

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today on behalf of constituents and people throughout the province of Saskatchewan who would like to see Bruno telephone exchange become part of the Humboldt telephone exchange. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to allow Bruno to be part of the Humboldt telephone exchange.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have another 55 signatures to this petition from the communities of Bruno, Wakaw, Wilkie, Lloydminster, Cudworth, Saskatoon, and Cut Knife.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today from residents who are concerned about some of the recommendations in the Fyke report.

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the condition of Highway 339. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 339 in order to facilitate economic development initiatives.

And the petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Briercrest and Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of concerned citizens in southwest Saskatchewan who have signed a petition regarding the Swift Current Hospital, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer of the petition 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, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of the city of Swift Current. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, residents of Ernfold have signed this petition, as have people from Herbert, Waldeck, and Kyle.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are concerned about the possible closures of hospitals and health centres in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take the necessary steps to ensure that services are maintained at least at their current level at Weyburn General Hospital, Bengough Health Centre, Radville Marian Health Centre, and Pangman health centre in order that accessible health care services are available to residents of the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency and beyond.

And this is signed by residents of Bengough.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too present petitions on behalf of citizens of the province regarding the EMS (emergency medical services) service. 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 service.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Fairlight, Redvers, and Bellegarde areas.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today. The prayer reads:

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 the users from our district, southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba, and beyond.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Carlyle, Alida, Redvers, Wauchope, and Antler areas.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to provide reliable cellular service in the districts of Rabbit Lake, Hafford, Blaine Lake, Leask, Radisson, Borden, Perdue, Maymont, Mistawasis, and Muskeg Lake.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Blaine Lake and Saskatoon. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today opposed to the possible reduction of health services in Kamsack. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that health care services in the Kamsack Hospital be maintained at its current level of service, at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctoral services available.

The petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Kamsack and Pelly.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with citizens concerned about the high rates being charged by SaskPower and SaskEnergy:

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 rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Loreburn, Strongfield, Davidson.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today to present on behalf of constituents concerned with centralization of ambulance services. 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 to affirm its intent to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And signatures to this petition come from the communities of

Wynyard and Wadena.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition regarding cellular telephone coverage:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the districts of Spiritwood, Medstead, Glaslyn, Leoville, Chitek Lake, Big River, Canwood, Debden, Shellbrook, Parkside, Shell Lake, Duck Lake, and Macdowall.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are signed by citizens of Glaslyn, Leoville, Spiritwood, Medstead, Mayfair.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens of this province who are concerned about the high energy costs. And 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 rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by folks from Unity and Lloydminster. I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise again with a petition from concerned citizens reference the cuts at the 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 the good citizens of Mossbank and Gravelbourg.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

The first petition is for raising wages at Rail City Industries in Melville and as well in other community-based agencies.

And 11 other petitions that are addendum to previously tabled sessional papers.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Brkich: —Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 46 ask the government the following question:

To the minister for Sask Water: what was the total amount of fees collected from producers for the sale of water for irrigation purposes during the 2000-2001 fiscal year?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a group of students sitting in the east gallery. These students are from the Maymont School, from the town of Maymont, Saskatchewan. There's 23 students sitting in the gallery. And I'd like to welcome their teachers, Austin Harpham, and Martin Hoehn

Please join me in welcoming the Maymont students and teachers to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it certainly is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this House, Derwyn Crozier-Smith up in your gallery. And he's well known to this Assembly, having come here to see proceedings before. But the reason he's here today is probably not well known by most members.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago with assistance from the provincial government, Saskatchewan teachers, working together with their education partners, established the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research into Teaching. The McDowell Foundation is an independent charitable foundation that funds teaching and learning research in our public, elementary, and secondary schools.

In true Saskatchewan spirit the McDowell Foundation brings together a wide range of education stakeholders and provides them with opportunities to work in support of our young people's education. To date the foundation has raised approximately \$1.3 million in support of educational research.

This year the McDowell Foundation is celebrating its 10th anniversary. To mark this important milestone, the foundation recently awarded in excess of \$90,000 towards research grants that will benefit children in schools throughout Saskatchewan.

In the gallery today, Mr. Speaker, is Derwyn Crozier-Smith who is the president of this foundation. On behalf of the government and all members, I would like to welcome him and extend our congratulations to the McDowell Foundation on its 10th anniversary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I would also like to pass on congratulations on the 10th anniversary of the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation.

I'd also like to also welcome Derwyn Crozier-Smith into the

gallery today. The McDowell Foundation brings together partners that help shape our education system through supporting the continued education of the stakeholders involved in learning.

Research is essential in all walks of life to ensure the positive progress into the future. Our teachers hold in their hands the future of our province through our children. Their determination to ensure our children will always have the best education possible is one of the brightest lights of hope for the future.

On behalf of my colleagues I'd like to congratulate Mr. Crozier-Smith and the McDowell Foundation.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 20 students from the great community of Lashburn. They're from the Lashburn High School, Mr. Speaker. They're sitting in the east gallery this afternoon. They are accompanied by their teachers, Tracy Doering and Allyson Best. Their chaperones are Brian Cote, Linda Amundrud, Marlene Stieb, Dorothy Pilon, and Louise Krissa.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that they're scheduled for an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) visit at 2:30 and it would be my pleasure to be able to sit in on this afternoon and be able to do that for you. As you've noticed, I'm doing this on behalf of someone else. They are unable to attend today. And it would be my pleasure to meet with you.

Mr. Speaker, please join me and all members in welcoming the 20 students from Lashburn.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Nexans Power Cable Plant Expansion in Weyburn

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, I bring to you word of a great development for Saskatchewan and the people of Weyburn. Nexans, an extended power cable plant in Weyburn, has completed their \$20 million expansion project with a grand opening that took place on May 18 of this year.

Mr. Speaker, this project included a 40,000 square foot building expansion and the addition of 13 pieces of top-of-the-line manufacturing equipment. This brings the total investment by Nexus in the Weyburn plant since 1992 up to \$35 million. It is expended that up to 60 new jobs will be created as a result of this expansion, once the plant is producing at the new capacity level.

Mr. Speaker, this new facility will position Weyburn as a North American leader in the manufacturing of a full range of power cables. Nexans Canada Inc. is also the largest company of its kind in Canada and one of the largest in North America.

(13:45)

This project is a great example of how good it is to do business

in Saskatchewan. When the wire and cable company first opened its doors in Weyburn in 1956, it was due to the negotiations of our former premier, Tommy Douglas. The first plant was located in a huge old hangar at Weyburn airport that had been held over from the days of World War II.

Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way in the days between. It's a great day for Nexans, for the people of Weyburn, and the people of this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Aboriginal Awareness Week

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 21 to 26 is Aboriginal Awareness Week across Canada and I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak to this very important event.

As we move on into the 21st century, Mr. Speaker, we look at the many wonderful contributions that Aboriginal people have given us. We also know that to build on that tradition and to encourage growth, it is imperative that access to education, employment, and business opportunities for First Nations people continues to be a priority.

Mr. Speaker, we must remember that this province will be facing a severe labour shortage within the next few years. To replace this group, the workers of tomorrow must be educated, trained, and given the resources necessary to grow Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we know how important Aboriginal people are to the province's future. Today one-third of students entering grade 1 are Aboriginal. Nearly 40 per cent of the province's total student enrolment including university and trades training are First Nations. Population predictions put the province's Aboriginal numbers at more than 200,000 in just over a decade and that number will continue to grow.

During Aboriginal Awareness Week, Mr. Speaker, we recognize and respect not only what First Nations people have given our province, but also what great things they have yet to contribute. We look forward to a long and successful partnership with them as they continue striving towards capacity building and full participation in Saskatchewan's growth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Funding for Provincial Tourism Projects

Mr. Addley: — More good news for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This time the news comes in the form of \$922,000 in funding for tourism projects, which will provide increased opportunities for job creation and boost economic development in areas throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Birding Trail Strategy will receive over \$400,000. This money will be used to link the expertise and resources of several diverse organizations — wildlife, tourism, economic development, and community organizations — in order to create birding tours of regional, national, and

international quality.

The Duck Lake Historical Museum Society will use its new funding of \$335,000 to revitalize the 10-year-old Duck Lake Museum, allowing it to remain viable while playing a leadership and coordinating role for tourism and marketing initiatives in the Saskatchewan Rivers heritage area.

The Trans-Canada No. 1 West Association is a not-for-profit association that has a mandate to promote economic and tourism development for communities and business along the Trans-Canada Highway. The contribution of over \$100,000 to this organization will support several innovative initiatives to increase tourism along or adjacent to the Trans-Canada in Saskatchewan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan was given funding of \$67,500 to be used to cover the cost to complete the accreditation process for known economic ecotourism operations, plus others such as traditional outfitters who decide to convert to eco-tourism.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is one of Saskatchewan's most dynamic industries. Building on our many attractions will create more jobs and increase tourism to our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Outlook Defenceman Selected in WHL Draft

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk about a young man from the town of Outlook in my constituency who's made a major accomplishment in the sporting world.

Fifteen-year-old Logan Stephenson was the first player for Saskatchewan to be selected in the WHL (Western Hockey League) bantam draft held on May 3. He was selected sixth overall in the first round by the Tri-City Americans, who regard the young defenceman as a very talented hockey player, with the potential to one day be a team leader and a franchise player.

What makes this accomplishment even more remarkable is that his older brother, Shay is already playing hockey in the WHL with the Red Deer Rebels. Indeed the pursuit of hockey excellence runs in the family as Logan's father, Bob Stephenson, also played professional hockey with Toronto years ago.

Following his hockey career, Bob and his wife settled in Outlook where they've raised their family, presently own a business in this community which Bob also serves as mayor.

Logan speaks highly of his parents as they taught him many of the fundamentals of the game and spent time with him in his early years to help him develop his skills. They've always been there for me, offering me support; I just really have to thank them more than anyone for getting me where I am now, recalls the youngster.

This coming year, he will attend the Americans rookie camp that's scheduled to take place on August 24. He then plans to return to Notre Dame where he will try out for their midget

AAA team. In the meantime his future looks very bright, as he's taken a huge step in pursuit of a dream that many young Saskatchewan hockey players have in their mind.

I believe this bright, young defenceman will do very well, and hopefully one day will be playing in the National Hockey League. While he may have a long road ahead of him yet . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Cathedral Village Arts Festival

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you had been in my neighbourhood on Saturday, you would have seen several examples of very moving art. But, when I say moving, I mean in motion, not emotion.

These were cars that were decorated for the art car parade, which was the preface to the Cathedral Village Community Association annual picnic and arts festival.

And this year, Mr. Speaker, it's better than ever. It's taking place as we speak. Festival 2001 will attract more than 25,000 visitors to the various events up and down the boulevard or up and down 13th Avenue, which I may say is our business district as well in the neighbourhood.

We have our traditional events like Films Under the Stars, the Poetry Slam — nobody gets hurt during that — numerous concerts, choir performances, face painting, and sidewalk painting.

This year we're adding a First Nations Showcase, a DanceFest, and Theatre in a Shu-Box. The event culminates on Saturday with the 13th Avenue street fair and outdoor concert. There's food and drink galore, all quite reasonable. And there's something for everybody, Mr. Speaker.

Regina Centre is in the heart of urban Regina, but it shares many of the virtues of village life. We are a very diverse community of performers, artists, small-business people, community volunteers, and just generally citizens who delight in diversity, proving once again, Mr. Speaker, that culture builds community.

I want to quickly congratulate Gerri-Ann Siwek, festival chairperson, and all the volunteers who make this a yearly success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fundraiser for North-East Health District

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today and tomorrow paramedics Lyle Moffat and Mark Ollinger will test their endurance in a run-and-bike race through the North-East Health District to raise money for disaster equipment.

Today the two will relay-jog from Choiceland to Nipawin where they will join a fundraiser at the ambulance base. Then

they will continue on by bicycle from Nipawin to Carrot River.

Tomorrow, the 24th, they will leave Carrot River, cycling to the Arborfield/Zenon Park area, then will complete the final leg on foot back to Nipawin. The total distance is approximately 160 kilometres, Mr. Speaker.

This is a project under the Disaster Management Committee. The ultimate goal is to raise \$30,000 to provide disaster equipment that would be used in caring for victims in the event of a mass casualty incident within the health district. The Disaster Management Committee is an umbrella group, which under all emergency agencies in the district operate in the event of a disaster.

Proceeds are to go towards the purchase of equipment such as backboards, spine boards, and bandaging supplies. When and if funds permit, the goal is as well to purchase a trailer to house the equipment so that it may be moved to a disaster site.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in congratulating Lyle and Mark on their tremendous effort in fundraising for the North-East Health District.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Registered Psychiatric Nurses Recognized

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know the importance of nurses to health care in Saskatchewan, and many of us have experienced a nurse's compassion and expertise first-hand.

Recently the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association gathered to pay tribute to members who have demonstrated excellence in the field of nursing. On May 15, the association held their President's Award banquet to honour those who have made exemplary contributions to the profession. I would like to quickly mention those who were honoured by the Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

Lynde McKinley received the Duke Leflar Award, an award that recognizes the graduate who has achieved the highest standing on the RPNAS (Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan) registration exam. Donald Yates, RPN (Registered Psychiatric Nurse), received the Award for Community Service, and Sue Myer, RPN, received the Psychiatric Nursing Education Award.

Appreciation awards are given to registered psychiatric nurses and members of the public who accept leadership positions within the organization and play a pivotal role within the organization through their volunteering.

Appreciation awards were given to Carla Bolen, RPN and President of RPNAS; Ellen Jones, RPN and member-at-large; Edie Montgrand, RPN, and member-at-large.

Congratulations to all the award recipients, and a thank you to all the registered psychiatric nurses for the contributions they make to the health care sector and to society.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Termination of Employee of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, on May 8 during question period, Government House Leader was responding to questions regarding allegations of bribery made by the member of North Battleford. And the Government House Leader said, and I quote:

If any member of this legislature or any member of the general public has any, any, any evidence to suggest . . . inappropriate activity, they have a responsibility to forward that to the proper process, which is the police.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Justice agree with this statement? Do government officials have a responsibility to take evidence of wrongdoing to the police?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, the member raises the question of the obligation on the part of anyone who finds out about wrongdoing to report that matter to the police. If the member is referring to the member from North Battleford having an obligation should he feel it necessary, then he should indeed take the matter to the police.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the problem is, government officials are sometimes reluctant to go to the police with evidence of wrongdoing for fear of being punished by that government. The Saskatchewan Party has been calling for whistle-blowing legislation to protect government workers who come forward with evidence of wrongdoing.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Justice think that government employees should be punished if they take evidence of illegal activities to the police, and if not, will the minister support our whistle-blowing legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, at the time the member talked about moving whistle-blower legislation, I indicated that the government would look seriously at his proposal, and of course the government will do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under section 76 of The Police Act, the Minister of Justice has the authority to appoint special constables. Could the minister please explain what is a special constable and what duties and responsibilities does a special constable have under The Police Act?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a special constable

is appointed for various reasons — sometimes at the request of the chief of police — and the special constable will fulfill whatever duties are designated to him or her in the minister's order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Section 78 of The Police Act says that a special constable is in effect a police officer . . . a peace officer. They're required to fulfill the duties of a police officer as prescribed by The Police Act. They swear the same oath as any police officer to prevent crime and enforce the law.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister agree that a special constable, perhaps even more than ordinary people, has a duty to uphold the law, to co-operate in police investigations, to provide any evidence of illegal activity to proper authorities. Would the minister agree with that statement?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the Minister of Liquor and Gaming. Mr. Speaker, why did the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority fire Joe Dosenberger?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of course, I think the members opposite would know when we're talking about internal personnel matters, we don't comment on individuals within the Assembly.

In this one, on a personnel issue, there was a thorough external review of some of the employment issues and a course of action was taken by management.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's all that I am able to supply to the member opposite in the Assembly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well a bit of information. Mr. Speaker, Joe Dosenberger was a 28-year veteran of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). In 1995, he went to work for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority as their superior of investigations and security. In 1996, he was appointed as a special constable by the Minister of Justice to help him fulfill his investigative duties with SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority).

In every performance appraisal Joe Dosenberger received from the SLGA, he received, Mr. Speaker, the highest possible rating in every category of his job performance. Yet on July 6, 2000, he was fired with cause and without notice.

Mr. Speaker, again I ask the minister: why did the NDP government fire Joe Dosenberger?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite would know that this matter would be before the courts very soon and we're not able to talk about internal personnel issues and individuals within the Assembly.

I don't think it suits that individual or the matters before this House to be able to speak about individual personnel issues, Mr. Speaker, and I think that I would want to say that I would respect that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well very soon isn't now, to start off with. And secondly, the good question is why is he there?

Mr. Speaker, according to an article in the July 12 *Leader-Post* SLGA CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Kathy Langlois said that a security official — presumably Joe Dosenberger — was fired for leaking a cabinet briefing note to John Gormley. But, Mr. Speaker, that's not the real reason.

The Saskatchewan Party has obtained a copy of Joe Dosenberger's letter of termination from the same Kathy Langlois. In her letter, she says Mr. Dosenberger was terminated for providing the cabinet briefing note to the RCMP, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Joe Dosenberger is a 28-year veteran of the RCMP. He was a special constable. He was a supervisor of investigation for the SLGA. He was a lead investigator on the SIGA file, and he turned that into the RCMP. For that, he was fired.

Why did the NDP fire Joe Dosenberger for assisting the RCMP in an ongoing criminal investigation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we would all know within this Assembly, you can say what one side of an issue might be or another side of an issue and it does not benefit the individual involved to bring individual personnel issues to this Assembly.

As I mentioned earlier, after a thorough external review of some employment issues, management took a course of action in the case of Mr. Dosenberger. We do not discuss individual personnel issues within the Assembly, and if they're becoming an issue that will be the course of legal action or before the courts, it's not up to us to discuss these matters within this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well we'll make a few comments about what Mr. Joe Dosenberger has to say about this incident. One of his written statements, Mr. Speaker, was written on June 26, 2000, the other one June 29, 2000.

Mr. Dosenberger clearly states that the only person he provided the cabinet briefing to was Sgt. Mike Morrissey of the RCMP. This is not disputed by this government. Joe Dosenberger's

letter of termination clearly states that he was fired for sharing this information with the RCMP. Yet Kathy Langlois told the news media he was fired for leaking this document to John Gormley.

So Joe Dosenberger provides important information to the RCMP and he gets fired, Mr. Speaker. Kathy Langlois fires him and then lies about it, and she gets a promotion from this government.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I would just ask members to not use language that is unparliamentary whether it pertains to a member or somebody . . . a civil servant who cannot defend himself. I would ask the member to withdraw his statement about lying and then take 10 seconds to make the question.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'll withdraw the word lying from my statement. Kathy Langlois does what she does and she gets a promotion.

Mr. Speaker, why did Kathy Langlois do this talk about firing with the news media? Was it her idea, or was she directed by that minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite knows this line of questioning is inappropriate, and the answer would continue to be the same. There is only one side of an issue that comes forward like this, Mr. Speaker. And employment issues are complex. After an external review of employment issues in this case, a course of action was taken by management.

There are other courses of appeal or repeal for this person to take. And I would say that such matters when they're looked at as an internal employment issue within Liquor and Gaming Authority should remain there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — The question just asked, Mr. Speaker, was if that firing had the support of that particular minister, which she is refusing to answer at this point.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy to appreciate the difficult position that Joe Dosenberger found himself in. On one hand as a government employee, which is what he was, he was expected to maintain confidentiality of certain government documents. On the other hand, as the inspector and special constable under The Police Act, he was required to uphold the law and co-operate fully with the RCMP and its SIGA investigation. To his credit, he did not see a conflict between those two goals.

In his June 29 statement he said, and I quote:

The objectives of the government and its agency should never be in conflict with the proper administration of the law.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dosenberger clearly believed he was fulfilling his sworn duty under the law, but the NDP (New Democratic Party) fired him for it.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is this: is the government saying that Joe Dosenberger should have withheld this information from the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I would stand behind the House Leader who says if there is an employee who knows of criminal wrongdoing or criminal action, they have the right and the responsibility to take that information to the police.

In this issue, Mr. Speaker, after thorough review of all sides of an employment issue, with an external review that took place, management made a decision. If they're asking if this individual was the instigator of that investigation or the management's decision, I would say no. If you're asking if I will support the decisions of management taken at Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Support of that decision then, Mr. Speaker, says that that minister supports firing someone for bringing the information to the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP seems to be saying that the government is above the law, that cabinet secrecy, Mr. Speaker, takes precedent over criminal investigation by the RCMP. When Joe Dosenberger saw this cabinet briefing note, he obviously thought it contained information that would assist the RCMP in the investigation so he provided it to the RCMP.

My question is this: what should he have done? That hasn't been answered. Is the NDP government saying the proper course of action would have been to withhold this information from the RCMP? Is this government in the practice of withholding evidence of criminal activity from the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I've already said to the member opposite, if anyone — including members of government, including members opposite, including anyone in employment — knows of any criminal action or wrongdoing, they have a responsibility and it is their right to take that to the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, again I would say with an internal personnel issue, it does not benefit anyone to have a one-sided discussion of employment issues before this Assembly. There is a proper channel to take and that is going to be occurring, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — The proper channel, Mr. Speaker, is when the government does something wrong, it's for the opposition to hold it accountable and that's what we're doing.

Here's a question, Mr. Speaker, the minister can answer. Mr. Speaker, who approved Joe Dosenberger's firing? Who directed that he be fired for sharing information with the RCMP?

Specifically, did the minister approve the decision to fire Joe Dosenberger?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, personnel issues within the Liquor and Gaming Authority are taken by management after a thorough review of all of the issues involved. In this case there was also an external investigation that was done and, as part of that, information that is provided through management to the decision making in this instance.

Mr. Speaker, this does not come up then to the minister for a decision on the operation or human resourcing of an individual area such as Liquor and Gaming Authority.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister said it didn't come up for her decision so obviously that department is out of her control.

Mr. Speaker, there is one other part in Joe Dosenberger's June 29 statement that's very troubling. And he says and I quote:

As much as we don't like it, high-level employees do commit criminal offences or attempt to cover up offences committed by their friends.

Mr. Speaker, as far as we've all been led to believe the current criminal investigation focuses on Dutch Lerat and possibly other members of SIGA. But here is SLGA's lead investigator on the SIGA file referring to criminal activity, Mr. Speaker, and cover-ups by high government officials. And one week later — one week later — he's fired.

Mr. Speaker, what was Joe Dosenberger alluding to? Why was the lead investigator on the SIGA file referring to criminal offences and cover-ups by high-ranking government officials?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the time that there was much emotion and much information and much information around the SIGA issue, there was the release of some documents, Mr. Speaker, and the actions that were taken.

And I would read from *The Leader-Post* at that time, actually July 13, 2000, when a member of the Assembly:

D'Autremont (I'm quoting from *The Leader-Post*) said he agrees that cabinet confidentiality is very important and that dismissal of an employee is probably the appropriate course of action.

Now if we're going to get into this kind of a discussion within the Assembly, it's highly unfair to that individual. It's a personnel issue that should be handled within the Liquor and Gaming Authority, a constituted regulator. They look at all sides of the issue and then that employee has a recourse that can be taken through the courts, Mr. Speaker, and that is underway.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to hold *The Leader-Post* accountable . . . but that minister.

Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder: was the NDP really trying to get to the bottom of this whole SIGA mess or were they just trying to bury it? It seems awfully strange that just a few weeks after this whole thing becomes public, they fire their own lead investigator for co-operating with the RCMP. It seems awfully strange that this is supposed to be an investigation of Dutch Lerat and SIGA, and here the SLGA's lead investigator is talking about criminal cover-up and criminal activity by high government officials.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP is really determined to get to the bottom of this matter, why would they fire their lead investigator right in the middle of the investigation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that this issue has gone into a totally different area. We have spoken before this Assembly about the issues at SIGA. All of the information was provided. There was a detailed external audit by our auditor. That report was released. All of the information has been made available. All of the information has been made available to the Justice department and that is currently under review.

So it's interesting now that this is taking this twist, when we're talking about the issue of employment and how people conduct themselves through employment. I would quote again *The Leader-Post* who says:

D'Autremont said he agrees that cabinet confidentiality is very important (and it's very important to the operation of any government, and it goes on to say) and that dismissal of the employee is probably the appropriate course of action.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that will be determined. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That minister has been dodging around a number of questions. Part of them are the responsibility that she has for her department. And the question that is there — and it still is there and the people of Saskatchewan have a right to have that answer today — is are you aware of that . . .

(14:15)

The Speaker: — I just remind the member to continue all his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Heppner: — Is she aware of that letter of firing; was she aware of it before it was mailed; and what were the contents of that letter of firing from her department?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would understand from his member when we're talking about cabinet confidentiality. But he should also understand — if he's wishing to be a person who's also responsible for an area of government one day — that there's also responsibilities that management has in the day-to-day operations and the running of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. With all of the information that's provided to them, it's up to them to make decisions and to be accountable for them.

And yes, they would let me know what that decision is. But I would not have a role in taking that decision. They would look at the external review that was provided, they would look at the employment issues, they would look at cabinet confidentiality — as the member opposite said, they should be taken very seriously — and with that in mind they would look at all sides of the issue. It's very inappropriate then for me to comment on individual personnel decisions that are taken with this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tuition Increases at Universities

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Post-Secondary Education. Mr. Speaker, the University of Regina announced yesterday that tuition fees for the coming academic year will be going up almost 9 per cent. That means that students will have to put out another \$300 in tuition this fall.

The University of Saskatchewan has already announced that its tuition fees will be increasing by some 15 per cent for the upcoming year.

Mr. Speaker, both universities are working hard, in spite of this NDP government, to deliver quality education. Meanwhile the NDP government is spending and losing millions of taxpayer's dollars on ill-fated business ventures.

Mr. Speaker, where are the NDP's priorities? Why is the NDP wasting millions on failing government businesses and forcing universities to hit students with massive increases in tuition fees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. And I remind the hon. member, as I know he understands, that the universities have the autonomy to make decisions in the best interest of the university and the students, taking into consideration access and affordability and the operations of university. I'm including in that, tuition.

Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member wants to talk about is funding. So, Mr. Speaker, let's talk turkey; let's talk Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there would be some who would say that the \$200 million to universities in this year's budget is a pretty fair amount of funding for our universities. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are some who would say that 15 per cent increase over the last three years funding to our universities is not too shabby.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is one group that would say that the 15

per cent increase in funding to universities over the last three years is too much and, Mr. Speaker, they're in this room and they're sitting on that side of the House. The Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, if they had their way would rip \$17 million out of funding to universities, Mr. Speaker. That's their position and we're not going there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about a 15 per cent increase in university funding over the last number of years. In fact this year it's 3.5 per cent which is woefully inadequate.

It's the same old story from this arrogant and lifeless NDP government. They say one thing before the election and do something exactly opposite after the election.

In the last provincial election the NDP promised free first-year tuition to every university student. The Liberals got into the game by promising a thousand dollar discount on tuition for four years, Mr. Speaker. But once the Liberals and NDP got together after the election, what happened? They forgot about their promises. The coalition government continued . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. The member will continue.

Mr. Hart: — The coalition government forgot about its election promises, Mr. Speaker, and they continue to dump millions of taxpayers' dollars into failing businesses. IQ&A for example lost \$2 million. Clickabid chopped up another \$2 million loss. SecurTek, a \$2 million loss.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP dumping millions into failing businesses while students struggle with rising tuition fees?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I note with interest when the hon. member talks about election commitments there's one party he left out. He did not talk about Sask Party election commitments to post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. You know why? Because there was none. There was none.

The most you could possibly get them to suggest was that they would increase funding by the rate of inflation — less than 6 per cent. Less than 6 per cent over the last three years, while this government has increased funding by over 15 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

They had a chance to change their story in the by-election in Wood River. They stuck to their story. They had a chance to change their election in the by-election in Elphinstone. They stuck to their story and they lost. They had a chance to change their position in an election in Riversdale. They stuck to their story and they lost, Mr. Speaker.

That's their story. Less than 6 per cent funding; \$17 million less to the universities if we follow the Sask Party policy. That's their story; they're sticking to it. The people of Saskatchewan are not going there and neither are we.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 203 — The Whistleblower Protection Act

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move first reading of Bill No. 203, The Whistleblower Protection Act.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery we are joined by 15 students, grade 9 students, from the Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon. They are accompanied by their teachers Rob Regnier and Shirley Gardiner.

I know that the students are going to be touring the legislature between 3 and 4, and I'll have an opportunity to meet with them. And I'd ask all members of the legislature to welcome these students from Joe Duquette in Saskatoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Would the member for Canora-Pelly also like leave to introduce guests?

Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, with leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery are a number of people from the community of Hvas, Saskatchewan, in the Canora-Pelly constituency, specifically from the North Star Christian School.

I'd like to introduce eight grade 7, 8, and 9 students and their chaperones, Rodney and Aldine Goossen, and Ken and Alta Penner. I'd like all members to join with me in welcoming this group to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca; why is he on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce guests as well.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I just want to join my colleague from Saskatoon in welcoming the school from

Saskatoon. I understand that one of the chaperones is Shirley Gardiner and Shirley is from Ile-a-la-Crosse. And I believe the principal of the school is also from Ile-a-la-Crosse, Mr. Duane Favel. And of course Ile-a-la-Crosse is my home community, so I want to join all the colleagues in welcoming the students from Joe Duquette High School. Thanks.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Membership of Standing Committee on Health Care

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this motion that will establish members of the Legislative Assembly to the Standing Committee on Health Care.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I think it is time that this legislature was served by a committee that deals with health care. Many of the committees are not as active as some, but I want to say I think this is one that is timely and it's very important that we establish this committee and this committee function, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that I think have been on people's mind, on the minds of the general public, not the least of which, Mr. Speaker, is the report that was crafted by Mr. Ken Fyke dealing with health care and the circumstances with respect to health care that we find ourselves in here, in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the forum, and a proper forum, for discussing and listening to people's comments with respect to the Fyke committee, is that of a standing committee as it relates to health care. And that's certainly part of the mandate of this particular committee.

Now I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we were hoping that members of the opposition — and are still hoping that members of the opposition — will join with us in hearing the stakeholders and individuals across this province who have expressed concern that they be allowed to respond to Mr. Fyke's recommendations. This government, Mr. Speaker, has indicated quite clearly that it's our intention to hear what people have to say and to report those findings back to the Legislative Assembly and to cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's one of the most important debates that we in this province will have because this really does speak to the future of medicare, to the method of service delivery, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to a system that was born here, born of this province that guarantees access to all people the highest level and highest quality of health care that we can, that we can support.

Now Mr. Fyke has made some recommendations with respect to how he sees changes that may improve the delivery of health care throughout this province. Now, Mr. Speaker, one can agree with some of Mr. Fyke's recommendations or one can disagree. I think it will be a matter of some debate in this province

because of the size of the issue. This is not a trivial issue. It's not a trivial matter. This is the basic fundamental future of health care in the 21st century in this province.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have been, as a province, leaders in terms of health care delivery in Canada. And I think we can continue to be that, because we have a feeling and we have an understanding for the delivery of our medicare system, although we know it needs some changes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I was disappointed initially to hear members of the opposition indicate that they didn't want to be part of a structure that could allow for us to hear the people of Saskatchewan; whether they be northern, whether they be southern, urban or rural, whether they be employed by the health care system or merely individuals and family members who have been supplied that kind of service by our health care and by our medicare system.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the intent of this committee goes beyond that though. It's important. We would intend to use this as a vehicle to hear the people of Saskatchewan and their response to the Fyke Commission. And I think that's important.

But I think it's fair to say that the establishment of this committee is important as well because there has been a national commission struck that is spearheaded and lead by the former premier of this province which commission will make some recommendations, as I understand it, to the federal government. And I think that this is a process, this committee, this all-party committee, is a process that can hear and that can listen and question the recommendations that will come out of that national commission at some point in time.

But I think more importantly for the immediate future, Mr. Speaker, it's the intention of this administration to establish the committee so that we can hear what the people of Saskatchewan have to say about the Fyke report that deals with Saskatchewan health care and medicare here in our province.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many issues that deal with our health. This legislature has been . . .

(14:30)

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you very much members of the Assembly to allow me this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to, Mr. Speaker, to all members of the Assembly the grade 11 students from Smeaton School in my constituency.

They are sitting in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Collins, and by chaperone, Mrs. Dunn. I'm going to be meeting with them for a little MLA

visit at 3:30.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of the Assembly and you, I would like everyone here to welcome the students, grade 11 students from Smeaton School in Smeaton.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Membership of Standing Committee on Health Care

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome the students to the legislature and I hope they enjoy the proceedings this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker indicated there are other issues aside from Fyke that this committee would have the ability to deal with. There are other issues that will happen from time to time that would allow for some discussion and would allow for some input from people, members of the general public.

We just had a circumstance — a very unfortunate circumstance in North Battleford recently here — that deals with health care and water quality. And I can see that as being perhaps a vehicle to act on that particular issue, to respond to and gather information.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the member indicates that it might be something for the Committee of the Environment. And it may — I wouldn't debate that. But I think with health care as the largest issue that's facing this province at this point in time, it's appropriate that we have a Committee on Health Care.

Now members of the opposition are on record as supporting enhanced work of committees through this legislature. As a matter of fact, speaking of committees, they're part of the Rules Committee which is now reviewing the establishment of different working relationships between the Legislative Assembly and committees and enhancing the role that committees take in terms of regulations and deliberation in terms of legislation. And I think that's totally appropriate.

Certainly members on this side of the House support that, which is why I think it's very much appropriate to have this commission and this committee that we are proposing . . . committee we propose . . . we're proposing today, the membership to it. And I want to say that I think it's more than appropriate that we have a legislative committee whose mandate is to deal specifically with this issue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that I understand why members opposite would be reluctant. And I am certainly hopeful that they're going to support my motion today — the motion by myself, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Northwest.

And I'm certainly hopeful that they will support the proposed membership list which includes the established, long-time historically established membership, as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has indicated the appropriate membership would be in. That's what I'm recommending here today.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, given the direction that this legislature is taking — that of an enhanced role of committees — that members opposite would support us in this initiative today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat not understanding — and I don't want to get into the debate on Fyke because I think that's a debate for another day. This is merely a motion to propose membership to this committee on health that we've established, that this legislature has established. Because I think it's really important that we do as we said we would do and what stakeholders, what SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) and the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) and other groups are asking: that they be allowed to comment to a legislative body with respect to their comments and how they believe Fyke and his commission and his report would impact health care and the future of this province.

So I say, Mr. Speaker, the debate on Fyke and on the Fyke report is for another day. I would only say that I'm hopeful that the official opposition will put partisan politics to the side on this issue and deal with what is a substantive recommendation in terms of changes to health care in this province, and hear what people of Saskatchewan have to say about this report.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I see the role of this committee as reporting back to this legislature what they hear. And I also see the role of this committee as being a committee that a report would be drafted by someone appointed by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly — an independent person — so that we could review in some detail what was said by the stakeholders and individuals. And I think that these are all things that can happen as a result of the committee's work. And we certainly want to work in a positive way with members of the opposition as it relates to this committee.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, I think the debate in terms of the commission, the report that Mr. Fyke has put before the Legislative Assembly, we've had some six and a half hours of hearings. Mr. Fyke was . . . attended to the legislature and spent some six and a half hours answering questions a couple of weeks ago.

I think this now gives us an opportunity to hear from the people of Saskatchewan in terms of that report. And so I'm certainly hopeful that my motion today will be supported by members of the opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Northwest:

That the Standing Committee on Health Care consist of four government members, three official opposition members, and one coalition member; and further that the members Judy Junor, Jim Melenchuk, Buckley Belanger, Andrew Thomson, Warren McCall, Rod Gantfoer, Brenda Bakken, and Bill Boyd be appointed to the Standing Committee on Health Care and that the membership be transferable pursuant to rule 94(4).

I so move.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it certainly is a privilege for me to rise today to second the motion

by the Hon. Government House Leader with regard to establishing the membership of the Standing Committee on Health Care.

We recognize that this is a new committee that has just been established recently — within the past week — by this Legislative Assembly and that the standing committee will deal with health care issues. Certainly this motion today basically establishes the membership based on the usual proportion designated for standing committees.

Mr. Speaker, certainly when we look at health care as an issue before the province of Saskatchewan, it is recognized that health care has been the number one issue of concern for the public of Saskatchewan for some time. This issue has dominated all other issues to the extent that issues such as agriculture, municipal affairs, issues such as legislation with regard to whistle-blower — I mean all of these things are minor issues when compared to the big issue of health care.

So we now have a standing committee. We are now establishing the membership of that committee so that committee, that all-party standing committee can do its work. And the purpose of that work is to listen to people, to have people come before this committee to talk about the issues of concern for them.

We have petitions that have been presented by the members opposite daily for the past several weeks talking about a health care centre concern with the community of Wadena, concerns about health care in Kamsack, concerned about emergency response and emergency services in rural Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly some of the concerns that have been talked about in the Fyke report, and concerns that the public of Saskatchewan need to bring forward to this committee.

So certainly, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the opportunity for this committee to hear responses to the Fyke report, to actually know what the stakeholders are thinking, what the providers of health care are thinking, and what the communities are thinking in terms of how we can improve our health care system, I'd say we should be putting aside partisan politics and having that committee do its work, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly with the motion today, we establish the membership based on the usual proportions for standing committees. And I believe that that committee should get on with the work of looking at health care concerns for the province of Saskatchewan.

And I would strongly be supporting the motion by the Hon. Government House Leader with regard to creating the membership of the Standing Committee on Health.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week in this Assembly we supported the motion to establish a Standing Committee on Health. We felt that it was being done at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons, and it should have

been done, Mr. Speaker, after the report came back from the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

Nevertheless the government moved forward with this and we supported it, Mr. Speaker, I think actually much to their surprise.

Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader and the Minister of Education talk that this motion should be viewed in a non-partisan manner — non-partisan manner. And yet, Mr. Speaker, they name all of the committee members not through consultation, Mr. Speaker, but just simply by doing it themselves without dealing with the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, on who should be a part of this.

Mr. Speaker, take a look at the very motion. Take a look at the very motion, Mr. Speaker, that determines the makeup of this committee. Not the individual names, but it names four members of the government, which is a normal method of naming people. It names three from the opposition, Mr. Speaker, which is again a normal way of doing things. But, Mr. Speaker, in this House it also names that one of the members has to be a member of the coalition Liberals.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the first time since this province was formed in 1905 that there has been coalition Liberals in the House. So after the next election — or even before that, Mr. Speaker, if members change their seats — we may very well be in a position where there are no coalition Liberals, Mr. Speaker, so how do you form the Standing Committee on Education?

One of the members named on that committee — not an individual but a function of the House, Mr. Speaker — does not exist. There may very well not be any coalition Liberals in future Assemblies, Mr. Speaker. That invalidates that motion, Mr. Speaker. How do you form the committee without coming back to this Assembly and changing the motion?

Mr. Speaker, this is being done simply for partisan reasons. It's not non-partisan at all. It's 110 per cent partisan, Mr. Speaker, and that very motion shows the partisanship of it. Otherwise the government would have said four or five government members, three non-government or opposition members, Mr. Speaker.

Since they're naming parties in the House — the coalition Liberals — in the motion, Mr. Speaker, why was no consideration given to the independent members of this Assembly? They weren't even considered, Mr. Speaker. They are as much a member of this Assembly as any other member, Mr. Speaker, but yet they're totally disregarded in this motion.

They could have said, Mr. Speaker, in the motion, a Liberal, which again in a lot of cases in this province there are not Liberals elected to this Assembly, but in this particular day and age there is three. They could have said in the motion, a Liberal, and that would have included the independent members, Mr. Speaker. But no, no. Because of partisan reasons it had to be a coalition Liberal, Mr. Speaker.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, the tradition of this House is that at the formation of a committee, it's done in consultation with both sides of the

House, Mr. Speaker.

In this particular case the establishment of the criteria for this committee was a phone call from the Government House Leader informing myself as the Opposition House Leader, here is what it's going to be: four government, one coalition Liberal, three members of the official opposition. End of story. Not what do you think, Mr. Speaker; simply this is what it's going to be.

Again, Mr. Speaker, that's not the normal way of this House, that's not their tradition, and that most certainly is not a non-partisan way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it has been the habit of this NDP government over time, over the last 10 years, to simply use its power to force its will on the members of the legislature. And again, when it comes to the establishment of committees and naming of individuals to those committees, that is not the tradition of this House.

But, Mr. Speaker, what they are establishing here today is a new precedent: that government will appoint all the members to any committee, Mr. Speaker; that they don't need to consult with the opposition; they don't need to consult with any of the members of the House. They can simply go ahead and appoint whomever they wish, Mr. Speaker, to any of the standing committees of this legislature.

That's not the way it has been done in the past. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding and belief that this is the very first time that this practice has been used in this Assembly.

The Government House Leader talked about some of the other issues that could be referred to the Standing Committee on Health, and he used the example of the North Battleford water situation. Well, Mr. Speaker, water is an environmental issue. Certainly can impact on health, but water is the jurisdiction of the Environment in this province.

We have a Standing Committee on the Environment, Mr. Speaker. The last time it sat was about 1993 because it didn't support the government, Mr. Speaker, and has not been heard of since.

I predict, Mr. Speaker, that the Standing Committee on Health, after it deals with the Fyke report, will never again be heard from, that there will be no references by this government to that committee just as there has been no references to the Environment Committee, the Education Committee, the Constitution Committee, the Municipal Committee, and a whole number of others.

Once in 10 years that I've been here, Mr. Speaker, this government has referred one item — one item only — to the Agriculture Committee. Mr. Speaker, no, this government simply uses these standing committees for its own partisan political purposes.

Mr. Speaker, we had Mr. Fyke in this Assembly. The minister says that we need to debate the Fyke report another day. Well, Mr. Speaker, he's being consistent because the day we had Mr. Fyke here, he shut the committee down because we needed to debate it another day, Mr. Speaker, when he had told us

previously that we could ask as many questions as we wanted and take as long as we wanted to get our answers. Mr. Speaker, again he's being consistent when he says it'll happen another day. Well, Mr. Speaker, the department on Education may sit another day but it likely won't be this century, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's a very sad day in this Assembly when this government carries out its undemocratic actions. Undemocratic, Mr. Speaker, because it does not allow the opposition to freely choose which of its members it wants to hold on a committee, Mr. Speaker. This is simply, Mr. Speaker, the implementation of the heavy hand of the majority to stifle, to stifle the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And it's a disappointment, Mr. Speaker, when the members of the New Democratic Party can't even live up to their own democratic name, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is simply a disappointment to everyone in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 9

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 9 — The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk today about the points brought up by the amendments contained in Bill No. 9. I'd like to go through and talk about some of the points being raised here that I think are of some importance to the people of Saskatchewan in regards to the SaskPower Corporation.

Of course lately, SaskPower has been in the news due to the rising rate hikes. So it is our duty as opposition MLAs to make sure that the government realize their position and that Bill No. 9 does not result in further increases which the people of Saskatchewan already finding it difficult to afford.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at clause 5, we see the amendment that will relieve SaskPower of the requirements to publish its charges, rates, and conditions where the service in question may be provided by an independent third party. And this explanation of clause 5 goes on to say that increased competition will appear with the implementation of the open access transmission tariff in July 2001.

Certainly, most people in Saskatchewan would agree that SaskPower needs to remain competitive with any independent third parties that may come into the province to supply power to its residents. However, we must remain assured that SaskPower does not use this clause to withdraw publishing of any charges, rates, and conditions that in the area where SaskPower has

exclusive power supply. It is only fair that the people of Saskatchewan know what the charges are for the utilities and especially with that in the light of the rising and continually high utility rates.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan realize again that any company, whether they are Crown corporation or an independent third party private company, needs to clearly advertise and make customers aware of just what rates will be charged to them. Let's make certain though that at the end of the day it is the customer that is best served from any competition that'll be coming into the province, as well as the rates charged to power customers are kept in line within reasonable limits.

There are many examples by which SaskPower seems to enjoy charging excessive rates. Re-servicing sites that had service at one time, especially in the rural areas where farmers may no longer use a particular yard and have had services cut there, and now at this point in time, they wish to re-establish a working facility for their farm. They're somewhat shocked to learn that the reconnection charge is quite costly. They feel that this is unfair and I would have to agree with that. Assessment is extremely high considering that all that happens in most cases is a re-installation of the meter and basically hit the switch.

Most farmers and people in all areas of Saskatchewan where power is reconnected are burdened with this high cost. I don't believe that they should be. And I would like to have the minister and his officials at SaskPower come up with something a little bit better than we feel is quite a gouge into the pockets of Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker.

In clause 6, we look at the explanation here providing SaskPower with express authority to wheel or transmit power across the province on behalf of third parties.

I also see from the explanation provided by SaskPower that SaskPower has express authority to stipulate interconnection standards by which independent power producers in the province may interconnect with SaskPower infrastructure.

This express provision will enable SaskPower to protect the integrity of its grid system and safeguard the safe and reliable supply of its power to other SaskPower customers. As well, this will enable SaskPower to join a regional transmission group or appropriate electrical association. And of course membership in that would assist in access and supply of emergency power needs.

Mr. Speaker, clearly these points in clause 6 are needed to ensure that third party power supplying companies have access to the power grid. SaskPower does not have express authority in this matter. As well, as the authority to stipulate interconnection standards, does raise some concerns that SaskPower yields all the authority in what third party companies must do in order to come into this province.

I would not want to see SaskPower exercise so much authority as to frustrate the attempts of private power businesses in Saskatchewan. However, all of Saskatchewan should be again given all the opportunities of having a competitive power system in which our rates are kept at a respectable level.

I believe that we have to look closely at SaskPower willingness to assist these companies should any of them be coming to Saskatchewan, and that would most likely serve the residents of Saskatchewan over the long term.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when you look at clause 9, we read that this amendment serves two purposes. The first is to clarify the language which is used to specify consent for the construction of power lines under a parcel. The language is now clear there may be on or under land that SaskPower needs to access. Secondly, the language allows SaskPower to obtain a non-registered easement in the situation where it is necessary to remedy an emergency or hazardous condition.

It must be completely clear that when we look at the terms, over or under land, that SaskPower is requiring to have access to virtually the land underground and the land over top. And as well we must bear in mind that all the improvements, buildings, and fences along the way that must be carefully safeguarded to prevent damage to residents' property.

Of course all the hard feelings and trouble that something like this could create would look like SaskPower, with the unregistered easement portion of this clause, has given themselves the power to act when necessary in cases of emergency conditions.

I would like to add that again here we must be careful that SaskPower does not do any undue damage while getting to an emergency, any more than would be necessary to clear up the emergency problem.

So again . . . so we must again have the property rights of people here protected. The ability of SaskPower to do this is something we must carefully watch to ensure that no more power that has been granted SaskPower has been used or abused.

Mr. Speaker, also in clause 10, I see that it clarifies SaskPower's ability to enter onto lands adjoining rights-of-way for the purposes of construction as well as operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement of any line.

It also indicates that this is compatible to authority given to other utilities, including Manitoba Hydro. So it's compatible, I would suppose, to other provinces. It will enable SaskPower to trim trees on lands, adjoining rights-of-way, in order to prevent safety hazards from developing, as well as unnecessary power interruptions.

Basically the concern here is that the obstructions of any kind should not hinder in any way the right of SaskPower to remove such obstruction such as trees and other obstruction that may fall onto power lines and power poles. I guess we have to agree that these things will have to be done. It is hoped that SaskPower officials will discuss with the property owners exactly what they are doing so that the work with the property owners is to their satisfaction, Mr. Speaker. Again, we must ensure that SaskPower does only what is necessary to make the repairs.

I believe that in the event of any repair or operations on the power lines or other electrical facilities, the site should be left

clean and neat to the property owner's satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, clause 11 indicates that it will give SaskPower the explicit right to consent to not only supply but also the transportation or sale of electrical energy by third party or to category of third parties. This will allow SaskPower to consent, for example, to a customer establishing its own system in isolated areas where no other customers are likely to require service. And to give an example, a good example would be I guess of isolated northern mine situations.

Here we have amendment that again is pursuant to the possible third-party supplier of power in the province. Again, it gives SaskPower explicit rights to consent to supply but we are adding also transportation, movement, and sale. We must be very cautious that SaskPower has the power to control most of the aspects of the power supplied, whether it be through themselves or through these third parties who may or may not be coming to the province.

Also again with that, under clause there at 11, I see SaskPower has the right to consent or not consent to a customer in the northern areas of the province where they wish to establish their own power system. They still must go through a Sask . . . or even though there could be an example in the future of a third party supplying power for less and the cost that SaskPower would charge to put the service in, SaskPower would have to consent to that.

(15:00)

So I find that it maybe cause some difficulty down the road to third-party power suppliers. We would have to make certain that this kind of conflicting situation does not occur and that people in northern situations have access to all kinds of power, whether it be through SaskPower or through somebody else.

Also, Mr. Speaker, about clause 12. The amendment makes it clear that the corporation can issue securities which may not be in the currency of the country in which SaskPower is issuing those securities.

SaskPower seems intent on continuing their foreign investments as made clear by this amendment that they can issue these securities which may not be in the currency of the country in which SaskPower is issuing those same securities.

It is clear that SaskPower will continue to invest abroad, although we cannot on this side of the House figure out why they would continue to invest abroad with a track record of such fiascos as Channel Lake.

You all remember Channel Lake and what a good investment that turned out for the people of Saskatchewan. Indeed it wasn't anything but a money loser. And we on this side of the House will carefully watch the investments of SaskPower in the future, to ensure that they're in the interest of the taxpayer of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, to talk about clause 13 and 14, briefly goes on to show the financial rules and boundaries of the finances of SaskPower. And these are basically explained as housekeeping amendments intended to make SaskPower legislation consistent

with other Crown corporations and approximately reflect provisions of The Financial Administration Act, we are told.

Again the track record of Crown investments in the past, be they Channel Lake or if we look across at Sask Water which I'm the critic, I can see many times where money was invested such as with SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) where millions of dollars were lost and are still being lost with Sask Valley Potato Corp.

These broad financial powers that are awarded to the Crown corporations must be watched very carefully, because this government has shown that over the past few years their investments have not panned out.

The result has been millions of dollars in losses to the taxpayers while at the same time they're looking at substantial rate hikes to many of the utilities, including SaskPower and SaskEnergy.

And whether the government thinks so or not, the people of Saskatchewan need a break. They cannot afford to allow these rates to go up while at the same time SaskPower is free to make investments abroad which in the long run may or may not be in the best interest of the taxpayer at all, Mr. Speaker.

But again we look at the taxpayer and also who is paying the bill. It is the taxpayer who is overburdened with far too many expenses, such as the small-business tax, high PST, (provincial sales tax), and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Government knows full well how high their taxes are for the people of Saskatchewan and how poorly they have acted in regards to the business climate they have presented to this province.

Mr. Speaker, also talking about the next clause, clause 15, indicates that subject to the passage of future regulations, SaskPower will be authorized expressly to collect arrears of accounts and accordingly this satisfies the Supreme Court of Canada's direction where the court recently ruled the utility required express positive authority to collect arrears.

Again SaskPower seems to be broadening its complete rules and regulations over the power . . . over the people that it charges for its services. We would like to think that SaskPower is acting in the benefits of its customers and it gives them every chance to pay their arrears when it is such a case, and also that compassion is shown as many of the people of Saskatchewan are not making a lot of money as the members opposite tend to say they do.

I would not like to see SaskPower cutting people's power off, especially during the cold winter months without some form of communication, without trying anything before that; that being the last, last to come before you cut somebody's power in the middle of January.

Also, Mr. Speaker, let's look at clause 16 that indicates that SaskPower be given the ability to register an easement where a power line must be moved in order to correct an emergency or a hazardous condition. Certainly most of us would agree that SaskPower needs the ability to move a power line when there is an emergency or when a hazardous condition does exist. And

again I must stress that the property owner's right to careful repair and clean-up process, to ensure that all the interest of landowners and repairs are looked after.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to address clause 17. In it they will enable SaskPower to order the removal of such obstructions and ensure that other customers are not paying for power supply of individual subscribers using these obstructive devices. Basically the corporation is saying here that currently there is no remedy for customers who build obstructions over meters and that this of course will give them that ability.

Certainly we have to be mindful of customers who are trying to double-dip I guess or who have extra usage which the customers are trying to hide from SaskPower. Certainly I don't believe this is the case in all matters but again SaskPower I guess will need the ability to read its meters and that is common sense, Mr. Speaker.

However, again . . . and the removal of these obstructions could be done with the customer's interests at heart, in the spirit of co-operation with the customer. Perhaps the obstruction is there for a reason other than hide the meter. It may be there to protect the meter in certain instances from external sources such as wind or harsh weather conditions.

Mr. Speaker, what I've lightly touched on today on some of the clauses and provisions included in Bill No. 9, the Act to amend The Power Corporation Act . . . amendment to The Land Titles Act, 2000, most of these notes I have spoken upon are simply to try to advise the minister and the corporation to always keep the best interests of the taxpayers at heart and to keep the rates affordable and to allow, if needed, the proper co-operation with any third-party power providers which may or may not come into Saskatchewan and enter into our economy here in the province.

We have to make certain that SaskPower realizes that the customers come first. Their rights of property should be taken into account when SaskPower exercises any of its powers to handle its electrical grid system during normal maintenance, installation, or repair and emergency repairs of its systems.

With that then, Mr. Speaker, I still have more questions on it, as with I believe other members of mine, so I will adjourn debate on this Bill for now. I will make a motion to adjourn, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 15

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 15 — The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill No. 15 today, The Credit Union Amendment Act.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly did deal with a piece of legislation about three years ago, a major overhaul of The

Credit Union Act. And that piece of legislation at that time in 1998, Mr. Speaker, dealt with a number of issues that actually gave credit unions the opportunity to modernize their system, and improve and focus the services that they were providing and making them more accessible to their customers, as well as communication amongst themselves, so that they could provide a more modern, up-to-date banking system in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand, Bill No. 15 before this Assembly today is a Bill that continues to build on the previous legislation that was passed in 1998 and came into force in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about credit unions we're talking about lending institutions that were built by individuals across this province — men and women who felt they needed an avenue of banking and banking business and services in small communities, and services which they felt they weren't receiving from the larger lending institutions that were currently in the province or that were in the province of Saskatchewan.

And therefore they put their heads together years ago and began the credit union movement, basically a co-operative movement of forming a lending institution. And as such, Mr. Speaker, these credit unions through the years have grown from small, one-room facilities to very large lending institutions in the province of Saskatchewan. And the credit unions have certainly met the needs of men and women and boys and girls across the province for a number of years.

And as we saw back in 1998, Mr. Speaker, credit unions have amalgamated to a point where they felt it was beneficial that they begin to look into the future, and how they were delivering services in order to keep up with the needs of their customers and the requests coming from their customers in regards to access to technical information and the services that come with it in regards to finances and the financial needs of their customers.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe the legislation in 1998 certainly did open the door for the credit unions across this province to provide an enhanced level of financing and banking to the people of this province and certainly to their members who have worked so diligently to provide avenues of lending and banking in many . . . especially, Mr. Speaker, many small communities as we see them today.

Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years and certainly the last . . . I would say that within the last five years, there are a number of communities in this province that have seen lending institutions actually discontinue their services. Some of the larger banking institutions have pulled out of small communities in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, most of the members of this Assembly know what one business leaving a small community does to that community. The fact that it may be four or five jobs, which in a larger centre like Regina may not mean a lot, but to a small community in many parts of Saskatchewan, that is a fairly large labour force that actually is pulled and removed from that community.

And what we have seen, Mr. Speaker, is we have seen the credit

unions of this province have actually, in many cases where they were in those communities, have become larger and have become the major lender and providing lending services to those communities. And in other communities where the service was totally removed as a result of the large lending institutions pulling out, credit unions have provided a branch or have moved in to take up the slack.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly appropriate that credit unions be given the tools that are necessary for them to continue to evolve and provide a class act, if you will, in meeting the financial needs and the lending needs and the banking needs of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are many reasons why lending institutions have pulled out of our smaller communities. And some of them . . . as we see in the area of agriculture, some of the struggles that we see in the agricultural field today, farms are becoming larger because we've had a push for the last number of years to larger farming operations because of the margins being so narrow. And so the feeling was if you became larger, you might survive longer in the agricultural field. And I think that's true as well in the lending institutions.

Banks themselves have looked at some of the communities they've been in, and then just felt that these communities were not large enough, and the base of membership that they had in these communities wasn't substantial enough for them to justify their presence in that community and have pulled out.

But what we have found, Mr. Speaker, as a result of their pulling out, we've found that credit unions however have taken the other view and they have . . . while they have amalgamated and, Mr. Speaker, throughout this province we've probably have many smaller credit unions have formed, have amalgamated to form larger lending units, they have at the same time, Mr. Speaker, continued to have a visible presence in many of these small communities which is . . . and what they're saying through that, Mr. Speaker, is they're telling these small communities and the small membership of those communities, you're just as important to us as the larger community that we're involved in and certainly the larger area we're covering as a result of the amalgamations and the formation of the larger credit union offices.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about credit unions, credit unions certainly provide a level of lending that communities and membership are looking for. They provide a means whereby people across this province have an access to financial opportunities, and in many cases, Mr. Speaker, they are the, if you will, the level of revitalization for many of our smaller communities.

And it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that we have this legislation before this committee, before this legislation right now, a piece of legislation to that . . . that will, after we've taken the time to review the legislation and to go through it, will give the credit unions even a greater opportunity to continue to provide the services that they desire to provide across rural Saskatchewan.

(15:15)

And, Mr. Speaker, it would certainly be appropriate for us, Mr.

Speaker, it would be appropriate if this government would maybe follow the example of credit unions when we talk about rural Saskatchewan.

We have the government forming a new committee, or actually a new department — I believe it's called Rural Revitalization — basically saying that all of sudden the rural community in this province still has an important role to play, and therefore, since we've been so far out of touch, we'd better find another means whereby we can address the needs of rural Saskatchewan. And so therefore they've come up with a ministry called Rural Revitalization.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that maybe the government could learn a little bit about rural revitalization by looking at the credit union system across this province and the way credit unions have met and continue to meet the needs of rural residents.

And I begin to wonder if the member from Regina Elphinstone even understands what rural Saskatchewan is all about, living in the very centre of a major centre, Mr. Speaker. And maybe it wouldn't hurt if the member from Regina Elphinstone would take a minute and go outside of the city of Regina and find out that there is actually a community that lives in this province that is not totally tied to the centre of Regina. And that, Mr. Speaker, that there are people outside of the city of Regina that are just as much a part of this province as members and as the residents of Regina.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's appropriate that we certainly take a look at credit unions. We take a look at how they provide services, and as well, Mr. Speaker, take the time to look at the needs of credit unions, realizing that as we move into the year 2000 and beyond, that some of the means of providing services have changed dramatically. Therefore it's important that legislation be brought forward as well to address the areas that need to be changed to enhance the role of credit unions to provide the services that they endeavour to provide and want to provide as they continue to look at how they can meet the needs of the customer base that they serve.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said that, I'm pleased here this afternoon to stand and address some of the issues that have been raised in regards to The Credit Union Act. And I know many of my colleagues would like to raise some questions as well and would like to bring forward some ideas and make some comments in regards to Bill No. 15.

I know that some of my colleagues have different opinions than I have. That's one thing about our caucus. We have a caucus that's certainly diverse in its opinions on many pieces of legislation and on co-operatives and the co-operative movement and Credit Union Central, but in general, Mr. Speaker, we're very supportive of the rural economy and we feel it's important that we take the time to address this piece of legislation to see that it is indeed, Mr. Speaker, is going to meet the needs of the credit unions that are currently providing a valuable source of financing. And not just financing, Mr. Speaker, but the fact that as a result of the number of credit unions across the province of Saskatchewan and in rural communities, we have jobs that are provided to people. And in many cases it may be a second income to a family that's struggling to survive in our rural

economy.

And so in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that we give the credit unions across our province the tools that are needed to allow them to continue to provide the support to their communities that they endeavour to do.

We do have some questions however. We have some questions about some of the functions, some of the changes that this legislation is bringing forward. Changes such as the functions that are currently conducted by the board of directors of a credit union appear to be shifting now from their control into a conduct review committee. We want to make certain, Mr. Speaker, that this doesn't take away from what the board of directors were doing before, that indeed the rights and responsibilities of credit unions and their membership will continue to be enforced; and that the membership can feel very positively about their credit union and about the level of service that it is providing to each and every one of them.

We also want to take a close look at, and ask, who will be sitting on these committees and how will the committee operate? Will the committee continue to be responsible to its membership and to the people that continue to support credit unions across the province of Saskatchewan?

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that while the Bill in itself has a lot of good points and certainly is designed to enhance the role of credit unions, Mr. Speaker, there are a few questions that need to be raised about some of the changes that are going to be . . . will be brought forward as a result of this legislation before us. And it's imperative that my colleagues and I do take the time to review the piece of legislation and be certain that every . . . the intent of the legislation meets the need of the credit unions as they continue to provide service to our communities.

And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I now move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 6

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to enter into the debate on Bill No. 6, The Planning and Development Act. Mr. Speaker, when I looked at the Bill, it's very brief. It doesn't have a lot of substance in it. I can't go on like the member from Arm River when he went through each clause and talked about each clause, which I'm sure is really disappointing for the members opposite.

But there are some issues in this Bill that I do want to touch on. And I think probably the biggest issue, when it comes to anything put forward by municipal . . . the Department of Municipal Affairs, is the concern that is raised by so many people from around the province after the episode we went through last year, Mr. Speaker. The episode, Mr. Speaker, last year of the Joe Garcea report and how the government

responded to it.

And they really talked about amalgamation and forced amalgamation, and certainly that really brought to the awareness of a lot of municipalities of, you know, the concern of what government can do just through legislation.

And so anytime that I have been talking to any of the municipalities for the last year, since last session, they've always been saying, well, what's coming forward as far as Municipal Government, what's coming forward? And when we see a Bill coming forward from Municipal Government, I tell you people, especially in rural Saskatchewan, and the constituency I represent, whether it's the communities of Indian Head or Montmartre or Francis are concerned with the whole — Odessa — the whole amalgamation. So when they hear Bills coming forward from Municipal Government, they want to have a look at it and they want to see how it's going to affect them.

Because they had a . . . they felt like they had a near-death experience last year when they had to deal with the former minister of Municipal Affairs who is no longer in that position.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do want to get into the concern that was raised, some of the concerns that were raised with this Bill. And although it is fairly brief, it touches on the Municipal Board and the whole area of subdivision appeals and that area, which, Mr. Speaker, really seems quite straightforward. But I guess until you talk to a number of the different municipalities that have been through this with appeals, one is not sure how this Bill will affect them.

Before in the past, Mr. Speaker, if a subdivision was to be appealed, they had to go through a couple of hoops or a couple of steps before the Municipal Board could make its ruling. And it seemed like very seldom would the Municipal Board ever . . . would rarely agree to the appeal.

Mr. Speaker, what this Bill does and talks about is that instead of going through a couple of hoops, there's really only one area that the appeal has to suit. You know, before it was whether it relaxed the provisions of existing zoning bylaws or it had a negative impact on neighbouring properties. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the Bill looks like it's going to say that only one of these areas need to be addressed, need to be affected for the board to make a decision on it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's only just that, as I said, when the firestorm of amalgamation hit last year, the municipalities . . . their interest is heightened any time a Bill comes forward regarding them.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked to a few of them; talked to some of them. They still have more information that we feel we need to get back before we can make a proper decision on this Bill, even though it is only a half page long, a couple of clauses, Mr. Speaker. But until we hear from the many different municipalities on how it's going to impact on them, Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we would adjourn debate until we receive more information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the short time that I've served in this House as a member for Cypress Hills, it's fallen to me very infrequently to have to speak on a subject that I know little about. However, that is the hazards of this job. I might as well get the confessions out up front. But you know, with the possible exception of rocket science, I know less about the film industry than just about any other subject.

I do know enough about the subject though, Mr. Speaker, to say that there are some very encouraging things happening in the film industry — not internationally, not nationally, but right here in Saskatchewan. And I think that the Bill that was a precursor to the amendment that we're talking about today was part of that particular growth and the stimulus for the film sector in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the previous member spoke about the shortness of the Bill and the couple of brief paragraphs that we wanted to study. This particular Bill is even more brief. This Bill, this amendment, changes one item in the entire Bill. It changes the date 2001 to the date 2003. Now I'm going to spend 10 minutes talking about this Bill based on that one change and I hope you'll bear with me, Mr. Speaker.

This particular Bill, as I mentioned, the precursor to it was The Film Employment Tax Credit Act, and is now known as The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2001.

And the existing provision of the Act says, and I beg your indulgence as I read this:

4(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, an eligible corporation may apply to the minister to have the residency requirements imposed by this Act waived by the minister with respect to a person to allow that person to qualify as an eligible employee or an eligible individual for the purpose of allowing the eligible corporation to claim as eligible salaries the salary or wages paid to that employee or the remuneration paid to that . . . (employee).

Mr. Speaker, that sentence would fail my grade 9 grammar class. Lots of verbiage there, lots of words. Doesn't say a whole lot, except to say that in the situation where we don't have people in Saskatchewan that can do the job, we can bring people in from other jurisdictions to do the job, and companies here can claim their pay as an eligible tax deduction.

Now the explanation for this says that section 4 of The Film Employment Tax Credit Act allows applicants to apply for the waiver of residency requirements when utilizing skilled individuals from outside the province due to the lack of available trained individuals residing here in the province. And this provision was included in the Act for the specific purpose

of assisting the accelerated development of Saskatchewan's base of qualified crew and other professionals.

Now this provision in the Act has a sunset clause of December 31, 2001, which is the subject of this amendment. It's to be removed and replaced with a sunset clause dated December 31, 2003.

Now apparently the industry has requested an extension to the sunset clause, articulating the extreme importance of section 4 which I read earlier, of The Film Employment Tax Credit Act, to the continued training of Saskatchewan's film crew and related professionals as required by the rapid growth of the film and video sector in this province.

As well, the delay of full film employment tax credit implementation and resolution of administrative issues have contributed to the underutilization of this provision.

I think we could do well, Mr. Speaker, by implementing a plain language Act in this province.

(15:30)

Basically, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is an admission that the tax credit was successful, maybe even beyond the expectations of the department and the people who promoted the tax credit. But they weren't in a position to fulfill the demands created by that tax credit, so we're going to have to look at bringing other people in to benefit the industry in this province, allow the tax credit to be used by extra provincial people.

But there is something in this explanation that does trouble me somewhat, Mr. Speaker. It says here, the delay of full film employment tax credit implementation, and resolution of administrative issues have contributed to the underutilization of this provision.

In plain language, Mr. Speaker, this I believe is saying that there's been too much red tape. Too much regulation. It's been a boondoggle. It's worked very well in one respect, but it has actually created more complications than anybody anticipated. And in order to get all those complications resolved, we have to get an extension on the sunset clause pushed ahead to December 31, 2003.

So on one hand, we have benefits to this particular provisions; on the other hand, we have negative consequences that is actually preventing the full benefit of this particular Act being seen in the film industry in this province.

Taking the minister's own words, and just looking at the press release issued by Culture, Youth and Recreation on April 10, the fact that there has been some positive developments as a result of the tax credit is evidenced by the statistics in this press release. And if I may, I would just like to quote the minister here. She said the change that we're talking about in this particular Act:

. . . will continue to speed up the process of training our talented film and video professionals" . . . "Saskatchewan's film and video industry has proven to be an economic and

cultural benefit to the province and will continue to grow with our support.”

To substantiate this particular statement the minister provided the following statistical information. And I won't go into great detail, but the press release says:

In 1998, after the introduction of The Film Employment Tax Credit Act, film and video production increased to \$58 million and in (the year) 2000 production and activity reached over \$60 million.

And somewhere in the research material I perused before speaking to this Bill, I understand there are projections of the film industry actually contributing upwards of \$100 million to our economy.

That's all very encouraging, and quite exciting I would think. Not just for the film industry, not just for the provincial government and the department that has moved to sponsor this type of legislation and activity, but it should be of interest and support to anybody who has promoted the idea of tax incentives to stimulate the economy.

Now individuals on our side of the House who have spoken to this Bill, have repeatedly pointed out that tax incentives have been the cornerstone of much of our political agenda. And we believe that the good work the tax incentives have created for the film and video industry could be replicated in many other industries in this province. And you're not talking about a huge incentive; you're not talking about significant or dramatic unsustainable tax incentives. In this case you're talking about reasonably, moderately instituted incentives.

And we think that if that was done in other sectors of the economy, especially in terms of the small-business sector, that we would see equal growth, equivalent to what the film and video industry saw, in the other sectors where that type of strategy was implemented and effected.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we would think that the government would learn from this particular example. It's been an example of their own creation, and we applaud that. What we don't understand is why they wouldn't take the very good lessons they've learned from the impact that tax incentives have had on this particular industry and extrapolate it to the rest of the industry, to the rest of the economy, to the small businesses, to the entrepreneurs who are struggling to get their businesses up and running in a competitive manner and in a way that will make them even more successful than they already are.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that having brought this to the attention of the House, the minister should be prepared to vote with the opposition when we talk about strategic tax incentives in the future.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have in fact a serious situation here. In discussing this particular piece of legislation, it alludes to the fact that we need more time to get more people involved. And it's occurred to me, Mr. Speaker, that part of the problem may be that we don't have the people in this province in as great numbers to become involved in the industry.

You know, one of the most frightening things statistically that has been brought to light in the last little while is the mass exodus of young people from this province. I've said in speeches previously how dramatic the loss of population has been in my own constituency. And we know for a fact that the province as a whole has experienced a large numbers of people leaving.

Some of those numbers have been offset of course by, you know, increased population through birth and some people moving to the province. But the reality is we have not grown as a province in population as other jurisdictions have.

And the most important segment of our population that is being lost is the 18- to 24-year age category. That particular category is the one in which we're going to see the most enthusiasm for occupations in the film and video industry. And that particular area is suffering from a lack of individuals coming into the industry for training.

And, Mr. Speaker, just recently a survey said that up to 40 per cent — up to 40 per cent of the 18- to 24-year-olds surveyed said they were planning to leave the province within five years. Now I think that in itself is a tragedy. I think that it does no good for the future of this province. And it certainly doesn't do any good for the future of any industry that is specifically looking to that age group for recruitment potential and opportunity.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see these numbers of people planning to leave the province, you can understand why the film and video industry has had the difficulty implementing and achieving the results they wanted with this particular tax credit. So while the news is good on one hand, there is a downside on the other.

Mr. Speaker, while I was referring to the loss of people in that specific age group, one of my colleagues asked me to confirm again the number of people that we've lost in the southwest. And I don't want to harp on this, but I think that when you see the vastness of this number, you can understand the tragedy that has been brought to bear on this province because of the loss of people.

In the area of Swift Current to the south and the west, we've lost 15,000 people since 1972 — that's a population equivalent to the entire city of Swift Current. Let me bring this down to a number we can understand and appreciate a little more specifically.

A week or 10 days ago the grade 12 class from the community of Eastend was visiting this legislature. There were 16 grade 12 students. In my opportunity to visit with them later I was trying to make the point of how important the contribution of young people can be and will be to the economy and the social economy of this province in the future. And I said to them how . . .

The Speaker: — I would just remind the member about the issue of relevancy. You should try to bring the date relevant to the one-word change that is in this second reading, the word 2001 to 2003.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you. I intend to get to the point you've just brought to my attention. But I believe there is relevance here. Because the purpose of extending this particular sunset clause is because the industry was not able to achieve the mentoring and the training of young people that they hoped to achieve with this particular Bill. They ran out of individuals, frankly, to train for the purposes of the film and video industry.

The group of high school students that I was speaking about, Mr. Speaker, there were 16 in total — eight of them indicated they were leaving the province upon graduation, five were planning to stay, one was returning to her home in Germany where she came from as an exchange student, and two — and two — weren't sure what they were going to do.

That particular example, Mr. Speaker, indicates to me very clearly that we are losing young people in too great a number. And the effect on commerce and industry of all kinds, not just the film and video industry, is adversely affected, and in a very serious way.

Many of my colleagues have referred to the business climate that a general reduction in taxation would create. And while they have expounded on that in a very full and proper way, I don't want to belabour that particular point. But it does, it does beg repeating, Mr. Speaker, that the entire economy of this province, not just this specific economy addressed by this particular Bill, but all of the economy in this province would be benefited by general tax relief. There is a crying need for that in this particular jurisdiction in this province and until we see it, Bills like this only amount to tinkering around a very serious problem — they don't get to the root of the problem.

The loss of qualified Saskatchewan residents for training is another very important issue, and I think that we've addressed that in fair detail already.

Mr. Speaker, in summary here, very little is changing as a result of this amendment. The government is just simply extending the sunset clause that allows a film or production company to claim wages paid to a non-Saskatchewan resident when calculating their particular tax credit. And that date has now been moved to December 31, 2003.

And the waiver of residency provision is for non-Saskatchewan personnel required. And it only needs to be used, or only can be used rather, when no qualified Saskatchewan resident is available. Mr. Speaker, I think that that speaks very specifically and clearly to the issue I tried to enunciate a little earlier.

The film and production industry has requested that this particular sunset clause come into effect. And the extension I'm assuming will be granted; the government will use its majority to make sure that happens. But it's important that this opportunity not be squandered, Mr. Speaker, with the bureaucratic administrative boondoggles and delays, but that they get to the meat of the matter and do what the Act was intended to do.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move adjournment of this debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Rural Revitalization Office Vote 43

Subvote (RR01)

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. With me today is Harvey Brooks who is the deputy minister for the office of Rural Revitalization. And immediately behind me is Dion McGrath who is acting director of policy and planning.

(15:45)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome, Madam Minister, and I want to welcome your officials here today.

Madam Minister, I'd like to start off today, because your department is new and we haven't had the opportunity to go into this area before, possibly if you could just outline the mandate of Rural Revitalization for us.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The mandate of the office is to work with rural citizens, provincial government departments and agencies, and Crown corporations to focus programs and services on assisting rural residents build on the economic opportunities available in rural Saskatchewan.

The office provides for initiatives that contribute to rural economic development. It works to alleviate obstacles to rural opportunity. It assesses overall government policy decisions for the impact upon the rural economy. It advocates and communicates rural achievements. And its other job is to consult with people in rural Saskatchewan about various economic opportunities and challenges.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I find in what you were just saying resembles a lot of the things that we used to see in a department called Rural Development, and I'm sure you're well aware of that.

I'll just read out some of their objectives and goals when they had Rural Development. They talk about community-based economic development, environmental sustainability, local autonomy, quality client services, development of staff resources . . . and I think that's kind of in a way what you're saying.

Community-based economic development they talked about here, a whole area on that. And environmental sustainability, they talk about that. And it goes on and on, but it sounds quite similar to what you're talking about, Madam Minister.

I found it interesting, Madam Minister, and I don't know if you've seen one of these copies — they used to have a monthly copy out of Rural Development on issues that were going on — but they talk at the back of this pamphlet, they talk of 90 years of change.

And I'd just like to go through some of the things that actually have helped rural Saskatchewan in the past decade before your government was elected. And we could even go back further but I think the ones that are more . . . that are fresher in people's minds are something like, one of the programs was rural gasification, which everyone in rural Saskatchewan appreciated. It was a tremendous lift to people in rural Saskatchewan.

The organization of the Saskatchewan Water Corporation, the Water Corporation has helped in a number of areas out there.

Another area they talk about is rural underground distribution program, which I thought was just an excellent program, the RUD (rural underground distribution) program, and I believe was cancelled by your government, Madam Minister, when you came in.

They talk about also the rural service network out there, rural development corporations, the RDCs, which I think have added to help in rural Saskatchewan. In 1989 they talk about SCN; Saskatchewan Communications Network was implemented. 1990, community bonds program, another thing that helped rural Saskatchewan. 1991, they talk about GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) and they talk about NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account).

And I don't really know if we have to go too far into that, Madam Minister, to remember what happened to rural Saskatchewan when GRIP was cancelled. I think that was one of the biggest blows that farmers have had in the past number of years, probably in the last 30, 40 years. Really the effects are still being felt out there.

NISA was a program that was set up between the federal and provincial governments back in that era, and NISA is still there to help farmers.

I guess where I'm going with this, Madam Minister, is rural development at that time initiated many of these programs that really they're a legacy left there that, if you ask anybody in rural Saskatchewan about any of these programs, I think they would have an opinion on and think they would remember all of these programs.

In the last 10 years, Madam Minister, I don't think we've seen anything like this. In fact I think we've seen cuts.

Now after 10 years we get a department called Rural Revitalization. I'm wondering, Madam Minister, what the legacy of your government will be for the last 10 years, and what do you plan on doing now with rural revitalizations to change the lack of leadership in rural Saskatchewan in the last 10 years?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I want to thank the member for a recitation of various events that took place under Grant Devine's government. We know where he ended up.

But what I can tell the member opposite is that if you look at what's happened in rural Saskatchewan in the last decade, there has been some significant increases. And I could . . . I might just recite some of those increases.

When we look at specialty crop production in this province, we've seen a significant increase. In fact we've seen . . . it's been up 23 per cent since 1999. If we want to look at specialty crop processing, we've seen an increase in employment in this area. In fact what we can say now is that the annual payroll for this sector is now estimated at \$21 million. We have 128 special crop processors in Saskatchewan and we have a workforce of over 1,000 people.

In the hog industry, we've seen significant increases in hog production in Saskatchewan. And in fact since 1997, we're well on our way to an output of one million hogs. We've seen a significant increase and we expect that we will bring the industry to over three million hogs by the end of this particular year.

We've seen an expansion in capital projects. In fact over \$400 million has been invested in this industry. We've seen 760 direct on-site jobs. And we've seen another 2,300 indirect jobs.

In the cattle industry we see that our entire cattle herd has grown by over 15 per cent since 1992, and it's now at 2.7 million animals.

In the game farm industry in just four years, our bison herd has increased from 7,500 head to over 24,000 head.

The elk farming industry has 500 producers with 28,000 head. And that's up significantly since Grant Devine era when there were about 400 head.

As well, deer on Saskatchewan farms has grown, an increase of 13 per cent in the last year.

In terms of the greenhouse industry, we've seen significant sales and we now have over \$11.2 million in sales in the greenhouse industry.

In fruits and vegetables, there's been a 100 per cent increase in the Saskatoon berry acreage since 1994. And in fact, since 1999 we've seen a 23 per cent increase in the potato production.

Let's go to farm equipment manufacturing, where in 1991 when we came to office we had about \$250 million in this industry in manufacturing sales; today over \$584 million. Employment in this sector has doubled since 1991. So that's been significant.

As I said, food processing has dramatically increased.

We have seen the opening of a nutraceutical plant which has certainly improved opportunities in our province.

We've seen the Hazenmore-Mankota community feedlot, where the community invested over a million dollars to head up a 10,000-head feedlot operation in their area.

FarmGro Organic Foods has built a flour mill and processing plant to process organic grains and specialty crops.

And I could go on and on, Mr. Chair, but there have been many exciting stories in rural Saskatchewan. And I think that we need to start talking about those exciting stories where we've seen some significant change obviously in rural Saskatchewan. But

we've also seen some significant opportunities that has meant jobs and has meant a diversification of our rural economy.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention some of the remarks made by Mr. Goodale yesterday and I'm sure the minister is aware of them.

And a lot of the things you just talked about are really diversification in rural Saskatchewan. I think farmers have taken the initiative out there through tough times and tried to diversify as fast as they can and as efficiently as they can.

If you heard Mr. Goodale's remarks yesterday, I thought they were somewhat amazing and astounding coming from a federal minister that supposedly is from the province of Saskatchewan when he says it's time for Saskatchewan farmers to diversify. I don't know where that minister and that Member of Parliament has been for the last 20, 30 years, but he certainly should know better than to make a statement like that. But I guess that shows why we have very little representation on the Liberal side in the federal government from Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, you had talked about a number of things that have gone on in rural Saskatchewan, but I'd like to just read for you a few headlines in the paper over the last number of years, and I'm coming back to Rural Revitalization and your new department.

But some of the headlines, this one is in 1996. It says: "No grand design for rural development government admits." And then it goes on to say a 1994 internal memo from Economic Development minister, Dwain Lingenfelter, says his government has no grand strategy for economic development in rural Saskatchewan.

Another one says: "NDP not endearing itself to rural areas." I believe this was also in 1996. It was done by Dale Eisler, Madam Minister, and one of his quotes in here says:

The loss of hospitals became a major factor in the NDP's declining support in several rural constituencies.

And, Madam Minister, why I'm talking about things like this is that I feel that when we lost all our hospitals out there, the 53 hospitals, it was another nail in the coffin of rural Saskatchewan and it certainly speeded up the demise of rural Saskatchewan.

Another headline, Madam Minister, goes on to say: "SARM slams tax burden shift." And I think we've talked many times in this House on the education tax that farmers are picking up out there. And again this year we see with the new assessment, even being asked to pick up a bigger portion of the education tax with the shift under the new assessment program.

Another program that was cut: "Rural road program cancelled" and we're talking, Madam Minister, about the futures program. And I was a reeve at the time when the futures program was in. To me it was one of the best programs we ever had and when that was taken away, it was just another insult to rural Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, we talk . . . this one goes back to the school tax part: "School taxes funding cuts angers SARM president",

and he's talking about Sinclair Harrison. And that's been a bone of contention with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) for a number of years now, Madam Minister.

Go back to April 12, 1996, Murray Mandryk, "Government spending demise of rural Saskatchewan." I'm just going to give you some quotes right out of this but it says also:

Suspensions were further heightened when Municipal Government leader, Carol Teichrob, (and I quote, Madam Minister) suggested next year's \$20 million cut to municipal government funding might be handled by changing the way money is distributed. Change has become the '90s euphemism for rural Saskatchewan getting less.

Well, Madam Minister, we wait 10 years and this is just a trend of what's gone on out there. And forgive me if I'm suspicious, but now you come out with a new department called Rural Revitalization. After 10 years of downloading on rural Saskatchewan, after 10 years of putting rural Saskatchewan . . . treating them like second-class citizens, what is your department going to do after 10 years with that kind of a record to revitalize rural Saskatchewan and turn around the trend that your government seems intent on doing to rural Saskatchewan? What are you going to do under your new department for rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I find the member's comments extremely interesting from this point of view. All we have to do is look at the demographics — not only in this province but in countries across the world — where we have seen an increasing urbanization of various provinces and countries. And it's taken place for a number of reasons. And this province has been undergoing a transformation in terms of urbanization for the last 60 years.

One of the things that has speeded up that transformation, in my view, is the context that we found ourselves in in the 1990s. Let's think about this country in the early 1990s. This was a country that had just entered in . . . recently entered into a new trade arrangement with the United States and with Mexico. There were dramatic changes taking place on a global basis when it came to international trade.

Saskatchewan people are traders. We are exporters of what we produce. We are the largest trading province in this country. We are dependent upon exports. And the world had changed. That's point number one.

Point number two, when we came to government in 1991, we basically were . . . we were a fiscal basket case. We were left with a legacy — and I think this would have happened to any government, had it been the Liberals that were elected in 1991 or the Reform Party or any government in 1991 — we couldn't borrow any money.

(16:00)

So you had a choice: either you turn this province over to the federal government and let them administer it from Ottawa or you started to deal with the fiscal realities that we were faced with. And we were faced with the reality that we couldn't borrow any money.

We had over \$15 billion in debt. We were spending well beyond our means and we had to make some decisions. And there were some very difficult decisions that had to be made. And I think . . . I mean the members can chirp from their seats, but as I recall it, everybody in this province paid the price for the spending that occurred in the 1980s. Whether you were urban people, rural people or northern people, I don't think there was a person in this province that did not feel the effect of the things that the government had to do to get our fiscal house in order.

And I'm pleased, Mr. Chair, that we were the first province in the country to balance our budget. I'm pleased, Mr. Chair, that we also began to pay off some of that long-term debt because we were spending, I think, close to 900 million on interest on the public debt. As part of that, government restructured itself. There were various changes and so on.

We now have our fiscal house in order because of the hard work of Saskatchewan people. We now have a new leader, a new Premier in the province, and he has made a decision that he wants to turn his attention to the many opportunities available in rural Saskatchewan and that's why this ministry was created. That's why we have a mandate to work with rural communities and rural citizens to focus government and government's thinking on the various opportunities that are available to people in rural Saskatchewan when it comes to economic development.

As you know we have set up a committee called the Action Committee on the Rural Economy. It's a committee that's comprised of 45 very diverse citizens, representing various businesses, various farm and rural organizations. I think that the Action Committee on the Rural Economy demonstrates our government's commitment to improving the quality of life for rural residents, as well as its willingness to listen to rural stakeholders about what can be done to promote economic activity outside of the major centres.

The development of a rural economic strategy I think is a consequence of all of the efforts that have occurred from those that are involved in ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy). ACRE is going to submit its interim report to the province in the fall and they're working on developing an economic development strategy.

There has been substantive public consultation with rural stakeholders which has occurred through the ACRE process. And we expect that ACRE will submit its final report to us in the spring of 2002, and then once they submit their final report there'll be many, many opportunities.

As well we have been working with Economic and Co-operative Development to develop a blueprint for the new provincial economic strategy, and there certainly is a rural component to that strategy. And we expect that the Minister for Economic Development will release the strategy very soon.

So we place a high priority under the leader . . . or leadership of our Premier on economic development in rural Saskatchewan, and we're looking forward to hearing from ACRE.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Madam

Minister, I think the intentions of ACRE are probably very honourable and the people sitting on those committees are very concerned about rural Saskatchewan.

I guess my concern, Madam Minister, that every time we turn around with your government it seems that we're going to have round-table discussions, we're going to study something.

I think the Fyke report is just another example of what we're talking about here. Mr. Fyke was sent out to check the needs of Saskatchewan when it comes to health care, and now what do we see is we have a legislative committee being set up to study it once again. I think it's one way for your government, Madam Minister, to pass the buck and not have to accept the responsibility to try and repair what's happened in health care, considering it was your health care reform that put us in the shape we're in, especially in rural Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, another comment and I find this one very interesting because it's a past, a past NDP MLA — and I'm quoting — says:

NDP ignoring rural Saskatchewan.

I'm sure you know already who I'm quoting from, it's Dr. Draper. But he says a former . . . it said . . . The quote goes on to say:

A former NDP MLA says his party has had a carefully planned strategy since 1992 to ignore the needs of rural Saskatchewan.

In a letter to the editor in today's Regina *Leader-Post*, Dr. Lewis Draper, MLA for Assiniboine-Gravelbourg from '91 to '95, said the Romanow NDP government has virtually no concern for ridings outside of Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. So rural Saskatchewan is in a double-bind, Draper said in his letter. The NDP doesn't need our votes so they will continue to ignore us.

Why I quote that, Madam Minister, is because I honestly believe that's the impression that many people in rural Saskatchewan, if not pretty near all people in rural Saskatchewan, have right now, is that they've been totally neglected and totally left out of what's going on in this province. And yet you yourself, Madam Minister, listed all the accomplishments that have happened in rural Saskatchewan, although they've happened with far less people than there used to be.

I guess, Madam Minister, today we're trying to get a feel what your new department is actually going to do to help us out in rural Saskatchewan. And I say us is because I am from rural Saskatchewan along with the high majority of my colleagues on this side. And our concerns are for the whole province of Saskatchewan; but, Madam Minister, I believe what is good for rural Saskatchewan is good for urban Saskatchewan is good for all of Saskatchewan.

I think one of the problems we have today, Madam Minister, we forgot that trend that's going on in this . . . or we've set the trend that's going on in this province. We've catered to urban Saskatchewan and they certainly haven't won by this, because

when rural Saskatchewan hurts I believe all of Saskatchewan hurts.

And not all of it is the NDP government's fault; don't get me wrong. We know that grain prices have dropped out of anyone's control. I feel we've been neglected by the federal government drastically. Mr. Goodale — I commented on him before — I honestly believe if I was Mr. Goodale I'd be scared to go out to rural Saskatchewan right now after some of the comments he's made lately and some of the lack of representation that he's taken to Ottawa, supposedly, when he's the only cabinet minister from this province.

Madam Minister, you know we go back and I'd just like to . . . the trend . . . I guess what I'm trying to say today is that there's been a trend for the last 10 years in rural Saskatchewan. And we've talked about hospitals. We've lost hospitals.

But there's more than that, Madam Minister. I give you an example in my own constituency when we get to education. Two years ago I lost the MacNutt School and I know, it's due to the drop in population. Yesterday there was an announcement there's another school in my constituency closing, Bredenbury School. And I know it's due to the drop in population.

Highways are in pretty bad shape out in my constituency and I think every member on this side can list you a number of highways — and you being the Highways minister, Madam Minister, I'm sure you're aware of this — that are in very poor shape out there.

There's little things that have happened under your government, Madam Minister. Regional parks, the funding for regional parks, something that brought a little more tourism into each of our areas out there — most of us have regional parks — that funding was just about disappeared.

Municipal funding, we've talked about this on many occasions, Madam Minister. It hurts rural Saskatchewan; it's a drain on rural Saskatchewan. And municipalities out there, small towns, large towns for that matter, villages, and RMs (rural municipality) have nowhere to pass the buck but to rural people.

All of a sudden we see what's happening out there. It looks so much better to the people out there to live in the cities or the larger centres because number one your taxes don't seem to be much higher in the cities. And you have access to the malls. And you have access to better health care.

And I for one can tell you, Madam Minister, that that's right. If we have a problem, as an MLA in Regina, I found it amazing to go down to South Albert, to the medi-clinics down here. If I go from . . . In my area we have to go to Yorkton now, to the Yorkton hospital; but we have to go to the doctor's office, which is normal procedure rather than use emergency, which is the way it should be. But on many occasions, Madam Minister, we might wait three hours to get to see a doctor.

We sit in a waiting room which is quite often full. I've had occasions to go a couple of times in the five years I've been elected to the . . . one of the medi-clinics on South Albert and was totally amazed actually. In fact, I could grow accustomed to this and quite spoiled by it. I wasn't in there, I'll bet, 15

minutes, Madam Minister, and I had a prescription. The doctor had checked me over, had a prescription, and I was out of that office.

And I guess what I'm saying is that service is tremendous. It's the way I feel it should be. But when I go home and see the time it takes the people from my constituency to go through the system, it's like a two-class system. And I know it doesn't always work like that in the city. There's many waiting lists in here, and they have their problems in here too.

But I'm trying to show you, Madam Minister, why if a person, a couple say, retiring, had their choice of where are we going to live? Out in rural Saskatchewan where we've lived all our life or would, maybe, should we be better off to move into the city of Regina, or Saskatoon, or P.A. (Prince Albert), or Moose Jaw. Yorkton even, for an example, the larger centres, but especially the big centres in here.

I think a number of the things we're doing, Madam Minister, are maybe chasing people out of rural Saskatchewan or on the other hand enticing them into the big cities. And I guess that's where I feel as government representatives, provincial MLAs on either side of the House, I think we don't need to speed that process up. I think if anything we have to try and slow it down.

I don't mean we can get involved in the economy and interfere with what's happening out there through you know, the normal population drains that are happening; but I think we have to try and put a slowdown to things that don't have to happen out there. And I think a number of the things that we have done in the past have speeded it up.

Madam Minister, can you maybe tell us today, do you have ideas in your mind that your department hasn't gone into yet, that you may want to look at, or you will be looking at, of slowing this trend down of people moving into the cities, out of rural Saskatchewan, further adding to the problems that we have in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I want to thank the member for acknowledging that not all of this is the fault of the provincial government. I appreciate that and I think it, I think it's very useful when we come to these kinds of discussions that we acknowledge that there are some events that are simply beyond our control.

And when you look at the grains industry in our province, in fact it hasn't declined. The level of consumption of grains has continued to grow and the real problem that we face is the European Community subsidies, as well as the US (United States) subsidies. And yet when you think about Europe and you think about the US, I mean they are the ones that wanted to enter into these trade agreements, yet they have large enough treasuries to subsidize European and US farmers.

I guess the question is really this, and what's interesting in terms of what the member speaks of, I had an opportunity to attend a WESTAC, which is the Western Transportation Advisory Council meeting in Victoria. And we had an opportunity to listen to the federal minister for Transportation, Mr. Collette, talk about his vision of transportation in this country. And when I listened carefully to what he had to say, he

talked about metropolitan Toronto and he talked about Vancouver and the need to move urban people.

And when I was sitting there listening to him, I thought this guy has no idea about the West. He has no idea about what we do. He talked about the new economy and he talked about the old economy. And it felt as though the federal government was into the new economy, the knowledge economy.

And when you think about our economy and our province, we are traders and we're traders of bulk commodities. We send out forestry, potash, uranium, oil and gas, coal, and grain. And it goes out by two modes; it either goes by truck or it goes by train.

And when I was sitting there thinking about this, I thought, well I almost feel like maybe how some rural citizens feel. They think about Regina, they think about Saskatoon and say they have no idea about what we do. So when the member talks about rural alienation, I agree with him. But when you think about western alienation, there are many, many times as a provincial politician that you're sitting, dealing with colleagues from across the country and you think these people have no idea about what we have to contend with.

Now in terms of what do we do in rural Saskatchewan, the member talks about losing schools in his constituency. I've been a member of the legislature for 14 years and I think I have lost four schools in my constituency and it's an urban constituency. And why have I lost those schools? Because the population has shifted out of my constituency to other parts of an urban centre, and schools are being built in those areas. So I understand what it's like to go through a school closure.

But school boards have to deal with certain realities. And the reality is that you need a certain amount of students in order to have a school, in order to have a proper education for students. And it seems to be the reality. And we can say it shouldn't happen; on the other hand, you need to look at what is a good education and you need to look at what can you afford.

(16:15)

In terms of what do I think we need to do, I think that we need to spend more time with our REDAs, our rural economic development authorities. And we have many in the province. They have some tremendous ideas. But they're not funded as well as they could be.

So I think that in terms of rural opportunities, the REDAs are a natural for us to really work with and support. And some of the REDAs are more developed than others. Some of the REDAs have more support from their municipalities, and why they're urban and rural, than others. And some of them are more sophisticated than others. And I think that we need to spend more time with the economic development authorities.

As well I think that we need to look at investment instruments for rural economic development. One of the problems that we have with rural opportunity is that rural people have . . . not only rural people but rural businesses, whether they're urban or rural businesses, have difficulty accessing capital because they're smaller projects. Some of the big venture capital funds

and so on are more interested in larger projects. And we need to figure out how we could design investment vehicles for rural development. So that's something that we're going to take a crack at.

The other thing that's become clear to me is that we have some regulatory impediments to rural development. And that's why our office . . . to try and act as a way to get through some of the bureaucratic nightmares that people refer to.

The other thing that I think we have to do is build organizational capacity. There are lots of people who have good ideas but they don't know what to do or how to do it. And so it's building community capacity or organizational capacity.

And there's a very good group of people . . . and I'm thinking of Linda Pipke, who is involved in community development, community economic development. And I think that her group has done a tremendous job along the No. 11 Highway between Saskatoon and Regina in terms of capacity building from an organizational point of view.

I think the other thing, and this is where it gets tricky, because I know that the job of the opposition is to critique the government and be critical of the government where necessary, but we have an attitude problem in the province. And I'm certainly not going to put that at the doorsteps of the Saskatchewan Party, but we need to have a more positive attitude when it comes to ourselves and promoting ourselves.

We are an innovative people in this province. We're a co-operative people. We're always thinking about new ideas, new thoughts. But when people think about Saskatchewan, I'm not necessarily sure they have positive attitudes about Saskatchewan.

In fact when the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce released its paper last week it talked about the need to have a more positive attitude. And I'm not sure how we do that. Because I know your job is to be critical. On the other hand, sometimes that could be impediments to economic development.

Training and education initiatives in rural Saskatchewan and, you know, we have a problem with shortages of certain kind of people. I'm thinking of nursing in particular. You talk about hospitals closing. Well if we can't get trained personnel to operate facilities 24 hours a day, it's closed by default, as a matter of fact.

And the Minister for Post-Secondary Education has . . . we're going to have a virtual campus. And I think this is really going to be positive for rural Saskatchewan because I think if we can train people in places where they live, that they're more likely to stay there. So I think that's another opportunity for us.

And finally, CommunityNet is really important for rural Saskatchewan. And it's become so interesting because there are knowledge industries outside of the larger centres, operating in Outlook and other places in Saskatchewan that need access to the high-speed Internet where they can create jobs. And I think that the high-speed Internet will be important.

And just to have the physical infrastructure that those of us in

urban Saskatchewan take for granted like high-speed Internet, cell phones, gas, electricity, water, all of those things, I think that we need to also focus on our physical infrastructure because that also is key to economic development in our province.

So just to recap, I think we need to focus in on how do we get the investment vehicles in place for rural development? How do we remove regulatory impediments? How do we have organizational capacity building?

We need positive attitudes. We need training and education initiatives. We need to make sure that rural people have access to information and knowledge. And we need to ensure that we identify those key sectors in rural Saskatchewan for development. And we need to really work with our economic development authorities.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Some of what you said I agree with, which is probably strange, Madam Minister, right off the bat.

But you talked about attitude of the people in Saskatchewan. And you know that it's surprising that I have constituents that actually have businesses in Alberta but maybe farm in Saskatchewan or for whatever reason are tied to both sides. And that's the first thing that you will hear from those people every time you talk to them, is that the attitude in Alberta — and I know you're going to say well we're always bragging up Alberta, but that's not where I'm going — but they say the difference right now is that the attitude in Alberta is that we can do anything we want and we can be successful. It doesn't always work out like that but that's their attitude.

And I agree in Saskatchewan, part of our problem is — I think whether it's rural or urban or wherever it is — is our attitude that we're scared to try because what if we fail. So what if we fail? Get up and try again. And I think that's . . . I don't know how it's done, there's no easy button to push it out, but I think that's one of the areas I agree with you, that we have to change that attitude if we're going to go ahead.

One of the things, Madam Minister, that I've talked about with a private member's Bill, is The Farm Land Security Act. I think that's one of the hindrances. You talked about removing red tape. And I believe honestly that's an area where it's a win-win for us; we're not in the '60s or the '50s anymore, we're in the 2000-2001.

I think it's a win-win because we can bring money in from outside. We could retire the people that have wanted to retire for the past 5, 10 years, who we hope would stay here and retire. So we bring new blood into the province. We bring new ideas. We bring new money and we keep that money with the people that have actually earned it, and create a competitive market for that land.

And I think it's things like that, Madam Minister, that we have to change. And we can't do it five years down the road, we've got to try and do things like that quickly.

You talked about processing earlier on and I agree with that. I think we have to get to the point where we get to process our

products right from start to finish. I think we both agree on that. I think how we get there we maybe differ on.

I think if Mr. Goodale wants to help us, there's an area he could help us. Federally they have far more dollars than we do in the province. They could come in here with dollars and help set up ethanol plants, processing plants for all kind of things, if they genuinely wanted to help. But once again it seems they get to the border of the other side of Manitoba and seem to forget we exist out here.

Madam Minister, my colleague from Watrous has had a couple of calls on exactly if your department could help these certain people. And they were talking about businesses wanting to be set up for processing pulse crops, for processing specific feed for horses, probably race horses I think she figures they're talking about. If these people contacted your department, could you help them, help them find ways to set their business up?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I could go on here for the whole afternoon and on into the night, and I'm sure my colleagues would love to go further. But due to time constraints and I believe we have to move on to the next department, I want to thank your officials and I'm sure we'll have a number of times to return to this. So, thank you.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I would move that we report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

Subvote (SS01)

The Chair: — I would invite the Minister of Social Services to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated beside me is Bonnie Durnford, the deputy minister. And seated to her right is Shelley Hoover, the acting assistant deputy minister. Seated behind Ms. Durnford is Dorothea Warren, the associate executive director of family and youth.

Seated behind me is Richard Hazel, the executive director of family and youth. And seated behind Ms. Warren is Darcy Smycniuk, the acting executive director, financial management.

Seated behind the bar are Phil Walsh, the executive director of income support; Larry Moffatt, the executive director of community living; and Deborah Bryck, the director of child day care.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Minister, I'd like to begin with a few questions related to some inquiries that have been made through my office in regards to funding for special needs and some of the special

services that are available in the province of Saskatchewan.

One of the requests that was brought to my attention was in regards to funding for . . . and I believe what they are is actually something like a private heavy care home but it was actually providing services for disabled or handicapped individuals, adult individuals.

And what I've been told, Mr. Minister, is that — and it's been brought to my attention — is the amount of funding that is available for these services, the amount of funding that people receive per client I guess — I think that's the term you would use — that they're providing a service for.

And I'm led to believe, Mr. Minister, that the level of funding is . . . most people are finding to be somewhat inadequate or it's very difficult for them to provide the 24-hour care and provide the services and needs based on the funding that's available.

So I guess the first question I would have, Mr. Minister, is what level of funding would a person receive per client in providing that 24-hour heavy care assistance to a handicapped or disabled person?

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well I can undertake to provide the member with details following our discussion today, Mr. Chair. But we have . . . And I think what the member is getting at is the level-of-care payment that we would provide to families to . . . or not to families, but that we would provide to individuals enabling their families to provide them with care in their own home.

We will have individuals who will make application to us who are disabled, and as any other adult can make application to us for assistance. We provide what is called a level-of-care payment. The level-of-care payment is dependent upon their level of functioning as determined by a physician.

And then on that basis, we will provide a level-of-care payment to that individual, which can then be utilized by the family to support that person in their own home with their family, and where the family is providing the care.

If that person is cared for by a personal care home that is outside the family, then those rates will be somewhat increased. The same levels of care are in effect, again depending on a physician's assessment. But the levels of . . . the level-of-care payment will be increased recognizing the additional cost that approved, licensed, personal care homes, staffed 24-hours a day, having to meet certain requirements, will have over and above a family home.

But I will certainly undertake to provide the details of that to them . . . to the member. The level-of-care payment for someone that is assessed at a level 1 would be \$453 a month. The level-of-care payment, level 2, is \$588 per month, and level 3 is \$773 a month. And this is for family homes, which are non-approved homes. And I might point out that that is a 5 per cent increase this year over the previous year.

With respect to level 4, we do not provide level-of-care

payments to family homes, or to non-approved homes, or for individuals to be cared for in their own homes. Level 4 requires, by definition, a physician attendance or registered nursing attendant at some point during the day. And therefore we take the position that that level of care should be provided in a licensed nursing home facility or in an appropriate facility that can do that. And I hope that answers the member's question.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, from what you've basically given me, you've indicated that there are levels of care to family members provided by a family.

The question that I'm actually looking at is levels of care for people that, and as I understood it, people that have some special needs and somewhat — what I'm trying to figure the right politically correct term, but let's . . . it's not coming to me right now — but who would have some disabilities and need care but aren't receiving that from a family home, are receiving it from a personal care home.

And what I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, is what the level of funding that personal care home would receive per client. And at the same time if that client, if you will, was in a, was in a care home — a licensed care home or a publicly funded care home — what level of funding would they receive in a publicly funded care home versus a private personal care home?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — We will provide payments to individuals who are in licensed personal care homes and who receive levels of care from levels 1 through 3. And that payment is then forwarded on to the operators of the personal care home by the trustee or guardian or whatever it might be.

But in that case, the level 1 payment is \$558 per month. The level 2 payment is \$709 per month. The level 3 payment is \$905 per month. But those are licensed personal care homes. Those are not necessarily public institutions.

The only public institutions I can think of are those that provide level 4 care, in which case the Department of Health becomes involved. And again, level 4 requires some, as I understand it . . . and I can certainly provide the member with the details of the policies with respect to attendance of physicians and nurses at some point during the day.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Minister, what you're saying then is, I would take it, level 1 at 558 . . . would that be someone who has some ability to actually contribute something towards their care? And level 2 and level 3 is getting to the point where an individual basically is totally dependent on care and therefore it's recognized in the 905? And is that the total sum that's available to a personal care home for the caregiver per person?

And, Mr. Minister, I guess in all the years of involvement, do you find that that fee or that amount of funds are adequate enough to address all the needs of caring for that person; food, clothing, shelter, and some of the special needs that come with care for that individual?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — First of all, the member asked about the definitions of various levels. Level 1 means essentially independent but may need some guidance or

supervision in the activities of daily living. And staff time for care averages about 20 minutes a day.

Level 2, supervision and assistance may be needed with personal hygiene and grooming. A person is safely ambulant with or without mechanical aids or independent at wheelchair level. Usually continent, able to feed self. Some supervision and direction may be needed regarding behavioural problems. And staff time for care averages 45 minutes a day.

Level 3, all degrees of supervision and assistance may be needed in the activities of daily living. Basic nursing care is usually required. Supervision and direction may be given for emotional problems which do not endanger life or property. And care at this level is usually carried out under the supervision of a registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse as directed by the attending physician. And staff time for care averages two hours per day.

And then in addition to that, there are level 4 facilities which provide for level 4 patients where all patient care is carried out under the continuing medical supervision, and all nursing care is carried out under professional supervision, and emergency and consultative medical services and highly skilled technical nursing services must be readily available when required. And staff time for care averages more than two hours a day.

As to the payments which can be made, in addition to the level-of-care payment which would go to a resident of a personal care home or a family home, there is, in addition to the level-of-care payment, there is an \$85 per month personal living allowance.

(16:45)

And in the case of the personal care home there is also a \$25 a month activity allowance. So that if the personal care home needs to or wants to take some of its residents out for a social outing and there are costs, whether it's for a bowling activity, or a movie, whatever the case might be, then there's some money provided for the residents of those personal care homes to enable them to do that.

But that is not an activity allowance that would be provided in the case of a family home, where we take the position that the family would be including the person who is the recipient of the allowance as part of their normal family activities.

And in both cases allowances can be made for special needs, whether it's diet or transportation.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Chair, and, Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, so what you're . . . as I understand it then over and above the 905, there'd be 85 plus 25? And also, Mr. Minister, what provisions are made if there's special medications that are required by a client? Are they . . . would that be a value that's covered over and above this amount as well?

And another question that was raised, in the case of, say, a personal care home that's in a smaller rural community where access to a dollar is not — or doctor, pardon me — is not immediate in that community and you have to transport that . . . I shouldn't use the word transport, but basically you have to

drive to see a physician. I understand there is some funding available or mileage allowance available.

I'm wondering what that allowance is, Mr. Minister, and if indeed you've had requests for a higher level of mileage in order to access physician services?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — With respect to coverage for prescription drugs and the like, all our clients would be enrolled under a supplementary health coverage so that we would make provision for that.

With respect to transportation allowances we provide, I guess, what might be construed as the bare minimum of 13 cents a kilometre which recognizes gasoline cost but really doesn't recognize any depreciation or ongoing maintenance that might be required as is in the case of some other allowances I can think of.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister, I think that's exactly correct. And that was certainly the point that was raised with me, the fact that the 13 cents is like the bare minimum. And of course right now with the current pricing on fuel, it may actually be a negative. They may be falling behind.

And I guess the question, Mr. Minister, is what discussion has your department been having in regards to the possibility that there may be some additional costs that may need to be looked at? Do you look at some of those changes?

And in regards to the wear and tear on a vehicle, if you were not caring for that person and didn't have to make that extra trip, then that's a savings on the part of the individual that's providing the service.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm just wondering what ongoing policy your department has in regards to changes that take place that you have no control over, but recognizing the fact that that becomes an extra burden for the caregiver. And how do you work . . . or look ahead and plan on dealing with those added costs?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — One, without, Mr. Chair, without getting into details of the policy and embellishments that can be made if someone from a personal care home has to travel with the individual. If there are more than two individuals going into town to visit a doctor, or the fact that the allowance gets paid in each case, and so that there's some potential for savings, but obviously not for a single person.

I accept the member's comments. We do consult with constituent groups, stakeholder groups, about the services we provide . . . the adequacy of the services we provide and the rates that we deal with. We did provide for a 5 per cent across-the-board increase in the level of care rates over the previous year which is not insignificant. But we hear the member and we hear the comments from stakeholder groups about the transportation allowance. And all I can say at this point in time is that we appreciate the comment.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, another question I probably should've asked the last time because it deals along the same lines.

But if a personal caregiver is taking a patient to see a physician — and in some cases in rural Saskatchewan now it may be an hour or so drive to your physician — and the question was not only the mileage but, Mr. Minister, are there allowances made for a meal if you're away for that time period and what allowance would be made if there is?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, we do not provide a separate transportation allowance in addition to the level-of-care payment. We see that as something that we assume would be provided by the personal care home, not only for those of our clients that are cared for in personal care homes, but that they would provide for other residents of their personal care homes as well.

We would not provide a separate allowance for their employees who takes someone somewhere for an appointment. We see that as part of the services they provide for their . . . or as part of their personal care home services.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. Having said that, I realize the difficulty that your department faces when you start looking at allowances for certain care services, and providing for individuals.

And I'm not here, Mr. Minister, I think you've seen that in the past, just to argue for a lump sum, a large sum more of money, but certainly I believe we all feel that people should be remunerated in a fair fashion. And that if they're providing cares to individuals it shouldn't actually be a care . . . level of care that's coming out of their pockets because if that care wasn't there, it would certainly be coming out from another care home, maybe a publicly funded care home or caregiver type of format which may even be a lot more costly because you then begin looking at union fees and working with unions and what have you.

But, Mr. Minister, how many personal care homes of this nature or agencies would we have in the province that your department deals with, where we deal with individuals who have special needs and roughly, how many individuals would we be talking about giving care to?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, rather than try to put together that number today, we will undertake to provide the member with that information as soon as we can.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.