of the Chief Electoral Officer and so practically I can't answer that.

Subvote (JU01) agreed to.

Subvotes (JU02), (JU04), (JU03), (JU06), (JU05), (JU07), (JU08) agreed to.

Vote 3 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Justice
Vote 3

Subvotes (JU02), (JU04), (JU03), (JU06), (JU07), (JU08) agreed to.

Vote 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. I'd just like to thank the members opposite for their questions. I appreciated the chance to explain some of the things that we're doing.

Please feel free to ask other questions as the year goes out, and we'll try to provide answers for you. I'd also like to thank all of the staff who are here, plus all of the in excess of 2,000 people who work in the Department of Justice for doing the jobs that they do, often in very trying and tense situations, in a very professional manner. And I'd like to thank them all. Thank you.

General Revenue Fund
Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
Vote 30

The Chair: — And before we start, I would ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I have with me my deputy minister on my right, Brent Cotter. Behind the deputy I have Melinda Gorrill, who's the director of administration. And behind me I have Paul Osborne, the assistant deputy minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. And there are other officials with me that I will introduce as necessary. Thank you.

Subvote (IA01)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Mr. Minister, to your officials. It's good to see you here today, and I just have a few questions.

First of all, Mr. Minister, with the Year 2000 coming up, I'm sure the government is planning some millennium events. Can you give us an idea of what they are and how many dollars it's going to cost us?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I thank the member opposite for the question. Saskatchewan is focusing on being a facilitator for the communities who want to celebrate and so we are focusing less on our own events and more facilitating the events of communities.

We're operating on a relatively small budget. I think our entire budget for planning, which includes the Internet site and the actions of trying to work with communities in finding an identity for their activities and providing facilitation for them, is in the order of \$350,000 if I'm not mistaken. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, is there any direct grants or monies given to communities then for their own individual events that they'll be holding out in all the towns?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — There will be a small amount of that \$350,000 which may find its way to some special community projects that are presented that have merit. It'll be a modest support for a small number of projects that reflect the flavour of this celebration in Saskatchewan province-wide.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I guess I'm going to ask you to be more specific, because I'd like to know how would you decide which is some project that will reflect the flavour you're looking for.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — One of the projects that we are . . . Let me begin again. We have had a millennium advisory committee working with Dickson Bailey who's the departmental lead on

this. And one of the suggestions that's being made by the advisory committee is that they might want to look at the Saskatchewan atlas project, which is being carried on by the university possibly to help create either the CD (compact disc) or the atlas book itself, possibly to help in the distribution of that atlas to the schools.

That's the sort of idea we're thinking about — something that will have lasting value that's a reflection of an important turning point in the history of mankind here and a small remembrance that is really quite universal for everybody.

Ms. Draude: — So, Mr. Minister, I take it that means there isn't going to be a big New Year's Eve party at Government House or that type of thing. Mr. Minister, I notice that there was a sizeable increase to the anniversaries secretariat and I'm wondering if you can tell me what that money will be used for?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The increase in the anniversaries budget is the planning around this celebration. And the advisory committee that was put in place by the previous minister, and which has been working very hard since then, has also been given the responsibility to look at the longer celebration window of the period from the millennium next year to Saskatchewan's centennial in the year 2005. And so they're beginning to look at options for recognition events to celebrate Saskatchewan's centennial as well. So there is a small build up in the capacity within the department to manage this celebration and the carrying on of that celebration into the year 2005.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I've had a number of comments from around my constituency, different seniors groups that are planning events for the Year of the Older Person this year, and I'm wondering what kind of monetary commitment the government has given to these groups, if any?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I'm advised by Dickson Bailey, the official who is seated two behind me here, that that is a process that will be driven and funded out of the Department of Social Services.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I know also in the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, I notice that treaty land entitlements has actually gone down for this year, and I'm wondering if we're at the end or near the end of paying off Saskatchewan's portion of treaty land entitlement money?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — In the signing of the treaty and land entitlement structure, Saskatchewan's committed funds were scheduled to be paid to the federal government over 12 years because it was anticipated that there would be a quicker settlement of land entitlements in the first six years and the amount allocated was higher per year for those first six years.

We're now entering the second six years of the payment schedule and the amount is significantly lower on an annual basis from here to the end of the payment schedule.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I understand from what you just said that the money will go directly to the federal government and they pay the bands? Is there any money that goes directly to the bands from the government for treaty land entitlement?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, I think you essentially have it correct. We pay to the federal government into a trust and then when the federal government has approved the entitlement lands for transfer, then these funds are expended to the bands for their contribution to their purchases.

Ms. Draude: — Is there money given from the provincial government to Indian bands for specific land claims?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I didn't quite catch the question because I answered the last question mildly incorrectly. The federal government actually having us transfer the . . . we having transferred to their trustee, then transfer to the First Nations trust on an annual basis so that it's available to First Nations.

Maybe I could ask you to repeat your last question.

Ms. Draude: — I must ask this mildly. Mr. Minister, I was talking about specific land claims. And I'm wondering if there's any monies given from the province to specific land claims. And I hope that this is mildly the correct answer.

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you. No, there is not. In fact the whole question of specific claims is under discussion with the federal government. We are hopeful that they are recognizing their duty with respect to specific claims.

As you know, specific claims are a much smaller total bundle of claims than the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement that we signed jointly. There are also claims that result from the federal government having removed unfairly Indian access to Indian lands, and the specific claims are a reclaiming of that land which was taken inappropriately from them. And so it is a direct federal responsibility and the federal government will deal with those on an independent basis.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, with the social policy reform initiatives that the provincial and federal government are undertaking, are there obligations for provincial money under that program as well?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I'm assuming your question originates in the new Social Union Agreement which I had the privilege of working on and which premiers agreed to with the Prime Minister only a month or two ago. The provinces have obligations and the federal government has obligations under the Social Union Agreement, and each of us is required to review the services we provide and access for Canadians to the services we provide through that agreement.

So the first stage of the implementation of the Social Union Agreement is that each of us needs to review our existing programs to see whether they meet the commitments we made under the Social Union Agreement. For example commitments to access to mobility, which means that Canadians are not restricted by program design from access to programs in one province or the other, is Saskatchewan doing anything that restricts the mobility of other Canadians to access programming? And so that becomes the first obligation we have under the Social Union Agreement. And should there be actions required, it will grow from that assessment.

Ms. Draude: — I hate to belabour this, Mr. Minister, but could you just tell me in clear and simple terms, have you put any money into that initiative right now? Or what's it cost to do the work so far?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — There is no requirement under the agreement for money and we have not put any in, other than the responsibilities that we had as the lead province in the negotiations. And so our responsibilities will flow from an examination of adjusting our programs to meet the conditions of the Social Union.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, you indicated that the money from the Treaty Land Entitlement went into the First Nations fund. I guess before we go further I'll just ask you if that is in fact correct, that money goes into that fund?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — If I used the English language carelessly, I should not have. They go into individual band trusts as opposed to . . . not the First Nations fund that exists in other agreements. The individual bands each have a trust with respect to their treaty land entitlement money, which they have a responsibility to then use in an appropriate way to meet their obligations under the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, then there is no provincial money that is going directly to the bands. Can you . . . can the people of this province feel secure that any money, any provincial money that's going to bands is fully accounted for by our Provincial Auditor and that there's no doubt that any money that goes directly from the General Revenue Fund to bands in Saskatchewan is accounted for — every penny?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Every penny that Saskatchewan pays into treaty land entitlements goes directly to the federal government. The federal government then has the obligation to set up the accountability mechanisms for the transfers and the spending of those funds with respect to the First Nations trusts.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just wanted to make sure that there isn't any other funds. I know that through the First Nations fund, there is monies that cannot be audited . . . that is not audited by the Provincial Auditor, but that wouldn't be going through the government. They go through the Crowns. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — There have been and there may in the future be more arrangements where a First Nation has agreed to be a partner with a department — let's say Social Services — in the delivery of a program, and that an individual department might have a relationship where the First Nation accesses funds because they both feel that they are in a better position to deliver a program than the department in some instances. That money would be accounted for through the individual line departments in their expenditures. Nothing would flow from my department into those kinds of arrangements.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't have any further questions. Thanks to your officials.

Subvote (IA01) agreed to.

Subvotes (IA02), (IA14), (IA15), (IA16) agreed to.

Vote 30 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
Vote 30**

Subvote (IA16) agreed to.

Vote 30 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I want to thank the members opposite for the informative discussion on the management of my department. Thank you for all of your questions. I want to, as well, thank the officials who have joined us here, for their work in respect to this — thank you.

**General Revenue Fund
Finance
Vote 18**

Subvotes (FI01), (FI02), (FI04), (FI03), (FI06), (FI05), (FI07), (FI08), (FI09) agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Finance — Servicing the Public Debt — Government Share
Vote 12**

Subvote (FD01) — Statutory.

**General Revenue Fund
Debt Redemption, Sinking Fund and Interest Payments
Votes 175, 176, 177**

Votes 175, 176, 177 — Statutory.

**General Revenue Fund
Finance
Vote 18**

Vote 18 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Finance
Vote 18**

Subvote (FI09) agreed to.

Vote 18 agreed to.

The Chair: — I thank the minister and his officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the opposition for their co-operation and also the deputy minister, Mr. Jones who's here with me. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — I'd like to thank the minister and his officials.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS