

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even though the hospital in the city of Swift Current has been designated a regional hospital, there is a considerable amount of concern by residents, both in the city and the area surrounding it, with the condition of the hospital and the monies that have been made available to it. And I have a petition here today signed by many Swift Current residents, but even more residents from the constituency of Cypress Hills, particularly the community of Gull Lake. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to carefully consider Swift Current's request for a new hospital.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding two of the government's Crown corporations, SaskPower and SaskEnergy. Both recently announced significant rate increases for residential and business customers. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the fine community of Biggar, Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to present the petition on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today with people concerned about the rural ambulance services:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

The people that have signed this petition are from Fosston and Rose Valley.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present a petition that's dealing with health care in the province of Saskatchewan. And reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take

the necessary steps to ensure that the Redvers Health Centre is maintained at its current level of service, at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctoral services available as well as laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from our district, southeast Saskatchewan, and southwest Manitoba and beyond.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by people from the communities of: Tilston, Manitoba; Maryfield, Bellegarde, Antler, and Redvers.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of people concerned in southwest Saskatchewan with the state of the hospital in Swift Current. And, Mr. Speaker, this petition's prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to carefully consider Swift Current's request for a new hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by people from the city of Swift Current, from Hodgeville, from Gull Lake, from Stewart Valley, from Cabri, and from Kyle.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are concerned about their ambulance services. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And the petition is signed by residents of Kayville, Ogema, and Crane Valley.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too present petitions on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned on the EMS (emergency medical services) report. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intention to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed in communities of Redvers, Wakaw, and Storthoaks.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present on the Redvers Health Service Centre.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Redvers Health Centre be maintained at its current level of service, at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctoral services available as well as laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care and long-term care services available to users from our district, southeast Saskatchewan, and southwest Manitoba and beyond.

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

These petitioners, Mr. Speaker, come from the Redvers, Storthoaks, Gainsborough, and Antler area.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about ambulance services. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And this petition is signed by the good citizens of Leroy and Englefeld.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition regarding citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about health care.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce current levels of available acute care, emergency, and doctor services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Spiritwood and Mildred.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that, at very least, current levels of service and care are maintained at the Pioneer Lodge in Assiniboia.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from Wood Mountain, Bengough, Assiniboia, Thompson Lake, Fir Mountain.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise with a petition to stop further cuts at Assiniboia Pioneer Lodge. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that, at the very least, current levels of services and care are maintained at Pioneer Lodge in Assiniboia.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Fife Lake, Rockglen, McCord, Fir Mountain, Assiniboia, Willow Bunch, and Lafleche.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order, a petition regarding the Highway 22 between Cupar and Dysart has been reviewed and found to be irregular; therefore, cannot be read and received.

Other petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) are hereby read and received. And they are petitions that are on the same matters as those filed as sessional papers no. 3, no. 4, no. 5, no. 10, and no. 58.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 36 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority: why was Bonnie Swan, manager of the southwest region of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority terminated from that position?

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy today to be able to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this House, 56 students from St. Jerome School, which is in my constituency, and their teachers, Mr. K. Anderson, and Ms. Bzdell, and they're up in the west gallery there. I'd like you to join in welcoming them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a special person in the life of one of our pages, Loni Schick. In the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Bev Schick, Loni's mother from Melville, who is accompanied by Angus Gilpin, who is visiting from Bradford, Ontario.

They've come to see Lonnie at work, and I'm sure that she will demonstrate a high level of responsibility and pride in participating in the events of this room. I would ask all members to invite her special guest today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, a number of individuals who are here for the second reading of The Registered Nurses Amendment Act.

From the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, Donna Ottenson, who is the chairperson of the Regina SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) district council, Marlene Brown, who is the vice-president of finance for SUN, From SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), Yvonne Warnes, who is the program head for the advanced clinical nursing program at SIAST, and Joyce Bruce, who is the faculty in the advanced clinical nursing program at SIAST. And from the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, Donna Brunskill, who is the executive director, and Heather Keith, who's a member at large and a primary care nurse who works in the North and will be now working at the Four Directions Clinic in Regina.

I ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Health on behalf of the official opposition to welcome the members of SUN, and SIAST and SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) here this afternoon.

This is another milestone in the nursing profession and we certainly are very pleased that you're here to witness the democratic process that will begin today. And we look forward to your comments and input, much of which I've already received, and I do appreciate that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do invite all members to join in welcoming these worthy representatives of the health care profession to watch the proceedings today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Purple Ribbon Awareness Week

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week has been proclaimed Purple Ribbon Awareness Week by the provincial government and the Saskatchewan Battered Women's Advocacy Network. SBWAN founded the campaign

in 1993 and promotes Purple Ribbon Awareness Week to raise awareness about violence against women.

The week commemorates victims who are experiencing violence or who have died at the hands of their partner. This campaign also urges the public to work toward the total elimination of all kinds of violence.

Along with Purple Ribbon Awareness Week today was witness to a new very successful, partnership between government and the community. Last year, SaskTel and the Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan (PATHS) developed an agreement that published the Abuse Help Lines page in every telephone directory in the province. The page offers information on what violence and abuse is and where to get help.

PATHS worked very hard to produce the page and piloted the project in Saskatoon last year as the Hot Peach Pages. SaskTel sponsored and partnered with PATHS to get the page into telephone books. The project fits well with SaskTel's social commitment to child abuse prevention.

The successful partnership between SaskTel, the Women's Secretariat and PATHS leads the way towards building safer communities. It shows us that together, as government and community, we can make a difference and prevent violence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Violence Against Women Campaign

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the first day of Purple Ribbon Awareness Week, a week set aside to commemorate women who have died suffering violence at the hands of their partner, and also to raise awareness of those who are still victims of violence.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women is a very serious issue and the growing number of victims indicates there is much more that has to be done to eradicate this. It is one thing to say that we adopted zero tolerance on this shocking and preventable subject. It is yet another to say that we have met with any success.

How can we say we have been successful when thousands of women are still physically tortured and abused every year, and hundreds more die as a result of their injuries?

How can we say we've been successful when the number of shelters and transition homes across the country keeps increasing?

How can we say we've been successful when every year we have to keep reminding others that violence — any violence — simply will not be tolerated?

(13:45)

It seem appropriate that Purple Ribbon Awareness Week includes Mother's Day this year. How many women died needlessly in the past 12 months, and how many children will be without their mothers this Sunday.

On behalf of the official opposition, our deepest appreciation for the Saskatchewan Battered Women's Advocacy Network whose dedication and hard work to this cause is without end. Thanks to them, women and their children are given the opportunity to start a new life. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Nursing Week

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a busy week. May 7 to 13 is also National Nursing Week, a time to remind ourselves of just what it is nurses do, to rid our minds of the narrow clichés surrounding this essential profession, to renew our efforts to enhance the conditions under which nurses work, and in general just take a few moments to recognize how crucial nurses are to our health system, and thus to the well-being of our society.

In Saskatchewan there are over 12,000 licensed practical nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, and registered nurses. Nurses constitute the largest single group of health providers in our province, comprising about 40 per cent of the total health workforce.

And, Mr. Speaker, nurses work in all areas of the community, far beyond the hospital setting with which they are traditionally identified. As well, the role nurses play in the delivery of health services is becoming increasingly more proactive and complex.

But regardless of how expanded their role becomes, nurses still are usually our first human contact with the health system, which can be a formidable institution.

Mr. Speaker, we as a community and we as a government value our nurses. We have new programs to upgrade skills, to increase the number of nursing students, and to expand access for northern and Aboriginal students. And we are working both to keep the nurses we have and to improve the conditions under which they work.

There is more we can do but I am proud to say that most recently 75 per cent of our nursing graduates from the nursing education program of Saskatchewan have remained to work in Saskatchewan. That I think is a comment both on the quality of our programs and on the commitment of our nurses to Saskatchewan and its people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

North Battleford Water Quality

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members know, this is a very difficult time for my constituency. It is a bitter irony that while Canada has over one-fifth of the world's freshwater resources, we are unable to guarantee the safety of municipal water supplies.

I welcome the Premier's decision to visit North Battleford. I also congratulate his decision to convene a judicial inquiry. However, I believe our main energy should be devoted to correcting the situation as opposed to assigning blame.

It is clear some procedures must be improved. It disturbs me that this province is not regularly testing for cryptosporidium. I call on the Department of the Environment to have mandatory and regular testing throughout the province.

Second, an official of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) said the department had commissioned a consultant's report last fall on the North Battleford water system. The mayor categorically denied that the city knew of such a study. The province has not communicated any concerns to the city. There is now an onus on the minister to say what his department knew and why this information was not shared with the city.

Finally, if it determined that the sewage treatment plant does not meet necessary standards, I call upon the federal and provincial governments to assist with its replacement.

I congratulate Joe Clark and the national Progressive Conservative caucus for their approach, calling for a national standard of national safe water. All members should support Mr. Clark's initiative for national safe water standards. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moose Jaw Women of Distinction Celebration

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the fifth annual Moose Jaw Women of Distinction celebration took place May 6. This event honours the accomplishments of women who keep the pioneering spirit of the Prairies alive through their leadership and commitment to the community.

This spirit was well represented, both by the community and the host organizations — Moose Jaw YMCA-YWCA and the Transition House. The Moose Jaw YMCA-YWCA has been providing services and programs since 1905 for women and girls, men and boys. They strive to make our community safer, stronger by bringing people, needs, and services together. As well, the Moose Jaw Transition House has provided shelter for over 1,400 families, along with providing services through the outreach and children's programs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to formally congratulate all the nominees this year who represent women whose talent, service, and creativity has made an impact on our community. As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like the rest of the House to join me in congratulating the winners of the Women of Distinction awards: Chelsea Jukes in the youth category; Diana Humenick, leadership in the workplace; Gladys Pierce, community enhancement; Vivian Meikle, community mentor; Heather Segall, science and technology.

These women are inspiring examples of what we can achieve, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North American Occupational, Safety, and Health Week

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the first official day of the North American Occupational,

Safety, and Health Week — a week set aside to focus the attention of employers and employees and the general public on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace.

This year's theme, Mr. Speaker, is Prevention is the Cure, and it is vitally important that we remember we are all partners in this initiative. We are all responsible for doing everything we can to ensure a safe work environment.

In this year's campaign, it is fitting that young and first-time workers are being given special attention because they have a higher rate of work-related injuries than other age groups. It is not because they are careless, Mr. Speaker, or less responsible. It's simply because they have the least experience in the workplace and as a result they will have the highest number of accidents. We must also remember that workplace injuries and illnesses do not just affect the employee and the employer; they also impact families, friends, relatives, and even entire communities.

As Labour critic, on behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the various agencies, organizations and departments who have committed to educating all of us about the importance of having an injury-free work environment.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Book on Saskatchewan Trivia Wins Award

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Parkland Publishing's book, *Saskatchewan Trivia Challenge* by Robin and Arlene Karpan, won the Souvenir of the Year Award at the 2000 Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence gala held in Regina.

The Souvenir of the Year is awarded to the item which best enhances awareness of Saskatchewan both inside and outside this great province.

This 192-page book is packed full of important as well as completely frivolous tidbits of information about Saskatchewan's biggest, best, firsts, records, famous folks, oddities, and just plain cool stuff that makes Saskatchewan such a remarkable place.

Discover why the folks at Cape Canaveral came to Saskatchewan to buy fire bricks for their launch pad; which lieutenant governor had a pet monkey that liked to swing from the chandeliers in Government House; and the crop where Saskatchewan farmers account for three-quarters of the world's production — and no, it's not wheat, barley, or canola. Find out where you'd be playing golf if you hit the ball on the ninth tee and the ball landed an hour later in another country.

This book will test your knowledge of Saskatchewan as well as representing the wonderful past and present this province has. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to formally congratulate Robin and Arlene Karpan on a job well done. They indisputably represent the spirit of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Water Quality in North Battleford

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, the government is now admitting that during periods of high inflow, untreated sewage is pumped into the North Saskatchewan River, just 2 kilometres upstream from the water treatment plant. An official also said that every time untreated sewage is pumped into the river, it must be reported to SERM.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us: how often does this happen; how many times in the past year was untreated sewage pumped into the North Saskatchewan River just 2 kilometres upstream from the water treatment plant?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite in this Assembly this afternoon — because I know that this issue as it relates to North Battleford, is one that's been on our agendas and certainly in the minds of people of Saskatchewan for some weeks now — and I want to say to the member opposite and to this Assembly that today, just a few minutes ago, the Premier had announced that he is going to be proceeding with an independent public inquiry on issues related to North Battleford.

And I want to say to the members opposite that we need to pay close attention to what's happening across the province. And to say to the member opposite to not only in Saskatchewan but across the country, because there's a growing concern and assurance that we need to have quality safe drinking water for our public, as I said, not only in Saskatchewan but across the country.

So today we're proceeding to take in a more fuller fashion a public inquiry as it relates to the North Battleford issue, and particularly around the issue that the member talks about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We as well appreciate the call for a public inquiry.

But, Mr. Speaker, my questions relate to what are supposed to be routine operating procedures for Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management.

Mr. Speaker, we now know that untreated sewage is sometimes pumped into the river because the sewage treatment plant does not have the capacity to handle all of it.

We also know that for three weeks in late March and early April North Battleford's water filtration system was down. This raises the question: how much untreated sewage was pumped into the river while the water filtration system was down?

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how many times in late March and early April was untreated sewage pumped into the river during the period that the water filtration system was not working?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'd like to say to the Assembly and to the member again, Mr. Speaker, when you have a situation that deals with the disposal of waste in this province and the determination of the quality of the water levels in this province, there are a number of actors and players that are involved in this process, Mr. Speaker.

There's the municipalities that are involved in making sure that the treatment of waste is disposed in an appropriate fashion. There's the public health officers that work within district health boards across this province. And we have agencies of government, Mr. Speaker, who are involved in this process as well.

And so on occasion, Mr. Speaker, we get to a place of this nature. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, the Premier today announced an inquiry into an issue of this nature — to look more fully, Mr. Speaker, at where in fact there have been some difficulties; how in fact Mr. Speaker, we might enrich and ensure that we have quality water systems in our province into the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, once again, we do welcome the call for a public inquiry. But how is it even supposed to work if the department itself cannot answer questions about what are supposed to be routine operating procedures and policies?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Mr. Speaker, it now appears that at some period in late March and early April, untreated sewage was pumped into the river. During the time that the water filtration system was down, raw sewage was being pumped in the river just two kilometres downstream. That same contaminated water was being pumped then into people's homes. The government stood by and let this happen and never told anyone.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how could Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management let this happen? They were supposed to be documenting each and every incidence of sewage being pumped into the river. How could they let the residents of North Battleford drink what amounts to untreated, unfiltered sewage water?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite and to the member opposite who is asking the question that we should be extremely careful in terms of the determination of what might have happened in North Battleford today.

What I hear the member opposite talking about is he's laying, he's laying blame, Mr. Speaker, on a particular department of government. And I say to the member opposite that the inquiry, the public inquiry is not about laying blame on anybody. The

public inquiry is about examining what happened in a situation in North Battleford because you'll have many people, Mr. Speaker, who will tell us and tell the member opposite in this Assembly that they engaged in the inappropriate time . . . in an appropriate time.

And I say to the members opposite we should be extremely cautious about pointing our finger at anybody and say to the member opposite that that's why we invited and are beginning with a public inquiry, to examine this fully so that we both have a better appreciation of the determination of what our facts are and what we can do in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We understand that the public inquiry will address the role of all of the players in the incident in North Battleford. But is he somehow trying to suggest that we do not have a role in questioning the role of the department in this incident as well? Because, Mr. Speaker, it got worse.

This morning we learned that the sewage treatment plant and the water filtration plant don't communicate with each other. So we had raw sewage being pumped into the river while the water filtration system was down. No one at either plant knew the problems at the other plant.

(14:00)

Meanwhile over 100 people had gone to the emergency room complaining of stomach problems, but the health district had no idea that there was a problem with the water system either. So no one's talking to each other.

Mr. Speaker, how could this happen and why did it take so long for the department to warn the people of North Battleford?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member one more time, that there is no question here at all about whether or not this issue should be raised in this Assembly by the opposition. Not at all.

Nor is there any doubt, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House that we should be providing a full response to this issue because, Mr. Speaker, there are a whole host of people who are involved in making sure that we have appropriate disposal of our sewage, that we have quality and safe water across this province. There are a variety of different people who are partners in providing that role, Mr. Speaker.

And I would say to the member opposite and to this Assembly, that we have a variety of different individuals who communicate and there's protocols across the province for a variety of different processes that occur.

And I say to the member opposite, we should permit the inquiry to do its work on North Battleford, to allow the inquiry to independently assess and determine what the issues are. And at that point, Mr. Speaker, then we can draw conclusions from which we might be able to ensure that we have a safer, better

water-quality system in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well let's just go over this one more time. We've got raw sewage being pumped into the river. These occurrences are supposed to be documented as a matter of routine policy and procedure by the Department of Environment.

This is happening two kilometres downstream. That same water is being pumped unfiltered into people's homes. North Battleford people are drinking the water, hundreds are getting sick. The emergency room had over 100 cases of stomach problems. The drugstore can't keep enough medication on the shelves and, yet, no one connects the dots. Where was the documentation?

And no one warns the people of North Battleford until April 25, weeks after the problem first started. Mr. Speaker, why were the people of North Battleford kept in the dark for so long and why was there no warning about the serious problems with the North Battleford water supply?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate to the member opposite, one more time, in terms of how the processes of managing and ensuring that we have safe water in this province and that we have control and safe sewage disposal system in this province.

And the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, is targeting one particular portion of the system which is responsible for certain responsibilities, Mr. Speaker.

But what the member is not talking about is that to provide those kinds of assurances across the province, it requires the participation and involvement of a whole host of different people, from SERM to municipalities to district health boards.

And I say to the member opposite, if there has been a breakdown in this particular process by those authorities who are involved in making sure that we have safe drinking water and appropriate disposal, then we need to make sure that this inquiry does it work — as the inquiry will do its work — and at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, will determine for us where in fact we need to enrich the kinds of services that we're providing today and make sure that those that have responsibility for it take a greater . . . play a greater role in it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For three weeks, unfiltered, untreated sewage water flowed into the homes of North Battleford families. For three weeks, people were drinking this water. They were giving it to their children certainly unaware of any problem. As a result hundreds of people became ill and possibly as many as three people may have died. And the people of North Battleford were never told anything until it was too late.

Mr. Speaker, how could this have gotten by the Department of Environment and Resource Management? How could a simple monitoring process such as keeping track of the number of

times that sewage was released into the river not be accounted for by that department?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite again that the member opposite has focused his attention primarily in question period today on the Department of SERM. And he's pointing his finger at a group of men and women today who have some responsibility for regulatory process.

And I say to the member opposite, before you act on a regulatory . . .

The Speaker: — Just may I remind the member to continue to speak to the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, just to say to the member opposite that to ensure that the regulatory process can be performed on fully, Mr. Speaker, we need to be sure that the other actors and players are involved in that process in a full expedience.

And I say to the member opposite today, we have a number of other people who were involved in this process and we raised those kinds of questions and concerns, Mr. Speaker. And that's why today the Premier has announced the public inquiry, Mr. Speaker, to answer those kinds of questions that the member's raising in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister responsible for SERM is unwilling to answer any questions today, perhaps the Minister of Health will answer some. My question is for the minister.

Today it is being reported that one North Battleford doctor alerted the medical officer as early as April 12 that there may be a problem with cryptosporidium in the area. He had confirmed one patient with the parasite, but what raised alarm bells with him was the local pharmacy who told the doctor they couldn't keep the anti-diarrhea medication he wanted to prescribe on the shelf.

The medical health officer said now that while he knew of this diagnosis, a full investigation had to wait until after the Easter long weekend. He said, and I quote:

Once it was apparent that there was more happening, we had to look at all the hospital records and visits related to similar symptoms. That was not possible over the Easter weekend.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why is our health system not able to accommodate a medical health officer's investigation in the face of a serious public health issue because of a holiday long weekend?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on

the question which is really ancillary to what the member earlier had asked, and that is the processes that are in place today to ensure that you have safe, quality water in our province.

And now the member opposite talks about yet another partner here, Mr. Speaker. He now talks about the role of the medical health officer, which is exactly the question that I was answering a minute ago, that there are a number of people today who were involved in the process of making sure that we have safe, quality water in this province, Mr. Speaker, of which the medical health officer is one of those players.

And now we have, Mr. Speaker, identified two groups of people who should be involved to a greater degree possibly in this process, and there will be others that should be involved in this process. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, today the Premier announced the public inquiry to examine fully — to examine fully, Mr. Speaker — what the role and responsibilities of all of these people are in the province today to ensure that in North Battleford, Saskatchewan we have safe, quality water that we talk about, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Dr. Lipsett felt that his confirmation of one case of cryptosporidium infection and the subsequent knowledge that pharmacies in the city of North Battleford were experiencing strong sales of medication should have been enough knowledge to warrant a public advisory at least.

The citizens of North Battleford dealt with a boil-water advisory last fall. SERM has had concerns with the water treatment plant since last fall. Surely the medical health officer has been aware of those concerns. And with the knowledge on April 12 that the doctor and the community had further strong suspicions and concerns that there was a problem in the city, one would think that the medical health officer might have acted sooner to put a boil-water advisory in place.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why did the medical health officer not take the precautionary approach and issue a boil-water advisory for the city of North Battleford on April 12?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member's question is exactly the reason for why the Premier today has announced a public inquiry — the very reason why the Premier has announced the public inquiry.

Why, Mr. Speaker, why have there not been some answers that we might have to these questions over a period of time that we might be able to respond to in a more, in a more intense, clarified fashion, Mr. Speaker? Why can't we do that? Because, Mr. Speaker, there's been a whole group of people who are involved in this process, Mr. Speaker. There are people from Sask Water, there are people from SERM, there are individuals from the district health board, Mr. Speaker, and there are people also from the municipality.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, today we have the inquiry is to

try and find out why over a period of two months we find ourselves in a situation today where we have a claim of 36 people who are confirmed to be infected by this particular illness. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, today we have the inquiry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Water Treatment Facilities

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of municipal government or his designate. In light of the problem facing the city of North Battleford, other communities in the province are taking a close look at their own water and sewage facilities. Many communities know they need to upgrade their facilities or even build new plants, Mr. Speaker, but they don't have the money to do it.

Chronic underfunding to municipalities by the NDP (New Democratic Party) government has forced these communities to delay these projects. Some communities who need new water treatment facilities have applied for a federal-provincial infrastructure funding but have been turned down. So they have no choice but to put this project on hold.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Municipalities have been telling you that a chronic underfunding from the NDP government was going to put safety of the residents at risk and now that's proven to be true. At a time when public health is being affected, why has the minister and his NDP government refused to increase revenue-sharing grants to municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that he just needs to look at our own backyard, Mr. Speaker, where he comes from and where I come from. And there are examples where communities are working together today, Mr. Speaker, to run public waterlines that incorporate the city of Melville and Yorkton and subdivisions outside of our community, and go past my community to smaller communities outside of that.

We just need to look at the Canora project today where you have a number of farmers and smaller communities around Canora that are getting that particular service. We need to look at the Wakaw-Humboldt.

We have municipalities today, Mr. Speaker, who are concerned in a major way about what the future direction should be in terms of supplying water. And the member opposite should take some credence in this, Mr. Speaker, and support those communities in that process, as we do through the provincial Canada health . . . through the Canada-Saskatchewan grant program, infrastructure program, Mr. Speaker, and also to assist municipalities, Mr. Speaker, in making sure that we have the appropriate manpower to ensure that we have the quality of water that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Deputy Premier wants to answer

questions today, let's talk to him. Mr. Speaker, that minister was minister of Municipal Government and no increase to revenue sharing for municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, then we went to the member for North Battleford, minister of Municipal Government — no increase to revenue sharing.

Now we have the member for Melville, minister of Municipal Government, this year's budget — not one thin dime of increased revenue sharing for municipalities.

Mr. Minister, what is the Department of Municipal Affairs doing to help the city of North Battleford deal with this water crisis? And is there consideration being given to help the city build a new sewage treatment plant prior to the 2003 planned building time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting question for the member opposite to be asking this government, Mr. Speaker. Because what we did, Mr. Speaker, is that we put across the piece a variety of different spending initiatives for not only municipalities but also for health boards and school boards and across the piece, Mr. Speaker. And what happens when we do that? That member opposite stands up when it comes time to vote for the budget and he votes against the budget.

And I say to the member opposite . . . And he asks me what we're going to be doing in this province today, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to quality of water in this province. In this budget, Mr. Speaker, in SERM, we had additional funding for 10 more employees that would come on staff, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have safe, quality water in this province. And what does the member opposite do? The member opposite votes against the budget, Mr. Speaker. Ten new people to be working in the assurance that we have quality water — but those members opposite vote against that budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, we voted against this budget for a good reason. The reason being no increased revenue sharing for municipal government which may, which may, Mr. Speaker, prevent problems like the problem we see in North Battleford.

That's why we voted against this budget, Mr. Deputy Premier, and that's the reason places like North Battleford are having problems keeping up with their infrastructure and renewing that infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that I think we need to ask today too is has the minister or the department of municipal government been aware of SERM's concerns with the water treatment plant in North Battleford from last fall, and was his predecessor, the minister of Municipal Affairs, the member for North Battleford, aware of SERM's concerns since last fall?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite of which last year or the year before, we were in a huge donnybrook in this province, Mr. Speaker, about what we should be doing in terms of municipalities' responsibilities in this province. Of which that member talked a lot about making sure that municipalities had the individual rights and opportunities to decide what they want to do in making sure that their infrastructures are maintained and sustained.

And I say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, today, that we're not laying blame, Mr. Speaker, on anybody. We're not laying blame on anybody, Mr. Speaker. What we're saying, Mr. Speaker, is that in North Battleford today we have an issue, Mr. Speaker, and we have a huge issue in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker.

And what we're asking the inquiry to do is to do a full examination of what's happening in this province today, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to managing the quality of water, as it relates to the sewage disposal, Mr. Speaker. And I expect they'll even look at what the infrastructure is today in place to make sure that the people of North Battleford are well served.

And I say to the member opposite, let the inquiry do its work in North Battleford, and it will report to us in due time to make sure that the people of North Battleford are well provided into the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Public Inquiry into North Battleford Water Quality

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a water crisis in North Battleford and the government has made the proper response in authorizing an independent public judicial inquiry.

But, Mr. Speaker, now the government can take two paths. Either they can be as open and as accountable as a government can possibly do in preparation for this inquiry to do its work or, Mr. Speaker, they can try to cover up as much of the evidence, throw as much distraction as they possibly can to prevent the truth from coming to light.

Mr. Speaker, we have asked this government to be accountable. We have asked the Minister of SERM to report from his department. We have asked the Minister of Health to report what his department is doing. But we hear nothing but wait for the public inquiry. The facts are not being brought forward.

I ask the Deputy Premier, will he allow his ministers to present the facts regarding the North Battleford situation to the public prior to this inquiry doing its work?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — This is an extremely interesting question that the member from Rosetown asks. Because the question earlier, from Carrot River, pointed to the fact that we have a problem today in SERM — directly pointing to those members from SERM. And then I have the member from Melfort who stands up and he says this problem is about the public health officer.

And so, Mr. Speaker, now we've gone from the SERM to the public health officer, and the member opposite now is saying to me that we don't have an accountability process.

And I say to the member opposite, that's why we have the public inquiry. The public inquiry is to make sure that people in this province have a full appreciation, Mr. Speaker, of what's happening in this area. That the people of Saskatchewan have a full appreciation, Mr. Speaker, of what's happening with the quality of water; what's happening, Mr. Speaker, today with the disposal of our sewage in this province. And we're not laying blame on anybody, Mr. Speaker, unlike what I've heard in the previous two questions from the previous members.

And I say to the member opposite, this is about finding out the facts and making sure that the people of North Battleford are well served, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF LETTER OF RESIGNATION

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly . . . Order, please. Order. Order. Order, order.

Members of the Assembly, I've received a copy of a letter from the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Regina Sherwood, which I would now like to read into the record. It is dated May 7, addressed to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan:

Dear Sir: With deep regret, but due to my profound respect for the Legislative Assembly, I hereby tender my resignation as Deputy Speaker.

I'm also requesting that I be removed from those standing legislative committees of which I am a member: Constitutional Affairs, Crown Corporations, Private Members' Bills, the Special Nominating Committee, and the Continuing Select Committee.

Sir, it has been my privilege and honour to serve with you and all officers of the Legislative Assembly.

Yours truly, Lindy Kasperski, MLA for Regina Sherwood.

Pursuant . . . members of the Assembly, pursuant to rule 26(1), I would advise the Assembly that the election for Deputy Speaker would be held tomorrow, just before orders of the day; and that members will have until 5 p.m. today to submit their names to the Clerk of the Assembly indicating their desire to run for Deputy Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand and table a response to question 150.

The Speaker: — A response to 150 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Convert.

The Speaker: — 151 is converted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 4 — The Registered Nurses Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Registered Nurses Amendment Act, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, attracting and keeping key health care providers are top priorities for our government. We continue to compete in a worldwide shortage of health providers. The shortages are not unique to Saskatchewan but we must develop uniquely Saskatchewan solutions to address the shortages.

Nursing practice is changing across the country. Here in Saskatchewan nurses are also increasing their education and their skill sets. A number of registered nurses have received advanced training so that they are able to diagnose basic medical conditions, prescribe drugs, and order diagnostic tests.

The Act before you explicitly recognizes the role of advanced practice nurses and ensures that they have the legal authority to perform advanced services. It is one of several new initiatives by our government to assist with the recruitment and retention of health professionals.

The specific services will be further outlined in the bylaws pursuant to the Act and these bylaws will require the approval of the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with all of our health sector partners to develop and implement solutions that will strengthen our health system. We have consulted with many groups on this Act and I will list them: the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association, and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations. All of these groups support what we are proposing.

Mr. Speaker, another important amendment will allow the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association's Council to issue temporary licences to registered nurses who may come from other jurisdictions and do not meet all of the requirements for a full licence. For example, if a registered nurse comes from another province or country that has a different education program than we have in Saskatchewan, the nurse may still be licensed on a temporary basis. This will enhance the ability of registered nurses to come from outside our province to work here. Not only is this required by the Agreement on Internal Trade, but it makes good sense when we are facing a shortage of these valuable health care providers.

The Act will also increase the number of public representatives on the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association council from two to three. This change is consistent with newer

professional legislation and ensures that a public perspective is provided in the regulation of this profession.

Mr. Speaker, these changes will benefit the province by ensuring that nurses with the appropriate skills can provide primary health care services as part of an interdisciplinary team. It will also provide greater flexibility to the association in the licensing of registered nurses.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of The Registered Nurses Amendment Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and a pleasure to respond on behalf of the opposition to The Registered Nurses Amendment Act, I guess for many reasons.

We've certainly heard over the last number of months and years of the shortage in the nursing profession and how it's affecting our health care system. Everyday we are hearing, on our side of the House anyway, hospitals that are struggling to keep beds open. We've had an example of a hospital such as a Lanigan who will be closing for the summer and the main reason, via the health district, is that they didn't have enough health nurses to . . . registered nurses to keep the facility open.

So if this Act is going to attract and retain registered nurses throughout the province, we're going to be fully supportive of that because that's certainly an area that we've talked about for many, many months. And I guess from an own personal standpoint as being married to a registered nurse and hearing some of the stories that she puts up with in the operating room of the Regina General Hospital and the shortages and some of the hours that have to be put in by, by some of her colleagues, it's definitely an area that we need to address and, as I mentioned before, retain and attract registered nurses.

When I heard the minister speak of the number of different organizations that have been consulted already—I believe there was seven different organizations—by the sounds of it, it met with rave reviews. So as I said, we'll have no problem moving along with this in an orderly fashion.

Things like increasing the representation on the committee, as he mentioned, is a great idea. As I said, some of the specific services . . . he also touched on some of the specific services. He didn't touch on them, but he said that will be through the regulations, I believe, that there would be some work done in there. So I'd be very interested to see how they're going to broaden the scope of practice, I guess, in that area.

So at this time we'll adjourn debate on this Bill for now but it does sound like it's a very positive step in the right direction.

Debate adjourned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Bill No. 5 — The Dietitians Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Dietitians Act.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working with all of our health sector partners in order to develop and implement solutions that will strengthen our health system. For the past two years we have been consulting with the Saskatchewan Dietetic Association to develop this new Act.

The current Act is outdated and does not contain the necessary and standard provisions required in newer professional legislation. Today health services are reaching out into communities across the province to help our residents improve and maintain their health and well-being. I am pleased to say that this new Act contains some very positive changes for both the profession and the people it serves.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will reserve the use of the titles dietitian and registered dietitian to qualified practitioners. This allows the public to have confidence in the services provided by these valuable health care providers. It will set out a clearer and more effective process for responding to and resolving public concerns about dietitians. It will ensure that dietitians are accountable to the people they serve.

The Act contains a number of updated public accountability measures that are standard in today's professional legislation. For example, representatives of the public will be included on the association's board and disciplinary committee. Disciplinary hearings will be open to the public, making the entire process transparent. This will allow the association to respond more effectively to public concerns. In previous years, Mr. Speaker, this government made similar changes to the legislation governing most of our health professions.

(14:30)

The Act will also ensure flexibility in setting registration requirements and issuing licences. It will require the association to file an annual report with my office.

As well, bylaws that may affect the public will require government approval. The approval process will include consultation with key stakeholders such as physicians, therapists, educators, and health districts.

Mr. Speaker, these are some very positive changes developed in close consultation with the profession. Our government is committed to providing quality health services to support people in their homes and their communities. I believe this Act will serve dietitians, including my mother who has been a dietitian for over 50 years, their clients, and the province well into the future.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of The Dietitians Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to stand today in the House and speak on Bill No. 5, An Act respecting Dietitians.

As the minister has just stated, the present Bill or Act that the dietitians are governed by is outdated. I understand it goes back to the . . . 1958. And that definitely, in today's modern world,

needs to be updated to take into account all the changes in our health care system and conditions that the citizens of this province are living under today.

It's very important that the dietitians are able to govern themselves and have the regulations in place to govern their own body and their own individuals and be able to set guidelines and standards for their members in the dietitians' profession.

As in many other health care areas, there's a shortage or a potential shortage of workers in the health care system — as my colleague had just mentioned a shortage in nursing, a shortage of doctors — and that situation will increase as the years go by. And I believe dietitians are an important part of our health care system. They are serving the community and the health care system. And we need to take steps to ensure that we have adequate number of dietitians in our health care system in our province.

And on the face of it, I don't believe we have any strong objections to the Act as it is. We believe that The Dietitians Act should be strengthened, which will help strengthen the health care system.

But at this time I'd like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 2

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 2 — The Securities Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise in the Assembly today to give a response to Bill No. 2, The Securities Amendment Act.

One of the big things I noticed in the Bill, Mr. Speaker, was that the government is actually allowing individuals to do business and to register for a longer period of time than one year. This is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It allows for a permanent registration system of deals and salespeople involved in securities trading systems, and ending practices of yearly registration which is currently in place.

The proposed amendments also includes provisions that allow for the sharing of information about market participants with the regulators for the purpose of conducting investigations, and allows for the electronic delivery of documents to security holders.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member from Redberry Lake, in his response said:

That the Act needs to reduce and streamline regulation and red tape which is a very high concern to small business in Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the amount of red tape dealing with small business in Saskatchewan, the amount of red tape in Saskatchewan is totally absurd. Small business have better things to do than spend time dealing with regulations. They should simply have more time to spend just doing business. Hopefully, this will streamline business and make . . . maybe, just maybe, cut out some of the ridiculous administration which we have so much of in this . . . in Saskatchewan by this form of government.

The changes being made in this legislation, from what I gather, for the most part, seem well-intentioned and positive. In this day and age when so many people are getting involved in the markets and trading stocks and securities, it is important that we keep our laws as current as possible to both, and to keep up with the demands of the current security trading industry and its continuing of our best to protect consumers.

I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that one of the changes in this Act makes it illegal for those conducting trades to make misrepresentations. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that many people join with me in our surprise that this is the . . . that it is only now being made illegal.

It is important to have laws in place that we do protect citizens from those who make . . . who may have less scruples, and to enhance investigation procedures against those with a mind that tends to drift away from what is right and what is legal.

Now we do see an increased power to share information here for those involved in the markets with investigators and other provinces. Now one will hope that proper safeguards are in place so that this new power to share such information cannot be abused, and the privacy of individuals not involved in illegal activity . . . and it cannot be infringed upon. We will want to question the minister closely on this when the Bill comes to the committee later.

It also appears, Mr. Speaker, that some of the changes here are modernization of the legislation and a nod to progress. We see that electronic delivery of information is now being recognized over and above the traditional mail system. This obviously is necessary . . . necessarily given with growing use of the e-mail and electronic delivery and less reliance on the post office, which may be going the way of the pony express in terms of this necessity to people.

One of the aspects of this Bill that I'm a little concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is a familiar refrain. That is the movement of issues and items out of the actual legislation and into regulations, meaning further changes to these areas will not come before the legislation — legislature, pardon me.

Members on this side of the House, and at least one who now sits on that side of the legislature, have complained in the past about the current government's penchant for moving more and more to the statutes of this province to regulations and out from underneath the scrutiny of the legislature and MLAs.

The minister states that this makes future changes to the rules easier to make. And I'm sure it's true. I'm sure it would be far easier for any government to make the change it wants to make without bringing those changes to the legislature.

However, Mr. Speaker, our system is not in place to make things simple for those governing us. Our system is in place to allow elected officials scrutiny over government actions. And when more and more is moved to regulations that have little scrutiny until after they are passed in cabinet, the people's right to hold their government accountable is weakened further.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 13 — The Class Actions Act/Loi sur les recours collectifs** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to join in the furthering debate of Bill No. 13, The Class Actions Act. Mr. Speaker, it's quite a privilege to be able to get up this afternoon and talk about a new Bill coming into this province, a Bill that is probably long overdue.

I was going through some of the background, Mr. Speaker, and noticed that this province and this government, this weak and ineffective NDP government, is finally deciding in the year 2001 to catch up to where other provinces have been trying to go to since 1996. It's certainly a great deal of honour to be able to get up and say a few words and maybe add some thoughts to this Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, class action suits are certainly a common phenomenon throughout the world. We see them taking place many times in North America, throughout the entire Americas. Certainly in the past if citizens of this province ever wanted to participate in a class action suit, Mr. Speaker, they were forced to join suits that were taking place in other provinces as it affected them as individuals.

Bringing a suit . . . an opportunity such as this into Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, means that we'll be able to provide our citizens, the citizens of Saskatchewan, the same opportunity that is enjoyed throughout much of Canada and the rest of the Americas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, although there are many good things about this Bill, there are some things that we have some concerns about and I will be bringing them up as I go along, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the oddities that took place in this province for many, many years, and will be corrected by this Bill through The Class Actions Act, Bill No. 13, is that in the past in order for a group of people to be able to indulge in some sort of a multi-person suit against someone, they had to have all suffered virtually the same injury.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that would seem odd that just in reference maybe to say . . . such as a car accident where there was, say, a fault of a manufacturer or something like that, everyone would have had to have suffered a broken leg, a broken left leg, Mr. Speaker, in order to have sued.

Now under this Act, which will bring residents of Saskatchewan in line with other jurisdictions, all they have to do is have suffered an injury in any way, shape, or form. We see that as a very positive attribute, Mr. Speaker. And for that, we're glad to see that this weak and ineffective NDP government is finally catching up to speed with much of the rest of the world.

Unfortunately it seems though, Mr. Speaker, that Acts such as this, Bill No. 13, The Class Actions Act, are being driven by a NDP government that is more reactive than it is proactive. And that's usually the case, Mr. Speaker, of a weak and ineffective government that is simply scrambling to try to find ways to maintain some sort of semblance of power in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we have gone through this Bill — and certainly on this side of the House, we've gone through the Bill extensively, which will surprise the members on the other side of the House who probably have no idea, many of them, of what the Bill is about — this Bill speaks to bringing the opportunity for the people of Saskatchewan to be able to protect themselves after an event that has happened that has brought massive injuries, or massive financial repercussions to them. And now we're going to have an opportunity for class action suits to be able to brought forward inside this province, Mr. Speaker, against corporations or individuals that operated inside this province.

(14:45)

Now as we stop and think about that, Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s one of the things that has been well documented in the area of class action suits, is the province of Saskatchewan. This weak and ineffective NDP government has many times brought actions against its own citizens that in fact now, under this class action suit, would allow its own citizenry to sue them. On this side of the House of course, Mr. Speaker, we see that as a very positive move.

Now we should cite a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker, as to, from this side of the House, our perspective as why we see this Bill No. 13 being a positive move on behalf of the citizenry of Saskatchewan.

And that one . . . the first one I'd like to speak to, Mr. Speaker, is GRIP, the gross revenue insurance program that was introduced in the 1980s and torn up; and torn up, Mr. Speaker, by this weak and ineffective NDP government even though they promised — they promised, Mr. Speaker — that as they were tearing it up they were going to replace it with a brand new plan.

Now in order, in order for a government to have the credibility when they stand up and say yes, we're tearing up this contract — it's no good but we're going to replace it with something new and better, and not do that, Mr. Speaker, that is going to provide the farmers of Saskatchewan the opportunity they really needed in the early '90s to be able to sue this government for lost monies that they had already put into the plan, monies that they were looking forward to using in an insurance basis, Mr. Speaker, an insurance basis that would allow farmers the opportunity to be able to plan for, just in case, in case, Mr. Speaker, of downloading onto farmers, lower commodity

prices.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, when weather, when weather plays such an important factor, Mr. Speaker, in the operation of farms in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it's really unfortunate that we didn't have this class action suit, Bill No. 13, in place in the early 1990s and then the farmers of Saskatchewan would not have the problem that they do with this government, that they do now.

And that's really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. Because one of the things that we noticed in the early 1990s when this government said we've got to have a better program, insurance revenue program for farmers of Saskatchewan, the farmers of Saskatchewan were actually quite excited about that, Mr. Speaker.

Now what would have happened, what could have happened, Mr. Speaker, is that if we would have had the opportunity for class action suits, which is going to be coming forth hopefully in this session in this Bill No. 13, Mr. Speaker, the government of the day would have been forced to actually do that, actually replace GRIP with, as they said, something bigger and better.

Well we never did see anything bigger and better, and the farmers of Saskatchewan were forced to simply curl up into a fetal position and take a whipping from this government that they have become quite used to.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's one other incident, I think, that I'd like to bring up at this time too. As you're well aware, Mr. Speaker, one of the great downfalls that we have in this province, that's been brought forth by this weak and ineffective NDP government, is this so-called no-fault insurance.

Now no-fault insurance, Mr. Speaker, as we're all well aware, eliminated the people of Saskatchewan . . . from the people of Saskatchewan the right to sue, to sue SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) for damages that were incurred should they be involved in an accident.

Now this is a great tragedy, Mr. Speaker. What's going to happen now, unfortunately for this government — I don't know why they haven't figured this out because we've certainly figured it out from this side of the House — is that with the opportunity to bring class action suits against perpetrators such as the Saskatchewan Government Insurance is that now the people of Saskatchewan are actually going to be able to continue suing this government in a much larger and more effective manner.

Now what's happened, Mr. Speaker, is that no-fault insurance has eliminated fault from the government. They are never to blame for anything, as we heard from the Deputy Premier earlier today, Mr. Speaker.

Even though the water problems in North Battleford are extreme, very worrisome, and are of a great deal of concern to us on this side of the House, the Deputy Premier got up and said, we're not to blame. Even though it's their own government departments that seemed to have missed the point on their own responsibilities that, Mr. Speaker, this type of legislation — as I get back to it — relates quite distinctly to this

very issue.

When something goes wrong and a department who is supposed to be held to a higher standard in looking after the citizens of Saskatchewan, this type of Bill, this type of opportunity such as Bill 13 should present, will allow individuals and communities — and certainly communities — to be able to examine whether a department has looked after them appropriately in the past and in the present, and whether they should be suing that department for neglect.

Now certainly we're hearing the province is looking at a judicial inquiry, and certainly we welcome that. But of course they're still talking about the judicial inquiry is not going to allow any opportunity for blame to be placed. But it will . . . well hopefully enough information will come forward, Mr. Speaker, that maybe the city of North Battleford or even the citizens of North Battleford an opportunity to take a bit of an inner look at the problems that have risen because of the lack of water quality, that maybe they'll have to take a look at suing someone.

As we continue, Mr. Speaker, talking about this weak and ineffective NDP government and its lack of ability to take responsibility for anything, it's interesting that I received a call just today, Mr. Speaker, from someone who is going to be attending the rate review panel hearing in Prince Albert on May 14 in regards to the energy rate hikes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, really it would be my pleasure to be able to tie in what is going to happen here. On May 14 the meeting in Prince Albert is talking about a rate hike, what people think about having a rate hike for SaskEnergy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this call that I received this morning asked me very specific, very directly, is it possible for the citizens of Saskatchewan to sue SaskEnergy for mismanagement? Well, Mr. Speaker, should this Bill become law, I would say yes, that's exactly what'll happen.

Now what we see here is a Crown corporation who, through its own inability to be able to operate a utility company, is now asking for a rate increase because of their own mismanagement, their own inability to be able to manage a Crown corporation in a judicious manner.

So we're going to try to find out through the next few days as we further debate this Bill, the opportunity for the citizens of Saskatchewan to be able to actually sue a Crown corporation for mismanagement. And, Mr. Speaker, that will certainly be a good day for the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was going through the Bill in this last few days, taking a look at what's in it — what's good, what's bad. One of the things that I really noticed is that there is a lot of good in this Bill — I really have to admit that — Bill No. 13.

But unfortunately, this weak and ineffective NDP government always manages to find some way to be able to mismanage an opportunity to do something good for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was looking through this Bill and I was

wondering, as the Bill was being put together, why they would need to have an opportunity, they feel, for the courts to reduce the powers of professionals in this province.

One of the things that it has come to our attention on this side of the House and probably no one on the other side of the House, on the governing side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is aware of, is that in this province where we have no-fault insurance and up to the presentation of this Bill of course we have no opportunity for class action suits, Mr. Speaker, is that we have people in this province who are making professional decisions who are not professionals in that field. That is really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill, this Bill for some unknown reason, probably even unknown to the government, Mr. Speaker, is why that process will continue. Why is it that . . . we're wondering why, Mr. Speaker, a government would allow court officials the opportunity to make medical decisions. Now we're really amused by that, and concerned, very concerned.

In Canada, we would like to think that a doctor is able to make medical decisions, that a psychiatrist would be able to make psychiatric decisions. Unfortunately in this province, those type of professionals, Mr. Speaker, are often overruled by the bureaucracy of this weak and ineffective NDP government. We see that in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, where that is going to continue to be perpetuated. We have a lot of concern with that.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're wondering why this NDP government would not think about the fact that in this country, that we have trained professionals in very specific medical fields that are very good, very good, Mr. Speaker, at their job and should be allowed the opportunity to practise their profession without intervention from this weak and ineffective NDP bureaucracy.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, because of the problems, this very singular problem that is in this Bill, we need time to take a look at it. And maybe the government in their wisdom would take opportunity to take a look at this Bill a little further and maybe, without assistance from this side, be able to use their own wisdom and correct that minor little problem, from their point apparently — certainly a major problem from our point — in this Bill. And I would ask that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 16

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Crofford that **Bill No. 16 — The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation was quick to point out how much money her government has made in the past few years with The Film Employment Tax Credit Act and how much it hopes to make in the future.

In 1997 the value of the film and video production in this province was about \$26 million. One year later, after the implementation of The Film Employment Tax Credit Act, that

amount had more than doubled to \$58 million. Last year the figure had climbed to 60 million. It's predicted that this industry volume could reach a hundred million dollars in production over the next few years.

We've all seen what this government likes to do with its money. They like to sit on it. In fact right now as we're debating this Bill, we're sitting on a huge election slush fund of nearly \$700 million in two combined funds. But this government has no plans to share it with the taxpayers — people who should have access to this money. They believe it's theirs.

This province has also seen a dramatic rise in the number of larger and more expensive film and video projects that are being produced in the province. We've also attracted national and international attention. This certainly speaks not only to our province's many attractions, but also to the level of professionalism of the people working in the industry.

The minister is also quick to point out how much The Film Employment Tax Credit Act has contributed to the overall growth of the province not only from a cultural aspect, which we are all encouraged to see, but also in the terms of economic growth.

A closer look at how The Film Employment Tax Credit Act has impacted the province reveals the following: tax credits, training young people, more jobs, economic growth, and spinoffs.

We're pleased that the members opposite have recognized the positive impact tax incentives can have on the economy, and for a very good reason. It's the message that this opposition has been promoting for many years.

What is disappointing, however, is that the members opposite only want to select this offer to a select group of people in the province. This government is always bent on picking winners and losers in the economy and we can only ask why, Mr. Speaker.

(15:00)

Why won't this government target the rest of Saskatchewan's businesses and industries? Why not offer them the very same incentives? I believe they deserve it as well. It's a well-known fact that they, and not the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan, are the engines that drive our province's economy.

But this Bill will certainly not address that problem, not even when we hear on a regular basis of businesses closing down, of businesses relocating, or just plain refusing to set up in this province. And why? Because after 10 years of NDP (New Democratic Party) government, there's just so much bureaucracy, too many taxes, and not enough opportunity.

The members opposite might well say if you decrease taxes you're going to run into problems because it will lead to deficit budgeting. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. For proof, all we have to do is take a look at what happened to a small sector of the economy that's dealing with a film employment tax credit. We see more jobs, more young people, more economic spinoffs. It just doesn't get any plainer,

Mr. Speaker.

It's a pretty simple equation when you think about it. And I hope the members opposite will listen just for a minute. Decreased taxes equals increased businesses equals increased economic growth.

We know that when this government cut its small-business tax by 2 per cent in this year's budget, it was welcome news. And the small-business income tax rate . . . claim threshold was increased to 300,000 from \$200,000. Some encouraging little baby steps from the members opposite who are so unwilling to depend on anything but the Crown corporations in this province.

But we have to ask them, why are you stopping there? So much more could be done. Will this Bill make any advancements in these areas? I think not. What the government seems to forget is that while someone from outside the province is working and training here in Saskatchewan, there is some very serious secondary expenditures being . . . taking place.

For instance, people working in the film and video industry have to be provided with accommodations, meals, travel, entertainment, and general necessities. And where will the people access all of those? Obviously from wherever they're shooting on location, whether it's in a city, town, or small community. This is where the economic spinoff really occurs, yet there is not recognition for the companies that are providing those services to the people.

So while this Bill addresses the issues of extending the waiver of residency for non-Saskatchewan personnel involved in the film or video industry, and while the Act itself provides for tax credits to that same industry, we can't help but be reminded that those secondary expenditure businesses are getting no such tax breaks.

What's even more troubling is that businesses have been treated very unfairly by this government in the past. The last few months in particular have been very disappointing. For instance, the 2 per cent business tax cut will literally be swallowed up by the huge utility rate hike facing all the small businesses in this province. SaskPower predicts it will have to raise its energy rates by another 10 per cent before the end of the year, and SaskEnergy has recently applied for a whopping 42 per cent increase.

How does the government expect those businesses to realize any profit when they're tied up with bureaucratic red tape and hampered by skyrocketing operating costs?

And let's not forget about reassessment, Mr. Speaker. This government's method for determining property tax values will literally force some businesses to permanently shut down. In fact we've heard that some businesses are going to see their taxes going up from 200 to 300 per cent.

Now while this Bill seeks to extend the waiver of residency provision, we can't help but note that it is to be used when no qualified Saskatchewan resident is available for employment. If we look a little deeper into this, Mr. Speaker, we might be tempted to say that the film and video industry is facing a

labour shortage much like the rest of the province. It would appear that there are not enough qualified Saskatchewan residents available for work in the industry so the industry is forced to look elsewhere.

This points out two very-troubling factors. One is that this government is addressing the labour shortage in a small, confined sector of the economy by extending a waiver of residency provision. The other factor is that — as with every other sector of the economy — it seems that once a young person has received the training in this province, they pick up and leave. There is simply not any incentive to keep them here.

According to StatsCanada, in the last decade the number of jobs in Saskatchewan has grown by 3.5 per cent — less than one-quarter of the national job growth average of 14.3 per cent. So while this Bill extends . . . provides for a time extension that will allow a tax credit for out-of-province residents, it does not even begin to address the many issues and concerns facing job growth here in this province. And it also doesn't address the issues facing the rest of the province's businesses and industries. And it most certainly does not contain any vision or a plan for long-term economic growth that would be provided for all sectors of the economy and not just a select few.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I ask that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 6

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 6 — The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, The Planning and Development Act amendment that's being brought in, I think, is relatively straightforward and a simple amendment. However, it's been our experience in the past that the most innocuous changes brought in by this NDP government have sometimes hidden a number of things within that amendment.

And when contacting municipalities out there, when even they haven't picked up on something, when the final outcome comes out, it's not for the best of the people of Saskatchewan. I guess that's where our mistrust sometimes comes with this government, Mr. Speaker.

I remember a similar amendment a couple of years ago and it altered the way assessed appeals are handled at the local level, and in particular, assessment appeals. It appeared on paper to be fairly innocuous. And the minister at the time, Mr. Speaker — and by the way, that was what, three, four, ministers of Municipal Government ago, Mr. Speaker — assured the Assembly at that time that the legislation was minor. She assured us that the proper consultations had been done.

Then when the municipalities started to call in, Mr. Speaker, we find out that yes, she had contacted the municipalities, but before they'd had time to respond the amendment had come

forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, on the surface this looks like a very minor change, something that I don't believe municipalities will have any trouble with, but wavering on the side of caution, I believe, Mr. Speaker, at this time I will move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Culture, Youth and Recreation Vote 27

Subvote (CR01)

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the minister. Would she please introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Today with me is acting deputy, Ken Pontikes; Jill McKeen, director of corporate development; Emile St. Amand, director of sport and recreation; Larry Chaykowski, executive director, finance administration and facilities; and Clare Isman, executive director, human resource development.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and Madam Minister, and welcome to your officials. As Culture, Youth and Recreation is a new department in total, I just have to start off with a question of the mandate of the ministry. And I realize that it says in the budget book that the mandate is to support and celebrate Saskatchewan as a great place to live and work. It goes on a little bit more, Madam Minister, but it's quite vague.

And so my question would be: what is the mandate of this new department specifically, and what direction it's supposed to take, and what plans are in place to implement this?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I don't wish to spend an excessive amount of time on this, Mr. Deputy Chair, but that is a fairly broad question. And I think to answer it properly I'll have to spend a little bit of time on it.

There's three areas really that we cover. The area of recreation, culture, and youth are the main focus for the department. And certainly these are all areas that are very linked to quality of life, health, lifestyle choices, employment, economic development. And there are also areas that have changed a lot over the years where at some points in the past, I think people saw these more as personal pursuits rather than strategic efforts on behalf of community growth, quality of life. And really as we move into the knowledge economy, as we move into a global society, and as we move into a more technologically oriented society, there are elements in all of these areas that have a lot to do with how successful we are in those other areas. And I can be more specific.

For example, in culture, the change we're seeing in the information economy, globalization, and new economic opportunities means that whether it's developing content which is a very large part of an information economy, whether it's for

the multi-channel universe, whether it's for the Internet, whether it's distance education, all of a sudden there's a huge demand for the kind of creative workers, the writers, the producers, the people who come out of the cultural sector. And so this sector has got a focus, as it never has before, from people who are interested in developing content for the information economy.

In terms of globalization, it's certainly true that people everyday turn on their TVs and are bombarded by information from around the world; on the Internet they're bombarded by information from around the world. So you have to ask yourself, how do you retain your identity in the face of that bombardment.

And I think there are still a sufficient number of people that think there's a Canadian identity and a Saskatchewan identity that's worth preserving; that feel that the best offence, the best defence in that environment is to have a strong cultural sector where we not only know who we are and support the development of cultural products, but also that we have a lot of pride in region which we certainly share with the other Prairie provinces.

And I think you're going to see both collaborative efforts across the prairie region in this area, as well as efforts in Saskatchewan to, shall we say, put our brand on the international marketplace.

The next thing in terms of economic activity is — I think it's partly because of some of the aging baby boomers and whatnot — but there's been the development of a fairly substantial number of people who are moving into retirement. They have disposable income and a lot of people are choosing cultural tourism as their first choice for how to spend their money. Whether it's events, festivals, heritage tours, whatever — there's a big demand for that kind of product that wasn't there before. In fact recently the Tourism Association had a cultural tourism conference.

(15:15)

So there's all kinds of new opportunities here that weren't there before. Because people saw these more as individual pursuits, or personal pursuits before, rather than as social imperatives or economic imperatives. So we're moving into a very different world and part of that world is very focused on young people, because of course they're the generation that grew up in this environment.

And so the intent of the department is to capture the synergies between these different areas in the new environment that we're working in and really create a strategic sector for growth and development in Saskatchewan. And it's not that we don't have elements of this here and there but this is an attempt to, without huge additions of staff or bureaucracy, to create a real focus on making sure that youth understand that we want them here, that we see them very much as part of the growing economy.

We've got issues of out-migration, we've got the Aboriginal baby boom, we've got succession planning, we've got growing skills shortages, we've got people who need work experience. So we're getting very focused on how we can create all of these opportunities and send a strong message to our youth, to our

recreation people, to our cultural workers, that this is the place where the action is and that we want them to be part of the new opportunities.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Whew! Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate your comments. There's a little bit more I think that I was looking for in there, something like a specific type of a plan.

I totally understand the cultural diversity of Saskatchewan. It's very easy to get up and say we're very culturally diverse, but how are we going to retain that? It's very easy to say we must retain our cultural identity, but my big question is how?

Economic activity, cultural tourism — I couldn't agree more. We have ample opportunities for cultural tourism. What are we doing for it?

Same as the youth. I mean the buzzword of the day is extremely simple. We have to do something to keep our youth in this province. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question to the minister is what are we doing, not the rhetoric of we must do something.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we find is that in any kind of surveys or whatnot that are done, is that youth really lack knowledge about the Saskatchewan economy. They lack an understanding of where the opportunities are, which sectors are growing, where there's skill shortages.

And quite frankly we have shortages right now in places like health care, trucking, trades, forestry, energy, mining. We have a wide range of areas where there's opportunity and we find when kids are interviewed in school that they don't even know that these exist. So certainly part of the effort here is to create the linkages between growing sectors of the economy so that people understand what those opportunities are, where they are, how you prepare yourself for them.

But there's another side to that, and that's the recruitment side. What we find these days is that employers from other provinces, other places, are very actively recruiting Saskatchewan skilled young people that we've invested a fair bit in training and preparing for the workforce.

And we also will be wanting very much to work in partnership with the private sector to send strong messages, both verbally in terms of recruitment practices but also in terms of practical supports like mentorship opportunities, work/study co-op internships, to help link young people to those opportunities in the growing sectors of the Saskatchewan economy, and I think to help employers understand how competitive that environment is out there and how they can more successfully compete in that environment.

Because I think there's still a bit of a tendency to passivity on the part of some of our employers. And I can assure you that when some provinces come recruiting here, they're not passive at all in their efforts. They're very aggressive in encouraging young people to go to their provinces to work.

So we have to get that same sense of urgency developed amongst our business community, our employers, and the youth

themselves as far as being practical and looking for where the opportunities are going to be.

And then part of our role in the department is to make that linkage, so that we're linking employers who are excited about having skilled young Saskatchewan people, young people who are excited about working here, and really helping them form the link that'll be a success story for both of them.

So we're going to be devoting a fair bit of our effort over this summer working in a partnership that's already underway to have youth in business and others involved in creating these linkages in a very transparent and open way for young people.

The other thing is, in the budget, you will have noticed the film tax credit, which of course is very much in support of the continuing growth of the film industry in Saskatchewan. And certainly there's been very huge returns on that investment.

In the cultural industries, you'll notice a new expenditure in the budget. And what they largely use that money for is training and marketing so that people know about the content, the products that are coming out of the Saskatchewan cultural industries. But also that people understand how they can turn their talent into an economic success story for themselves. Because there's many people who are very talented who never make a living by that talent because they don't know how to package it, how to market it, how to turn it into a business opportunity for themselves.

So people in the cultural industries, that's what they do — they help people figure out how to do that kind of thing. It's a very entrepreneurial sector of culture and we've devoted additional resources to that in this budget as well.

On the sport front, as luck would have it, just as I arrived in this portfolio, the federal government caught wind of what we were doing and decided to spend more money on both sport and culture.

And we're going to be arguing that there needs to be a strong municipal component in the new federal strategy, because of course most of where sport activities exist is at the municipal level. And certainly around Saskatchewan communities and rural areas and northern areas, there's a big need for a strong recreation infrastructure there.

And we will be working with the federal government on that as well as trying to determine what their intentions are for the use of the cultural monies that they've just designated.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really agree with you on the linkage from youth and getting youth in partnership with business. I just think we're maybe 50 years too late because we've had such a mass exodus of youth from this province, as we all in this House know and everybody in this province knows . . . and what has created that over the years.

I look at the area that I now live in and there's a gap of people from the ages of about 20 to 50 that have all departed this province. So it would be nice to see if there was some kind of a plan where we could do this other than just a linkage. And I

think I'll have more questions on that a little bit later.

Same as the rec infrastructure. We have a continuing problem in rural Saskatchewan with the closure of facilities. We know of even churches that are closing because of high energy rates. And when you get a small community that's blessed with these high gas and power rates and there's not a tax base to help out one of the rec facilities, they are closing. And we know that that's happening.

So it's nice to see if there's something come along from the federal government on recreational infrastructure and I sure hope some of it gets out to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Chair, question to the minister is, as this is a new department, can the minister say how many people are now working in this department and where will the central location for this department be located at?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The staff that are headquartered in Regina will be in the Bank of Montreal. I don't know the actual buildings they are in the other communities. But we certainly do have staff at La Ronge, Saskatoon, and Melfort to serve the various areas.

There were in total 19 staff transferred from the previous area in MAH (Municipal Affairs and Housing), and I think the total of new staff is 17 and there's some summer students as well.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Again a question: is that a ceiling or is that a starting place or where's the expansion going and where will we be going on that; because my next question, it comes to salaries. So could you just let me know where this is going or if we do have a target number?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Our intention is not to build an empire here. Our intention is to do as much as we can in partnership with organizations that share the objectives but to use the staff we do have to facilitate those working relationships and the strategic focus in the areas that I mentioned earlier.

And over time as we get things done, we can then shift our attention to new things that need doing. So I don't see us just fixing a path and then being stuck there. I see it being very much evolving as we get things done and move on to do other things. And hopefully on any subsequent day we'll find a new hill to take.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the minister. When I talked about the salaries, I just note that salaries have been budgeted at \$546,000 in the next fiscal year, an increase of nearly a half a million dollars.

Can you tell us how many full-time people will be employed in this? And I know you've given me 19, but in order to come up with a figure of 546,000 there must have been some rationale to come up with that figure. And how this would break down with respect to assistants, communication, department managers, deputy ministers or whatever, if you have the breakdown of that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. In that particular vote, it's the administrative vote that you're looking at and that doesn't represent the entire department. That represents the minister's office, the deputy minister's office, the communications, the administrative services, the human resource services.

And I'll mention that there's no additional ministers, and each minister's office would have had a complement charged somewhere in the system before, depending on their responsibilities. The only real new part here is the two persons in the deputy's office, the deputy and corporate services.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, I also wanted to touch on an aspect of the budget — and I know we already talked about youth and technology services a bit in the preamble — but youth and technology services, I believe, have a budget of \$334,000 with a mandate to provide research and policy analysis to integrate the perspective of youth, innovation, and technology under government decision making. And that's right out of the budget book. It will also coordinate and supplement youth employment.

How will this be any different than, for instance, the various departments of Labour, Post-Secondary Education, and Economic Development? What's the difference that they might provide that this would be different?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for your question. In this particular area, there's a lot of questions around the work environment that young people expect today when they come into the workplace and that they find attractive to them in terms of being involved in the workplace.

(15:30)

And in this particular area, we'll be dealing not only with how we assist Saskatchewan in the transition to the information economy because, as you know, we made a fairly large commitment in this budget to the CommunityNet, to government on-line, to creating broadband networks throughout the community so that businesses and community organizations and service providers would have access to broadband Internet services. And in this whole changeover youth will be a very important component of helping make this a successful changeover, because they have both the skills and the high comfort level in working in this environment.

And so we're going to be part in this department of helping to create the opportunities for youth to be very involved in those changeovers, but also to make sure as we work with our education partners, that all the appropriate training is there to build the capacity in our communities to participate in the information economy and the changeover to broadband networks. But also as we look at our student youth employment program, that we think about how we use some aspects of that youth employment program to help both government, businesses, community organizations to make this transition into being comfortable with using technology both for social, geographic, and business reasons.

So really what we're doing I think is creating value added as far as bringing the youth technology component into government. And you could do it . . . technically speaking you could do it

through Post-Secondary Education, who we'll certainly be working closely with. You can do some aspects through K to 12.

But this is really to create a strategic focus on youth innovation and technology, and also to send a message to the youth that they matter to us and that we want to have them involved and we're aware of their desire for these type of work environments and their participation in them.

The other comment I would make is in the new media area, we've certainly got our eye on that in terms of all the young people wanting to move into work in content development. And that's a very growing sector of the economy. We'll be quite involved in that.

But also there's hardly a government in the world that doesn't have a Web site for youth that helps to coordinate government services to youth through that Web portal. So part of our resources there will also be to develop that Web portal so that we can compete with other governments in terms of youth access on the Internet to a window of government that is speaking to them specifically.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I guess that's a subject of debate, whether we get into whether governments get involved with providing all of the support to the youth or whether the ideas come from the innovative approach of business. And I'll get to that soon when we talk about the summer student program.

I saw in the budget that the summer student employment program has been given 5 million this fiscal year. Could you provide a breakdown of how that 5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Deputy Chair, to answer the member's question, in executive government there's 300 jobs; in the commercial Crowns, 300; in post-secondary institutions, 200; in urban parks and conservation areas, 100; regional parks, 100; and community-based organizations, 500; for a total of 1,500 new jobs.

Now it might be of interest to the member that when students started to see the high quality of these jobs and what they actually were, we just had a flood of applications. I think the day these jobs were posted on the Internet, within a very few days after, we had 7,000 applications. So there's been a huge uptake as students are looking for jobs that match their educations and are part of their ongoing career development.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, in the summer program and the figures I was trying to write very rapidly here, I've got 300 for executive boards — is that correct; 300 for Crown corporations; 200 for post-secondary; 100 for urban parks; and 100 for regional parks. Are those figures correct?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll just mention, the first one you mentioned, executive board, that's executive government — that's like all the departments of government. And the one that was missing from your list was community-based organizations, 500 jobs.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, there's one glaring exception to the whole summer student employment program that I can see, and it's a lack of initiative into small business.

And we just previously spoke about the linkage between youth and the workforce. And what this would suggest is that your only concern on workforce is government-funded agencies or government agencies, rather than an entrepreneurial business sector such as the small business sector. This would have been a prime opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have some program for youth to enter into the business sector to learn, to learn a little bit of the entrepreneurial side of it.

Could the minister discuss that and why the business sector was totally ignored in this program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think the member has quite a legitimate question there, and hopefully he'll agree that I have quite a legitimate answer.

But what I'll just say first of all is that government as well as being government is also an employer — one of the largest employers in the province. In the health sector alone, for example, there's 36,000 employees who are public employees.

And all of these areas have needs for recruitment, needs for experienced people, needs for renewing their workforces. And what this is, is the first step really in renewal of the public sector as we look forward to retirements right across our entire public sector. So we have an obligation, not merely as government but also as an employer, to look at renewal within the public sector system.

Now that being said, nothing in this program is written in stone and if through our work over the next few months with employers, with students, we find that there is a need to strengthen that component . . . And then we would also sit down with the federal government who provides a private sector program to make sure that we're not duplicating funding that's already there for the private sector through the federal government.

We do have the opportunity to strategically target some money, whether it's to the business community getting teched up for benefit in that community, whether it's getting people involved over the winter in mentorships, co-op programs, internships, work study with various employers.

I think that if you have any very specific ideas about how people might usefully be given high-quality work experience that will build on their B. Comm. (Bachelor of Commerce) degrees or build on their desire to work in the entrepreneurial sector, I think, certainly one would consider those carefully.

But also again I emphasize working with the federal government so that the money that they're investing in the private sector also has a public sector complement, because we have a lot of groups and organizations out there, whether it's parks or people providing group homes or whatever the community service is, that also require young people coming into their systems and certainly have a need for support because they have no other place to get that income.

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Heppner: — To ask permission to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. In the Speaker's gallery are two women that I would like to introduce to you. One is Arlene Heppner and the other one is Kathy Janzen. They've spent the last two days in Regina on a buying spree, not for personal but for their businesses.

Arlene owns a store in Rosthern and Kathy is one of her long-time employees. So they've spent the last two days here. And if anyone wants to know some of the difficulties of running a business in Saskatchewan, I'm sure Arlene would be glad to tell you about that.

One other thing that I should mention is, Arlene's also known as Mrs. Ben Heppner on occasion. So I would ask you to welcome her to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Culture, Youth and Recreation Vote 27

Subvote (CR01)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just note with a bit of interest, and I'm going to go back to the entrepreneurial side of it. And I know that we have a lot of concern on this side of the House with only using government agencies, and your comment about someplace to make money. Well I think most of us on this side feel that you could make money in the business sector too, especially an entrepreneurial sector where somebody, some youth, if there's a program provided that was equal to the one that was being provided to the government agencies.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Minister: I'd like, if you wouldn't mind, comparing the youth program of a year or two years ago — and I don't remember the numbers offhand and hopefully that you do — how many numbers of youth were employed through the youth program vis-à-vis the 1,500 that we have under the program that you just outlined?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well actually I do have a recollection of why there was a decision made not to continue that program. And really at the subsidy level there was . . . the fact of the matter was the federal government provided a much more attractive program to employers. And we realized that if we were going to be in the summer job employment business, that we had to provide an attractive program both for employers and for students.

So the old program that we had really just wasn't meeting the grade any more and the federal government was actually

providing a better service on that front. And so we believe that this new program has a good beginning. We had to get it implemented quickly in order to get students hired for this season.

But again I emphasize that over the winter we have the opportunity to be thoughtful about what the best use of these dollars is, both for the students and to serve Saskatchewan service needs as well as a growing economy. And certainly any suggestions that you would want to make in that regard would be welcome.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, what I understand is the last program is from the small-business sector. It's not every one . . . not every one of the employers met the criteria, was one of the downfalls in the system. It wasn't, from what I understand, a problem with the youth getting valuable experience from that.

My question now to the minister is, is there any avenues that are open to the small-business sector to help them? We've already identified that there's a labour shortage problem and again there is more agencies out there other than government agencies, although the government is one of the biggest employers. But there are other people that I think all of us are concerned with because there is a lack of workforce out there.

Is there any avenues open to the small-business sector to help them with this labour shortage problem?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It would be I think beneficial, Mr. Deputy Chair, for the Minister of Post-Secondary to provide a little more information here.

But in this budget as well I know that money was targeted for special initiatives in Aboriginal training, and technology, in forestry, in construction trades. So there are a number of areas where there was money strategically provided in the budget for training in a range of areas.

And certainly we provide funds as well through the government to sectoral areas like trucking, clothing manufacturers, etc. And those would be the kind of areas where you would have seen some direct resources going into growth of particular sectors of the economy.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I'm wondering, these are part-time positions that I total up to 1,500; I gather they're part-time. Or are they full-time during the summer? Or is there equivalency of . . . a full-time equivalent that's employed in this program?

And I'm wondering if you could give me kind of a breakdown of the type of dollars that individuals would be making? I don't know if it that's different throughout where they're being employed in the summer. But it would be nice to have some background as the dollars that these young individuals can make during the summer months.

(15:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for the question. Again these are, I think for the most part, pretty good jobs. They are

summer jobs. About 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the jobs are summer jobs. Another 15 per cent of the money has been set aside for work placements and whatnot over the winter, which would be part-time. But during the summer the jobs are full time.

And depending on the employer's share — and I don't have all that information yet because projects are just being approved as we speak — the wage rate over the summer would be between 6 to 8,000, I think would be sort of an average. And there may be some that go higher and some that go lower, depending on whether it's a graduate student or the nature of the work.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, the minister had mentioned there's been a flood of applicants for the . . . and I don't remember if you gave me a number. I'm wondering what the criteria is. I've not had a chance to see the criteria, and I have had people that have asked me about where they could apply and how. And I'm wondering what the criteria is and how somebody can make an application for summer employment, or if it's too late already.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Just to tell you what the differences are. For the Public Service Commission, actually ever since the previous government where many people complained about patronage with summer hiring, we instituted a lottery system where actually the system, based on the qualifications that are coded in, pumps out the name of the youth that will be referred to a job. And that's within the Public Service Commission.

The Crowns have their own process for hiring which I would have to check into. But the community organizations and whatnot, they'll be doing that through their own local associations. We don't do their hiring for them; they do their hiring themselves.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I don't know if I can use that as an answer to take back to the people that have asked me about it or not, is throw their name on a piece of paper and put it in the wind today and where it falls, maybe they get a job. I don't know.

I don't know if you answered the criteria of what's needed, like . . . and I know it might be specific to each individual. But I think a youth that's trying to get a job for the summer, they don't really care what department it may be in. But if there's a criteria that they must meet before they can even apply for the job, it would be interesting to know that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The way the system works is the employer identifies the key skills that they're looking for and then you match it up with the key skills of the applicant, who are also coded into the system. So it's very much skill driven, both from the point of view of the employer and the employee.

And I would beg to differ on one point. I do think young people care what kind of jobs they get, and I don't think they're in school just to amuse themselves. I think they go there because they have a career objective in mind. And I think they're much more focused than we were actually when we were younger. And perhaps I can't speak for yourself, but I think today's youth have very much an idea that they want a career.

And one of the things that caused the flood of applications was posting the actual job descriptions on the Internet, and people were then able to pursue jobs that related very directly to their education.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Well I would agree to disagree with you on one item because although there's people that are very interested in career paths, if you have a career path that's entrepreneurial in nature, where would you get the job within this program to do it?

And I also know a great number of young individuals that yes, they would like a career path but I'll tell you their prime interest of the day is to get some money to go back to school, so they'll take it in any sector at all. That's one of the reasons we're filling some rural jobs.

And I guess that comes back to a question, and I don't believe you've answered it as yet, is how many of these jobs would be broken down — out of the 1,500 — that you would consider as rural jobs? And by rural, I mean rural — not Swift Current or Yorkton, not just Regina and Saskatoon as the urban centres — jobs that are actually in rural Saskatchewan.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I will be looking carefully at the information as it comes in, because I think this is one of the design questions about the program: are we sure that there's an equitable sharing of these jobs around the province? That was certainly one of the criteria of going into the program and we'll have to see by the data that we get back whether that criteria was well met. But it certainly was our intention that all of the province would be well represented.

And certainly as far as the regional parks, all of those jobs would be outside of the urban areas. The community-based organizations exist around the province. Certainly government departments exist around the province. The post-secondary institutions, those may well be more centred in the urban areas. But I would say, overall, we would hope to see a good representation around the province. And I fully expect you to hold me accountable to that as we move through getting some of that information back.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I'm sure — thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker — I'm sure, Madam Minister, you can count on that, that we will do our utmost on this side to hold accountable.

But it strikes me as odd when we say that the jobs . . . You've given me a breakdown of the jobs in general terms, but do we not know what the individual jobs are? I gathered that from your remarks. We haven't hired in some cases because we don't know what the jobs are.

Is there not a breakdown of the specific jobs or did we just say roughly, oh let's hire 300 people for the Crowns and worry about where we're going to put them later. Do we have a breakdown?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll just remind the member that 900 of the jobs I cited are not under our control — either from the point of view of proposing the jobs or hiring for the jobs — so there would be a very large percentage of these jobs, about two-thirds, where people like regional committees and whatnot

are making the decisions about who gets these jobs; not only who gets them but which organizations are approved for their proposals.

So all of this decision making is out of my hands, but in the areas that I mentioned on the first list when we talked about community organizations, regional parks, conservation areas, post-secondary institutions, Crown corporations, and executive government.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, again I'm . . . been involved in many organizations. It just seems odd when you say it's outside of your control.

Here we form a ministry that comes under you but not in your control. It really strikes me as odd. If it's the Crown corporations, then why isn't the program through Crown corporation? It's kind of a distant service. Here — I'll give you money for 300 jobs but now I'm not accountable for it. And we just finished discussing and debating whether we're going to hold you accountable, and here, right off the bat, well I'm not accountable for the government or the Crown jobs.

It strikes me as a little odd, with you as the Minister of Youth, Culture and Recreation and have no input or say into the majority of the 1,500 jobs that are coming about. That strikes me as a little odd.

Is there direct discussion between yourself and the other ministers as to how this is going to be handled?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — When the program was first designed, there were several criteria. One, that these should be jobs that did have some kind of a career link, that they should be around the province, that they should be hiring a diverse workforce, that they be run by organizations who can be accounted on to provide the level of support and training needed by the youth.

Now I think the Regional Parks Association would take exception to you saying that I should interfere in their hiring processes. When they apply for a project or a series of positions that they're allocating, they refer to the criteria the government has set out, and they're responsible to report back to us in terms of the criteria that we've set out.

Certainly all the money would have to be accounted for; it would have to be accounted for that it met the criteria that the students were eligible. All of those things.

But at the end of the day, I don't decide who they hire. The Regional Parks Association decides which parks gets the priority and which students get the jobs. And I think that's appropriate. I don't think a minister should be deciding who gets a job out in Yorkton or somewhere else.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, taking exception to that is a little bit, a little bit . . . maybe an overstatement. I agree maybe you don't wish to be right there and be the person that says: yes, you get the job and no, you don't.

But the fact that I understand is if the money is coming from you, I think the ultimate responsibility should be left in your

hands if it's your department. Would you agree with that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think I outlined to the member that there's criteria, that the criteria have to be met both in terms of the application, the student and how they qualify, the organization and whether they qualify, their bookkeeping related to the project. So I believe all those accountability measures are in place.

And I would certainly share the member's view that anybody who receives government money should be held firmly accountable for the appropriate use of that money.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, we agree on that because somebody has to be accountable. And under what you'd explained before, we can give them the money and it's at arm's-length and they do what they want with it. Well I totally disagree with that because, as the minister, I believe that you have to remain responsible to the money that is coming out of your department.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I noted in the budget that the budgeted amount for culture or recreation financial assistance has increased by more than 5 million. A good portion of that amount is in the film employment tax credit, and I believe you said that this amount reflects an accounting change that was previously netted against corporate income tax revenue as expenditure.

Can you explain why the change? What precipitated this? And did anyone ask for this, and if so, why and who?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I think there's a few reasons why it makes good sense to do this. This information would have been included in Finance's tax information before but we think this is better disclosure. It's more transparent. It stands right out as an investment in that area. And for people who are in the cultural sector, they have a clearer picture of what government resources are being allocated to the sector. So I think it's just a more open and transparent way of accounting for this money.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Madam Minister, I have a couple of questions that I have not been able to find any answer to as yet and it goes along with the culture and recreation financial assistance. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question to the minister is the financial assistance to culture and recreation.

Now to me that indicates that if somebody has a cultural project within Saskatchewan and they wish to apply for a grant, that this monies could or might be available for a cultural program of this nature, of something. And I'll go to specifics after, but I don't want to go into specifics if, in fact, it's not what the fund was designed for.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Any requests that are made in these areas are under provincial organizations who make the determinations. And if it was for example in the arts area, it may well be the Arts Board that was determining where those monies went. And if it's in the sports area, it would be the lotteries, Sask Sport Trust that was making the decisions.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, okay, I have the specific for you.

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Asking for leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, and thank you to the member opposite. I'm very pleased to introduce to all members of the legislature, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Roger Thomas from Nexen Incorporated, Wascana Energy in Regina. He's president of Wascana Energy. And ask all members to welcome him to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Culture, Youth and Recreation Vote 27

Subvote (CR01)

(16:00)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the minister, my question is going to be specific.

This would happen . . . there's two of them happen to be in my constituency, and it's an initiative that has started some time ago and it's called the Metis cultural village of Willow Bunch. It's a program that I believe is now estimated at a million and a half dollars to get it going. And a small village of 100-and-some people, it's extremely difficult to get a million-plus dollars.

And I'm wondering if that would fall under one of the cultural financial assistance programs that appear to be in this budget?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — What we do, if anyone is looking for money for specific projects, is we try to refer them to the appropriate funding source. There are different funding sources out there and depending on the nature of their project — whether it's capital, whether it's operating, whether it's business — would be the determination of who you would refer them to.

But certainly if you would like us to take a look at this particular project and see whether we could recommend that they get in contact with the appropriate resource, we could do that.

Because as I say, we don't provide this money directly. There's organizations who are much more equipped to make the determination of how they fit within the whole spectrum of funding.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee report progress on the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

General Revenue Fund Women's Secretariat Vote 41

Subvote (WS01)

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the minister, and would she please introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure for me today to answer questions pertaining to Women's Secretariat. The mandate — to work with others to promote economic and social change to achieve equality for women. And we have strong women working in this area.

Beside me to my left is Joan Pederson, the acting executive coordinator of Women's Secretariat; and behind Joan, would be Cheryl Senecal, the senior policy analyst for Women's Secretariat.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Welcome, Madam Minister, and to your officials.

I normally like to start the discussion by giving, by letting you have the opportunity to tell me what you've sort of . . . what you've done this year, how you've progressed and fulfilled your mandate. Maybe you can give me an idea of how many employees you have, as well, and sort of what's happening in your department.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, the Women's Secretariat works to achieve its mandate by doing a few things. The first one is it undertakes evidence-based research and policy analysis to support gender analysis of social and economic issues.

It would also support the mandate by working with the departments and agencies across government to ensure that economic and social realities of women are taken into consideration in the development of government programs and policies — economic security, family violence, single parents, pay equity, jobs and training, unpaid work, balancing work and family, women in agriculture, employment equity and senior women, the Canadian Pension Plan and income security issues, services to victims, and sexual harassment, to name a few.

The secretariat would educate and inform the public about key issues that affect women's lives.

It also consults and liaises with community groups, public and private sector organizations and individuals; and it facilitates partnerships between women's organizations, the community, and government departments and agencies, and the private sector. So it tries to fulfill its mandate by playing that role.

Moving on to the key accomplishments for the year 2000-2001, we've provided a one-time millennium initiative, moms on the move scholarship program, that awarded 10 \$1,000 scholarships to single-parent women enrolled in post-secondary education.

Through the International Women's Day grant program, it provided one-time grants of \$500 to 101 non-profit community-based women's groups to support an International

Women's Day event or activity. And I know the member probably paid attention to the number of groups throughout the province who came together to have those events or to sponsor a workshop on some of the issues that face women to celebrate International Women's Day.

I know that she was in attendance at the If Gender Mattered conference, and that conference was sponsored to present and discuss research and policy development relating to advancing women's equality.

We worked with government and community to address poverty reduction. And as the member would know, this is the second year in a row that we've had a reduction in the number of children living in poverty in Saskatchewan. The non-market work in rural Saskatchewan, housing issues, and gender-based planning in the health sector, including the health districts.

There's the assessment of taxation policy to identify the impacts on low-income earners and families, and women's economic independence and security, when we talk about taxation and tax initiatives.

In partnership with Aboriginal organizations, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, government, and community, we provided policy analysis to support strategies addressing the economic and social well-being of Aboriginal women and families. And of course the year before, to do that, we needed to have some strong analysis and launched a profile of Aboriginal women to use as the backdrop for that kind of work to be done.

Developed statistical updates on employment, education, visible minority women, Aboriginal women, immigrant women, rural, and senior women.

As a result of the information gathered in the evaluations of the woman's on-line program, a follow-up forum was held in May, 2000 so that the recipients from the program could participate in skill-building workshops, share their experiences and learn from one another, and expand their ability to work on-line. Two additional one-day training workshops were being offered in April in Prince Albert and Regina, primarily for those unable to attend the forum last year and to get the sharing of those workshops.

In partnership with government, community, and other jurisdictions, we work to support government's family violence strategies and adapted the Money Smarts for Young Women from the British Columbia model. And that was distributed to the schools.

We collaborated with the federal-provincial territorial jurisdictions on policy initiatives that further progress on women's equality, including the release of women's economic independence and security and the federal-provincial territorial strategic framework and updates on economic gender equality indicators.

So it's been a very busy year and plans are underway to have this year be as full as the last.

The last question that was asked, Mr. Chairman, was: the number of full-time equivalents that we have within in

Women's Secretariat, and that would be 13.

And I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to give that overview on the work of the Women's Secretariat for the year, and a review.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The 13 employees that you have, could you give me an idea how they're broke down between administration, policy, research, communications, and public education?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — At present, Mr. Chair, we have one acting executive director who would be considered as in a management position. Although some of the areas . . . we have five people working in senior policy advisory roles or policy development. Some of those, at least one would be, probably determined to be management position. We have four people working in the area of strategic initiatives consulting, and doing the communicating and the facilitating within the communities. And we have two who would be in support staff positions.

Ms. Draude: — I notice there's going to be one full-time equivalent dropped from this year's budget. Can you tell me what department that person was dropped from?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — There was a voluntary retirement in the support staff area. And I guess that would be then the two that we were looking at in support staff. One was voluntarily retiring and we didn't move to fill that position, so that represents the full-time equivalent.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I had a number of questions that were fairly organized and laid out, but you said something in your discussion of what the mandate was of the secretariat and you talked about moms on the move. And I'm wondering if you can give me more information on that initiative.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, it's our belief that education is one of the most important ways to help women out of situations of poverty. And the moms on the move program was a scholarship program to ensure that single-parent women were better able to handle their studies and the load of . . . financial load on their studies.

It was single-parent women who are among the highest debt load . . . or people carrying the highest debt load following their studies. And these scholarships were specifically designed to reduce that amount of student loan needed.

The single-parent moms who show great commitment and determination to improve their lives by advancing their education and work potential are the best possible role models for others, and we wanted to make certain that they would be able to be there and provide a positive example to others. And the scholarship was a means to do that.

It was offered in the second year of post-secondary educational training for these women. And the program would be completed by the fall of 2000 with 10 single-parent women who were each awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

On behalf of Women's Secretariat and Government of Saskatchewan, we congratulate the recipients of those

scholarships and we commend them for their initiative. It's hard work and determination that would help them to get through balancing their family load and their study lives. And this was aimed to be a debt reduction program for them so that they would be able to go out into the workforce and support their family, and have less of the load of the tuition and other costs of post-secondary education.

Ms. Draude: — I understand, Madam Minister, you said there was 10 women that each received a thousand dollars apiece? Is that correct? And how was the determination made on who was . . . what the criteria was, who was going to be eligible, and . . . I guess it wouldn't matter which, the names of the people, but I'm just wondering if you could give me an idea of how they were decided, it was decided they'd get the grant.

(16:15)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — The program eligibility and requirements, Mr. Chair, were that they must be single parents with custodial rights; they must be a Saskatchewan resident attending an approved Saskatchewan post-secondary institution; they must have successfully completed at least 60 per cent of a full course load in the first year of study in the program of their choice; they must be enrolled in at least 60 per cent of the full course load in the year 2000-2001 school year; and they have to submit an application — a one-page outline of how the scholarship will benefit them and what their future educational and employment goals are, as well as the two reference letters to be attached.

The program criteria and recipient selection was based on the student's need, the geographical location, individual achievement, and passing grade. Members of equity groups, women with disabilities, Aboriginal ancestry also had a priority. And individual achievement was also considered.

Then we had an independent selection committee who reviewed the applications. Representation on that committee came from the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, SIAST, and Women's Secretariat.

To be awarded a MOM (mothers on the move), moms on the move scholarship, successful applicants had to complete and return two forms: one that verified completing the first year of study, and enrolment in the second year of study; and one that requested information on the student loans account from the individuals.

Now if the member would like, I could get the names of the recipients to her and we can provide that to her. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I know that there was 10 women who received the grants. Could you tell me how many actually applied?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — These 10 women were chosen out of approximately a hundred applications that was received. It was a very successful program and an important initiative I believe on behalf of Women's Secretariat.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, the members that were on

the committee to make the decision on who would receive the grant, were they paid anything? And were they all women?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, the people who were on the selection committee were all women who did that in a volunteer capacity and were not paid for that participation on the selection committee.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, there was . . . the secretariat, I know, has some funding available for grants for various women's organizations, and if not grants then partnership funding. Could you give me an idea or give me a list of the grants or partnership fundings that were given, paid out this year and last year?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — There are about four pages, Mr. Chair, of the names of groups and agencies that receive some funding from the Women's Secretariat. The International Women's Day grants would be separate.

But I think she was asking about in a partnership way and sort of . . . I would like to table this for the member, Mr. Chair, so that she would have the ability to look at those, rather than read them all out; it's a long time to do that. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate that. Could you give me an idea of what your relationship is now with the committee or the group that used to be called Working for Women?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — In March 2000, cabinet approved the development and implementation of new funding mechanism for community-based organizations delivering specialized career and employment services to specific client groups.

Following the initial request for proposal, recommendations for funding have recently been approved by the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training.

As a part of this new CBO (community-based organization) strategy, Working for Women was not successful in obtaining multi-year funding to deliver services to multi-barriered clients in Saskatoon.

The department had developed a process for evaluating proposals and used specific criteria, and all proposals were assessed on the same set of criteria.

The needs of women were incorporated within the broader theme of multi-barriered, and we believe those agencies receiving the funding through the program would provide suitable selection of employment-related services to assist women in obtaining employment.

It's not saying that we don't recognize the valuable work some community-based organizations do, but we remain confident those organizations who receive the funding, along with Canada-Saskatchewan career and employment offices, will be able to provide the appropriate career and employment services to meet the needs of women.

So this agency, established in 1980 through federal grants from the employment outreach program of Employment and

Immigration Commission, had been funded over the past two years but would not receive the funding for this program in this year.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I'm not sure if I understood. Did you say the Working for Women has only received funding from the Women's Secretariat for two years?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — This is a program through Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. And the transitional funding had been provided to Working for Women until the end of June 2001 to assist them in assessing their continued viability and research alternative sources of funding.

So through the Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training department, I believe that was their only source of funding. Consequently their funding will go till June 2001 to see if there's any continued viability, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. I guess just to clarify then, they only received funding from the secretariat for two years?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — To be clear, this initiative is based in Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. And they have a new strategy that they're developing with community-based organizations to deliver specialized career and employment services to specific client groups.

As a result they put out criteria they would follow for women's groups to access the funding in this area. So this is not something that comes out of Women's Secretariat, but it is Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training based.

Over the past two years, Working for Women was funded through Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training to provide career planning, computer training, assertiveness training, and job-finding clubs.

Now they did not submit the kinds of reports that had been asked for in a timely manner, and the department couldn't adequately assess the outcomes. And they've been doing that with groups who have been coming forward and going to be doing the work in this area.

So transitional funding was given until the end of June 2001, to assist them to assess their continued viability and research alternative sources of funding for the organization.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, through the Women's Secretariat, even though the funding has been given through post-secondary skills and training, this organization or group has been in the province for a number of years and has been doing a considerable amount of work. I'm wondering if you're going to be keeping in contact with them and determining if there is some other way that you can be enhancing the work that they're doing and the very valuable work that they're doing.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Women's Secretariat has been in communication with them and working with them to determine what their future would be. And that's in progress, and discussions are still occurring, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I know that there's another program available where there's grants for, I believe it's \$500 given to a number of recipients. Can you give me an idea of what these are for, the criteria for those grants?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — In my overview of the department's work this year, I did mention the International Women's Day grant program, and this would be the area that I believe the member is questioning.

It was one-time grants of \$500 to non-profit community-based women's groups to support an International Women's Day event or activity. Many of the groups in the community go about doing their work and don't take time to either outline what that work is to the community or to recognize the work that strong women provide to their community.

So in some communities, there's a recognition event. In others, there was just a celebration of what women are able to achieve that would be able to have them be strengthened and go forward in the year ahead. And others had International Women's Day celebrations that would invite the community in.

At the university, there was a program here that had women involved in different programs and supports to students at the university — those kinds of activities and events.

There were many, many applications, and we were able to offer about 101 of those this year, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, can you tell me how you determined who would receive the grants out of the very many applications you received?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Basically the Women's Day grants, the women's groups had to profile their work to address equality issues. They had to be an event that would increase public awareness about the history and significance of International Women's Day to the broader community. And applications for grants were used to support this event or celebration or contribution that they would make to Saskatchewan women.

The applications for grants were processed as they were received and when all the necessary information was obtained, the groups were notified either by phone or by a letter to say that they were awarded a grant and could plan their programs accordingly.

And the selection was done by that information being provided to Women's Secretariat.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, so then the 13 women that are working within the secretariat, I guess, they're . . . probably the two support workers and the four strategic initiative people involved would have to sift through these 2 or 300 applications and decide who was going to receive the grant. Is that correct?

(16:30)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Yes. Mr. Chair, the committee did have representation. Two of the women that would work among the community groups would have an understanding of the work that has been accomplished, would be looking at the

applications along with a support staff person, and they made recommendations that would be given to the senior person in the Women's Secretariat who then would choose the final recipients.

Ms. Draude: — So, Madam Minister, then these three or four people went through these 400 . . . or 300 grants and they would decide after reading the very complex application that had to be . . . that was filled out, they had to determine what criteria and decide this is the person who will receive a \$500 grant and this one isn't.

Is this . . . was this a complex way of deciding how . . . if you're going to receive the money? How was the actual decision made?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chairman, all of the women's groups were given the chance to submit a criteria form that said yes, they were a non-profit women's group, here's the work that they were going to do, here's how they would spend the money, and they would comply with the criteria for the grant.

And Women's Secretariat had \$50,500 that they could spend on that program. So when we received the applications, we would have the individuals that we talked about go through those and make sure that they met all of the criteria, and the grants were then given out on the first-come, first-serve basis.

We couldn't meet all the requests, but those women who got in the information who met all of those criteria, if we received their applications, received the money. When the money was gone, the program was gone as well.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I believe you just said that you received this grant on a first-come, first-serve basis. So all the . . . if you weren't one of the lucky people to have got your application in immediately, then you weren't going to receive any of the money. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Many groups took advantage of the program and sent their applications in. And there was lots of time for them to prepare that and make certain that they had the information prepared to meet the criteria.

So the selection committee then looked at the application and would make certain that the group met the criteria — non-profit, working in a community, here's the event they were planning, if it was going to do the things that we outlined. And then yes, they were then given on a first-come, first-served basis until \$50,500 was used.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I would understand that in each department it must be difficult to decide who would be the most worthy recipient. I'm sure that lots of the people that filled in their application a couple of days later or received . . . or was received in your department a couple of days later because of Canada Post may have had a very valuable proposal, suggestion.

But it would seem that a determination to spend \$50,000 on a first-come, first-served basis must be something that's a difficult decision to make in a department like yours where you only have 13 staff and definitely a small amount of money.

I would think that there must some individuals in the province felt like they didn't have much of an opportunity to get funding that could have been available. Is this decision going to be re-looked at next year?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Any time you have an amount of money and a program with many people who want to take advantage of that program, the selection process is always difficult. So we did say when they received the information that it would be allocated on the basis of those people who submitted their applications first who met the criteria.

And then we gave a good length of time to not have people say well, we didn't have time to get our application in, or, oh, we just found it at this time. We gave a good length of time for them to be able to submit to the program.

Once in a while when you're looking to the women in the community and you want to have them be able to take some time to celebrate accomplishments . . . And the women that work within Women's Secretariat work with the community groups and organizations would know that there's once in a while you take a chance to look and reflect on the work that's being done, but to provide those women out there who are doing the work the strength to carry on and to celebrate International Women's Day, not for us to lose sight of what that day is all about and the importance of that day.

So this was the year that we determined that we would do that. There's no indication that this is going to be an ongoing program for every International Women's Day, but we wanted to highlight that this year and this is the way we did that.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, it really wouldn't matter what length of time you gave them to send their applications in if it was a first-come, first-serve basis. The first people in there are going to get their . . . are going to get chosen. So I would think that this is something that you would really have to reconsider if you're really going to look at who it's going to be benefiting the most.

Madam Minister, I was interested in hearing you saying that the committee . . . that your secretariat looked at assessment and taxation as one of your mandates this year, one of the jobs you worked on. We all know that with the many discussions that have been brought . . . carried on in the House in the last six weeks, that assessment and taxation is a huge issue.

Can you give me an idea of what the secretariat felt women's influence on assessment and taxation would be?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — The Women's Secretariat would look at any new policy development or program in the area of finance as they would any other department. And not so much the ongoing assessment, or assessment issues through municipalities who make those decisions, but the decisions that are taken by the provincial government.

And the member opposite would know that there were a number of tax changes contemplated when we . . . dealing from the federal government's tax forms, and we had an opportunity to address some issue areas by what initiatives we would undertake in that review.

And so once the changes were being looked at, the committee — of course, the tax committee — did its work and Finance was developing the options and the things that they would do to implement that report, we would then be able to assess and analyze what kind of an impact that would have.

So, for example, once the tax changes are fully implemented, approximately 55,000 low-income seniors, single parents, minimum wage earners, and working families will no longer pay provincial income tax. Once the provincial income tax brackets and personal tax credits are fully implemented, they will be protected from inflation. And this is particularly important for low-income earners.

The expansion of the sales tax base to include some goods and services that were previously not taxed would be offset for low-income families by the provincial sales tax credit.

Two-parent families will receive up to \$264 per year, while the single-parent family would receive \$209 per year. The child tax credit offered for the first time in 2001 helps all Saskatchewan families with the cost of raising children. It's worth \$1,500 per child and does not restrict the number of children that can be claimed. By 2003 the tax credit amount will be worth about \$2,500 per child.

Now what we would do as a secretariat when we look at the tax initiatives and how Finance is developing their strategies in response, our personnel would be at the table with them discussing how that would impact — how the changes will impact and how you protect those most vulnerable in our community from the tax changes and the tax shifts.

And so they would determine then the kind of phasing-in of certain initiatives or what we could do to support, as I said, income of seniors, single parents, minimum-wage earners and working families. And we would have our say in those initiatives.

Now of course then, the final decision on how that would be taken and what would be put in place would be the budget deliberations, Mr. Chair. But we would have the ability to have a women's lens on those tax changes and the shifts of taxation.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, I am pleased to hear you say that after you gave me the rundown of the changes in taxes that were going to happen this year, that it wasn't something that your small department had to analyze, because I'm sure there must be more personnel available than just in the secretariat.

But what I wanted to know is what your department had to say about some of these changes in taxes. Like for example last year you had the expansion of the PST (provincial sales tax). I'm sure that your department, your women's department, must have been very concerned with the idea that single moms are going to have to pay expanded PST on a number of issues.

Do you have any voice in these kinds of changes? What do you say to cabinet and to the Finance minister when he says that we're going to smack women hard again when it comes to some of these changes? How do you make an impact?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. On a broader view, I would say that if you were going to contemplate an across-the-board reduction of 20 or 25 per cent, Women's Secretariat would be at the table and say, well then recognize this gives those people who have the most benefit in our communities the biggest benefit of a tax reduction, and the least amount of benefit to the lower incomes and may have impacts on programs and services.

So if Finance were talking about back there at the table and they would point out to Finance the implications of that kind of a move on those who are the greatest in need in our communities. And therefore when we were having the Tax Review Committee and looking at what and what would not occur, we would give an analysis of how that would have an impact on the community. But we would also have a broader view of what we do as government to help those who are in greatest need.

And hand in hand with that would come the redesign of Saskatchewan social assistance program to better meet those who are most vulnerable families in the community. There would be the Saskatchewan Child Benefit in combination with federal children's benefits to remove children's basic benefits from welfare and assist low-income parents with the costs of raising their children. So that would be another way we would have a role to play in that in a broader view.

The Saskatchewan employment supplement is a monthly payment that supplements income earned by low-income parents from wages, self-employment, and child spousal maintenance. So the lone parent women that are leading about 69 per cent of those households would benefit from that kind of a program. When we're looking at one, we don't just do it in isolation of all of the other things we would do to support women.

And of course if there's one area that's being recommended to expand or broaden the PST, we would give an analysis of how that would impact on low-income families or single-parent families. And we would be saying that the offsetting of that — when we talk about the tax credits, those kinds of things — the PST program, rebate program would also be part of the analysis of that.

So it's not one in isolation of many other factors, but we look at the broad nature of that and say that if there are going to be these changes, how we can protect those most vulnerable in our community from those changes.

(16:45)

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, while I appreciate the fact that your voice is there when it comes to looking at changes in taxes and the impact it's going to have on women and especially single moms that are raising families, and I'm sure that they're hoping or praying right now that your voice is going to be heard when it comes to the impact on their lives when it comes to utility rate increases that we're going to be feeling in the next little while.

I understood you to say that when you're looking at . . . your mandate is to look at the broad picture and to have a voice in all areas. And I think that there's going to be many . . . many

families in this province are going to be hurting badly and expecting you to . . . hoping that you're going to have some voice around the table when it comes to making those changes.

Madam Minister, last year, was there any unfilled positions in the Secretariat?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Yes. Mr. Chair, we have Joan acting as the executive coordinator, the executive . . . That position, since Faye Rafter left, has been filled in that capacity, and so we would be looking at eventually going out to fill that position. And there's one vacant position in the senior pay equity adviser capacity, and we would be looking to fill that position as well.

Ms. Draude: — So I understand then that last year the 13 staff members was actually 11 for a percentage of the year to try to fulfill . . . justify the mandate that has been given to you by this government. I guess it's big shoes to fill.

Madam Minister, can you give me an idea how much you spent on minister's travel in the past fiscal year and how much of it fell into the other category?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I may have misunderstood the member, and I'll try and answer it this way. I believe she's asking about ministers responsible for Women's Secretariat — might not necessarily be this minister, but the previous minister who had the portfolio before me — would be \$2,153.77.

And that would be to attend federal-provincial territorial meetings of ministers responsible for the Status of Women. They would generally have one meeting that would lead up to the full ministers' meeting, a sort of a pre-conference — share information, know what information they would want to go back and gather before that conference — and then they would attend the conference of all of the ministers per year. So that's that category.

And then, other — I'm assuming you would mean support people that go along. Is that what . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, so the total travel expenses for everyone who would be involved to support the minister or to represent Women's Secretariat through the year, because Joan would also go to conferences where people who are in that role would come together, and the total amount of money then would be \$22,813.72.

Ms. Draude: — Could you give me an idea, Madam Minister, why so much of the travel money would go under the category other?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Well the opportunity for ministers to get together are the two opportunities that I mentioned.

And then on an ongoing basis support people would come together, so there would be conferences for the person who would be now in Joan's position. So there would be some travel for Joan, or Faye Rafter at the time, who would support the minister, or go to meetings of equivalent responsibility in other jurisdictions, and then would take — probably depending on what the nature of that meeting was, what the topics of discussion were — would take someone who was a senior analyst in that area or someone who worked in that area who

would be able to provide support to them.

And so those are the people who would then travel along with the senior executive of the Women's Secretariat. So that's why.

Most times there's a pre-conference, or I believe the minister goes to the meeting to determine what are some of the topics or initiatives that they'd like to support on an annual basis, and then goes to the full federal-provincial territorial ministers' meetings. And throughout the rest of the year, the other officials do those kinds of meetings.

For example, the If Gender Mattered conference, we would have had women from . . . who are leading women's secretariats in other provinces, plus probably some of their women that work in pay equity analysis or policy analysis come with them. And they provided good information to us and we were able to share our information with them.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, and, Madam Minister, so maybe I misunderstood the way the categories are broke down because it sounds like other must be travel just for the minister and . . . I mean travel is just for the minister and other is for other members.

My real question is why wouldn't you put travel under travel, whether it belongs to the minister or the support staff or the deputy minister? You're telling me that \$2,153.77 is under travel, but \$22,813 is under other. If it's travel, why doesn't it just go under travel?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — That's probably why I mentioned to the member I wasn't quite certain how she was asking the question.

The total travel, ministerial and support people, the total travel is \$22,813. That includes the minister's travel. But the opportunity for the minister to travel is to get together with other ministers responsible for the status of women. And there are two that I mention. There are about four to six other meetings for the executive officers of the secretariats, and they meet in various places and around various topics of discussion.

And then those people who would also take their policy analysts would go as well.

But the total envelope of travel — and I thought she asked about ministerial travel and then other people travelling, and that's why I broke it down that way — but the total envelope is the 22,000-some dollars.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In the expenses under the term travel . . . under the term other, what is in there besides travel? What other expenditures are considered other in your department?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, are we talking about in the Estimates document, what means other? What's in the other category?

I guess I could tell the member that of the expenditures for the Women's Secretariat, the breakdown would be like this: \$690,000 — salaries. Of course that's the main component of

the secretariat because that's what we do. We're in places to be the lens of women into the departments. So our most . . . most of our expense is salaries.

The next expenses would be under office and equipment, and that's about \$90,000.

Communications — the printing and the advertising and the getting the information out to women is about \$66,000. Meals and travel for those times that they travel, about \$49,000.

There's a sharing of the cost of operating my office as the minister responsible, which is about 6 per cent, and that totals \$27,000.

There's the International Women's Day grants that we talked about; the scholarships we talked about; \$28,000 in the area of partnerships.

The special initiatives, there were two this year — PATHS (Provincial Association of Transition Houses Saskatchewan), \$48,000; and the women's health centre, the Prairie Women's Health Centre, 10,000.

And then there's postage of \$5,000 and rent of \$75,000. And that's the total budget for Women's Secretariat.

So of that, I guess I'm not certain how they broke that down for expenses and other. But I guess it would be anything that wasn't the salaries that I gave you the information on. It would be the salaries and then other, and I've read those out to you today.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.