

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan seriously concerned about the state of our highway system.

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 every pray.

And the signatures on these petitions are from Regina, from Assiniboia, from Arborfield, and from many other small communities from around the province.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, again this afternoon I present petitions from residents of the northwest requesting that the dangerous and unsafe congestion at the entrance to the city of North Battleford be alleviated by moving the junction of Highways 40 and 16.

Your petitioners this afternoon come from North Battleford, Sonningdale, Battleford, Glaslyn, Cochin, and Meota.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring forward petitions in regards to a regional hospital in Swift Current and the need for it. 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 speciality care hospital, and to immediately provide funding for purchase and operation of both imaging equipment and a renal dialysis centre.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are from Swift Current, Hazlet, Val Marie, Abbey, Glenbain, Neville, Morse, Hodgeville, Shaunavon, Ferland.

I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens that are concerned for the plight of our farmers in this province. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, those who've signed these petitions come from throughout the Thunder Creek constituency, as well as all over the province.

I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise again 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 so deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks from Alida, Carnduff, and Estevan.

I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege once again to rise on behalf of citizens who are concerned with the education of some of our most vulnerable in Saskatchewan. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide essential funding and ensure the delivery of scientifically proven diagnostic assessment and programming for children with learning disorders and 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 Waskesiu, from Christopher Lake, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, and I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act, an Act to rename provincial Highway 339;

I also give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 2, an Act to rename provincial Highway 363;

As well I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 16, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 43;

I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 17, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 202;

And as well I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, The Romanow Road Act No. 18, an Act to rename provincial Highway No. 301.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Hon. members, earlier today at Government House, tribute was paid to 26 Saskatchewan recipients of national and provincial honours. Twenty-five of these recipients and their guests are seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon, and we want to recognize them in the Legislative Chamber here today.

In just a moment I'll invite the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, and Leader of the Third Party to make a few brief remarks, and then invite members of the Legislative Assembly to take the opportunity to introduce their constituents.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you've pointed out this morning, it was our pleasure, those of us who had the opportunity to be there, to speak, and to recognize Saskatchewan citizens who have received some of the highest honours of our province and our nation. The highest honours that we can bestow and they are in the Speaker's gallery, as you have pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, this morning in my brief remarks — I hope they were brief — I tried to point out that it's important that we note that we ask the Crown to give these honours and awards on behalf of a grateful province and a grateful country. We ask the Crown to present the Order of Canada and the Saskatchewan Order of Merit to recognize what I described as heroic achievement and dedication across a wide range of endeavours: medicine, civic administration, research, fine art, community service amongst some of the fine endeavours.

We also, as the Crown, present the Order of Military Merit to members of the Canadian Forces who have demonstrated leadership and achievement often including going into harm's way as peacekeepers in the international community. And we ask the Crown as well to present bravery decorations to people who have risked their lives to help people who needed their help.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we heard the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), as we will in a moment, introduce individually these very, very fine and very special people, and when they did so this morning at Government House they briefly described their achievements. And I can tell my

colleagues who were not present and those who'll be watching this on our cable network television that for me in any event — I think that our colleagues will find this as well — the achievements are very impressive and how moved we all were to hear the stories of dedication, of commitment, and of downright heroism in a case of the acts of bravery.

May I say these are going to be stories which are role models for not only us but future Saskatchewan and Canadian people.

So I describe these people as real heroes whether they had one shining moment of extreme bravery or whether their heroism was in their perseverance and dedication to their work. They are nonetheless real heroes. And for that reason it is entirely good and right that we recognize them and their efforts right here in this Legislative Assembly.

We've thanked each of them with the honours and awards they've received and we now honour and thank them again in the home of democracy in Saskatchewan, the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. and congratulations to all our recipients.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a privilege . . . privilege . . . Wow that was a tough one — there must have been more in the water than the ice cubes!

No indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous honour to recognize along with the Premier and the Leader of the Third Party the tremendous accomplishments of these individuals. As I stated this morning, we in Saskatchewan are blessed by the fact that we have so many people in this province who are willing to give of themselves, whether it be through time, through effort, or indeed as the Premier has indicated through heroic bravery incidents.

We are very, very grateful to these individuals for the fact that they have committed so much to the province of Saskatchewan and to the nation as a whole. When we recognize our national award winners and we recognize the recipients of the Order of Military Merit or the bravery recognition decorations, we recognize people who have contributed so much to the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to say on behalf of the official opposition, congratulations, we are truly blessed to have you as our recipients this year. And it is a pleasure to recognize and to honour you. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, today at Government House, I had the privilege, the sincere privilege, to offer the toast recognizing the 26 Saskatchewan recipients of national and provincial honours.

Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned, many of them are here this afternoon in your gallery. Those men and women have earned

some of the highest awards this country can give to recognize those who work and act to make Canada and this province a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, the actions and works of the recipients should stand as an inspiration to all of us to strive to help all those we can. After all, Mr. Speaker, in the end that is what the awards are all about — the recognition of those who help make everyone's life better.

Mr. Speaker, to the recipients here today and to all those countless others that act and work to help others — I congratulate you. And I thank you for helping to make Saskatchewan, to make Canada a better place to live.

As I said earlier, it is indeed humbling to have the privilege of participating in recognition of people who extend themselves for the betterment above and beyond the call of duty for our country, for our province, and for their fellow man.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, once again congratulate each and every one of you for all your efforts. And I thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — In just a few seconds I'll call on members of the Legislative Assembly to individually introduce honours' recipients from your constituencies. And at that time I would ask honours' recipients, when being introduced, if you would stand while being introduced, and then remain standing through the applause that I know that you'll receive.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Dr. John Gerrard, Officer of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the member for Saskatoon Sutherland, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Dr. Ali Rajput, Officer of the Order of Canada, and Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — And while I'm on my feet, on behalf of the member for Saskatoon Northwest, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Clifford Wright, Officer of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Miss Freda Ahenakew, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Angus Campbell, Member of the Order of Canada, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. William Pehudoff, Member of the Order of Canada, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Again, Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, an equal pleasure, to introduce Mrs. Gladys Rose, widow of the late Mr. Gerald Rose, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce Miss Carole Sanderson, Member of the Order of Canada, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Chief Warrant Officer Robert Frosst, Member of the Order of Military Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege for me to introduce to the House, Master Warrant Officer Graham Goodrum, Member of the Order of Military Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Ms. Isabelle Butters, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Dr. Constantine Campbell, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you Mr. John Green. He is a Member of the Order of Canada and a member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and the Assembly, Mr. Stacey Millham, of Stockholm, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Darrel Morin, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Hon. members, it is my pleasure to introduce from my constituency, Constable Randy Armitage, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And also from my constituency, Constable Todd Booth, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to the Assembly, Corporal Marc Girard, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Hon. members, it is also my pleasure to introduce from my constituency, Mr. Gordon Knox, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And also from my constituency, firefighter George Paterson, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And I would like to also introduce Mr. William Reiman, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And in addition, to introduce to you Constable Norman Renwick, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, from the other Moose Jaw constituency, I am pleased to introduce to our House today, Mr. Dale Santa, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And also, pleased to introduce to the Assembly, Constable Thomas Savage, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And finally, of our honours' recipients, I introduce to you from my constituency, Constable Anthony Tirebuck, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Hon. members, introductions of other guests.

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the east gallery we have a group of students from Delisle Elementary School. I would ask you and all other members to welcome the students,

including Kyle, who is in the chair here by the main entrance.

This group is made up of 37 students, 11 chaperones, and 3 teachers — Mr. Keesey, Mrs. Williams, and Mrs. Konecnik. And I will be pleased to meet with this group at 2:30 for pictures and refreshments in room 255. Please help me welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we just had introductions from very . . . of some very esteemed people in Saskatchewan: Members of the Order of Canada, the Order of Military Merit, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and people who have received a bravery decoration.

I would like to though, Mr. Speaker, introduce to you a group of very special people who made all these awards and decorations possible. I am referring to the family, friends, and spouses of all our award recipients. And I would ask them all to rise so that this Assembly may honour them as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, a group of 66 grade 5 students from McLurg School in my constituency of Regina Sherwood. I'm here to welcome them this afternoon. I'll be meeting with them a little later at 2:30 as well.

And I'd just like to welcome their teachers, Carol Grant, Debbie Kivela, Barb Slywka, and their chaperones, Val Kiraly and Sandy Zelinski. I hope you have a good visit and we'll see you soon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that gallery we have a number of students from northern Saskatchewan. They're here with the class of the Dumont Technical Institute.

And I want to just quickly rattle off a few of their names. There's Roy Montgrand, Priscilla Wolverine, Collette Sylvestre, Clara Janvier, Brenda Sylvestre, Leonard Sylvestre, and Florence Piche. And they're here to watch the Assembly for a few hours today. And they're also accompanied here by their instructors, Cecile O'Neil and Roger J. Morin.

And I think I'm forgetting one of them. I'm not sure if this is correct, but the one I'm forgetting I will buy lunch for this evening. And I want to welcome all these fine people that come all the way from La Loche to visit the Assembly here today.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is International Midwives Day and, as people in the Assembly will know, a few days ago we introduced an Act respecting midwives in the province of Saskatchewan, and of course we're hoping that we can pass that legislation this afternoon.

But in the east gallery is a group of predominantly women — along with their children — who are called Friends of Midwives. And these women have lobbied actively the provincial government, and no doubt the opposition, for a number of years in the hopes that we could have legislated midwifery in the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to introduce the women who are in attendance this afternoon, and I'd ask them to stand: Eileen McKenzie, Maryanne Zuzak, Carol Thompson, Sylvie Roy, Rita Richardson, Laura Forrester, Michelle Sanche, Karen Herriot, and June Friesen.

I'd ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome these wonderful advocates for midwifery in the province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Health in welcoming the women, the Friends of Midwives, and I notice some of the midwives here today as well, into the gallery. We are looking forward to passing this Bill today so that midwifery can go on as one of the important parts of being a woman and of having children in this province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce a friend from the constituency but before I do, I want to also add my greetings and thank yous to all of those who have been honoured here today and those who've accompanied them and been their partners and friends in the lives that they have lived to so well . . . service all.

In the west gallery is a friend from my community at home and the school district in which I used to be the trustee, Susan Stanek, and she is a wonderful, committed volunteer in the community — farmer, and a mother of one of my ministerial assistants who is also a very competent and exceedingly good servant of the public.

So I ask you to introduce Susan Stanek . . . to welcome Susan Stanek.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party in recognition of Emergency Preparedness Week. Over the past couple of weeks there has been news reports indicate . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I believe the hon. member is making a statement? Yes. I haven't called for that yet. We're still in introduction of guests.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's four people I want to acknowledge so I'll just efficiently do it all at once. And that would be from the Women's Secretariat and part of the honours family group today, Denise Savage, who is the most excellent person in the Women's Secretariat. And she's here with her mother Gladys Savage Gorrill, and they would stand and be recognized.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And I want to also acknowledge the midwives, many who have actively lobbied me from my constituency, and congratulate them on the baby steps that we have taken today toward full midwifery service in the province.

Also it's a real pleasure to recognize Calvin Racette in the west gallery, who has been very involved in the identification and preservation of Metis artistic and cultural arts and artifacts, but as long-time teacher and principal as well. And if he would stand and be recognized.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And Willy Hodgson from Moose Jaw, who was a wonderful support to my daughter in a difficult time. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, finally again from Moose Jaw, seated in the back pew of the west gallery is the next MLA from Moose Jaw Wakamow, Debbie Higgins.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Midwives Day

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the official opposition in recognition of International Midwives Day.

Mr. Speaker, midwives offer a special kind of care and education to an expecting mother who makes a birth a wonderful experience instead of just a process. Expecting mothers are made aware of childbirth choices, of the advantages of eating properly during pregnancy, counselling on dealing with postpartum syndromes, and many . . . a host of many other issues.

Midwives believe that every individual has a right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations. They also feel that the normal process of pregnancy and birth can be enhanced through education, health care, and supportive intervention.

Mr. Speaker, the midwifery process is focused on the needs of the individual and the family for physical care, emotional and social support.

I would like to commend the midwifery association of Saskatchewan on their efforts on making this a reality in our province and I look forward to the next step in the process, which will be to have a financial provincial support for births attended by midwives.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Building Permits on Rise in Saskatchewan

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here I am again with more good news about Saskatchewan provided by those NDP (New Democratic Party) hacks at Statistics Canada. They must be working for us because they keep twisting their numbers to back us up when we say things are on the hop here.

This time it's building permits. They're up. They're way up in Saskatchewan. Total building permit values, residential and non-residential, increased by 60 per cent in March over the previous month.

The national average was only 18.7. Manitoba's increase was 28.4. And get this, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's jumped by a whopping 11.1.

That's just one month, you say. Well let's look at the year. March to March, Saskatchewan's rate increased by 14 per cent. Manitoba, on the other hand, declined by 19.3; and Alberta, that great province to the West, dropped by 4 per cent.

One more statistic, this year to date January to March, Saskatchewan's total building permit value increased by 11.3 per cent over last year. Manitoba's declined by 1.7; Alberta's by 9.2 per cent.

You know, Mr. Speaker, somebody may be building in Alberta, but they're doing it without a permit.

But in Saskatchewan we've always been more law-abiding than in freedom-loving Alberta where the air is free but the health premiums cost \$840 a year. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Program for Children With Cerebral Palsy

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Many members may be aware of a parent-initiated program for children with cerebral palsy called Conductive Education operating at Estey School in Saskatoon.

This program started on March 1 and will conclude at the end of this month. The program which is new, has attracted children with cerebral palsy from all over our province. And this program has been very strongly endorsed by parents because it teaches children the basic skills that they need in everyday life.

There's been some financial support from the Department of Education through basic policy funding, but most of this funding, Mr. Speaker, has been borne by the parents. Three founding families have found themselves \$40,000 in debt because of financing this program for their three children and the 18 other children who have come from around Saskatchewan.

Since this program involves our children, the province's children, Mr. Speaker, it would be most appropriate for the department to ensure that this pilot project receives the support that it deserves. By doing so the organizing families, the moms and dads, are not left with crippling debt, and Saskatchewan children with cerebral palsy will be allowed to experience this

new and innovative program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Doctors in Twin Rivers Health District

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The enthusiasm of the member from Swift Current is contagious. I have two pieces of good news from Lloydminster constituency. First it rained last week. I think it was rain. It's been so long, Mr. Speaker, that I forgot what rain looked like. We need more of course but it's a good start.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that since December the Twin Rivers Health District in my area has attracted five new doctors. Four of them live in my hometown of Maidstone but they all work around the district. These doctors are a very welcome addition to our communities. And I want to welcome them by name on behalf of my constituents.

Dr. J.J. Pretorius arrived in December of last year. Dr. Annette Viljoen came in January, as did Dr. Gavin Van De Venter. Dr. Hilda Peplar and my doctor, Dr. Katherine Meyer, completed the list, having set up practice last month.

Putting funding into rural doctor recruitment did work. And I want to . . . I'm thankful that as a government we listened to our rural district health boards.

Total resident physicians in the Twin Rivers Health District is now nine. A warm welcome to our new doctors, and they tell me that they are enjoying rural Saskatchewan and the folks who live there. I don't blame them. I love rural Saskatchewan too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Battlefords Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening I was pleased to be present at the Sixth Annual Battlefords Business Excellence Awards. This prestigious event is presented by the Battlefords Chamber of Commerce, the city of North Battleford, and the town of Battleford.

It honours business excellence in the following categories: the Heritage Award which was given to Ulmer Chev Olds after 83 years of history in the Battlefords; the Property Appearance to the North Battleford Dairy Queen; New Business to the Garden Market IGA, Community Involvement to Battleford Furniture, Young Entrepreneur to Rae Ann Remeshylo-Barclay; Customer Service to Mark's Work Wearhouse, and Business of the Year to Battleford Furniture.

Each winner was presented with a replica antique desk specially created by master craftsman Stan Wychopen from Battleford.

This event is an evening of celebration of business excellence, and I would like to congratulate the participants, the sponsors — SaskTel, Battlefords Credit Union, Royal Bank, SGI, SaskEnergy, SaskPower, and Whirlpool Ltd.

Congratulations for another successful BBEX (Battlefords Business Excellence Awards). It was a very upbeat mood, Mr. Speaker. In fact they even applauded the Deputy Premier.

SGI Donates Uncut Eyeglass Lenses

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday our Minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation helped SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) make an unusual, a valuable, and a very worthwhile and lasting contribution to the Third World.

SGI presented \$22,800 worth of uncut eye glasses to Operation Eyesight Universal. It's an organization that distributes eyeglasses in the Third World to needy recipients.

SGI came by these lenses as a result of a waterline rupture at Prairie Ophthalmics in Saskatoon. The lenses were soaked but far from ruined. They just could no longer be sold as new. And SGI stepped in and found a way, Mr. Speaker, to put those lenses to good use.

Operation Eyesight Universal is a charitable organization that distributes glasses to many people. It also runs projects to restore eyesight to the poor and to prevent blindness in children.

It's moving to see firsthand the evidence of Saskatchewan's common sense, caring, and sharing efforts, on behalf of so many people whose needs are all too often not met. God bless the great people at SGI that made this happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Safety Patrol Week

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to rise today on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party in recognition of School Safety Patrol Week. Mr. Speaker, safety patrollers are a familiar sight around any school ground, with their reflective vests, stop sign paddles, and the well-known sound of their whistles. They stand on guard and they are on a mission to keep their fellow students safe.

There are many reasons why kids become safety patrollers, but most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it gives them a sense of purpose and that they are contributing to the well-being of the students and their communities.

For sixty years school patrollers have helped students get to and from school safely. I would like to congratulate all of the safety patrollers who, regardless of inclement weather, are out at their post ensuring the safety of their fellow students.

On behalf of the official opposition, I would like to wish all of the patrollers the best of luck, and enjoy your weekend of activities at this year's jamboree. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskEnergy Natural Gas Network in Rosetown

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, there's even more good news from rural Saskatchewan today. In addition to beating the

pants off Alberta and watching the rain fall where it hasn't fallen for a long time, I want to celebrate a small event that happened in Rosetown when the Deputy Premier came and joined us for the opening of a new partnership. He was there to celebrate the opening of a SaskEnergy natural gas network location in Rosetown with an open house at M. E. Cook and Son, Ltd.

The SaskEnergy network was formed in June of 1998 and now has 64 members province-wide. Members are independent natural gas retailers and contractors who offer services like natural gas appliance and equipment sales, installations and in-store financing for these items. This will make it easier for customers to enjoy the advantages of natural gas service. Ron Hay is the owner of the new location and says being part of the network gives his customers more choice and flexibility.

I want to congratulate Ron Hay and his staff on becoming an important part of the SaskEnergy natural gas network. They're certainly showing their commitment to bringing enhanced customer service to the people of rural Saskatchewan around Rosetown. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my question is for the minister for Sask Water or his designate. Mr. Minister, the \$8 million you lost on the Lake Diefenbaker Potato deal means this year's \$8 million budget is shot. The surplus is gone. It means the NDP is now running a deficit and it's hard to say how much more money the NDP has poured into this ill-fated potato adventure.

First it was your hare-brained scheme to buy a Third World power company in Guyana, and whoops, \$4 million down the tube, Mr. Speaker. Then you forgot to read the Channel Lake sales contract before you signed it and Saskatchewan taxpayers were out another \$15 million. Now you've blown \$8 million or more, Mr. Speaker, more on a company you knew was in serious financial difficulty. Some reports say the NDP has invested as much as \$23 million into a potato storage operation in the Lake Diefenbaker area.

Is that true, Mr. Minister? How much money has the NDP invested through SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) in potato storage facilities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put some facts on the table here about this particular issue. And I know the members opposite have difficulty with that but let's start with some facts.

The Lake Diefenbaker operation was an independent operation with local and outside investors. It wasn't the Government of Saskatchewan involved alone. It was a partnership. The federal government was there through Farm Credit Corporation. The province was there. The private sector was there through the

Royal Bank.

And I think the reason that all of these partners were working together was to diversify the Saskatchewan economy, to take advantage of the fact that there was irrigated land there and that we should be adding more value to that land.

And I will say to the member opposite, we will continue to work with local people and with other partners like the federal government to diversify the economy of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Madam Minister, we saw what happened when you got involved in the hog industry. The bottom fell out. Many investors lost their shirts that had been in there for years. Now we see exactly the same thing in the potato industry, Madam Minister. Because of expensive, overly high cost of buildings that you put up out there, you help drive the potato market out of business out there.

Madam Minister, yesterday the minister said that Lake Diefenbaker Potato company failed because of depressed seed potato prices. Did it ever occur to your government that it's interference in the market that caused the price to drop in the first place?

Madam Minister, you fuelled the big expansion on the production side of the potato industry, then you dumped the . . . (inaudible) . . . potato production on the market at once. What did the NDP think was going to happen? Potato prices dropped like a rock.

Madam Minister, will you admit the NDP contributed to the drop in potato prices by flooding the market? And will you admit the NDP's mismanagement of the potato industry has devastated many small investors and farmers in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, what these members don't know about economic development is absolutely frightening. Just think about this logic for a minute. Saskatchewan produces a lot of oil as well. So does that mean if we open a few extra oil wells in the province, the price of oil is going to tumble? Saskatchewan is a major partner . . . a major producer of grain products. Does that mean if we seed some extra grain in this province, the price of grain is going to tumble?

These members don't even realize that we in this province are building an economy that can compete on a global basis. We're into a global marketplace. We're building a new Saskatchewan that can compete in the global marketplace. These folks are going to take us back to some weird and wonderful other world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Madam Minister, I pray that you stay clear of the oil business or they'll be probably going under with your record.

Madam Minister, potato growers in the Lake Diefenbaker area are worried about today's future. Thanks to the NDP's bungling

many families are wondering how they're going to pay next month's bills. Many local investors have lost thousands and thousands of dollars and they're wondering about what will happen to the potato storage facilities that you've built over the last few years.

Madam Minister, what is the status of the other potato operations in the Lake Diefenbaker area? Now that your government has devastated the potato industry, what plans have you made for the existing potato storage facilities? What can you tell hundreds of small investors and broken farm families that have bet their life savings on broken NDP promises?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. Of course anybody in this province who ventures into business and has difficulty, we sympathize with. So to that extent we sympathize with what has happened here.

We have made a commitment. We are working in this government with local investors, local communities — the federal government is a partner — to diversify the Saskatchewan economy.

And I want to say to the members opposite, what exactly are they going to do with this economy? They don't want to go into potatoes; they're not into hogs. I looked at their supposed economic development plan — not one word about forestry, where we got more than half a billion dollars of private sector investment. What exactly is their plan?

We're going to diversify this economy, we're going to work with local folks, we're going to work with the federal government, and we're going to create jobs for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway Maintenance

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Highways. Madam Minister, last fall the Saskatchewan Party launched our worst highway in Saskatchewan contest, and there was a lot of interest in the contest. In fact we've received over 300 entries and 105 different stretches of highway were nominated. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of bad highways.

Madam Minister, today we are announcing the three finalists. The three highways which received the most votes are: Highway No. 56 from Indian Head to Katepwa; Highway No. 8 from Moosomin to Storthoaks; and Highway 349 from Junction 6 to Junction 38.

Madam Minister, last year we invited you to be a judge in our worst highway contest, and we again extend that offer. Madam Minister, will you join the member from Cannington and myself next week as we go judging which of these three highways is the worst highway in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think as the Minister of Highways and Transportation, I have been the judge of the highways in this province. And that's why, one of the reasons our whole government has made a commitment of \$2.5

billion over 10 years . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — . . . to invest in our highways and transportation system. That's why, since we've had balanced budgets, we've been able to increase funding into Highways and Transportation.

So we've recognized the need for more dollars into our highway system; we've recognized the need for good planning; we've recognized the need for partnerships, which we have at the municipal-provincial, which we're still calling on the federal government to come in with funding for the highway system too. So I recognize the needs of our highway system in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, a further question to the Minister of Highways. Well, Madam Minister, we're sorry that you won't be joining us or don't want to join us as we go and judge these highways. I guess I can understand that, though. You're probably going to be at home trying to save your seat. After all I think, Mr. Speaker, the Madam Minister can find a number of worst highways in her own constituency.

Mr. Speaker, to the Madam Minister, though, we do have another individual who has agreed — a road builder — who has agreed to come and join us in this judging contest.

Madam Minister, we've had eight years to fix the highways — you've had eight years — they've gotten worse and worse, and your time is nearly up. I guess it's going to be up to the Saskatchewan Party to fix the highways . . . (inaudible) . . . Madam Minister, will you now admit that your NDP government policy has destroyed the highway system in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, we put a plan together with more dollars and good planning. And actually the highway that was identified the most on their contest, that's the highway that we're fixing and doing a tremendous amount of work on this very year. The other two, the other two highways in which they have mentioned, we're continuing to put dollars there also.

But I think the people of this province if they want to judge the worst pothole, they know very well the worst pothole — it was the debt that these Tories built as they sold off the highway equipment, ran deficit after deficit, \$2 million a day on interest payments. They cut the fuel tax.

And it's kind of interesting, we talk about the fuel tax . . . gave away the equipment, cut the fuel tax so I don't think the people of Saskatchewan are going to back to their plan for fixing the roads because they know they're the ones that created the potholes in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agriculture Income Disaster Assistance Program

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, the evidence continues to pile up that your AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) program is failing Saskatchewan farmers. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently polled its agri-business members on your NDP government's AIDA program, and do you know what these business people said? You guessed it — they said your program stinks.

Mr. Minister, in fact only one in eight agri-business people said that your AIDA program is going to do anything to help Saskatchewan farmers. And information out of Ottawa says it's so bad that only 500 farmers have even bothered to apply.

Your NDP farm policy is failing farmers, is failing the businesses that they patronize, and it's failing the workers that work in agri-business. Mr. Minister, when are you going to not take the advice of all your backbench hacks and listen to the business community and scrap this AIDA program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we should inject a few more facts into this. The numbers that he says one in eight, well of the 2,300 people that were polled — and I agree that there's a problem with this program and that's not a surprise —but 18 per cent of the people replied, so he's trying to insinuate that this goes right across the piece.

Now the point to be made here, Mr. Speaker, is this: we all know this program isn't a great program; we all know why we went into it. Let me read something though. This says that government should never — skill-testing question — government should never become involved directly in business through grants, loans, or direct investments.

An Hon. Member: — Who said that?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Saskatchewan Party resolution — Tories. Tory resolutions. They are up here criticizing AIDA when their policy says: don't give them anything.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Polling by Crown Corporations

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two sure signs that an election is near is that the cabinet rats have all left or are leaving the sinking ship, and the NDP crank up the spending on friends and insiders.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that the NDP have made polling a SaskEnergy priority. According to a freedom of information request by the Liberals, SaskEnergy spent \$22,400 to CanWest Opinion in 1996. One year later the public opinion budget jumped by almost 200 per cent. Once again, a year closer to the election — double the amount. For 1998, this trend could show probably another 3 or 400 per cent but you won't give us those numbers.

Mr. Speaker, in the Liberal's plan — Priorities 1999 — we say that we'll get these priorities right. Saskatchewan people don't want more NDP propaganda. Instead of money on hacks and flacks, we put money toward students, health care, highways, and saving rural Saskatchewan grain elevators.

To the Premier, to the Premier — when are you going to stop using taxpayers' money for public relations and rewarding your NDP hacks and flacks, and start dealing with the people's priority of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member from Wood River is so agitated today after a very successful nomination for the NDP in Shaunavon where Robert Anderson . . . where one of his good friends and former supporters, Robert Anderson, ran and was successful in getting the NDP nomination. He has been irritable ever since.

But I want to say to the member opposite, when it comes to SaskEnergy, what you have to know is that your caucus and the official opposition party — the Tories — have been pushing for opening up to competition for our Crown corporations, and SaskEnergy is now involved in full competition.

And in order to be competitive — knowing what the client wants and needs — market research is extremely important. I want to say as well that the new program of getting together with an alliance with 64 private sector companies throughout Saskatchewan, and doing the market research, and preparing for competition is hugely important.

I know the member opposite doesn't like that because he would prefer that the Crown corporations would fail, but advertising and market research will become more important, not less, as we move into full competition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, you would think that a Crown monopoly like SaskPower wouldn't have to spend thousands of dollars on opinion research. What would a Crown monopoly like SaskPower ask? Are the rates too high? Well of course the people of this province think the rates are too high.

You see, Mr. Speaker, according to a freedom of information request obtained by our caucus reveals that in 1996, SaskPower used the firm of Anderson/Fast to conduct market research polling worth 4,200 bucks. A year later that polling went up by 1,700 per cent to 75,000 — 1,700 per cent. That's quite a jump.

It's amazing no matter if it's SaskPower's 50 per cent increase in public relations, Phoenix Advertising 50 per cent increase in their advertising revenue from SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation), or the \$200,000 increase to Phoenix received from SaskEnergy.

The closer we get to an election, the more the NDP spends on polling firms, hacks, and flacks. You don't need to spend 75,000 bucks to find out power rates are too high.

My question to the Premier: you attack these old Devine Tories for the way they ripped off . . .

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

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Premier, you attacked the Devine Tories for the way they ripped off Saskatchewan taxpayers. You run the same kind of government. When are you going to get your priorities straight, the priorities of the people of this province?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite that we now have full competition in SaskTel and, as you know, that the vast majority of advertising for the whole government, for the whole government, is in SaskTel and largely to do with competition. I think we now spend \$11 million in SaskTel on advertising which is the equivalent of all the rest of the Crowns and all government departments. And the reason we do that is because advertising — in order to keep 93 per cent of the people supporting SaskTel — is usually important.

You can't have it both ways. You can't have it both ways. You can't say, open up to competition — and we've opened up to competition — and then say, by the way don't advertise. So I tell you, my friend, there will be more marketing done by the Crowns because your attempt to do in the Crown corporations . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the answer being provided because the hon. member who asked the question was commenting constantly while the answer was being provided. And the Chair . . . Order. And the Chair . . . Order. And the Chair asks for co-operation of all members of the House on both sides.

Does the Deputy Premier wish to conclude his answer?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say to the member opposite that he knows full well that the federal government operates many Crown corporations, many Crown corporations. I would ask the member to check with Mr. Goodale to see how much Farm Credit Corporation spends on advertising or market research and he will know full well that Crown corporations, like any corporations, in order to meet the needs of the consumers, need to do market research and advertising.

Highway Maintenance and Branch Line Abandonment

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The highways in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, are crumbling and the NDP is doing nothing. No. 2 Highway from Findlater to Watrous is breaking up and the NDP won't even help keep the rail line that runs parallel to it. The NDP has said as well that the cost of road repair will rise dramatically if a rail line goes.

Mr. Speaker, Highway 42, 44, and 15 are a disaster and yet the NDP ignore the fact that the CP (Canadian Pacific) line from

Broderick to Moose Jaw is under review. If this rail line is abandoned, then highways like No. 19 will completely disintegrate.

Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, when are you going to step up to the plate and come up with a real transportation plan for Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to this because we do have a plan, as I was saying earlier here. We've got dollars that were committed over 10 years — the \$2.5 billion — and also the plan of good planning, which is certainly part of working with municipalities, working with producers. We have a short line advisory unit. We're doing a lot on the branch line abandonment issue in which really as a province, we don't have the jurisdiction.

It seems very interesting to me as we work with communities in this province, trying to save branch lines, trying to have short lines be viable, the government that has the jurisdiction actually starts with a big L — Liberal. And actually as of today, we're making calls again to some federal MPs (Member of Parliament), the Minister of Transportation, on lines that are very important to this province, whether that's P.A. (Prince Albert) to Birch Hills or some of the lines that the member just opposite said.

Because what they are putting forward on branch line abandonment when we're . . . When there's a review and Estey even identified the difficulties at the federal level and which needs to be fixed, we should have that moratorium on branch line abandonment. I haven't heard the members opposite ask for it. They've got their federal cousins in Ottawa. Where are the Liberals at?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway Accident at Balcarres

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, On Saturday, May 1, a young lady travelling east on No. 10 Highway was signalling a left turn into a service station at Balcarres. A vehicle travelling in the same direction hit her car from behind, causing very serious injuries to occupants of both vehicles.

My point is going to be with this question, is the inaction of the government opposite in attending to some very serious situations that people have brought to their attention and they don't listen.

In November, I alerted the minister of potential dangers on that highway through Balcarres. The town had requested on previous occasions to have a speed limit. The minister replied to me that her officials would do more studies, do more counts this summer, and on and on.

Six people have died in car accidents in that particular area over the years. Madam Minister, what are you waiting for? We don't need to have any more studies. People have lived there for years that have seen what's happening.

There's additional B-train traffic, heavy truck traffic, vehicular traffic; summer traffic is coming along. Why don't you act immediately? What are you going to do? Wait until somebody gets killed on that stretch again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, we are always concerned about accidents. And when there is an accident we always do review the circumstance of the highway conditions and the review of safety on that type of issue.

I did receive a letter from the member opposite and we have already acted on that in that the review that has taken place. We have existing traffic accident data. They're pulling some of that together and there will be a meeting set up with the town of Balcarres and others in that area in the next four to six weeks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High-Speed Chases

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, earlier this year a driver fleeing police caused the senseless and tragic deaths of a Rosetown couple.

Not every high-speed chase results in tragedy but every high-speed chase has the potential for tragedy. Some people look at trying to outrun the police as a game. It's not a game. It is a dangerous, deadly activity, and government needs to send a clear message that it will not be tolerated.

Mr. Minister, today I will be introducing legislation that will ensure mandatory jail time for anyone who leads police on a high-speed chase. The Saskatchewan Party Bill would impose a minimum sentence of three months for first-time offenders. Mr. Minister, will you support that legislation?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to high-speed chases, this would certainly involve the criminal justice system and amendments to the Criminal Code. And I don't know whether the legislation the member is referring to would be a matter for provincial jurisdiction or federal jurisdiction. But certainly this government will listen to the suggestions that the opposition has because this is a very serious matter that we need to take very seriously.

And we haven't seen the legislation the member is proposing but certainly we will look at the legislation and obtain advice from the law officers of the Crown with respect to what is a matter that is serious. And we share the member's concern about this matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Well I would hope that the Justice department of this government would know where it belongs. It is a traffic offence and we're going to keep it that way and we're going to deal with it.

But the question is, why doesn't Saskatchewan take a leadership role this time? You were slow to act on the issue of child prostitution. You are slow to act on the issue of high speed chases. How many more senseless tragedies have to occur before you consider this an issue?

Will you support the Saskatchewan Party Bill calling for zero tolerance for those who try to outrun the police?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, if we do recognize indeed as the member says that these are serious matters, then I'm sure the member would agree that at times we need to invoke the Criminal Code of Canada, Mr. Speaker, because that is how you deal with serious crimes and serious matters.

We will continue to take the advice of the law officers of the Crown as to how to take these matters most seriously, which I would suggest with respect to the member, it is sometimes more appropriate to invoke the Criminal Code of Canada rather than provincial traffic laws.

Having said that, if there are appropriate instances where a provincial law should be amended, we will certainly take the advice of the members opposite, examine what they propose with respect to the provincial traffic laws, and have a look at it, Mr. Speaker. Because we very much share the view of the member that these are serious matters and we need to do everything we can to prevent such occurrences from happening in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 203 — The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1999

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 203, The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1999 be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Bill No. 207 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1999

Mr. Heppner: — Yes, I would like to move the first reading of Bill No. 207, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1999

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

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce, by leave of the Assembly, a motion of condolence.

Leave granted.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I'll move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, my colleague the member from Canora-Pelly, a

motion now that leave has been granted, a motion which in effect says this:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

William Z. Neudorf, who passed away this morning, was a member of this Legislative Assembly from 1986 until 1995, representing the constituency of Rosthern for the Progressive Conservative Party.

Mr. Neudorf was born on January 1, 1940 in Neuanlage and received his early schooling in Hague, Saskatchewan. He continued his education at the University of Saskatchewan, convocating with bachelor degrees in arts and science and in education.

On July 18, 1964, Mr. Neudorf married Alma Sawatzky and together they had four children.

In his private life, Bill Neudorf was first a teacher and later a farmer. His association with schools in the Saskatchewan Valley area extended over 20 years and included terms on the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation provincial area bargaining team and as chairman of the PTA (parent-teacher association).

Then in 1979 he purchased a small hog farm. The farm became the focus of his attentions as he expanded it to encompass a 315 sow-farrow-to-finish operation.

Mr. Neudorf's concern for the well-being of others in his community was evidenced by his participation in a variety of organizations. He served as a municipal councillor in the rural municipality of Rosthern, as the fire chief for the village of Hague, as president of the Saskatchewan Valley Hockey League, and as the vice-chairman of the Saskatchewan Pork Producers Marketing Board. The Hague Mennonite Conference Church also benefited from Mr. Neudorf's membership and his tenures on the executive and as a Sunday school teacher.

Mr. Neudorf was first elected to the Saskatchewan Legislature, as I said, in 1986. He successfully retained the constituency in the 1991 general election before retiring from political life in 1995. During his two terms in office, Mr. Neudorf sat on both sides of the Assembly and also in cabinet, where he held the Social Services portfolio from October 3, 1989 until November 1, 1991.

Mr. Speaker, in recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

That is the substance of the motion which I shall so move, and I'm kind of doing it in an awkward fashion, but let me close with a few personal comments.

I didn't get to know Bill Neudorf as well as I would've liked to. When I returned to the House in 1986 and when he was first

elected in 1986, it so happened that in 1987 I assumed the leadership of the opposition of the party of the day, and a lot of time was in the House and a lot of time was outside the House. But in my dealings and relationships with Bill Neudorf, one got the impression — as the record of the motion indicates — of a very deeply religious man who held very strong principles and strong values and ideals. And certainly a person who had a genuine interest in people, as the record of activity in the community shows.

I liked Bill Neudorf. He was a good debater; he was an above-board debater. Sometimes in this House we all — or most of us, I'll put it that way — tend to sometimes slip into a form of debate which doesn't elevate the Chamber, but I don't really recall an incident where Bill did anything except speak in very civil, decent terms and tones.

It's not that he didn't believe passionately in ideas and his ideas and in his particular point of view — he certainly felt that. But he did it in a way which I think brought a lot of grace and a lot of general benefit to the Assembly and to the eyes of the public as far as this Assembly is concerned.

At age 59 it's a tragic loss of a person who had many more years yet to contribute to his community. Our heartfelt sympathies have to go to the families, his children, wife, friends, colleagues — this was a person who really was a very distinguished Saskatchewan resident.

Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day, and by leave of the Assembly, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, I so move this motion. Thank you very much.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to stand in this Assembly — if I can say it's a pleasure — to say a few words in memory of Mr. Neudorf, a very close and personal friend and a colleague in this Assembly.

Bill and I were elected first in 1986, and I remember meeting Bill for the first time, and when Bill walked into caucus his stature alone just caught our attention. And Bill was the type of person that while as the Premier acknowledged he could be very quiet at times, he could also become very boisterous. It reminds me of some of the members in this Assembly and past members as well.

Mr. Neudorf and I actually boarded together for a number of years — we rented a 2-bedroom suite. I can remember the first time when Bill and I after we had been in a . . . renting a house from a pastor in town I knew and they had indicated that they were selling their house and we'd have to find other lodging. And I talked to an elderly lady who had invited us to come to her home and she had indicated to me and she said, you know I've had so many boarders for so many years I'm not exactly sure if I want more boarders. But she said I tell you what, you come on over and we'll see how it works out.

Bill . . . I'll call him Bill, actually arrived at the suite before I did and he was sitting downstairs and I arrived at the suite and we were chatting away for a few minutes before we called it an evening and a knock on the basement suite door and our landlady came in and said, "There's some bread in the fridge but I forgot to bring you a toaster. You may want to toast your

bread and have a piece of toast at night." And, Mr. Speaker, that ended up . . . today that's the member from — the current member from Rosthern continue and I continue to reside in that suite.

Mr. Neudorf had a real love for his family. He had a love for this Assembly. He enjoyed debate and he enjoyed his family with a passion. I can recall him talking of the exploits of his sons, both in hockey and in baseball, and how proud he was of his daughters.

When it comes to the debate in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we'll all remember, especially in his years as the opposition House Leader, jumping to his feet, "Mr. Speaker, point of order!" and he'd be flipping through the *Beauchesne's* to find out exactly the right context he should be addressing that point of order in. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think we all enjoyed his accomplishments in the Assembly and the way he conducted himself in the debate.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I took a moment to go and visit Bill. And as I was driving to Saskatoon it was my intent to visit him at home. But I thought, boy, I'd better call home. I called the house and there wasn't an answer. That surprised me a little bit, but knowing that Bill wasn't very well, I decided I'd better do some checking and I happened to get a hold of his son and was informed that as of noon last Thursday he had been admitted to the palliative care ward of the Saskatoon St. Paul's Hospital.

(1445)

And, Mr. Speaker, it was . . . To walk into that room, and we had become close friends, and just to see the gleam in his eye as I walked in the room, and having had those moments to cherish and to sit together and discuss it. And that time as well, Mr. Speaker, Bill said to me, he said, you know, as much as I enjoy the time I've had with my family since leaving politics, he said, I still miss that Assembly. He said, I wish I could still walk down to the Assembly and sit on the floor and tell every one of the members how to run that place, and tell the Speaker, and just inform them how much I enjoyed the debate and would like to be there. And he asked me to pass that on and I pass it on.

Mr. Speaker, while we're well aware of the debate in this Assembly and well aware of how Mr. Neudorf appreciated his family, there's a few little funny things that come to my attention as well.

Like the time when caucus, we were sitting there in caucus one morning and Mr. Neudorf came in and explained the exploits of rescuing his tractor after it had gone into that massive dugout that he had created. And putting on his scuba gear and hooking on the cables to pull his tractor and manure spreader back out of the dugout.

Or the time when he was leaving the Assembly on a Friday afternoon and as he was on his way home to his community and farm, he gets a call that his hog operation is on fire. And his quick call into caucus and said, can you get a hold of the Department of the Environment? I need a water bomber right now.

As he was driving home, he called his wife and he said, I've located a water bomber, they're going to be coming over shortly to put a fire retardant on the fire. And kept them informed by his cell phone and finally he said, there's a bomber within two minutes, get everybody out of the way.

And just chatting to people afterwards, they said it was an awesome sight. All of a sudden, all these people dispersing as this bomber comes floating in, dropping the fire retardant that actually controlled the blaze.

Those are the types of things that Mr. Neudorf enjoyed. He just enjoyed . . . he was a man of action. He demanded taking action.

Mr. Speaker, we in this Assembly and those of us who had the privilege of sitting here when Mr. Neudorf was a member will appreciate his involvement, his passion for the Legislative Assembly, his commitment to his constituents and to his family.

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Party and myself, I'd like to extend to his wife, Alma; their oldest son, Dean and his wife, Brenda, daughter, Latrissa, and son, Cody; son, Duane and his wife, Carissa; daughter, Cheryl and son, Tony, and daughter, Cindy, our deepest regrets and sympathy. Our prayers are with you at this time in your lives.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I also consider it an honour to speak briefly at this time. I grew up close and in similar communities to Bill Neudorf, and in that part of the country, the valley area, he's affectionately known by everyone only as Bill Z. Bill and I taught in the same school. We hunted together.

We have represented the same constituency in this Assembly, something, as has been mentioned before, he was extremely proud of for the time that he served his people, as I said, in this Assembly. He did everything with zest and with a lot of enthusiasm. And I would like to add in sending my and my constituency's sympathy to the bereaved family. Thank you.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to express our condolences on behalf of the Liberal caucus. While I did not have the pleasure of sharing the legislature with Mr. Neudorf, I did see him in action from time to time on the television. And I have heard from his colleagues and friends, and it was very, very evident that he was in fact a very sincere and thoughtful man.

His contributions to this Assembly and to his communities will be remembered for a long time because they were very, very numerous. He was a man of varied interests and talent, and yet I am told, his greatest aspiration was to honesty and integrity. Those who knew him refer to him as a kind and sincere person who will be missed in his community by all who know him.

On behalf of my colleagues, my staff, and our families, and I'm sure, on everyone that saw Mr. Neudorf in action, knew him, our sincerest condolences to his family.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a very sad loss of a passionate, dynamic, capable, and determined person. I had the opportunity to get to know Bill, mostly because of — not just the workings of the House and how fascinated I was as

a new member in 1991 and '92 especially to see him as such a competent House Leader in action — but mostly because of the work that we did on different standing committees.

Probably the most popular and intense one was the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures. Much took place on that committee, Mr. Speaker, which was chaired by the former Speaker. We met for many, many hours, and some of the changes that came about as result — such changes as having member statements in this Assembly, limiting bell ringing — all of those things came about as a result of very intelligent discourse and a lot of fascinating debate.

We had really wonderful discussions, but the moments that I remember most are Bill's amazing smile and his great laugh. If there is such a thing — and I believe there is — Bill Neudorf was a terrific partisan. He was also a very proud father, a very proud family man and husband, and an extremely proud grandparent as we've seen evidenced in this very Assembly when his three-year-old granddaughter sat in the east gallery and he stood to tell everyone that she knew all of her alphabet as well as all of her numbers. There was no mistaking whose granddaughter this was, Mr. Speaker, because she had a head of just curly, curly hair — just like her grandpa did.

I wish to simply add my condolences to those that have been so eloquently expressed by other members of the Assembly, but I also wish to provide to the family, a quote from *Isaiah*, which has given me much, much solace in times of sorrow and which I prefer to share with others in time of similar need. And it is: "See, I shall not forget you. I have carved you in the palm of my hand."

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to join with other members in speaking to the passing of a good friend, Bill, who I served with during his total period here in the Assembly. And when the member from Moosomin called me this morning, I was on an aircraft to Yorkton, and I was shocked by the call and obviously disappointed and distressed as we are when we lose a friend.

But I began to think about what it is about this place that makes it at one level so wonderful and at one level so terrible. But I think what Bill speaks to when he talks about coming back to this place is all about friendship.

There really is a camaraderie and family that builds up not only within your own caucus, but within members at large that no one who has not served here can ever possibly understand. And I say that sincerely to all members, my own members of my caucus but to members opposite, that over the years there's just a level of friendship that builds between members that really make us an interesting family.

And Bill and I shared many, many common interests. And I remember the times when he was House Leader and I was House Leader on the other side, both in opposition and in government, the one thing you always knew about Bill Neudorf is that his word was his bond.

And I don't say this in any negative way to anyone else who was active as House leader. But when you make arrangements for House business, what you always knew when you dealt with

Bill, that once he said something, whether it was written down or wasn't written down, you could just count on his word as being the gospel.

I remember very well the issue of the tractor in the dugout. I remember it very, very well. Because somehow we got a hold of a picture that appeared in the local newspaper of only the exhaust pipe of this wonderful big tractor sticking out of the dugout, and I don't recall totally, but I think a picture of somebody in a scuba-diving suit getting ready to go and try to retrieve the tractor.

Well anyway during question period, whenever it got tough, whether Bill was on the opposition side or the government side and you were under siege from Bill, one way you knew you could break the sequence is ask him, heckle him across the floor — Bill, why did you drive your tractor in the dugout?

And Bill would inevitably start laughing. And he would have a difficult time then getting the questions going again, and you knew you would escape that day's newspaper story if you could just get going on the tractor.

Well I just want to say that Bill was extremely in favour of discipline at one hand, but extremely caring at another. And he was an interesting individual because he cared so much for people.

And I just say that when he became Minister of Social Services, I think that we were all surprised at his ability to express the caring side of his personality. And I have here a clipping from *The StarPhoenix* of October 6, '89, where he talks about his role in social services, and I quote when he says . . . he said:

He intends to discuss the issue immediately with V.D. Martin, the new minister of families, talking about the issue of hunger."

And I quote, and he said:

We can't close our eyes to it (talking about hunger) certainly not. We are going to be taking a very, very close look at it in an effort to discover solutions."

And that one of the themes that he carried on was the issue of child hunger and the need to take better care, not only of our own kids, but kids in general. And that theme has developed, I think, into a wonderful theme throughout our province.

And I just want to say through this medium to the family of Bill that he will be sincerely missed. And on behalf of my family, from Louise and I and our kids, to Bill's family, and on behalf of our caucus, sincere sympathy and condolences to the family.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to add my words of condolence to those of others to the family of Bill Neudorf today. This is the first time that I've had the tragedy of losing a colleague from the legislature, and while Bill and I had quite different views on politics, we had other common roots.

We come from the same faith and church background, and we had to remind each other of that from time to time when we weren't feeling as charitable as we ought towards each other.

We also have a common root in farming and the hog business. And that brought an interesting reflection to my life when I became Minister of the Environment on the day when he picked up his cellphone and asked for a water bomber. Because that wasn't a common request, and it was a little bit difficult to explain to the public afterwards. But I think that was Bill, a man of quick thinking and quick action, and . . . So the water bomber, rightly or wrongly, was ordered and it did its job and got back home and the fire went out and everybody was grateful, and . . . very much a reflection of who Bill was in terms of being a man of action.

I've had the chance since Bill has left the legislature to meet him in other circumstances. My son has played for the Rosthern senior hockey team and his sons have played for the Hague senior hockey team, so a number of times in the last number of years we've had a chance to visit.

I became aware of his illness this winter and Bill and I have had more than one good visit about his life here and about the life in the community, and all I can say is that Bill reflected in the . . . in every one of the engagements I had with him the spirit that others have said here — a man of great commitment and great charity, and a man whose efforts in the community will be missed now that his time is over. And I want to add my condolences to his family, thank you.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again I ask leave of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — This is regarding the transmission?

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Canora-Pelly, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with the transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

(1500)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 44 — The Midwifery Act

The Deputy Chair: — I'll begin by inviting the Minister of Health to introduce her official.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm joined today by Drew Johnston, senior health professions analyst in the policy and planning branch, from the Department of Health.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, Mr. Johnston, I'm delighted to see this Bill brought forward today.

Myself and my caucus have been meeting with the midwives over the last couple of years and I've assured them that we are supportive. I didn't realize that this was going to be a large Bill and it was going to start a new, I believe it's called a college. And we'll leave it in the hands of the government to know that this is the best way to proceed with it.

I have a couple of questions starting with the number of people living in Saskatchewan right now who'd be currently qualified to call themselves midwives under this Act.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There are four practising midwives in the province of Saskatchewan. In addition there may be a further six that would qualify to become midwives, and a further six may be obstetrical nurses.

Ms. Draude: — How many of the provinces right now do allow midwifery?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell us what medical training or training in general midwives will require to carry on their duties in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — In Ontario there's a four-year program; I believe it's at McMaster in Hamilton. In fact I believe the Department of Health is providing a bursary for one Saskatchewan resident that is engaged in the program in midwifery at McMaster.

We in the province are going to be looking, I gather, at all of the competencies that are necessary for midwifery. And it may be a combination of competencies from other jurisdictions or other countries, along with training and nursing.

So all of this will have to be assessed and I know that that's what the college is going to be engaged in.

Ms. Draude: — Do you foresee training in midwifery in Saskatchewan at some time in the near future?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I understand that the western provinces are discussing the formation of a program not unlike — for example, Saskatchewan has a program of veterinary medicine where people from the west come to that program. In addition some of our citizens go to Manitoba or Alberta for speech and language therapy or occupational therapy. So it will be determined in the future where a program might be housed in the western provinces.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Of course we're all hoping that that will happen in Saskatchewan and if there's something that we can do to make that happen, I imagine they will be. Can you . . . will midwives be required to carry an equivalent to a malpractice insurance like a physician has?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes they will.

Ms. Draude: — Can you give me a general idea of what a midwife will charge for their services.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I understand that the charge currently varies between 800 and \$1,300.

Ms. Draude: — I'm not sure what the cost of the service that a midwife provides, that is now provided by a doctor would be compared to what a midwife would charge. I would imagine you have that type of information. But is there thought given to saving the province money in the long run when you add the idea of wellness and the well-being of the mother and the child with the services of a midwife? Can the province save money by covering this under medicare?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — My understanding from other provinces that have legalized midwifery in their province that the experience in other provinces indicates that midwifery adds to the overall cost of the health budget in that an individual may see a midwife but they may also see their family physician.

Ms. Draude: — Probably in the beginning when it's a new experience, it's something new for mothers. It may, it may take a short time for people to understand that having a baby isn't a process; it's not a disease. It's something that can be a very wonderful experience. And I wouldn't think that it would be a long time before it became sort of a natural thing to do and would end up saving a lot of money.

Has there been any studies done or any information received from places like England, where midwifery is a common thing, to show that it actually does save money?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that in Ontario where the NDP introduced legalized midwifery, I believe, in the '80s and midwifery, has been in operation in Ontario for several years now, that there is no indication that midwifery decreases the overall cost of the Health budget.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, well I guess about the only thing we can hope right now then is that there are enough women that use the services then they will understand that I believe it can save money.

If you can . . . if you just add the direct cost of the hospital care when the baby is born, maybe that's more money. But if you look at the overall costs when a mother is returning to see the doctor or baby's coming back in because of a young mother maybe not being sure of procedures or the help that they can, they can get from a midwife, it's probably difficult to look at all the costs. But I am confident that it probably would save money.

Madam Minister, there's one part of the Act that I talked to you about. And I brought it up because it alarmed me. And at the same time I did talk to some . . . one of the ladies on the midwife . . . I think it was their board or their group of women who looked at, at this Act — that is section 23 of the Act that has caused some concern when the section refers to invasive procedures.

Can you tell me what the authorized procedures are that are outlined in this Act?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The bylaws will contain the details of the kind of invasive procedures or services that will be

available. And invasive procedures that are envisaged are consistent with other provinces.

They will involve inserting or removing an instrument, device, hand or finger beyond the narrowing of the body orifices during pregnancy, labour, and the postpartum period; taking blood samples from newborns by skin pricking, or from women from veins or by skin pricking. In addition, there could be the performing of episiotomies, amniotomies and repairing episiotomies and lacerations, not involving the anus, or the anal sphincter, rectum, urethra and paraurethral areas. So I hope that's enough detail for you.

I can assure you that there is no intention to perform abortions. Just so you're clear, there's no intention to perform abortions. And that is something that falls within the college of physicians and surgeons. This kind of procedure won't be within the purview of the midwife.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I was very, very sure that the . . . not only the government but that the midwives did not want this to fall under this Act. It's something that I'm . . . I know a hundred per cent sure that we're not looking at it. But I am just wondering if there's some reason why we should . . . shouldn't put in the amendment that I have forwarded to you talking about the termination of a pregnancy just to safeguard not only the government but to safeguard the midwives. Because we . . . I look at this procedure as something that is a great step forward for midwives. I believe firmly that it's going to be good for everyone.

And if we can put in just to underline and to give security to everybody that there is not going to be something that will sometime down the road by somebody that's not connected with anything today, be able to look at this Act and say, well, I did this and I think it's okay under the Act. And I'm just . . . I ask you to look at it and to consider it; it's something that I believe could be good for all of us, and I'll just leave it in your hands for now.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. It's not within a scope of practice for midwives. It's not within the scope of practice for a registered nurse. This kind of a clause would not be found within The Registered Nurses Act. So I understand your concern, but I can assure you that this would create a precedent, we'd have to then look at putting this kind of a clause in other professional pieces of legislation.

So I think that what we need to do here is just put on the record, the legislative record in *Hansard*, that the scope of practice for midwives will not include the termination of any pregnancy.

(1515)

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I think that I'm going to, when this clause comes, I'm going to bring up the amendment and it'll be up to you to do whatever you want to with it. I would feel more secure, I think our caucus would feel more secure, if it was voted on. And maybe even by the mere fact that it was talked about, it will make sure that everyone is aware of what is and isn't allowed.

So right now I have no further questions, and I thank you very

much.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would welcome Madam Minister and her officials this afternoon, and I would ask her to kindly address us on the debate of home delivery versus hospital delivery. I understand that home delivery is not part of the anticipated service here, and I would like her to just address us as to what are the principles involved, what are the issues involved, and why the government has come down on the side they have.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This Act does envision home birth, and how home births will be handled will be contained within the draft bylaws that will go along with this legislation.

Home births aren't envisioned if there is multiple gestation, breech presentation, pre-term labour prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy, or post-term pregnancy of more than 42 weeks and that means 14 days past the estimated due date. So there will be a number of procedures that will be necessary in order for a birth to take place outside a hospital setting. And when I say outside of a hospital setting, I'm talking about at home.

Mr. Hillson: — So then if I understand the minister right, if it is a low-risk pregnancy, the mother and midwife will have the option of requesting a home delivery.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You're correct.

Mr. Hillson: — There is also of course the funding issue, Madam Minister. And while the practice of midwifery is being legalized, it of course is not being included as a basic insured service under our health plan. And you have already indicated to the member for Kelvington-Wadena that experience in other provinces is that midwifery tends to be an add-on as opposed to in place of other medical services in time of pregnancy.

But I want to ask the minister if, insofar as she's able to foretell, is the decision not to ensure this service a final one or is it a case that you want to start the midwifery profession in this province, say give it a couple of years, see how it goes, and then make a final determination as to whether it ought to be a basic insured service or otherwise?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That's correct. As I indicated, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia have all legalized midwifery. And Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia either fund or intend to fund midwifery. We have certainly not closed the door to the notion of midwifery being an insured service under medicare. We want to see how it goes basically; how many people are interested in having the services of a midwife.

I suspect that it will be quite popular. It certainly was a popular notion for women of my generation, and I understand that there are many younger people that are interested in having a midwife attend their birth and be involved in pre-natal care and post-natal care. But we have not at all closed the door to the notion of midwifery being an insured service for people in this province.

Mr. Hillson: — Back to the question of midwifery service being either an add-on or a replacement. May I ask the minister

what her officials and the medical experts are saying in regard . . . is it possible at an early stage of pregnancy to confirm that this is a low-risk pregnancy that would maybe thereafter require less or no visits to the doctor? Or is the feeling that it would continue to be important, even where the services of a midwife are being engaged, that an expectant mother would continue to make regular doctor's visits in addition to seeing the midwife?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I understand it, there are diagnostic tests that are done initially once the pregnancy is confirmed, as well there are diagnostic tests that are carried out during the duration of the pregnancy. And midwives are responsible people and know when there could be complications or there are complications. And we know that through the bylaw process, certainly, and through training and having experienced midwives, that they of course would not have a home birth if there were to be any kind of complications.

So we're quite encouraged by the work that's been done with the midwives in the province of Saskatchewan, that home births will only be available to those people who have no complications during their pregnancy.

Mr. Hillson: — And in conclusion if I may turn to the issue raised by the hon. member from Kelvington-Wadena, it's my understanding that when a list of powers is given, then the absence of other references — in this case abortion — that the only assumption to be drawn from that would be that it's not included. And to specifically state it is not included in fact would make it more confusing rather than more clear, just as . . . you know, the nursing profession Act doesn't state they don't do that. The dentist profession Act doesn't state they don't do that.

Where there is a list of the things they are authorized to do, that is deemed to be an exhaustive list, and it certainly wouldn't clarify anything to then create a negative list. Indeed, where you create a negative list, if you have not listed something on the negative list you might even get yourself into the position where it's deemed to have been included by virtue of the fact that you have created a negative list, so that . . . My question of the minister is would her officials agree that a negative list would actually make the Bill less clear rather than more clear?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised by my official that it does in fact make the legislation more confusing, and what we want to do is have clear, concise legislation. And then obviously it's important to have clear, concise bylaws and regulations that come out of legislation.

Mr. Hillson: — And then finally, Mr. Chairman, your officials are satisfied that if there is a list of the powers and services granted by midwives, if something does not appear on that list, that settles that debate. It's not one of the powers or services authorized.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chairman, I indicated earlier the kinds of invasive procedures that were envisioned, and those will be the kind of invasive procedures that will be allowed once the bylaws are written. And so that will be the kind of scope of practice that midwives have.

In addition, drug privileges similar to other provinces are being

discussed with the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association, and these drug privileges will be given as part of the provision of care for a midwife's patient or client.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I just wanted to make a comment or two and to get your response to them.

Madam Minister, invasive procedures are not really clarified in the Bill as it exists right now from what I understand. If they are, I think that's good. But in order to make sure that there is distinctive clarity on what those procedures may or may not be, I think it's incumbent upon the Assembly and to the benefit of everyone in the province to know clearly what those procedures may or may not be. And why we would not agree with the amendment from the member of Kelvington-Wadena is what's not clear to me.

It's an invasive procedure that is now taking place in the province and throughout Canada, and I'm speaking of abortions. And I believe that in this case we need to distinctly and clearly place in the legislation that this procedure is not part of the invasive procedures that may be taking place.

Rather than . . . or rather, contrary to your statement that it would add confusion, I believe that it would provide clarity. Could you comment on that, please?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. I do just want to say this: that the kinds of invasive procedures that will be allowed will be contained in the bylaws and the regulations that go along with this Act.

The member from North Battleford is quite correct. I'm advised by my official that what bylaws do is they indicate procedures that can be performed by a particular profession. If you are to place in legislation that that can't be performed, what there may be is confusion because the scope of practice is clear.

Under a scope of practice provision which is found in the registered nurses bylaws, in the licensed practical nurse bylaws, in other professional bylaws, it indicates those things that you can do as part of your scope of practice within your profession.

If you start to put in those things you can't do, or one thing that you can't do, then the question becomes: well if you can't do that, does that mean you can do other things that aren't contained within the scope of practice. So for the . . . I think for clarity it's important that we not cause confusion.

And I can assure the Assembly and I can assure the public that midwives will not be performing therapeutic abortions. The only persons that can perform therapeutic abortions are physicians. That is within their particular scope of practice. It is not within the practice of midwives; it's not within the practice of licensed practical nurses or registered nurses.

And we have never done this for registered nurses, for instance. We have never said you can't perform therapeutic abortions. They can't perform therapeutic abortions because it's not within their scope of practice.

I guess my question would be, I don't think it reasonable to

treat midwives different than you would treat a registered nurse under their scope of practice, or a licensed practical nurse under their scope of practice. They cannot, under their scope of practice, perform therapeutic abortions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 22 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 23

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chairman and Madam Minister, we've had a considerable discussion about this already, and I understand what you're trying to do. And again I'm going to state that I have the utmost faith and belief in what you're doing and in what the midwives are doing.

But I . . . we made a number of phone calls to obstetricians, and they have said well, I suppose that could . . . that is considered an intrusive procedure. And the other thing that kind of bothers me is that this list of what people are allowed to do and not allowed to do is under regulations.

And then as elected members of this Assembly, we know that regulations can be changed without the House actually having agreement on that. So sometime down the road maybe something would change but is not in my or your or the members of this House at this time . . . it's not what we had wanted.

(1530)

So I'm just asking that this amendment, and I'll read it to you. Under clause (3):

(3) No person shall perform any practice pursuant to this Act for the purpose of terminating the pregnancy of any other individual.

And I'm asking that be added. Amend clause 23 of the printed Bill by adding subsection 3 that I have just read. I so move.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 23 agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 52 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My officials with me this afternoon, seated beside me is Mr. Craig Dotson, who's the deputy minister; right behind Mr. Dotson is Mr. Michael Littlewood, who's executive director of legislation and school administration; and directly behind me, Mr. Chair, is Mr. Tom Irvine, who is the Crown counsel, constitutional branch of the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your officials again.

We have a few questions, Mr. Minister, that require, I think, clarification in most instances. Again, on behalf of the official opposition, I want to thank you for allowing us to have some discussion on this Act yesterday. Your officials also provided us with some input and we really appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, this Act basically contains three . . . I'll refer to them as three separate areas: one dealing with the fiscal year and the changes for boards of education; the second one dealing with representation for reserves that are contained within school divisions; and the third issue of course is trying to establish, maybe clarify, what is current in whether or not people of the minority faith are in fact members of the minority faith, or are they supporters. And we're looking for clarification there.

I'll first begin, Mr. Minister, with the fiscal year and a couple of questions that have popped up there. Mr. Minister, could you indicate, you know, for the people who may not understand how education is funded and how the government's fiscal year operates differently, could you explain to the people of this province what is currently in place right now and what your government is proposing by way of changes to section 310?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Member. And what I might do is just highlight from some of the speaking notes that I put together after the second reading speech. And they're really I think three bullets that I want to capture here that will be important.

First of all, the government funds the operating grants on a fiscal year basis but pays currently on a calendar year basis. Accrual accounting makes this arrangement problematic for governments and further, school boards receive no grant payments until January and February . . . or for grant payments in January or February or March. And what happens of course is that then school boards need to borrow funds until the grant payments are made later in the spring which is the current process that we have right now.

What the amendment will do — I expect this is the question that you'll probably get to next — and what the amendment will do is will provide for the grant year and government fiscal year could be actually over the same period of time which would then be from April 1 until March 30. So really, taking that three-month period and rolling it back, boards of education will receive monthly grants each in the months of January to March instead of having to borrow and then wait for those grants to come through.

Our estimate is that the new funding regime will save school boards, in our view, about \$1.5 million per year in borrowing costs and it really will assist them with some of their own local financial planning, is the intent right around that piece of the amendment.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. As I've indicated to this House and to you before very clearly, school divisions who have large amounts of tax arrears . . . Many

school divisions are in a borrowing position as we speak right now, and as we've debated in this House in interim supply, we've only had one-twelfth allocation for boards of education or maybe even a little bit more than that. But indeed boards of education have experienced, probably since we are in the month of May, they may have experienced as much as 40 per cent of their annual cost. So I think boards of education are looking forward to that change.

Mr. Minister, the confusing part to me, and I'm sure to many others, is that you've indicated you're going to provide the grants on that fiscal basis of the calendar year. The question that pops to mind is of course, what's going to happen for January, February, and March — obviously not this past year, and you're saying I think it's coming into effect next year. How will your government deal with the budgetary requirements of suddenly needing three-twelfths or one-quarter of the money in advance?

And I guess, Mr. Minister, I've read section 370(15). I've read that over a number of times in terms of saying how the transitional grant will be applied. And I'd like you to clarify for myself and for others as to how that's going to work.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — We've worked out this issue with SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and SASBO (Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials) and if I might just read this portion as to how we'll look after the period January to March. It might be useful, certainly for me, and hopefully will answer your question.

The introduction of course, of your accrual accounting a few years ago, really meant that the accrual account had to be set up to deal with the fact that when school grants are announced in the budget, part of that amount will be paid with respect to the last three months of the previous government fiscal year. So with the establishment of the accrual accounting that decision was in May.

The amount which has already been expended on the government's books for this accrual accounting is sufficient enough to cover off the grant payment from January to March of the year 2000. So it will cover off that period.

In other words, no additional money will be required in the budgetary process for us. It is simply a matter of paying out the money already in the accrual account. So through the accrual accounting process those three months will be covered off. Once the grant year has changed to coincide with the government's own fiscal year, the accrual account will no longer be necessary.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, you're indicating that that accrual accounting method will have, you know, developed sufficient fund I guess, to pay that. What amount do you see necessary to be able to handle that for January, February, and March of 2000?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — It will be, Mr. Chair, to the member, it would be about a quarter of the annual grant, so it will be about a hundred million dollars.

Mr. Krawetz: — Good. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the second issue of importance I think to many

boards of education in the province of Saskatchewan is dealing with representation from native reserves.

Could you explain what is the current practice, if there is a native reserve that is within a school division and there is a need to have representation, what is the current process that's in place and how will your amendment change that?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think with this particular amendment what we're looking at is doing a number of things, or doing this specifically. What's happened is that we had a request from the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division and the Muskoday First Nations, and they both approached the government through their school divisions asking us to amend the legislation to provide an additional option. So what this really does is provides an additional option for Aboriginal representation on school boards.

And what we've done here is we've actually added a clause to the Act to allow the minister to include an Indian reserve within the school division in order to allow reserve residents to vote in the same way as all other school division residents rather than creating a separate subdivision which is what the Act currently today has. It has a subdivision for the reserve and then that individual selected from the reserve would then be represented on the school division.

What we're doing here of course is adding a clause which would then include the Indian reserve within the school division in order to allow the reserve, like any other individual then, to run for office and duly get elected.

This option can be utilized only . . . and it will only be utilized in situations where the band and the board already have a tuition agreement and when the band and the board both agree on the arrangement. So you'd have to have consensus from both the band and the board on the process.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in a situation today between a band and a school division, if there is a tuition agreement in place today, what is the relationship and how is representation handled in the current setting?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Member, if there is, if there is no tuition agreement today, then likely the band is looking after its own responsibilities in terms of education, and there wouldn't be any representation then on the school division.

Mr. Krawetz: — Well my question, Mr. Minister, was: if there is a tuition agreement right now, how is representation arranged with the reserve to ensure that there is some form of representation? Is it different than what you're proposing?

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well what it is today is that, if there is a tuition agreement, then the band and the school division would apply for subdivision status. And so when they apply for subdivision status, then within the subdivision the First Nations people would have their election. And then whoever it is that they would select, that individual would then be the representative who would sit on the division board. What we're doing . . . That's the current practice today.

What we're doing of course is now adding or amending the Act to permit someone to run at large in the school division. And it comes about because the First Nations individuals have . . . or First Nations, Muskoday, has come forward through the Saskatchewan Rivers board and said we would like to have either option. But there must be a tuition agreement in place in order for that to happen, and so we're amending this section of the Act to permit for somebody to run at large within the school division.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, all rural school divisions are under the ward system. And I know there's been a number of school divisions that have spent a great deal of time redefining their boundaries, where they've had seven subdivisions and then they decided to change to five, and there was a need to redraw the boundaries and create new subdivisions.

By your amendment now, will you be having in place a committee to review the creation of new subdivisions? Because now, as I understand what you've just said, you're going to have the reserve not necessarily a subdivision in itself, but it's now going to be encompassed. But then if the makeup of the particular school division is that there be seven representatives, how will you now restructure that new school division to contain seven subdivisions? Will you still not end up with almost the same thing, where the population of the reserve will determine that it is going to be primarily the subdivision?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, to the member. This amendment doesn't have any implications at all to any of the other boards across the province.

Really what would, what would occur here is that in advance of the election, what would happen is that the reserve would be declaring the process in which they would want to use, whether they would . . . In the case of Muskoday, whether they would remain with the subdivision status that they have today, which in all likelihood wouldn't happen because they're the individuals who in fact are making the request for the at-large process.

So in their case what they would do is they would, they would proceed with an election which would encompass the reserve within the school division. And at the end of the day the person whose name would be on the ballot would be involved in the election process like anyone else from that school division.

Now as I've already stated, there must be a tuition agreement in place here in order for these options to be exercised — either the subdivision or the at large, which we're recommending in the amendment.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the other major portion of The Education Act, 1995 amendments this time around deal with your explanation that there is a need to clarify an issue regarding the taxes of individuals in the province of Saskatchewan and where they are assigned.

There's been a lot of discussion, Mr. Minister, over the last number of years with many groups: the catholic school trustees association; the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; individual communities. And I'm sure at every municipal

office, municipal administrators have struggled with the urban Act, with the rural Act, and of course interpreting The Education Act, 1995.

We know of course now that in terms of Saskatchewan we have an education system that has been determined long before the current education Act. We're now referring back to of course ordinances of 1901 and the constitution of Saskatchewan of 1905 and the like.

Mr. Minister, I think what is of great interest to a lot of people in the province is to try to get an understanding of the conditions that exist now versus the conditions that you want to have, as you've indicated, clarified.

And I guess, Mr. Minister, I'll begin there by asking you to indicate to the people of Saskatchewan what you see as the laws that exist or precedent cases that exist that would indicate to the people of the city of Regina where we do have both a public and a separate system, to the people in Yorkton or to the people out in Englefeld where in fact there is now a separate system even though it's of a different faith — what is the practice that is in place in law that would determine where taxes are assigned?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much for the question, Mr. Member. As you well know, within the province of Saskatchewan we have a number of educational systems of which the Catholic and the Roman Catholic separate system and the public system exist.

And rightly you've identified that over the years — and having had some experience, and you as the Saskatchewan school trustee president and I as a municipal councillor — from time to time there has been a bantering of thought about how it is that the municipal government in fact collects the taxes on behalf of the school division and the school division in fact then is responsible for administering the education system. And from time to time there's discussion and debate about whether or not the municipal system actually adequately collects the taxes on behalf of school divisions.

And today in Saskatchewan, if you're a Roman Catholic taxpayer or you're of the Roman Catholic faith and you own property in the province, the law requires that you would pay your taxes to that of the Roman Catholic school system. If you're a public, a non-Catholic taxpayer in this province and you have children who are attending . . . or you're paying taxes on a piece of property, that those taxes would then go to the public system. And constitutionally that is the requirement that we have today in Canada and certainly in this province.

What's happened here over the last several years is that there has been some discussion and actual debate about whether or not tax dollars are actually going to the appropriate jurisdictions. Because from time to time the question that's being asked, when I arrive or somebody arrives, a home owner arrives, at the municipal office to declare where their taxes should go, the question usually asked is whether or not you're a supporter of a particular faith.

And sometimes what's happened, of course, is that you might have an individual whose child who might be a Protestant or

might be an individual who is non-Catholic who might be sending their children to a Catholic school because . . . for a variety of different reasons. And they may then when the question is asked, are you a supporter of the Catholic system, they might say, yes, by virtue of the fact that their child is attending a Catholic school system, where in fact it is an inappropriate designation of your tax.

So today what we're doing is we're designing a form which would really ask a different question. And the question that would be asked today is: what faith do you support? And so today if you are a Catholic . . . if I were a Catholic individual in this province and I were to buy a piece of property, would show up at a municipal government office, then I would respond by saying that I'm of the Catholic faith and my taxes would then be directed to the appropriate school division.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I think when you mentioned faith and you said, you know, faith support, I think what you're talking about is actually membership in that faith. Okay? And I just ask you to clarify that because I know people are indeed watching and will probably be reading in *Hansard* the terminology that you've used. And we want to make sure that your explanation is correct.

Mr. Minister, if I'm a person in Saskatchewan and I've just heard what you've said — and I know what you've talked about in terms of the fact that the taxes will be determined by the membership of that minority religious faith — if I was to ask then of you, the minister, and say, Mr. Minister, can you refer me as a member of the public to a particular section of the urban Act, the rural municipal Act, The Education Act, where will it tell me that I must be a member of the minority religious faith and thus my taxes must be assigned to the faith . . . to that system if it is established regardless of my own individual philosophies that indeed it indicates in a statute that my taxation must be assigned to either the public system, if I am not a Catholic, or on the other side if I am Catholic and there is a minority separate system in place, my taxes must go there as you've indicated, where does that type of statute exist?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, to the member, the section of The Education Act, 1995 in which the powers and duties of separate school divisions are stated and highlighted is in section 53 of the Act.

And in terms of precedents that have been established in the courts, one went to the Privy Council, which is the Bartz case; and another was decided by the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal and it's spelled N-E-I-D-A — I would call it the Neida case, is how I would interpret that. So those are the two precedents as they relate to the provision of the section 53 of the Act.

One other piece of information that I might share with the member is that I have here a letter dated January 19, 1999, which in fact was provided to me by the president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, which I can provide a copy for you as well — I think it will be important for me to do that. And really it talks about some of the issues that make it important for us to proceed with the amendment.

It's from Deb Ward. I could read this into the record if you like.

And I might just take a minute to do that. And this is how it reads:

I have reviewed the proposal of the Department of Education to include a new provision in The Education Act, 1995 to give authority to the Minister of Education to require by regulation the use of municipalities of the tax designation form in those situations where taxes need to be directed to either the public or the separate school division.

This matter has been considered by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and (the) Catholic Section of the Association on several occasions. It is our view that the tax designation form should conform more closely to the law. In this respect, we understand that it is the Minister's intention to establish a form that directs taxes in accordance with the taxpayer's response to the question, "Are you a member of the faith that established the separate school division?" (and) This change in the form would meet the expectations of the association.

Further, it is our understanding that the Department of Education will consult closely with the association (and develop) . . . the tax designation form.

Which in fact we have, and then it signs off by saying:

I appreciate the opportunity to express the views of the Association in the proposed amendment to The Education Act, 1995.

And I can provide a copy of this for you, Mr. Member.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm aware of the position of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, and in fact I've talked with a representative of the Catholic section of the province, Mr. Julian Paslawski who serves as their chief executive officer and indeed that's the opinion that is held by the Catholic association.

The bit of confusion that is out there, Mr. Minister, in I think the minds of many people is the example that you've cited where you've had individuals that you know of who, not through any wrongdoing of their own, have their students who may be attending a Catholic system or a public system if they are Catholic. I mean I'm not trying to identify one or the other, but inadvertently they have said we are a supporter of the system because we like what is happening there or if we have children going there. Or in the case of maybe, you know, people who don't have students in place, they like a particular program that that system is delivering. And therefore they have said they are a supporter.

(1600)

The confusion may be eliminated if you are going to be looking at a prescribed form that says that if I am a taxpayer or if I'm a new owner of a piece of property in Regina, even though I haven't lived here before and I buy a piece of property in the city of Regina, the question now if the prescribed form will come forward, will be, are you a member of the minority religious faith in Regina or are you not? Is that the type of form

that you will be having put forward?

And then the second part though still is confusing to some individuals who now look at it as not necessarily a collective right of that minority faith. They're looking at it as an individual right and say, where in the Act or Acts does it say that I must pay my taxes to the system because I am a Catholic, or in the case, a non-Catholic? So two questions for you there, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member. It's our opinion that section 53 particularly (2) of the Act, really establishes where in fact you as the property owner today are expected to pay your property taxes whether you're a Protestant or Catholic.

And so what we think that within the Act there, it identifies that. And you're absolutely correct when you say that today as a non-Catholic, for example, taxpayer, I could still send my children to a Catholic school if in fact the Catholic school permits that to happen. But my taxes would not flow to the Catholic school system.

By law today that would not be the case, and vice versa. So we're not changing the law here at all. There's no change here to the law nor are we saying to the public that they have a different choice, that they have different choices to make today in terms of where they send their children. The choices remain the same. Although I have to say to you that the Catholic system does not have to accept a non-Catholic student. But in many instances they do. But as a non-Catholic, your taxes would continue to flow and . . . (inaudible) . . . continue to the public system.

And so what we're doing here, really, is developing a form — as you've rightly identified — where you're going to be identifying whether or not you're a member of the minority faith. So the form will be very explicit in asking that question, and hopefully then will reduce the confusion about who it is that you support because you'll be really designating which faith you are a participant of.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I understand what you're saying in trying to remove that confusion and simplify and clarify. But I'm wondering why when you have made the changes to The Education Act — and the amendments are numerous in terms of changing the word "supporter" to "taxpayer" — when I look at section 246 of the urban municipal Act and section 288 of the rural municipal Act, and I guess . . . you know, mostly we have been dealing with Catholic systems in urban municipalities, coterminous with urban municipalities. But we're also now having that effect out there in rural Saskatchewan, and the example that I've indicated is the new Protestant separate division in Englefeld.

The rural Act still uses the word "supporter." And therefore are we not still leaving that unanswered question out there in many urban municipalities or rural municipalities that says that the administrator now is still going to be able to look at the Act and say, I am a supporter. And it still doesn't clarify. Indeed, what you're saying is the law, and the law says that if I am a member of the minority faith, I must state that.

Why weren't we looking at consequential amendments to the urban and rural Act as well to ensure that that is clarified as well?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. In our research from some discussions that we had last evening, what we did is had some of our legal people take a closer look at this, because you pose a very interesting question. And as we reviewed it and got our legal opinion on it, we're told that the consequential amendments to the three municipal Acts really were not required. So that's why the process has not moved to amending those three Acts.

Ms. Draude: — Welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your officials. I appreciated the opportunity last night to discuss this portion of the Act or the amendment with you. And so today I have just have a couple of short questions. And I'm wanting to clarify when I'm assessing the amendment then; what it's really doing is guaranteeing the concept of the minority not only can, but must support the school system that they believe in that they're a member of.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's correct — where the minority must. And it really is confirmation of the way in which the law today is written. So it just conforms . . . the form really conforms with what the law is.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I know that there's going to be further discussions about this at some time. And I guess the one thing that people are still saying to me is that the tax system in Saskatchewan that is the . . . at least 40 per cent of the funds comes from the General Revenue Fund and goes into both school divisions whether they're public or separate. And so it is a publicly funded school system. And again for the taxpayers overall, that it comes into the funds publicly funded way.

Then the people are saying, well, what is wrong with the concept of choosing. You have a choice of supporting . . . you have no choice of putting your money into the tax system for the schools, but you don't have any choice of who you're going support.

So this idea of who am I . . . why are you taking away my choice in this country where we have our freedom of expression, a freedom of choice, a freedom of religion. This is actually limiting choices. And people are saying to me, we now have a province that is standing up and saying I'll take your tax dollars but you don't have any choice of which school system you're going to support.

I know that there's lots of cases in this province where, as my colleague has said, where parents may choose to send their children to a school that is not of the same faith that they believe in because they like the program, they like the system that's going on in that school. And they feel that if their children are going there then they should support it with their dollars so in fact that system can sustain itself. And I know we can get into the discussion about equalization and that type of thing.

But really when we're coming down to the bare bones of it is, where is choice left when we have these kind of prescribed forms that is going to take away an individual's opportunity to

choose?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think what's important, and I just want to sort of accentuate what the member has said, Mr. Chair, and that is that this is not a change to the Constitution of Canada, because the Constitution of Canada today guarantees minority faith — not only guarantees it but it protects it. And when I look at . . . and I have a section here of the Charter of Rights of Freedoms, and I'm quoting from section 29 where they're really talking about here, and it says this:

Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate, or dissentient schools.

So it isn't the decision of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly for us to determine whether or not someone has a derogation of their right today in terms of where their children can attend school.

The Constitution of Canada actually guarantees the minority faith and it also protects it. And what we're doing today is we're accepting that and putting into place a format that will conform with the legal expectations today of how in fact the property taxes are directed.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one further comment, Mr. Minister, and I do thank you for your time and . . . (inaudible) . . . when it comes to explaining where you're coming from in this whole issue.

But I think there's going to be . . . The question is, does the general public know? I know that you tell me and I believe that you have a request for not only from the SSTA but from municipalities who through our system have to collect taxes — property taxes and education tax — from landowners.

So these people are asking . . . Do they all know? The boards know what's happening. Does the individual taxpayers know? Do they know that by this there's going to be changes and that they are going to be forced to . . . they'll be required to fill out a form to say that this is the faith that I am supporting and that this . . . that I am a member of — not supporting — that I am a member of.

And I think that when the general public learns of this, they may feel that they are again having some of their rights taken away, their choices taken away, and that it can be seen as control by government. And it's a fear that I have that it will become a widespread problem with a lot of people in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member. I think you make an extremely important point, that what's necessary today, once this Bill makes its way through the House, is that we communicate with not only the trustees in the province but also with municipal levels of government. And we do that collaboratively, where I think that not only the members on this side of the House but certainly through members on your side of the House as well, that we communicate this message clearly and concisely so that there isn't confusion within the process.

And it will be our undertaking to make sure that through the municipal levels of government, because they meet on a regular basis — not only their elected members but their administrative staff get together on a regular basis in the province — and it'll be important for us to communicate this message to them and ensure that it gets communicated to all levels of municipal government across the province.

And at the same time school trustees get together on a regular basis in this province, and we'll make sure that this process is well identified and transmitted to those across the piece.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that the members of the Saskatchewan Party have asked a number of questions on this. However, frankly we are hearing more and more reports in the media and simply stories around the province that ratepayers who for any reason are mad about anything a school board has done, go down to town hall to reassign their taxes.

And I realize that that is one of the things you're attempting to address. But I still have to ask you, if this form really does deal with the situation that as I understand it, most people in Saskatchewan think they simply have an option. And what you have explained this afternoon is that short of actually changing one's religion, we in fact do not have an option.

But I would submit to you that most people in the province believe and have heard many stories to the effect that it is as simple as going down to city hall and saying, I'm mad about what the school board did on whatever, and I'm now changing from public to separate, or separate to public.

And I would still like you to address that if you would, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well first, Mr. Chair, I want to say to the member, we're not changing the law at all from what it has been since 1905. I mean constitutionally the law has remained the same.

Now as I said to the official opposition, that you or I who have children in the school system today could always make a decision about where we want to send our kids if we have a separate and a public school system within our communities. Public school system you have for sure; if you have a separate school system we could make the choice about where we want to send out children.

(1615)

By and large under the letter of the law, we did not have a choice or do not have a choice about where our tax dollars flow — never did. And we're not changing that today. And across the province in municipal government offices there were a variety of different forms that municipal offices would use asking you to declare whether or not or whom you support.

And it was the question that they asked that was often the problem. Because if in fact I am a Protestant or a public school supporter, or I'm a Protestant individual and I choose to send my children to a Catholic school, and somebody would ask me, are you a supporter of the Catholic system, I might say I am a

supporter of the Catholic system because my kids go there. But the reality is, is that my tax dollar does not necessarily flow in that direction, because I am not of the Catholic faith of which the constitution has established for us since 1905.

So today we're not changing the law at all. All we're doing is providing what we think is a simpler form, one that asks the appropriate question today in terms of ensuring that the tax dollars really flows to the appropriate school division.

Now I think what else is important here is that this is not a retroactive process. So if there are people within the system today whose tax dollar is flowing in a way in which it shouldn't be, that will continue. But for all you property owners today, this form hopefully will address the issue more appropriately.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, we also as MLAs, I'm sure, all get calls and questions at municipal election time that people think that they should have the option of voting in whichever school board they choose to vote in. Does it follow from what the minister has said that we also really don't have a free choice as to which school board elections we will participate in?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, the member is absolutely correct. You don't have a choice, and the form is very clear.

Mr. Hillson: — Then I will just close with this and invite the minister to respond if he wishes. You have said, and I think legally you're correct, that this is not a change in the law or the Constitution as it has existed from . . . well I was going to say the earliest days of the province, but I think before the creation of the province.

However, the reality is de facto we do have a situation in many areas of the province where changing school support is as easy as going down to the municipal office. And I'm just wondering if you intend to do anything to tell the general public, and especially municipal offices, that redesignation was never supposed to be as easy or as automatic as frankly many ratepayers in this province have for a long time believed.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well it's my view that school boards will continue to communicate sort of the common message that has been communicated for years.

I think that as the member from Kelvington-Wadena pointed out, that there needs to be a broad educational process today that makes its way into the levels of municipal government and to school trustees to ensure that this message is clearly communicated, that the form really only is conforming with what the law always has been, and that when ratepayers ask the question that they can clearly be articulated that they understand where in fact their designation is most appropriate.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 44 — The Midwifery Act

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I move that the Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

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

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

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

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

The Deputy Chair: — Do I see the member for Athabasca on his feet?

Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, and to the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce a guest in the Speaker's gallery. And it would be not proper of me if I didn't recognize his truly artistic, incredible athletic ability. I'd like to have the Assembly welcome a fellow athlete from northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Ted Flett.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

The Chair: — Before I call the first subvote, I invite the Minister of Highways to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce my officials. To my immediate left is Barry Martin, the assistant deputy minister of operations division; to my immediate right is Bernie Churko, the senior executive director of grain, rail, and area planning, in policy and administration division; behind me to my right is George Samatinos, director of business services branch; and directly behind me is Terry Blomme, executive director of the southern region.

Subvote (HI01)

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to the minister and her officials. Madam Minister, for my benefit — I don't know if it's being provided to other members across the floor — but do you have a project-ranking benefit-costs report that you produced fairly recently, that I might have a copy sent across to me? I haven't got one here with me.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — The list that you're talking about that we gave out last year, that one hasn't been updated but we could provide you with that list again — the 1997 one — but we don't have it here. And we could . . . Certainly the project list this year is just straight projects — that could be made available.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, could you send a copy of that across to us right now then, the list of projects that you've just referred to? I don't have that one on hand with me here at this time too. So if you wouldn't mind sending that across.

If you might — just while I'm getting that copy — if you might respond to the, just the simple matter of the number of damage claims to vehicles globally in this province, damages resulting from highway conditions. Have you got a global figure that you could provide to us here this afternoon?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Overall to answer that question, we've had about 216 claims. Those would include both surface condition claims and flying stone claims. And when you think about that we have over a million vehicles registered in this province and the number of trips that that's the number of claims that we had.

Oh, the dates would be from April 1, 1998 to February 15, 1999. That's when we had summarized that. We weren't quite to the year-end.

(1630)

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Madam Minister, I'm looking at a document here that made reference to damage claims for the '97-98 fiscal year. At that time it only totalled, I think, sum total was 105 claims. So I guess you can put it in perspective of how many vehicles we've got registered in the province and that it's not that bad. But the fact is, that figure is well over double what I'm looking at here for the fiscal year of '97-98. That's hardly a record to be envious of.

I know in my own riding I've had a number of individuals who have called, concerned about the damage done to their vehicle. Certainly a lot of rock on the glass type of damage. I know Highway 301 just recently — recent, within the past 10 days — there's been some gravel, oil, pressed onto the surface. A lot of people have been calling saying that they've got rock damage to their windshields as a result. I know you can argue, well, everybody has to slow down. The driver that's incurred the damage — fine, they may be taking the appropriate action; they may be responsible enough to slow down. But that oncoming traffic — that isn't always the case, and I know there's been some significant numbers of damages done as a result of that type of a surface application.

Couldn't there be a better means of repairing some of . . . what are potholes? And I guess a better way of describing some of where I saw that type of an application done is it's kind of filling the trenches, so to speak, that have developed in some of these . . . what you would refer to as secondary highways, what I would maintain are actually primary routes for a lot of people — primary routes to marketplaces, primary routes to get their kids to school. This type of an application doesn't seem to be

serving the best purposes for all involved, given the amount of damage claims that I'm sure you will be obtaining as a result of what's happening out there.

If you could make some comments on that, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — I think, to the member from Thunder Creek, that this method of seal coating is a very cost-effective way to do a lot of repair on our highways. And certainly when it's under construction or when that repair work is being done, there is signage to slow down. And I know the concern that you have that some people don't, but . . . When you say is there another cost-effective way? No, not really, because it would be a lot more expensive; we wouldn't be able to repair as much highway. So I think this type of a seal coat is a very effective way in which to repair our highways; and we would just again, I guess, ask drivers too that when this work is being done — which I think is positive that the work is being done — that they need to slow down because during that repair time there is that . . . the concern that you raise about flying rocks or stones.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Madam Minister, you refer to there isn't a more cost-effective means of doing that type of repair but I don't know — and correct me if I'm wrong — but I don't think I used that terminology when I asked you isn't there another way of effecting some repairs to some of these trenches that have developed in these highways, and may be cost effective to you but certainly not to the drivers that have to travel over these stretches of roads and incur these damages that they are incurring to their vehicles.

So I guess if you could elaborate in terms of other means of repairing these types of roads and the serious conditions that have developed upon them. And also available to you — and I might toss this one into the mix as well — is certainly there's more fuel tax revenues collected in this province than what you're applying to the roads currently.

So when you're looking for . . . you're referring to the most cost-effective means to effect these types of repairs, what's wrong with tapping into a little bit more of those fuel tax revenues? And let's get these patches or repairs done in a better way, in a way that actually repairs them on a more permanent basis rather than what is amounting to — and I've got letters before me here that refer to a lot of the work that's done these days — as nothing more than temporary or band-aid type of applications on these highways.

Just exactly how much of the tax — the fuel tax revenues that are generated in this province — how much of that in terms of a percentage or dollar figure is actually put back into the Department of Highways and then into our road system?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay, I'll answer both of these questions here. First of all, when you say cost effective, I think that is still an important thing because if it's cost effective you can do more repairs right across this province.

If we went to what you're calling a different kind of a treatment, we could spend 80,000 to \$100,000 per kilometre instead of the kind of repair with the strengthening, with the type of granular repair that's done there maybe at 2,000 to \$3,000 per kilometre.

I think too when you look at the total amount of claims, that the cost of what the vehicle damage claims are in the neighbourhood of around \$55,000, just upgrading like the surface that you might be talking about at \$80,000 a kilometre. I mean you do have to take cost-effectiveness into this because 1 kilometre of an upgrade would be 80,000 to \$100,000.

When you say, how are we doing with our tax revenue — if we compare what we actually spend on highways and roads in the province within our own provincial Highways budget plus also the municipal part, and we take that in comparison to what we collect on fuel tax which is on-road fuel tax, we are putting back onto our highways and roads in this province about 80 per cent of the tax collected.

When you think that at least 16 cents of every dollar that's collected is paying interest on the debt, we are putting a significant percentage of our gas tax on highways and roads in this province.

When we look at the federal government and the revenue that they're getting, they're only putting about 6 per cent back into transportation across this country; in which I would say as a provincial government in this province, we're getting about zero per cent.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, you can talk cost-effectiveness all you want. I didn't hear anything in there that refers to your consideration for driver safety and passenger safety on these highways.

There have been incidences provided to you in this legislature, examples of people coming in here displaying the injuries they've received with rocks and stones coming through the windshields of their vehicles.

At some point, how do you reconcile that, as a department, where you're trading off people's safety against the road system in the province in trying to provide a band-aid solution to as many kilometres as you can. Essentially a political gloss-over, and it's at the expense of the safety of the driving public.

Certainly there's a lot of examples that have been presented where people's safety has been drastically compromised. You can refer to only, you know, however many tens of thousands, 50-some thousand dollars of damage claims. You don't even see the tip of the iceberg.

There's so many people that travel these roads day by day, they incur vehicle damage on an ongoing, on a continuous basis. They've given up hope of ever trying to get any sort of a rebate from you or any kind of restitution from you or your department. They've just given up hope.

There's a lot of damage out there as I say, that's going unreported due to the types of applications, the types of treatments that you're applying to these roads.

Another one, another example is how you repair your potholes. And you'll dump a pile of asphalt in them, maybe you roll a truck over it — I don't know what — but within a couple of days that patch has worked its way out. The pothole has become larger. It's again . . . you can't even refer to that as a band-aid

solution. It's just a matter of days until that type of treatment has lost any effectiveness.

And in fact in many instances we've saw examples of where it's actually created a worse highway traffic situation where the pothole, the size of the potholes increased and there's little fragments of the asphalt strewn all around on the road, then again creating a driving hazard.

So how do you square that circle of driver and passenger safety against always just the cost-effectiveness aspect that you relate to us this afternoon?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay, to the member opposite on that question. I think just the opposite interpretation should have been given to my answer — is that being able to repair more roads in this province in a very cost-effective way because you can do way more kilometres, is all about safety and keeping these roads safe for people to be driving on. If we did what the alternative was here, of you saying that we need a more expensive treatment and fix less roads, I don't think that would be conscionable to the drivers of this province. This is all about having safe roads for the people.

And I don't know about your constituents, but I have met a lot of constituents right across this province, and actually several of yours also, in which I believe that they want to see these roads repaired and that the way that we do these repairs with this kind of a granular surfacing, is a very effective way to do them and it is a way in which we can keep our roads safe.

The thing about potholes, the way that we repair our potholes, as they do in any other jurisdiction, is acceptable. Now sometimes there's a treatment that's done very quickly and that they have to come back afterwards to complete that. But every spring certainly there are some breaks in the highway, there are potholes in the highways, and we have to get out there and get those fixed as best as possible because the safety of our highways and roads is a priority for our department and for our government.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well, Madam Minister, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, there's a lot of people out there who are saying, fix the roads; fix them properly. Fine, you can say we're better off to stretch what is an ineffectual type of repair across the entire road system in the province. But what they're saying is fix them right.

And you mentioned you spoke with some of my constituents. Well here's one here — Helen Whitfield of Briercrest. I don't know if you've spoke to her, but this is the sort of thing that she says concerning our highway system, and it's as a PS (postscript) on this letter to me. And I'll quote from it:

P.S. Concerning our Highway 339, I'd like to invite Mr. Romanow and some of his members to drive down our highway like we drive.

These are people who day by day drive the roads that we're talking about here this afternoon where you've effected this cost-effective means of repairing them, where you've put the little piles of asphalt into the potholes to have it worked out, where you've rolled the gravel and oil over stretches of the

road.

(1645)

There's a lot of problems that are directly related to impacting on the safety of drivers across this province that are not being addressed by the type of repairs that you're effecting here. Fine, you can say we're better to stretch it all the way across all of the road system.

And essentially what you're admitting to by saying that is you're not providing any real degree of safety to anybody. Because what we're saying is these rocks are flying all over the place — through people's windshields. There's pieces of asphalt that we've delivered to your office in fact, pieces of asphalt that are knocking vehicles off of the road.

So what we're saying is there has to be a better way of effecting repairs to roads, and at the same time to be doing a better job of rebuilding our highway system here in this province.

And I'd like to know what the exact breakdown is. If you could explain to me one more time how you arrive at that 80 per cent of those revenues collected that go back into our road system. Because that one comes as a bit of surprise to a lot of people around this province when they hear that here this afternoon.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Thunder Creek, as I have said before, but I will say it here again too — that we are putting more dollars into our budget for highways and roads in this province. And over the last two years, we've had an increase of . . . well, two years ago \$30 million; last year another \$30 million; this year an additional \$15 million. There is more money also went to municipal government for roads.

And so we've recognized that we need to put more dollars in. And what we are doing . . . I mean the engineers and the people in our department I think do a very good job of keeping the highways, the roads in this province, repaired and fixed.

Now if you have some suggestion that there are other ways in which . . . instead of this seal coat that we use, which is a very safe way of treating the roads and we can treat more kilometres by using that method.

My understanding from your question before is that it was when the road was actually being repaired that sometimes people aren't slowing down and that there's rocks and damage during this repair. I believe people want their roads repaired. I think they want the holes in the road, the potholes fixed. And I believe we're doing it in a very effective manner.

Now if you have some suggestion that there is some other way . . . Our department works with engineers and people all across the world in knowing what's the most beneficial way to keep your road structure in place, and I believe that we're delivering that. Now if you say there's a better way, maybe you can share that with us.

I'd have one suggestion of a better way, is if we had more dollars. And I believe there needs to be federal dollars participating in Highways and Transportation in this province. And when you have federal policy that has impacted this

province so tremendously on transportation and you're getting zero cost sharing here in the province, I believe that that is one of the better ways, if we could talk to the federal Liberals and get some of those dollars also to come so we could be doing more work on our roads in this province.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. You asked for some suggestions on how you could do more. Why not put the full amount of the fuel tax into our roads and highway system? You're using figures of 80 per cent. The fact of the matter is you're playing games with some of those numbers.

And I notice in a letter you sent to constituents of mine, Chris and Perry Gryde of Climax — now those are the people that sent their wheel in here and I raised it in the House that day, the wheel busted completely in half and squashed — and I would like to know how your department has arrived at some settlement, if you have, and what the settlement was.

In fact your department has never gotten back to us on that issue. Hopefully you've done more than send out this letter from yourself to Chris and Perry Gryde.

What is happening out there, and the highways that they're driving on are in absolutely terrible, terrible shape.

In our platform . . . You're asking what should be done. In our platform we're saying put 100 per cent of the fuel tax, and we're basing that on your budget.

So it's a case of priorities. We're coming up with our numbers based on your budget, and we're saying we can put 100 per cent of the fuel tax in. You're using figures of 80 per cent, and you know it's not correct. It's probably around 60 per cent and you've upped that, Madam Minister, from . . . it used to be at 38, 39 per cent, as we recall from the CAA (Canadian Automobile Association) report that was put out a few years ago. A very embarrassing document for you and your government.

So if you're up around 60 per cent, you're still, you're still raking in millions and millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' dollars while you're saying you're putting them towards health and highways. The fact of the matter is, what you're doing with those dollars is investing in foreign countries, power plants, TV stations in New Zealand. Sixty-two million bucks — that could've went a long ways to our highway system.

It really comes down to being a case of priorities. Your priorities are wrong. The people have said it time and time again, Madam Minister. And so if you're looking at . . . you know, you're bragging up your own program, the two and a half billion over 10 years. You're not fooling anybody. In fact you've got it in your letter here that you've got some commitment.

I look at a news release that was done here not so long ago, I guess by the road builders, and they're saying you're \$64 million behind in your commitment in the first two years. Are you saying the road builders aren't telling the truth?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Okay, there's two or three questions

there that I will address that you had brought forward.

First of all, on getting priorities and on fuel tax and so on — I think the priorities of our government have been the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan, which is a balanced approach. With every balanced budget, take a third of that surplus to increase funding in areas of priorities, which we have done, which have been health, education, highways, which are the priorities of the people of this province. We also said to take a third of that surplus and be working on paying down the debt, which we have been able to do. And we've also taken a third to do some tax reductions, which we have delivered in every budget since we've had a balanced budget.

So I believe we have met the priorities of the people in a balanced approach. We've recognized, by saying a \$2.5 billion commitment which was in 1997, that we have to continue to increase our budget over the next 10 years to meet that \$2.5 billion commitment. I think no one said at the time that that would mean that you would take 2.5 billion, divide it by 10, and come up to 250 million for 10 years. You can get the average by just adding, ramping up your budget.

And I will be able to send over a graph that will show ways in which we can meet that commitment, and we are doing that. And actually if we took on an average amount of increase up to a \$2.5 billion commitment we would actually be ahead of what those average . . . we would actually — I'll just wait a minute if you want to hear the answer — is that on that \$2.5 billion commitment, if we took an average increment every year of how that we could meet that commitment on an average line ramping up, we would actually be above that average line. So we are going to live up to that commitment of dollars to highways and roads.

We also, when we're talking about the provincial sales tax, when we do the numbers we're not fooling anybody. We have the numbers here in which we take the actual on-road fuel tax revenues and then add what we have in our provincial highways budget, which are also in the municipal budget for roads, put those together, take the average. It works out to close to 80 per cent, 78.9 per cent, somewhere in there. So we are making that commitment of putting more of our dollars onto highways and roads in this province.

Now on the specific question when you were asking about the claim that is coming . . . that came from a constituent of yours on Highway No. 37, that is being processed. I understand there will be compensation paid on that.

Mr. McPherson: — Will they be compensated fully for their loss of the wheel and the time and any vehicles they had to rent in the meantime?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member from Shaunavon . . . or Wood River, I'm sorry. I'm not sure of the actual dollars but that's being worked on with the people that have brought that claim forward.

Mr. McPherson: — Actually you made mention . . . your own statement was well, we're not fooling anybody. And I'd have to agree, you're not fooling anybody about how much your commitment is.

Why don't you send over the graph and why don't you show us what your long-term plan is? How much money you're going to be spending in the next years — and surely you've done that budget — in the next years of your full commitment? We would like to know, as would the road builders, exactly where this is going to peak out.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member opposite, we're just sending the graph over.

And over the . . . as we go through budget processes we are predicting our \$2.5 billion. Now whether or not each year you have to constantly look at all of the revenues that are coming in to your province, all the circumstances, as you finalize a budget. And we have been ramping up that budget, and as we've had good years in the last two years we've even added dollars into our budget from what we had presented at budget time.

So the commitment is there. But I think again we have to be totally fiscally responsible and we will be making that commitment and if there's a year that we can add more that changes the graph a little bit. But at the end of the 10 years there will be a minimum of \$2.5 billion being spent.

Mr. McPherson: — Madam Minister, if you weren't prepared, your government wasn't prepared to spend the amount of money on equal instalments, why did you have the road builders believe that you were?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — To the member opposite's question on that: actually when we went to the \$2.5 billion commitment and the meetings that we had with road builders, I mean one of the comments that had come right from the road builders at that point in time was they did not want to see a huge ramp up immediately. They said to take time ramping up the budget.

And so certainly I'm sure the road builders this year would like to see more dollars in the highways and roads. As the government we would like to be putting more dollars in highways and roads, but again we have to balance all of the priorities that we are faced with.

And so the commitment that we made . . . and the road builders were there at the time, at the beginning of that, and they certainly didn't believe we would go up to 250 million and keep it flat for 10 years. They knew that. And for taxpayers' dollars too, we wouldn't want to have a huge increase like that because you can also bring in inflation and other costs to that.

So that was . . . I think we listened very carefully and as we can afford to do it we will be putting more dollars into our Highways and Transportation budget.

Mr. McPherson: — Madam Minister, if anything I think you would have seen the people of this province and the road builders themselves expect that you would have front-end loaded more of this rather than play some game. Because quite frankly nobody dreams for a moment you're going to be empowered to see any commitment that you're making.

And I'm going to just quote from this Murray Mandryk, Leader-Star News article:

The Saskatchewan government is never going to meet its 250 million a year commitment on highway spending at its present rate, says the past president of the province's road builders' association. And it is Saskatchewan construction firms who've spent millions of dollars on heavy equipment because they thought the government was serious about this commitment that are now paying the price.

And it goes on to quote:

"Our last government highways contract ended in June", said Wayne Jorgensen of ASL Paving Ltd., a Saskatoon-based company that spent more than a million dollars on new equipment this year, including 430,000 on a new asphalt spreader because of the government's 1997 budget commitment to spend two and a half billion over the next 10 years on Saskatchewan highways. Everybody's working for nothing right now, just to keep the employees on.

You see, Madam Minister, here's a company alone that has spent a huge, huge amount of money, over a million bucks, sitting back and listening to your commitment.

And you're saying that whatever dialogue that you had with the road builders, that they wouldn't, if they're going to spend a million bucks, that they wouldn't know exactly what you meant.

I think you led everyone on in this province with these commitments of yours. Everyone knows full well what you do at election time, going into elections. A lot of promises. The old saying about — how does that go — when everything is said and done, more gets said than gets done. And I think your department really gets that in spades.

Having said that, I know we'll have more to say on this on another day, Mr. Chair. I'd like you to recognize the clock.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

