

EVENING SITTING

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

**Referral of Fyke Report to Standing  
Committee on Health Care**

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before, before the break I was identifying some of my concerns and concerns of constituents with reference to the proposed Standing Committee on Health. And where my concerns stem from is the lack of this government and actually the Fyke Commission of listening to the people. And that is a huge concern of my own, I believe on this side of the House, and of the people of the constituency.

And I've identified some examples of where this government has not listened to the people of Wood River and I think that's very important when we enter the debate about the standing committee because if they have not listened before, when will they start listening? And we can do a study and we can have an all-party forum but if it's all preordained, then how much is this government and this committee going to listen to people from the Wood River constituency?

So, Mr. Speaker, that being said, I would just like to close my comments with expressing my concerns about the committee and lacking the committee and the government not listening to the people of Wood River and to people of Saskatchewan with reference to the health system. So I will be supporting the amendment but I will not be supporting the motion.

Thank you.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, health care is certainly one of, if not the most, critical issues of our time. Medicare is in a shambles in Saskatchewan with health boards not able to balance their books, nurses and doctors leaving the province in droves, the longest surgical waiting lists in the country, and rural hospitals under constant fear of closure or conversion while capacity to handle additional patients simply does not exist in the major centres of this province.

Surely in a time of crisis like this in health care, one would expect the government of this province to take a consultative approach to solving the many problems that afflict our health care system.

Instead, this government, Mr. Speaker, chose to hire a politically sympathetic former civil servant to conduct a review of health care in this province — a review that was conducted, Mr. Speaker, with precious little consultation with the public or health care professionals, and a review that was conducted at great cost to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we had Mr. Fyke, the author of this report, in this Assembly with the assurance from the Government House Leader that all members of the opposition would have sufficient opportunity to ask all of the questions that we wanted to ask.

Mr. Speaker, 18 of us on this side of the House had questions that we wanted to ask Mr. Fyke, and after only six of our members had the opportunity to ask questions, the government ceased debate and Mr. Fyke went home.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government, as out of touch as they are with the people of Saskatchewan, have realized just how unpopular Fyke's recommendations are in both rural and urban Saskatchewan. All of a sudden they want members of the opposition to be involved in a committee to discuss Fyke's recommendation — an obvious attempt, Mr. Speaker, by this government to share the blame for the lack of any substantial health care policy.

It is this lack of any policy or direction in health care that makes this government, this government in decline and disarray, so vulnerable to the outrageous proposals set out in the Fyke Commission. A total lack of any policies or principles in health care whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

This same government that has run election after election in this province as the saviours of medicare; this government that claims to be the authors of medicare in Canada; this government that has systematically destroyed health care in Saskatchewan since 1991: this government that hired the former deputy minister from the 1970s to produce a health care report in lieu of any real plan or health care policies or principles or directions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they intend to force members of the opposition on to their committee arbitrarily in an attempt to fool the people of Saskatchewan into believing that we somehow endorsed the deliberations of the Fyke report.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province won't buy it. This is a crass abuse of the rules and convention of this Assembly. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is within the law, but is unprecedented in the history of this Assembly, and whatever else can be said about it, no one can say that it is in keeping with the democratic history and tradition of this honourable Assembly.

In the amendment proposed by the member from Melfort, it is suggested that this standing committee conduct hearings in any community where conversion or closure of health care facilities is recommended. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this government dominated standing committee will avoid holding hearings in those communities at any cost.

Mr. Speaker, under the criteria for hospital closures as spelled out by the Fyke report, the Herbert hospital, the Gravelbourg hospital in my constituency and even the Union Hospital in Moose Jaw are all in jeopardy. These are some of the things I would have liked to ask Mr. Fyke about in this Assembly but was denied the opportunity. Denied the opportunity by this government, this so-called open and accountable government that assured us that all of our questions would be answered by Mr. Fyke.

This government now wants to force opposition members on to a standing committee of this House in unprecedented fashion so as to share the blame for the health care disaster that will surely follow implementation of the recommendations of this report.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of the amendment and against the motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to enter into the debate regarding the Fyke report. And as my constituency and my constituents are asking me to present some of their opinions and their questions, I feel it's my privilege now, or my time to explain some of them and ask some of them.

I'll have to give credit to the Parkland Health District and their board at this time because when they first got the Fyke report, they decided the best thing for them to do was to hold some public meetings and get the opinion from the people there as to what they should do with the Fyke report and what they feel is good about the Fyke report.

And I'm not going to stand here and say that it's all bad. There is some good. But I'll tell you one thing: to rural Saskatchewan, the people in rural Saskatchewan and in my constituency feel it's a kick in the face for what rural Saskatchewan is facing in regards to what this government is bringing down in the health care field.

The members of that board, the Parkland Health District Board, Mr. Speaker, had the opportunity to hold a brief review of the recommendations of the Fyke report. Also, Mr. Speaker, SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) requested the board's position on the recommendation by April 30. And members indicated this would not be communicated until they had the proper time to consult with their stakeholders, which is the members from the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency.

The board determined that they would hold four public meetings. The public meetings would be advertised in the local media, with letters going to our local governments, encouraging their attendance. The meeting dates were established: May 1 there was one held in Shellbrook; May 3 there was one held in Big River; and May 7 there was one held in Hafford.

The board members agreed to a half-day meeting on April 26 before they went to these public meetings so that the board could understand and read more about the Fyke report.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a whole list of questions from the board members from . . . or the members from my constituency from the meetings held at Shellbrook, the one held at Big River, and also the one held in Spiritwood. And I would like at this time, Mr. Speaker, just to read a few of the concerns that some of these members have brought out at that meeting.

In specialty care. The tertiary service in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert — will beds be available in these three centres? As it is now, we hear otherwise. And will the three centres have similar services? Concerns. There is no direct route, no highways that are suitable for highway traffic with the ambulances to actually get to any one of these tertiary centres. There should be more air ambulances, and helipads should be constructed at the tertiary sites to move people from the airport to the hospital. These are some of the concerns that the people from Shellbrook brought out at that time.

In regional hospitals. This will require a need for increased ambulance services, with paramedics available at all rural settings. Contracting with specialists. Are the doctors going to stay? And we've had many consultations and meetings regarding doctors in rural Saskatchewan and they're not staying. And what is this government doing to help the doctors stay and survive in the small urban or rural communities? Can we provide incentives to keep specialists in our province?

In the utilization of beds. Quality council standards; concern about a lower standard versus a higher standard. Is money going to be a contributing factor?

Also they went on to make assumptions about making things fair, Mr. Speaker — something this government doesn't know a whole lot about. Will there be fairness until we are not so territorial in all levels? People are protecting their turf; this has to quit. Government has to be more accountable also.

We need to be careful about using statistics, performance indicators to prove efficiency. Figures can lie and liars can figure. We need to do what makes sense in the whole picture as opposed only from district to district.

And also some reports from the public — a must to open everyone's eyes. We have to start taking responsibility for ourselves.

The annual reports. Emphases are on goals, outcomes, and performance indicators. What about reflection of outcomes and indicators in an area that reflects poverty, poor primary health provisions, i.e., our reserves. Concerns that a district would be penalized for a poor result in a performance indicator when an area has a high risk of poor health due to underlying health determinants. They also went on to make reports . . . (inaudible) . . . supporting of change. And the district there went on to say, making larger districts cannot only necessarily mean a saving. Concerns with a bigger group of bureaucracy, too much money is for administration. With bigger districts, local input would be less. The proposed boundaries for health districts simply lump adjoining districts together and did not apparently consider servicing areas.

In regards to Aboriginal peoples of my area, people have concerns, are saying, why should the delivery of health care services be any different for Aboriginals than they are for everyone else? Need to be discussed with tribal councils, chiefs, and etc.

When it comes to paying the bills, Mr. Speaker, the board reported that home care can be better communicated from district to district. Duplication of assessments, tests, lab work is too costly and will not work. There has to be major changes to the home care system in order to work functionally.

Also people who have read the report have found it to be very vague, not enough information to determine what the implementations are. It needs definitions. What is included in convalescent and acute care? What fits into each category? What cases stay in 24-hour community care beds and what goes to regional hospitals?

Shellbrook is actually wondering what is the state of their

hospital. Right now they are raising money to add to the hospital. Is the money that they're raising all in vain? The Fyke report shows that the rural hospitals are going to be eliminated, so to Shellbrook, are they raising money for a white elephant?

There is another report that was done in Big River and the concerns of the Big River people are much the same as in Shellbrook. They have concerns about the health care system there and the Fyke report. It was also mentioned in the Fyke report that the tertiary centres were looking at roughly 60 miles as a radius. Well if you look at Big River, Mr. Speaker . . . and you know exactly where Big River is, that's about 85 to 90 miles from Prince Albert. So if that's the case, then what happens to the centre like Big River? What happens to their health facility that they have now?

(19:15)

The government, last year, decided to build on to Big River and the people of Big River were happy. They got a health care system or a health care facility that would give longevity to their health system for all the people there. But now with this Fyke report coming out, what is going to happen with Big River? The people there are very, very concerned. Is their facility that's just been built last year going to be closed or will it stay open?

One of their major concerns from Big River is the use of the traffic flow of people should be used, not for the direction of the government, but for what the people use. In other words, the highways that they use, the transportation system they use, and where they get their needs from, that's where health should be looked at. And proposing that, they feel that they should not be going into the west side of the district. They should be closely linked with Prince Albert because that's their mainstay.

As for the town of Spiritwood, my hometown, they're in the process right now of getting a new addition to their hospital. And many of them are asking, is this going to be a white elephant? What's going to happen with the Spirit hospital? To us and many people around it, because of our locality which is 80 miles from Prince Albert and 80 miles from North Battleford, there's a good chance it probably will stay. But with the Fyke report coming out, what is the nature of the plan for our hospital in Spiritwood?

People do not seem to be against change but strongly emphasize the need to have enhanced primary health care delivery and emergency systems in place prior to making changes to existing structures.

Mr. Speaker, that's just some of the report that came out of the three public meetings that the Parkland Health District held. I know there's many people that would like to be at these meetings to express their views, but according to the Fyke report it will not happen. As my member said before, when Fyke did his report, very few of the rural areas got to voice their opinion regarding health care in this province, and therefore when the Fyke report study comes out now, they will still not be given a chance to voice their opinions. That's why members on this side, all the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) on this side here, have been asked by their people to bring their concerns to a health care system. But the way the government is

implementing this process for the Fyke report, they will not get their concerns heard.

And so therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of the amendment put forth by our side but I will not be voting in favour of the motion. Thank you.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the debate on the motion put forward by the government and also the amendment put forward by our critic, the member from Melfort-Tisdale, regarding the Standing Committee on Health Care.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've talked . . . a lot of our members have talked on different issues, perhaps in their constituency, and the whole issue of a standing committee and what is being referenced to the standing committee which is just the Fyke recommendations, according to the government.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think there has been not one of us on this side that hasn't talked about the need to look into health care, to strike a standing committee, and how important this issue is.

As a lot of our members have said and I will agree too, and touring through my constituency through the winter months, that health care is probably one of the largest concerns in the constituency. I'd say it's probably, if not the most important issue, it would be right amongst the top two or three. And, Mr. Speaker, health care isn't just one report. Health care is the whole issue — whether it's emergency medical services or whether it's hospital closures or whether it's senior care, and the whole issue.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after looking at the Fyke report and not unfortunately being able to ask questions of Mr. Fyke himself due to time constraints which . . . you know, we always hear the moaning and groaning from the side opposite on how this, how we are, you know, stretching this. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was some legitimate concerns that we had, some very legitimate concerns that we couldn't raise. And just the way the timing went — the government got so many minutes and we got so many minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but it certainly was not enough time to cover the issues that needed to be covered with Mr. Fyke.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know in my constituency a number of issues that I wanted to raise. I had talked to a number of the health care providers. I talked to a number of the health districts which are, I believe, four different health districts, bits of health districts that are in my constituency, and certainly not enough time to raise those concerns.

I never had a chance to stand and question Mr. Fyke on what he felt about the three health districts in the North and his whole plan for that. And why that would be when they're cutting down the health districts in the South. And what his vision was as far as how many hospitals there would be in a health district, how many primary care hospitals.

So there was a lot of questions that were unanswered, I guess, after Mr. Fyke presented himself before the legislature here.

But I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that I found

most interesting with this whole process is that we on this side of the House have put forward a vision and a plan for what we would like to see in health care. Our member, our Health critic, the member from Melfort-Tisdale, made a presentation to the Fyke committee and said, this is what we would like to see, these are some of the issues that we think need to be dealt with. And we put that forward in our submission to the Fyke Commission.

After that, of course, we had the Fyke Commission report and so that was Kenneth Fyke's vision of what health care should be. But you know, as I go through this there's only one group that hasn't put forward any vision for health care, and, you know, it would be the members sitting opposite. They talk about the keepers of medicare and they are the creators of medicare, but I haven't heard one thing other than . . . I guess there was a couple of things I heard from the members opposite and that was during the election.

During the election they talked about, talked about hiring 500 new health care professionals. Now it was maybe, I think, misunderstood by some when they said they were going to hire 500 more health care professionals. A lot of us assumed that it was going to be nurses and we found out after that that wasn't the case. Now I realize that there is requirements in all different areas, but just the whole way they framed that, I think most of the general public — and perhaps it was a play on words that they were hoping that people wouldn't catch on to — but I really do believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, most people thought the government at that time during the campaign was talking about nurses. But that just wasn't the case.

They also talked about a number of other issues such as decreasing the waiting lists. And that was their vision for health care, is they were going to decrease their waiting lists, and they talked about that during the campaign. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that was their vision, they've missed their vision completely because the government hasn't come anywhere close to those targets.

So you know, we've heard from our side of the House what we as the Sask Party would like to see in health care. We've heard from the Fyke Commission and what they wanted to see in health care. And we haven't heard a word from the government on what they're going to do with health care.

They wanted to, first of all, start up the Fyke Commission and that was great — see what they had to report. Now let's have a standing committee and let's extend it and extend it and expand it and not really come up with any decisions or any concrete plan from their side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, it would be very interesting that if we've got our position and the Fyke committee has their position, and then we could have the government state a position that they would like to see, how they want to see health care handled. Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could go out and see what the public thought of their idea, what they thought of the Fyke committee, and what they thought of our ideas put forward by the Saskatchewan Party. But oh no, you know, the government hasn't come up with any vision whatsoever on health care, on a number of other areas, and a number of other areas.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMorris:** — I want to try and keep my comments just to health care because if I started off on some of the other issues in other areas such as agriculture and highways and education, and we'll name all the other areas that they have absolutely no vision on, they seem to be floundering in the wilderness, Mr. Speaker. But at least we can kind of gauge this one and have an area that they're talking on and that would be health care and that's what I want to address today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've gone and I've asked a lot of constituents, a number of constituents, first of all, should we even be a part of the process? Should we even buy into this fact that we're going to be a standing committee, join in with a standing committee? I've asked a lot of constituents, and I've also in the city here asked a number of friends that I have in the city.

And I was amazed, you know. I really kind of at first thought that a lot of the people would be saying that we should join into the Fyke committee or join in to the standing committee. I asked them all and they said . . . many, many of them said — and I was surprised at this — don't have anything to do with it. Have absolutely nothing to do with it. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they said have absolutely nothing to do with it because we followed this government and they know what type of input we would be able to have in the standing committee. And I was quite interested in that very fact.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I got a number of letters also, as I'm sure every member on this side and that side received, a number of letters regarding whether we should be involved or not involved. And one of the letters here talks about how they're really not political, they're not involved in politics, they don't want to be involved in politics. But they talk about the wellness model that was started up in the early '90s and how it was absolutely lack of substance. I mean it was a great catchword, it was a great catchword that . . . you know, the wellness model was a great catchword. It all sounded very good.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I heard Mr. Fyke speak in front of the legislature committee here, I found out that what he was talking about was, we don't need quantity as much as we need quality. That was one of the major phrases that he said. We need quality care, not quantity. And I thought, you know, that's a great catchphrase too. We had wellness in 1991; now we'll say just we need quality — forget the quantity — and that's going to solve things. Very, very I find . . . I found from going through the Fyke submission that it was really, really lack of any strong substance.

Was any of the ideas that he came forward with costed out? Well, of course they weren't. None of them were costed out, you know. And so it was really . . . I was very disappointed. I mean he had some good ideas perhaps, but a lot of it was just lack of substance and it wasn't costed out.

But this letter goes on to say that, you know, they really would not want to see politics played with this committee. And that's what they have said. They don't want to see politics played with this committee.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing I would like more than to have that very issue, the health care, and the standing committee look at the Fyke Commission without any politics played. And the standing committee is supposed to be looking at health care. So why do we want to, why do we want to just box it in on only looking at the Fyke Commission, Fyke study?

I think, and then put forward by the . . . the amendment put forward by our members is exactly that. We want to look at health care, but we want to look at it as a whole — globally — not just around the Fyke Commission, but the whole issue. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's one area that we're having trouble with.

And if you want to say who's playing politics, I would say that the government is definitely playing politics and that they only want to . . . they don't want to open themselves up too much. They don't want to have their own ideas of the wellness model and everything else looked at. Let's just try and keep it around the Fyke Commission and not open themselves up to too much criticism, because believe me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if a standing committee was to go from community to community on how they've handled — this government opposite — how they've handled health care in the last 10 years, I'm sure they'd open themselves up to an awful lot of criticism.

And I think that's why you're seeing politics played in this very issue, that they only want to look at the Fyke Commission and they only want to do it here in Regina. And they'll try and limit their losses to that, Mr. Speaker.

One of the concerns that we have, and after looking at *Hansard*, listening to the speeches opposite on Friday by the seconder, I believe — I'm not sure — but looking through *Hansard* and listening to him, how really it seemed like the mind was made up on what they wanted to do with this standing committee anyway. And it was really just going to be an exercise of putting in time and delaying it a little bit so that they had time to implement the study. And I just really question that whole thing, why we'd even enter into that in the first place.

But that's why we wanted to see it broadened. So it's not just one issue but the whole issue on health care.

(19:30)

Mr. Speaker, I just briefly want to talk a little bit about my own constituency and some of the health care concerns that we see in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency.

I had the opportunity of meeting with a local group that were concerned with the Indian Head Hospital and they sure don't want to lose that hospital. They're right on No. 1 Highway. It's really key to their community. And as the member from Kindersley, I believe, was talking about last Friday how when you take one of those facilities out of a community, how it just about rips the heart out of their community. They feel like they've really lost something, and as if rural communities haven't lost enough. And this is one other thing that they are going to fight for to keep.

And they were saying how, you know, that one of their concerns is that they're so close to the city, so close to Regina

and that was a concern. And I thought to myself, I said now should that be a concern that they're so close to Regina that they'll lose their hospital or could that be an asset. I really think it's an asset. I think that knowing the way the situation is in Regina with some of the hospital beds and definite shortages of hospital beds, being that close, instead of . . . I forget which member on our side was talking about where they had to put them up in a motel in Swift Current in order to get into the hospital. It was kind of like a holding pen, I guess, is what you could almost say, the way they've got this set up.

And I thought now there would be an excellent example for the Indian Head Hospital, 30 minutes away from the city. They don't have to build any structure. There's no capital cost. The community is more than willing to put in a lot of the equipment. They just went forward and, I think, paid something like 3 to \$400,000 for a new X-ray machine that the community raised. They're looking at their facility and they're saying, what are the possible reasons they could come in and close this hospital? One of them was they felt they didn't have a strong enough X-ray machine, so they went out and they raised the money and put that in.

And I really think that, you know, when you look at the Fyke report is that he really, really looked at consolidating and centralizing services. And I guess if that's all you're going to look at, communities like Indian Head may not have that great of a future.

I would like to see it go the other way, though. Instead of worried about how much more money you have to put into capital for buildings in Regina, you could use the outlying facilities that are only 30 minutes away. It makes real good sense to me.

The other area, Mr. Speaker, that I just want to touch on even briefer than the last one is the Fort Qu'Appelle area. Fort Qu'Appelle has had a hospital in it for 70 years. And it has the Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Hospital and that was put up through the federal government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they're talking about building a new hospital in Fort Qu'Appelle, a beautiful facility in Fort Qu'Appelle. They've got most of the plans. They have a rough idea about how much it's going to cost. I was out there on Friday, Mr. Speaker, and I was talking to one of the fellows involved with this and they said it's really been put on hold right now because they can't guarantee any funding from the provincial government.

They've got a lot of federal money in place. I believe the federal government has come into Saskatchewan for a couple of facilities and they have put in around \$13 million in place that will then go towards that hospital. But they can't go towards that hospital right now because they're not sure where the provincial government is on this issue. And they can't go ahead with just the amount that the federal government has given. It needs to be a partnership with the provincial government.

They can't go ahead with it and they're quite frustrated and I believe they're having a meeting with the Minister of Health to try and figure out where they're going. But if you look at what the Fyke report talks about, that hospital would never get built.

You know, you're looking at probably 50-cent dollars to build that facility in Fort Qu'Appelle. You're looking at the federal government probably putting half of the money in to build a \$10 million structure in Fort Qu'Appelle and right now it's put on hold because the government is not sure where they're going or what direction they're going. And all it takes is the okay from this government — this government — to put some money forward and that facility would be built. It would be a beautiful structure and the cost to the province would be 50 cents on the dollar, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I really think that when I started out by saying that I don't believe this provincial government has any direction or any idea of where they're going in health care and that's all part of it, is that they get into a situation like this where, where we're not sure what the future of that facility is even though there's a lot of federal money to go into it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I think that when we look at this Standing Committee on Health Care I wish we could say that it was a standing committee to look at all of health care and not just at one report which I think . . . and I would be very interested to hear the honest thoughts of the members opposite because I think most of us on our side — in fact all of us on our side — have come up with opinions that have been phoned into us, that have been written into us, that the Fyke study and the Fyke Commission really didn't touch all the bases.

It didn't go out into rural Saskatchewan and listen to what the effect of closing the Indian Head Hospital would be. It didn't go to Fort Qu'Appelle and say, what is the effect if we don't put provincial money in? Are you going to lose the federal money? It didn't look at so many issues and that's why I really question that a standing committee can be so closed on just the Fyke Commission when the issue is as big as it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went to one meeting . . . I was at a health district and they were having a public meeting about long-term care and I was sitting and talking to one of the board members who was definitely a strong proponent of the government in power at this time and you know he said, you know, there was never any problem, I didn't think, with health care until the last provincial election. And then all of a sudden there seems to be a lot of problems with health care.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's because there was an opposition that was getting stories from 26 different constituencies on the problems in health care. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that was one of the first things that Kenneth Fyke said about this government's health care plan is that medicare right now in this province is in the breaking point — it's to the breaking point. So let's not just look at the Fyke Commission, let's look at all of health care to make the proper recommendations so that we have a strong health care system into the future.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll be supporting the amendment put forward by the member for Melfort-Tisdale on this issue. Thank you.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I consider it a privilege to enter this debate on that particular topic, and basically discuss some of the ideas and concerns that come from my particular constituency.

I think some of the philosophical background was very well presented by the previous speaker, my colleague, and I'd like to deal with some of the things that are unique to my constituency.

But before I do that, I want to say one or two things about the Fyke committee and the way this has been set up and the way government intends to go on this one. And I think we have to look very carefully at what happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we went through the Channel Lake affair.

Because the government here is repeating a process, and very often when we ask questions they talk about process, we should be aware of process. Well let's just see how they operate these sorts of things and I think if we look at how they've done it, we have no reason to expect anything different but that they will, to some extent and maybe a large extent, repeat what happened in the past.

And without going into the details on the Channel Lake situation and what brought that all about and the fiasco and the money that was lost, let's look at how that committee operated. They set up a major committee. We met downstairs in room 10 day after day after day. And I hear one of the members from Saskatoon talking about being tired. Well, if she'd been there, she'd have got tired of some of the answers and the runaround that we got there as well. But that went on, as I said, day after day. The media was there; it was a show for the whole province. We tried to get answers; we couldn't. There's still a whole lot of money missing.

However, the frightening part at the end of that all wasn't that much the answers that were given and weren't given, but when this committee was supposed to come up with a conclusion and a report and to be able to tell the province we've done this amount of work, and here's what we discovered.

So you would think, Mr. Speaker, that all the people that were involved around that committee from, I believe, three different political parties would have had some input into that. And then when the thing comes to a conclusion, we find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a report had been written in the premier's office by one of the premier's henchmen while this committee meeting's going on and the committee . . . the report shows up. Had nothing to do with what happened in that committee meeting, and the meetings because it lasted for weeks.

It had nothing to do with what the NDP (New Democratic Party) said and what they asked. It had nothing to do with what the opposition asked and the answers they got or didn't get. It had everything to do with a political decision made by the premier and his henchmen to say, okay we'll let these people ask all the questions, spend all the time they want, and here's the report. Politically this is what we think should be happening.

And I'm very afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is exactly what's going to happen with this committee that the government wants to set up at this particular point. And fact is I wouldn't be the least surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if somewhere in this building there were two or three people right now huddled around a typewriter or whatever these people use — they're sort of back in the dark ages. Tommy Douglas was typewriter time and the way they revere him they probably had

Tommy Douglas' original typewriter and they're still clicking away at it.

So I have very little doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that already this government has made up its mind about where that committee's going to go and what its findings are going to be. And about the time the committee starts to sit, it may already be in print. And so we're going to be wasting our time, spinning our wheels — whatever metaphor you want to use — but this government will do it. They did it on Channel Lake; they will do it again over here. And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it becomes very obvious that they really are totally insincere about this whole committee process.

And let's look at one other thing to underline the fact that there is no sincerity on this committee process. We had, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Fyke sitting in these chambers, and we asked him questions. And yes, it went on for hour after hour. But remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's 58-some of us, there's some 58 of us, every one of us with the right to ask some questions. The Fyke Commission had cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. And again we have the member from Saskatoon complaining about the same sorts of questions. They weren't the same sorts of questions because the questions related to different hospitals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and are in different areas. That's important to the people of Saskatchewan. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why we're here, is to represent those people.

Then in the process of this whole thing, the NDP call a recess for about 20, 30 minutes, come back after the recess and say, we decided to go home. Now why, if they had decided to go home, didn't we go home before the recess? It was just part of the little games they were playing. And they sat down during those 20 minutes and said, well I think we're running into trouble on this; let's just shut down the opposition. So they jumped up and shut us down. And there were a lot people on this side of the House that never had a chance to ask a question on behalf of their constituencies.

And I'm one of those, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was shut out by the NDP government. My constituency, every single person in my constituency that I represent was essentially shut out, were not given the opportunity to speak and to ask questions in this House, by that NDP group, by those socialists over on that side. That's the way they operated in Channel Lake, that's the way they operated when we had Mr. Fyke in here, and that's the way they're going to operate on this particular committee. That's their process, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They follow process, and that's the process that they follow.

Now I want to say a few things about my particular constituency because it is totally different and very unique from every other constituency. Number one, it's different from the urban ones because it's a rural constituency. The other part that makes it unique, it is the only rural constituency in Saskatchewan that is growing in population. If, unfortunately, these people ever get a chance to, you know, do a bit of gerrymandering, the size of my constituency will be smaller because the population is growing.

Now why is that important, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's important that as they've gone ahead and destroyed their dream that

Tommy Douglas had about hospitals and lights throughout the province, and all those kinds of quaint things that he used to be so proud of, they shut down 50-some hospitals. And the Deputy Premier over there grins right now. He's proud of the fact that he was probably the instigator of closing down the first 50-some hospitals.

Now under the Fyke report . . . Now under the Fyke report there's a strong hint that they want to close another 50-some. Now I have in my constituency, because it's growing, we have growing needs for a hospital. It's not like saying, well we have fewer people, do we need the same size hospital? In my constituency we have a growing population and every year we need a hospital more than we needed it the year before. But according to the criteria that was set up by Mr. Fyke, the hospital in Rosthern will probably go out the door.

(19:45)

The hospital district . . . and I have two that are in my constituency. One is Saskatoon; it will probably stay. The other one is Gabriel Springs which runs over into Humboldt and I'll let the member from Humboldt speak for the hospitals in that area. But the hospital in Rosthern — very much a needed hospital for a couple of reasons.

The communities, the towns in the area are growing. We used to, in that valley area as it is often called, basically have three health care centres. We had a hospital in Rosthern, we used to have a hospital in Waldheim, and we had health care that could be received in Warman. The Warman situation is gone. The Waldheim hospital is gone. We have only the one hospital left in Rosthern. But all the towns are growing, so the need for a hospital continues to increase.

The other thing is in my area probably the number of farmers is actually increasing, if we include the hog operations and the stock operations as well as grain farming. And as we well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the area of industry in this province where we have the most accidents. So if we have more people involved in agriculture, the need for immediate care increases drastically. That's happening in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

However, Mr. Fyke has this idea that somehow if it takes an hour for the ambulance to get out and an hour to get back, that's good enough. Well I'd like to see what happened if you went to an urban situation and said well as long as you can get to a hospital in 120 minutes, that's fine — should they live that long. There's no way anybody in an urban situation would stand for that. And yet Mr. Fyke is prepared to say sure, so you take an hour for the help to get out there, pick up the person, take him back in. That's not good enough.

And so in an area that is growing in population in the towns, growing in population in the rural areas, Rosthern needs its hospital. According to the Fyke criteria, it won't be there. That government would not allow me to speak and ask Mr. Fyke the specific questions on that. They shut it down.

I have another important factor that needs to be mentioned here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just adjacent to my constituency, Beady's & Okemasis reservation. It is probably one of the

fastest-growing reservations in Saskatchewan. It's a very vibrant one. They've got a lot of industry, a lot of well-trained people. They have a good school. They're probably about 8, 9 miles out of the town; 8, 9 miles away from that hospital. They also need more health care than they needed 50 years ago because their population is growing.

So we have three basic areas: what you could call the town area; the rural, agricultural area; and the First Nations area, all requiring more health care. And yet, Mr. Fyke recommends that that hospital not be there.

And having seen that this government closed down 50 hospitals some years ago, and are prepared to sit there and smile about it now, and are prepared to shut down the discussion when we wanted to talk to Mr. Fyke about it, I'm very concerned where this is going to go.

One more thing about Gabriel Springs. It's one of those health districts that has managed to run in the black, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's a rather rare sort of a thing in this province. But they've managed to run in the black, and then they're punished. Their budget actually gets cut.

Seems hard to believe, but that's the kind of government we have, that if you overspend and run in the red they'll throw you some money. If you're fiscally responsible, as the people in my constituency are, and they run a hospital in such a way that it's in the black, they'll come back and say oh, we'll take more money away from you because obviously you don't need it.

It sounds very much like the way this government works. And I hear some people back in the '80s again. I would suggest that that person from Saskatoon check very carefully the front page on a recent *StarPhoenix* if they want to see people being charged. You'd better check that and see where they are right now before you squawk from your seat.

Anyways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've gone through the committees, why the Fyke Commission and the Fyke committee isn't going to work, from the history that we've had. We've gone through the rural constituency that I mentioned, what's happening in my particular constituency, and we've discussed Gabriel Springs.

One more thing that I need to say about my constituency. We have some very major highways running through there, highways which are very accident prone, particularly Highway 11. And I think my community, my town, has three different accesses on to the highway, Highway 11. I believe in total, in the last number of years, we've had between 10 to 20 people killed on those three intersections. So it's sort of a morbid thought but because of the accidents caused on that particular highway, we need a hospital where people can come, get that emergency help so that we save lives. If you're not going to do it on the highways, let's at least do it in the hospitals. This government needs to recognize that.

For those sorts of things, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, and definitely not the motion. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few moments tonight just to express my thoughts in regards to the committee that the government has been proposing to bring forward at this time, the reason why we are standing in this Assembly and debating this issue.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important. And certainly it's important that the individual members who have taken the opportunity that is afforded them as members of this Assembly to stand and speak, it's important for us to voice the concerns and . . . the concerns of our constituents, and also just raise these issues with the government, with the minister responsible, certainly with the Premier, and let the government members know that there are people living in this province who live outside of Regina and Saskatoon, the large urban centres.

And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to quote from a couple of articles that appeared most recently in one of my local papers — both of them actually in the Moosomin *World Spectator*. And one of the articles, the headline is, "Speak up in response to the Fyke Report." It says:

We are very fortunate to have a full staff of very capable doctors, but if we lose our hospital one cannot expect them to stay. The medical staff are the only ones who have raised their concerns, but we can't expect them to always speak on our behalf. When our hospital is closed and the doctors have left, people will wonder, how could this ever happen? (And it says) So come on, Moosomin and area, let your voice be heard before it is too late.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're hearing, beginning to hear from across this province. People are becoming very concerned. And as the impact of the potential of the Fyke report begins to sink in, more and more people are starting to sit back and give some thought to this whole process. And that's why we have the debate this evening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another letter to the editor and the headline is, "Fyke ignorant of rural Saskatchewan." It says:

It seems to me that Mr. Fyke is completely ignorant of conditions in rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the fact that actually Mr. Fyke came from the Moosomin area certainly says something as to what people in that area are beginning to think, and think of one of their own sons. This letter goes on to say:

Anyone who is familiar with conditions in rural Saskatchewan knows that if the people of our rural areas are to receive the medical services that they deserve, there need to be many small hospitals across our rural areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe today, as well, the College of Physicians and Surgeons has also indicated in a letter that we've received that there is a place for many rural hospitals.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that we also need to acknowledge — and the member from Canora brought that up earlier today — that maybe not all the hospitals we had in the past were essential or we could afford to have them, but we cannot afford to move to 13 regional centres and leave so much, such a large

area of the province out of our health care system.

The letter, and I continue to quote from it, says:

This reveals a complete lack of feeling for rural people when you consider what a 60 or 80 mile drive in a blizzard over poor roads would be like with a critically ill patient.

And the writer says:

When Mr. Fyke tells us that we'd be better served by fewer rural hospitals, even though we would have to drive for 60 to 80 minutes to get to a regional hospital, the words are very familiar to most people.

And he said:

If they are not, they should be. It was that same line of talk that the experts at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool told the farmers, producers and others. They said they were going to tear down the local elevators, build a few big concrete terminals situated in choice locations across the province and that would give better service at less cost, even if we had to haul our grain 50 to 60 miles.

As everyone knows, the exact opposite is true, plus it's contributed to the destruction of our roads.

And the writer goes on to say:

If we allow the government to implement the Fyke report as it now stands, our medicare, as we now know it, will go the same way the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is going, completely finished.

And he has more to say and it says:

It's time that people realize that there is no such a thing as a free lunch in health care.

Mr. Speaker, health care is a vital component of delivery of services here in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, our members . . . government members realize the cost to implement and to continue to maintain the level of health care we have in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're all familiar with the promise that the NDP made in 1991 when they went to the public asking for their support to be elected as the government of the province. And then after they were elected and they said we forgot, we didn't take a close look at the books. We have to open the books and the money isn't there, therefore we've got to change how we do things.

And at that time the former minister of Health basically decided that we were going to change things dramatically in the health care field and we eliminated 53 hospitals. And I believe the minister of Health of the day said the reason we cut back the hospitals was to save money. And as a result of cutting 53 hospitals it meant that there were fewer caregivers, it meant that there were fewer nurses in hospitals, and heavy care aides and LPNs (licensed practical nurse) working in our hospitals because we didn't have 53 fewer hospitals to work in.

However, Mr. Speaker, the government at the same time introduced 38 health districts. And what I have found in the constituency of Moosomin, and I think my colleagues have found the same thing, that people have been looking over for the last 10 years at what's been happening to health care delivery and the expenditure of health care dollars, and what they're seeing is less and less of the services that are needed in the acute care field and the heavy care field and the needs of patient services, but they've actually seen what appears to be a larger expenditure at the administrative level of health care delivery.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this whole debate that we're entering into tonight is centred around the fact of how we deliver that service. And as I said earlier, the former minister of Health, when the wellness model came into place, said we needed to change how we deliver services and we needed to cut back on the number of facilities in order to save money.

The minister of Health that followed that minister said after we looked at the books . . . and actually there was higher expenditures. While we cut 53 hospitals and while we cut a lot of health districts, Mr. Speaker, we actually noted that there was a higher level of expenditure in health care in the province of Saskatchewan as far as the provincial dollars. And the minister of Health said, well it wasn't all about saving money, it was about how you were spending money and spending it well. And, Mr. Speaker, in the meantime more and more people found themselves on longer and longer waiting lists just waiting for some of the essential services in health care.

And so what has this government done for the last 10 years? Mr. Speaker, this government was elected in '91. They were supposed to have a vision for health care but yet they're still living in the past. They're living in the Tommy Douglas era of medicare and telling the people of Saskatchewan, you trust us because the NDP or the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) — now the NDP — are the only political party and the only people who know how to deliver health care services in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well what have we seen after 10 years, Mr. Speaker? I would suggest to you that there are fewer and fewer people believe any more that this group of individual MLAs have a clue as to how they deliver health care services. And, Mr. Speaker, how do we . . . how do we know that? The fact that every time they run into a problem they decide to set up another committee.

(20:00)

And what did they do? They brought in a former deputy minister of Health to sit down and study the delivery of health care in the province of Saskatchewan, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Fyke, to come up with a proposal and a plan for health care delivery services in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, after \$2 million, what did we get? We got a plan that basically calls for fewer hospital facilities and fewer services and in some cases, Mr. Speaker, almost puts us back into the old days of where you provided your health care delivery right at home. And, Mr. Speaker, is that what people need? Is that what people are asking for?

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe people are asking for everything to be handed to them on a platter, but I believe people want to know that when they're sick or in need of a health care facility or medical services or the need of a physician, that the services will be available and will be accessible — and, Mr. Speaker, in a facility that is as close to them as possible, not 60 or 80 miles away based on the recommendations or the suggestions that are coming out of the Fyke report.

And Mr. Speaker, my colleagues today have raised a number of issues that have . . . a broad range of issues that have been brought to their attention from across this province, Mr. Speaker. And while we had Mr. Fyke in this Assembly and the opportunity to question and quiz Mr. Fyke about his recommendations in view of the concerns that our constituents had, Mr. Speaker, after about six and a half hours, as the government members have been chirping from their seats today, the debate was stymied, was called off, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they shut the debate down before all of the members in the opposition benches had an opportunity to actually rise and raise the questions. In fact, when some of my colleagues were speaking today, one of the . . . the member from Greystone for example, chirped from his seat, you had plenty of time to ask the right questions. Well what are the right questions, Mr. Speaker?

I believe the questions that our constituents were looking for us to raise . . . They wanted us to ask Mr. Fyke exactly what he meant by this submission in his report, exactly what he meant by 13 regional centres, exactly what he meant about where these facilities would be. Because, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the people who live in the Moosomin constituency are going to look at that map and determine where they should be settling at the end . . . when they retire, or even if they should move from the area. They're going to be looking at what community has a health care facility because that's where they're going to desire to move closer to. And what does that do, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, it's just another nail in rural . . . the coffin of rural Saskatchewan as services are taken out of communities and people leave those communities, leaving small businesses trying to struggle to stay alive because the services aren't there.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look at the committee the government's promising. Mr. Speaker, I thought Mr. Fyke was supposed to come up with a recommendation that as MLAs . . . and this government could certainly work with and build upon, and that would address the delivery of health care services so that all the people of Saskatchewan could believe they had access to quality health care. And that quality health care within the framework of a, of a financial situation that is achievable and is deliverable and, Mr. Speaker, addresses not only the concerns of the nursing staff or the doctors but all the health care workers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, what we found — and I believe what's happened again — is the government all of a sudden when Mr. Fyke presented his report, the report wasn't exactly what the government was looking for. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province and many of the members on that side of the Assembly all of a sudden found themselves at odds with people right across this province.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, and certainly for the members in the larger centres like Saskatoon and Regina, the general feeling might have been well, you know, that isn't all that bad at all because they're living in the two large delivery centres. And so of course they're going to be close to health care services.

But for the majority of the people of this province, they certainly wouldn't have that access. And coming from a government and a Premier who just implemented or built another ministry — a ministry for rural development or to address the rural needs and trying to determine how this government is going to respond to the needs of rural residents of this province — Mr. Fyke's report I believe did not provide the avenue that the government was looking for of reaching out to rural Saskatchewan. So rather than just trashing it completely, they've now determined that we should study it again. Mr. Speaker, what does that do by studying it again?

What we've seen for the last 10 years, we've seen a government that has lacked a vision, that is floundering in the area of how it's going to deliver health care. And every time they run into a crisis, they establish another committee to study the issue.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe people across rural Saskatchewan are becoming tired of studies — studies that basically don't move us anywhere and really aren't moving us into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, communities like Moosomin are becoming very frustrated as well. For the last number of years the community of Moosomin has had a request in for a new hospital . . . health care facility. And for the last three or four years they've been stonewalled and they've been put off because well we're just about . . . we're very close to a provincial election and we don't feel we should be making an announcement at this time.

Well the election came and went. And the committee in Moosomin are waiting for the government to announce their new health care facility that they keep promising is on its way. And they said, well we're not exactly sure that what you're looking at in Moosomin will fit into health care delivery in the future, and we need to take a closer look at health care delivery services, and so we're going to appoint Mr. Fyke to do a study. And while Mr. Fyke is doing the study we're not going to announce any capital projects.

So the committee in Moosomin said well fine, we'll accept the fact that there's a study being undertaken to determine how we can more effectively provide health care services, but when that study is complete we hope to have an answer as to whether our facility goes ahead.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, the community and the health committee have been moving forward, raising funds, putting in place the dollars to work together with the provincial funds to build that health care facility. But here they still sit in limbo, Mr. Speaker.

And so what do we have now? Mr. Fyke has presented his report and then the government comes up with, well we'd better study that a little more, so we're going to put a standing committee together and see if we can come up with . . . I don't know if it's a better idea or exactly what the idea is. My guess,

Mr. Speaker, is the fact that what this government has basically said, we're just going to stall a little while longer until we can get our heads around this whole area of health care services and delivery to determine whether or not we're going in the right direction.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have the standing committee on the Fyke report, another study which is just delaying the inevitable — a government finally putting its head around the issue and coming up with a plan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Fyke Commission really didn't give us an answer to health care delivery services. In fact one of the issues that my colleagues and I felt very strongly of when Mr. Fyke was actually doing his study, we believe Mr. Fyke should have been allowed the ability to do an overall view of health care delivery and take a look at how we're expending the dollars right now, and see if he could have come up with even a better idea than what he supposedly brought forward that was the best idea for health care delivery in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, you wonder why this opposition is concerned about another study and about a standing committee — a standing committee that we suggested to the government. If it just follows the rules of the Channel Lake Committee, at the end of the day the standing committee appears, Mr. Speaker . . . It's just another way of the government because they don't have an idea, because they don't know where they're going. They're just flying . . . their standing committee is a way of basically blaming somebody else if it doesn't work. And that's the concern that has been raised on this side of the House by many of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as the member for Moosomin I believe it's important for me to stand up and speak, and speak on behalf of the constituents of Moosomin. The people of Moosomin have been working so diligently for health care services. And when I talk about how diligently they've been working, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the O.R. room, the operating room in the hospital of Moosomin, currently as it exists, is up and running.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's not up and running because this government put the tools in place to provide the services. It's up and running because the community had six active doctors who said enough was enough. There were services they could provide if they had the equipment available. And physicians in the area had actually gone to take extra training so they could be the anaesthetists and provide the medical services in the O.R. room. The community raised the funds to upgrade the operating room so that those services could be performed.

And to this date the community is now waiting for the government to complete its study to see whether or not that O.R. room is fulfilling its role.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that, Mr. Speaker, that people who have had the privilege of receiving the services of the O.R. room in Moosomin have been very pleased that it has been in operation for over a year now, and that it is serving the purpose of not only Moosomin, Mr. Speaker, but even the chemotherapy that is being involved.

People from Kamsack are coming to Moosomin for

chemotherapy. People from close to Regina are coming to Moosomin for chemotherapy. And you would ask why, Mr. Speaker. Because in Moosomin they have quality caregivers providing the service and they've got access almost immediately versus coming into Regina or Saskatoon and waiting in line for your chemotherapy, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, as the college has indicated, there is a place for a lot of rural centres to provide a . . . to have an integral part into the delivery of health care in the province of Saskatchewan. And I stand with my colleagues. I stand with my colleagues here this evening, Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate that fact: that we need to stand up, and we must stand up for our constituents.

And my colleagues and I have certainly desire to work out a health care plan and delivery service that provides service to each and every resident of this province, be they a resident of the Southwest or the extreme North, to provide delivery in the most economical form and the most accessible form that is possible.

And, Mr. Speaker, I see that some of my other colleagues would like to speak as well and it behooves me to begin to wrap up my speech. I think, as our pastor says, well about another 15 minutes I'll be done, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, let me put it this way. The people of Moosomin are looking for this government to show some direction and to let them know where things stand in regards to the new facility. The people of Kipling want to know that that facility which is, Mr. Speaker, if you're looking at it . . . Mr. Fyke was suggesting maybe 60 or 80 miles to the nearest regional centre. Well Kipling is sitting pretty well right in-between and it's 90 miles away. So what does that say if there is an emergency shows up.

Mr. Speaker, there are hospitals in this province and rural communities that are providing just a superb service to those communities and surrounding area. And if you wonder why we speak with such passion on this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, you can understand why. Come out and visit some of our communities. Come out and visit some of the hospitals. Come out and talk to some of the doctors and the caregivers in those communities and you'll find out exactly how strongly they feel about the delivery of those services and why they are so concerned about the Fyke report, and why they agree with us and concerned about the direction this government continues to go by just putting off coming up with a plan that will provide health care services that is accessible and available to the residents of the province of Saskatchewan.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I stand in support of the amendment as put forth by my colleague, the member from Melfort.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I must say that I was enjoying the comments of the member from Moosomin and for my part he could have gone on for another 15 minutes. It was excellent material and certainly well worth all members of the House listening to his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, we are debating a motion to refer the contents of the Fyke report to a newly constructed Standing Committee on Health Care.

Mr. Speaker, all of us certainly recognize the importance of health care in Saskatchewan. I don't believe there is a single member in this House that doesn't recognize that health care is one of the most important deliveries of government. Mr. Speaker, most of us understand that because of first-hand experience.

(20:15)

I remember, Mr. Speaker, when I became the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party. I believe — and I stand to be corrected — but I believe the very first function that I responded to after becoming Leader of the Saskatchewan Party was to attend a rally. It was called Save the Plains hospital rally and it was east of Regina — I can't remember if it was Indian Head or Fort Qu'Appelle, one of those communities.

I believe the member from Moosomin was the health care critic for the newly minted Saskatchewan Party. And I remember that foremost in the minds of people, at least in the southern half of Saskatchewan, was maintaining quality health care and the importance of the Plains hospital in providing that.

Mr. Speaker, because I quickly recognized how important health care was at the provincial level after having been in federal politics for a number of years, I embarked on a tour of most of the health districts in Saskatchewan. I met with officials of most of the health districts in our province, met with health care providers in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they were very forthright and very willing to share their understanding and information pertinent to health care with me as the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to go on public record as thanking the very many dedicated people that deliver health care in Saskatchewan for their unselfish service to the province and also, Mr. Speaker, for sharing with me much of the knowledge and wisdom that they have about the health care system here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, to show me up, my critic for health care, the member for Melfort-Tisdale, embarked on even a more extensive study and tour of health care in Saskatchewan. I believe that my colleague from Melfort-Tisdale has probably met with every health district in the province. He has toured most of the hospitals in Saskatchewan. He has met with every professional health care association in the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I say to every member through you in the House that I believe the health care system knows that they have a friend that understands them in the member from Melfort-Tisdale.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party was the only political party that made a submission to the Fyke report. It was an extensive multi-page report, Mr. Speaker. It's a public document; it's been tabled in this Assembly. It is currently on our caucus Web site.

We have staked our position, Mr. Speaker, and it deals with all aspects of health care. It deals with acute care. It deals with

home care. It deals with long-term care. It deals with primary, secondary, tertiary, and special needs care, Mr. Speaker. It's all there for the public to see. The Saskatchewan Party has not hid its position on health care.

Mr. Speaker, we do this because at least on this side of the House, and I believe on that side as well, we've all had personal experience that has given us impressions of health care in this province.

And I think to my own father, who has passed away. He had Alzheimer's for the last years of his life. Mr. Speaker, that was a difficult time for our family, and we came to realize some of the issues that health care providers grapple with as we deal with loved ones who see their health failing them and need a system that will deal with an issue and a disease like that one.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of uncles that are actually still living . . . one has left Saskatchewan. The one uncle was injured back in the '70s — this is in the Allan Blakeney health care era — and, Mr. Speaker, it was out in my part of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the doctor had to come to pick him up — and he was badly injured from a construction accident — had to come and pick him up with his own station wagon.

Can you imagine? A very seriously injured man, and the doctor drove out with his own station wagon and we loaded my uncle into the station wagon, took him to the nearest hospital which was about 20 minutes away, got him stabilized, and then had to transfer him to an ambulance in the next town, and then had to get him into Saskatoon for emergency medical treatment. Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to remember exactly how many hours it was from the time he was injured until he actually received the medical care that he needed in Saskatoon, but it was a long time.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of those kind of stories, communities embarked upon improving health care, and there is now an ambulance in my community. It was bought by my, it was bought by the people who lived . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, no, not thanks . . . some member across . . . This is serious stuff, I wish they'd listen. Some member across there . . . thanks to Roy Romanow. It was not thanks to Roy Romanow. It was thanks, Mr. Speaker, to concerned people, real people concerned about loved ones, who dug into their own pocket, pulled out money, wrote cheques, and funded an ambulance that would provide health care, Mr. Speaker. Roy Romanow had absolutely nothing to do with it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, more recently, more recently, under the Roy Romanow health care era, I had an uncle that needed a hip replacement. And, Mr. Speaker, he had to go month after month after month being on a waiting list, and they kept postponing it. I believe it was close to two years before this loved one was able to get his care that he required.

And I just want to relate one other personal experience if the members opposite will listen. I live near a lake, and there was a young man, he was in his teens and unfortunately he drowned. And, Mr. Speaker, health care provision arrived; unfortunately not in enough time. But in those kind of situations when you're

standing at the shoreline as I was, and you're watching health care professionals try to revive the life of a young man, you realize how important health care is.

And I was impressed with that doctor with equipment, with putting the electricity, trying to restore the heartbeat of this young man, and when minutes count, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately for this young man there weren't enough minutes, but at least there was an ambulance and there was a doctor within about 20 minutes and so there was at least a chance. There was at least a reason to try. And at least the family of that young man knows that there was a health care system within a reasonable distance that made an effort to save that young man's life.

Mr. Speaker, I read the comments of the Deputy House Leader as he opened the debate on referring the Fyke report to the Standing Committee on Health Care. And, Mr. Speaker, he quoted me from I believe it was November 2, and he said:

And I'll quote from *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker:

The success or failure of governments at both levels to design and implement an effective 21st century publicly funded health care system will to a large extent be dictated by the degree to which citizens are given the opportunity for real influence.

And, Mr. Speaker, the House Leader for the government applauded that statement, and I certainly stand by it, Mr. Speaker. But we've seen from this government that they will not allow the public an opportunity for real influence and decision making.

Mr. Speaker, we see it over and over and over again in every area in every department of this government that it's government control — keep a lid on information, Mr. Speaker, don't let the public know what's going on, whether it be water quality, whether it be some of the capers of the Crowns.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're led to believe that perhaps even in health care this government is not really wanting to give the information to the public and allow them to have a real influence over the decisions that are made regarding it.

I refer back to the closing of the Plains hospital. Mr. Speaker, if there was ever a clear message from the people of Saskatchewan . . . Mr. Speaker, if there was ever a message that you could not doubt, it was the people of southern Saskatchewan wanted the Plains hospital to remain open.

Mr. Speaker, I went to the rallies. Some of the members . . . I remember the Deputy Premier being at some of the rallies. I think he was the minister of Health at the time if I'm not mistaken. He heard people practically crying and pleading. There were petitions that were brought forward in this House with hundreds and hundreds of names. And, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader at the time was going to chain himself to the door of the Plains hospital and he and his two remaining colleagues made this the battle cry, Mr. Speaker. They've since forgotten all about it.

But, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people legitimately don't think

they have real influence because when they have voiced their opinions, and when they've made it abundantly clear to this government what direction they are to go, they haven't had a positive response. They've had a shrug of the shoulders, Mr. Speaker, and a no, thank you, we'll do it our way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the standing committee because this is brand new. A brand new standing committee on health care, can you imagine. Tens of . . . what, decades, and we have not had a committee. And I hear the Government House Leader, the member for Prince Albert, and he's also the Government . . . not only the Government House Leader, he's also the Minister for Economic Development, so he must have a . . . you know, he's got a lot of irons in the fire.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell that member, and all members in the House, number one, I support the concept of standing committees. He said that he thought I did. Well I'll set the record straight. In fact, Mr. Speaker, prior to coming to this auspicious Assembly, I have sat on standing committees.

And I want to tell you some of the rules that we followed when I was serving on these standing committees. Mr. Speaker, I served on two, actually. I was a full-fledged member of the standing procedure on House rules and procedures, or Procedures and House Affairs, I believe it was called. I was also a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture in the federal parliament of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, when I was on that committee . . . when I was on that committee, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Government House Leader would listen for a few minutes, I want to tell him about my experience serving on standing committees.

First of all, the rules allowed you to question the government. Mr. Speaker. I was part of the committee, the Standing Committee on Agriculture hearings when we agreed to have the special session here. And then we agreed to put together this . . . an all-party and sector committee together. But, Mr. Speaker, the rules then were that yes, you can question the federal government, but you daren't say anything about the provincial government and its responsibility. Those were the rules, and we were supposed to abide by those rules. We mustn't say anything about provincial responsibility when it comes to agriculture, only point your finger at the feds. And if you can play by those rules, then you can be on our committee.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when I was on the Standing Committee on Agriculture those weren't the rules. You could certainly . . . in fact the whole point of being on the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture was to deal with the federal government's role in agriculture.

As I mean . . . we let the provinces deal with the provincial issues, federal dealt with the federal. You would think that when you have a federal . . . a provincial standing committee, your focus would be on provincial responsibility. But not with the NDP; they would much rather point the finger at somebody

else than possibly look inwardly at their own responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, you could also . . . on the standing committees I served on, you could actually see the report before it was tabled in the House. Mr. Speaker, you were actually part of writing the report; you actually had input into the report. And, Mr. Speaker, if you were in opposition and you didn't agree with the majority in the committee, you could submit a minority report.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly different than the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations that did the study into Channel Lake. The opposition certainly had no hand in writing the report. In fact, the government members didn't have a hand in writing the report. It was written by the premier's aide, Mr. Speaker. It was delivered to the media before members of the standing committee even saw the report. What an abuse of democratic process, and certainly not the way a standing committee is supposed to function, Mr. Speaker.

I'm really not used to the NDP's way of running standing committees, Mr. Speaker. Table officers wrote the report and table officers consulted with all members of the committee and drafts were produced and changes were made democratically, Mr. Speaker. Not the way the NDP operates their standing committees where the premier's assistant, Brian Topp, goes off in a little room — I suppose under direct orders from the premier — and writes out the report in a way that whitewashes and absolves the government of all responsibility and then gives that report to the media without the members of the committee having even seen the report.

Even the member for Regina South knew that that was wrong, Mr. Speaker, and he complained, Mr. Speaker. He complained about the lack of democracy and responsibility on that committee.

Mr. Speaker, then the opposition members chose which of their members would actually sit on the committee; not like this government who wants to choose for the opposition who would even sit on this committee.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know about standing committees, and, Mr. Speaker, I support standing committees, and, Mr. Speaker, we have members here on the provincial standing committees. But what I would point out to the Government House Leader and to all members in the House is that there are right and proper ways to run your standing committees and there are wrong and abusive ways to operate your standing committees. And what I have seen up to this point from the NDP government is they lean pretty heavily towards running them wrong instead of right.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned, finally we have a Standing Committee on Health Care. Why now? Why 2001, almost 100 years after the province was formed? What are we at now, about 67 years after Tommy Douglas first became the premier of Saskatchewan? A half a century since the big medicare debate or almost half a century since the big medicare debate in Saskatchewan, we finally have a Standing Committee on Health Care.

(20:30)

Mr. Speaker, I think that there are three reasons why we have this committee struck right now, and they all, all three reasons start with the letter D. First of all, delay. Mr. Speaker, some decisions have to be made and that government is not prepared to make them. Mr. Speaker, the Fyke, the Fyke Commission report is tabled. The recommendations are there. The decisions need to be made, Mr. Speaker, but they're not ready to bite the bullet whether it be good or bad. They're not ready to stake their ground. They want to delay a little longer.

Mr. Speaker, I think they have another ulterior motive, and I believe that that's to deflect, deflect responsibility from themselves and put it on a larger group. And I'm sure that the Deputy House Leader and perhaps the Premier and the Deputy Premier and perhaps the Minister of Health sat down and said, you know, we're going to take a lot of heat over this Fyke Commission. There's a lot of things in there that are going to be pretty hard to handle because they may not actually improve health care in Saskatchewan. How are we going to spread the blame around more people than just ourselves?

And so they said, what we're going to do is we're going to somehow try to include the Saskatchewan Party in this by striking a committee and putting their members on this committee, and then every time that we make a decision about health care, every time that we see health care professionals leave the province or we see a health care facility downgraded, they'll say, well you know folks, the Saskatchewan Party knew about that. They were part of the hearings, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, their names are at the end of the report. And whether we oppose it or support it, Mr. Speaker, they will try to include us in their decision-making process, even though, Mr. Speaker, based on past performance, we would not be given one iota of say or influence on that committee whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I think the third reason, the third reason that they wanted to strike this committee, they wanted some mechanism to direct the outcome the way they wanted. And I use the word direct, but really what I mean is manipulate, Mr. Speaker. They want to manipulate the process.

Mr. Speaker, it was just . . . like the Fyke report was just a little too cut and dried. Mr. Speaker. Probably some things, some things they wanted to adopt; perhaps some other areas that they didn't want to adopt it and so they thought they'd direct or manipulate the outcome by striking the committee.

And we've seen an example of that, Mr. Speaker, in the standing committee on the child sex trade. Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member from Humboldt, has led a province-wide awareness campaign of the terrible abuse that many children are suffering because of the sex trade in our province. Mr. Speaker, she caused that issue to be made — an issue that the public became very aware of.

I commend her, and I think all members would commend her, for her excellent effort on that. And she was putting some heat on the government. I mean, as she revealed the problem growing and becoming a huge problem in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert, the government realized they had to do something.

So months ago — and I'm not sure; my colleague could tell me

— I don't know how many months ago this committee was struck, but I think it was close to a year ago when they actually struck this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . over a year ago my colleague from Humboldt tells me when they struck this committee. By that time my colleague had already suggested many concrete steps that could be taken.

What does this government do? They want to delay things, they want to deflect criticism, they want to direct the outcome, and they want to do it through a long, elongated process, Mr. Speaker. And so that committee is still holding hearings.

Mr. Speaker, they still haven't introduced legislation on that side of the House that will deal with the child sex trade — one of the most despicable things that we observe in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they talk about it until the cows come home. Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough for the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we don't know if they plan to mothball this Standing Committee on Health Care after it brings down a report or not. If other committees like the Committee on Agriculture or the Committee on the Environment are any indication of this government's respect for standing committees, once they've figured out a way to deal with the difficulties created by the Fyke Commission, the Standing Committee on Health Care will become as obscure as other committees. Mr. Speaker, I hope that's not the case.

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Melfort-Tisdale, introduced an amendment to the motion put forward by the government. And, Mr. Speaker, that amendment calls or would bring to the attention of the House a number of issues.

The first issue that that amendment makes us aware of is that this government knows how to reduce health care services. Mr. Speaker, they have closed at least 53 hospitals in the last decade. And, Mr. Speaker, when they closed these hospitals — and some of them were in my area — they made a promise. They made a commitment to the people that when they undertook this process health care would actually improve. We'll close the hospitals, but we'll improve your health care. I think the member for Kindersley talked a bit about that in his speech on this issue on Friday.

Well, Mr. Speaker, every community where the hospitals were closed have seen the deterioration of health care. Bar none, Mr. Speaker, bar none they have seen a deterioration in the delivery of health care. Mr. Speaker, we thought, because of that, we should include that in our amendment to the motion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know, we know that the Fyke Commission recognized problems with health care but there were very, very few concrete proposals put forward that have ever been tested, that have ever been tested. And you know, the member just opposite was talking about agriculture policy, and why he raised that when I was talking about health care, I have no idea.

But it reminds me of what the federal government did when they eliminated the Crow benefit. Mr. Speaker, they eliminated the Crow benefit and they said they were going to put

something better in place. They said that they were going to put a transition fund in place, but they were going to first eliminate the Crow benefit and then they would get all of the other things put in place that were necessary.

Well that's the same tactic that the NDP use — we're going to get rid of a bunch of stuff, but don't worry; we'll make it better down the road. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals weren't able to do that when it came to the Crow benefit, and that's why I voted against the budget that eliminated the Crow benefit.

This government in 1993 brought forward the wellness model and said they were going to make things better. And, Mr. Speaker, they haven't made health care better in Saskatchewan. They promise . . . They do two things. They promise to take something away and then they promise to replace it with something better. They keep the first promise and every time, Mr. Speaker, they break the second promise. And the people of Saskatchewan are left the worse for wear.

Mr. Speaker, we also mention in our amendment the fact that we are losing health care professionals in Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, some would make this whole Fyke report an issue of health care in rural Saskatchewan versus urban Saskatchewan, but that's certainly not the case. And when we see health care professionals leaving Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I daresay more of them are leaving the urban centres than are leaving rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there are some very dedicated health care providers in rural Saskatchewan, but every time I pick up *The StarPhoenix* or the *Regina Leader-Post*, I read about specialists leaving Regina or Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, to the point where whole health care disciplines are put at risk, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why are the waiting lists so long in Saskatchewan — not in rural Saskatchewan but all of Saskatchewan — why are they so long? Well, Mr. Speaker, it's because we do not have the health care professionals in place to provide adequate health care for even 1 million people in our province. Mr. Speaker, our amendment deals with the issue of the longest waiting lists for health care treatment in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, because our amendment recognizes the failure of the NDP and the need to come forward with a comprehensive health care package, and the need to act rather than to diddle and to study and to study and to study some more, Mr. Speaker, we have put forward our amendment that actually means something and is worth supporting.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to support the amendment and I will not be supporting the motion if the amendment fails.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — There being no further speakers, we now will be conducting the vote. The first vote will be on the amendment proposed by the member for Melfort-Tisdale, seconded by the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, the amendment to the main motion which was originally moved by the member from Prince Albert Northcote and the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

The division bells rang from 20:41 until 20:46.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

**Yeas — 22**

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantfoer	Toth
Stewart	Eagles	Wall
McMorris	D'Autremont	Weekes
Bjornerud	Kwiatkowski	Brkich
Harpauer	Allchurch	Peters
Huyghebaert		

**Nays — 28**

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Atkinson	Serby	Melenchuk
Cline	Sonntag	Van Mulligen
MacKinnon	Wartman	Thomson
Prebble	Belanger	Crofford
Axworthy	Nilson	Hamilton
Junor	Harper	Jones
Higgins	Kasperski	Trew
Osika	Lorjé	Yates
McCall		

The division bells rang from 20:49 until 20:50.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

**Yeas — 28**

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Atkinson	Serby	Melenchuk
Cline	Sonntag	Van Mulligen
MacKinnon	Wartman	Thomson
Prebble	Belanger	Crofford
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Huyghebaert		

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**General Revenue Fund**

**Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation  
Vote 53**

**(Subvote SP01)**

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

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this evening I have with me, to my immediate left, John Law, president of Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. Behind John is Mr. Paul Radigan. He is the director of financial planning. And beside Paul is Garth Rusconi, vice-president of accommodation services. And right beside me, on the right, would be Al Moffat, vice-president of commercial services.

Mr. Chair, in our last session there were some questions asked of me, and I would like to provide this response first to the member from Wood River. The member from Wood River asked a number of questions about air transportation services, including cost per mile, aircraft usage, and the breakdown of cost per mile of the aircraft. One of the questions dealt with cost per mile and whether our \$4 per mile charge includes costs such as hangarage, payroll, insurance, and all other ancillary costs.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that SPMC's cost per mile figure does include payroll, insurance, and other ancillary costs, but because the air transportation hangar in Regina is fully depreciated, hangarage costs are minimal, of course. For the hangar leased by air ambulance in Saskatoon, accommodation costs equal about 20 cents of that charge per mile.

The member from Wood River had also asked for a breakdown of the usage of the fleet of aircraft and the breakdown of the cost per mile for the aircraft. In response to that, Mr. Chair, for Regina-based Executive Air for 2000 and 2001, average costs per mile are about \$4.16, with total miles flown, 421,561. For Saskatoon-based air ambulance for 2000 and 2001, average costs per mile are \$3.34, with 578,939 miles flown.

The question, the final question dealt with the cost of operation. The costs of operating the air ambulance and Executive Air programs for the previous fiscal year are \$1.75 million for Executive Air and 1.935 million for air ambulance.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Battleford-Cut Knife asked a number of questions regarding leased spaces, leased office space, and vacancy in leased office spaces. The question dealt with the amount of . . . one of the questions that we dealt with was the amount of leased space that is currently vacant.

Approximately 2.6 per cent of SPMC's lease space is vacant. This is substantially lower than what is considered to be the acceptable level of vacant space in the real estate industry which ranges from 5 to 7 per cent.

(21:00)

The member from Battleford-Cut Knife asked about the ratio of leased office space in the four major cities. In response to that I would say that 50 per cent of SPMC leased office space is located in Regina. There's approximately 10 per cent of the space in Saskatoon, 9 per cent in Prince Albert, and less than 2 per cent in Moose Jaw.

And the final question that was dealt with on the leased office space in Regina that is currently vacant is the amount of leased office space in Regina that is vacant is approximately 1.2 per cent. While this is a very low vacancy rate, SPMC is

undertaking a number of activities now in downtown Regina and SPMC expects to decrease this number even further with these initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to the members for allowing me to respond to their previous questions and to introduce the officials present with me this evening.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I'd like to tackle an issue that's really very dear to my heart at home and that is the movement or your moving the Department of Agriculture from its old building to the old liquor board store. And I'm wondering what that cost . . . what that move is going to cost and who is going to get struck with the cost of moving.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — I thank the member opposite for the question and as he states, this is something that's been near and dear to his heart, and certainly on behalf of his constituents has followed up on this many occasions with me in conversation and now tonight in Estimates.

We are relocating a government department from a leased spaced to owned space in a government building. And I'm told the total cost of that project was \$265,000 which includes \$132,000 for tenant improvements to have the department move into that space. The rental rate for the last year of the term and the renewal period is \$127,814 per year. So the payback time on this project is estimated to be about 2.8 years, and from there we will be having our office in a government office and government-owned building.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, I guess I have a concern about this move in regards to where you've located the Department of Agriculture now where parking is at a premium. In fact, there is no parking or virtually none, at least not for farm trucks like my constituents were used to doing in North Battleford.

So what you've done there is you've curtailed where they can park now and I guess that's a concern. And I guess I have a concern that you as a government or as a department were not listening to the people of the Battlefords in this regard. And I have a problem with that because I think if you want to destroy agriculture what you are doing is just a great way to do it.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Mr. Chair, to the member opposite, we are an accommodation provider for departments of government.

And in this case, the client would be Agriculture. That client would have to determine whether they can provide the programs and services that they are offering in that location to their clientele, and then base their decision on whether or not they want to expend additional dollars on accommodation or whether that would be better spent on delivery of programs and services through that department area.

One of the areas that we talk about in doing improvements, of course, because it was one that was talked about, was the need to have some parking improvements. Some of the leasehold improvements would include parking and some additional accessibility measures to be taken to assist in the issue that the member identifies.

But in the end, it would be up to the Department of Agriculture to determine if those dollars are going to be spent on programs and whether they can provide the services to their clientele from that location and, with those savings, provide programs and services directly to the people and the customers that they serve.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, switching gears totally, the renovations of the legislation has been completed. Can you tell us what the final cost of renovating the building has been or is.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Mr. Chair, I would be happy to answer the member's question because the renovations of course have been watched carefully by all members of this Assembly. And there's been a lot of going on after hours to make sure the disruption is minimal to the members — to our comfort and to our safety.

And it seems that with final figure verification there may be a slight, very slight, variance up and down from this number, but we believe the final number would be \$18.6 million. The budget provided was a \$20 million budget. So I think the final figures you will find will either be verified there, or we will get back to you information. It might be slightly under or a little over that, but a slight variance from that 18.6 million.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, can you tell us if there were any major projects conducted during the renovation that were originally not planned for?

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Through you, Mr. Chair, we didn't, and tonight again we were trying to decide if there was some discovery of something that we hadn't contemplated originally. But we knew originally that stabilization had to occur so the work done on the underpinning and replacing some of those, I say, leaning soldiers of the past had been done.

Then we moved to address the life safety issues, the building code issues; and so you would see the sprinkler systems installed, the accessibility issues dealt with, and all of the while being mindful that this is a heritage property and we are bound by The Heritage Property Act. But there weren't any, through the process of the renovations, any discoveries of something that was major that we hadn't planned or expected would be there.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, part of the renovations was the long overdue completion of the ramp for visitors in wheelchairs. What was the final cost of this very worthwhile project?

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Because the Legislative Building is a provincial heritage property as I mentioned, we were bound by The Heritage Property Act to ensure that any new construction is sympathetic to the original heritage designs and the architectural drawings from 1908. To do this, we had Tyndall limestone that was used for the exterior of the wheelchair ramp with the marble railing on the interior, and the interior of the entrance cost approximately \$300,000 which includes the lighting, fire detection and sprinkler systems, the new flooring, the wheelchair ramp, and the railing.

And I have to say that some of those features, the people from

SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) discovered some of the fixtures and went to great detail and some work on those to refurbish what's part of our heritage and the historical value of those items. And we appreciate the work that they did in discovery and then restoring them.

(15:45)

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Does this include the construction of the new art gallery that is so very near the ramp for disability? And was the gallery part of the original plan?

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — With all of the fine advice I have this evening, and if memory would serve us well, the \$300,000 cost would include the entire area — the accessibility entrance with the gallery. But just to make absolutely certain, we will double-check that information and will get that back to you as quickly as we can. Thank you.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, besides the ventilation system in the legislature, is there anything that must be done in this building in the near future that was not done in the major renovation?

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Mr. Chair, to the member opposite, this is a building that has been valued at about \$250 million as a heritage property. And as a building of this age and the value of that property, we would want to keep that asset well maintained. And so there will always be those ongoing maintenance issues with a building of this nature and size.

When he's asking if there's anything that . . . we've done a lot of work. Completed work includes stabilizing the building with approximately 1,800 precast concrete piles using state-of-the-art technology. There's elevator pit upgrades; cross face slabs; dewatering system in the mechanical and electrical association with the building stabilization. There's minimal life and safety and building code upgrades, barrier-free accessibility, ventilation upgrades that will be completed or are completed this year, and there's upgrading of the aging mechanical system. There's lower level and high capacity ventilation fans for smoke evacuation, upgrade of electrical systems — there's just a long list.

One of the things that we can think of that we will need to do is to do what's called the repointing — the cladding of the tindlestone and the relationship of that to the brick on the exterior of the building. But that would be, I believe, one of the only major outstanding things. Besides, the ongoing maintenance on a building of this size and value is always quite a major undertaking.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I just have a couple of quick questions and I guess they're a little bit of a follow-up to the answers that you gave at the start when you started in for the member from Wood River on the aircrafts and some of the expenses.

And I was interested at the one and I just wanted a little clarification, I guess. You had said that it was \$4.16 per mile.

Was that per mile? I believe you said per mile for using the aircrafts. And I wasn't . . . I remember the question and I can't remember does that take into consideration everything? Like, I mean salaries? Does it take into consideration fuel also? I guess if you could just — and whether it's here or whenever — give me all the items that you included in that 4.16 per mile.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you. Mr. Chair, through you to the member opposite. Earlier I had stated that, and we had stated that there is usually, when we average things out, it's about a \$4 per mile charge which includes many things.

In the response to Regina-based government air transportation services, that would be about \$4.16 per mile, and that would include pilots' and engineers' salaries and benefits, training, employee expenses, allocated administration, fuel and oil, materials and parts, permits and licences, in-flight expenses, pilots' and engineers' overtime, and any shop expenses.

What I did mention that our hangar is a very old hangar and because of that the hangarage costs have been depreciated and so they're very minimal right now. So that wouldn't include the same kinds of hangarage charge that we have, for example, for the air ambulance in Saskatoon.

So we can provide you with a more detailed breakdown of that in writing, and we'll get that to you as soon as we can.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Madam Minister, I'd appreciate that. If I could have the breakdown of the costs in writing, that would be very useful.

It was interesting you had said that the hangar is pretty much depreciated out — the one here at the airport. I guess it's maybe a little bit of a question for the future. What are you looking at doing? I've heard some questions and comments on that hangar with some black mould considered problems. And so what are you looking at in the future? Are you looking at relieving yourself of that property and getting into something else? And if you do, will that then be considered as an expense to be factored in the full expense, and how do you look at doing that?

You know, if you're looking at a private business that is starting up, they have to have a hangar and the aircraft and that's all going to be considered in. When you're trying to compare what the cost per mile is for Exec Air compared to private charter, I mean, those are costs that they're going to be incurring and I guess that should also be probably factored in.

So I guess, first of all what are your plans in the future with respect to the black mould that is found in the present hangar and what are your plans for the future?

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — I think I would like to start the answer this way, Mr. Chair, in that at all times the health and the welfare of employees is paramount in our minds, and we are . . . been examining all options of how we would provide hangarage services at the lowest cost available to us, keeping in mind all of those types of requirements.

So we are at present investigating all options open to us for accommodation with the efficiency of trying to provide that at a good cost or the lowest cost possible.

It would be good to note, though, that we've done that in Saskatoon. We looked for other hangar options because we had to relocate there. And when we did that, we found new accommodation, as the member would probably know, a very good accommodation for these services and the cost is 20 cents per mile for that service on a leasing arrangement.

So yes, that would be factored in as all other costs are. But in the case of providing that very good service and accommodation in Saskatoon, the additional charge to these costs would be 20 cents per mile.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. So I guess . . . the question more though was directed at the situation here in Regina. I'm not very familiar, although maybe I should be, regarding the situation in Saskatoon.

But the facility here in Regina — I guess as I said, I've heard some complaints of black mould in that building.

I guess I'd like to know, one way or the other, is that a problem in that building and what are the steps that you are taking in the future? You answered what had happened in Saskatoon. I'm asking what will happen in Regina?

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, we did do a thorough investigation of that building and that identified mould contamination in the building, that has been contained and it's been sealed. And we are continuing to look at this through the eyes of occupational health and safety and through the eyes of engineers in how to handle that situation and whether or not we would follow that as an accommodation to pursue. We're not ruling out any options.

We're going to review all options available to us and whatever course of action, we'll have everything to consider in that decision that is finally made. And when the decision is taken, we will then cost factor that into the cost that we give to you.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the minister then, when you were saying all options, have you also looked at . . . You're looking at all options, I guess, regarding hangarage.

Have you also looked at the options of private charters for a lot of the miles that you're doing as opposed to going into a new facility?

(21:30)

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — I would like to go into this in two parts. First there were some old discoveries in the building which have been sealed and contained. We are now working with engineers to have a full reporting on that building, not to rule that out as an option, but certainly to look at all options available to us. So we wouldn't discount at this time what can or cannot be done.

To the other part of the question — and I think that was what the member from Wood River was trying to get to and said that another time he'd be glad to debate that with me — we continually compare our service to a private service and service of charters, and there are many reasons why we don't go there

in a major way. But outside consultants have confirmed to us comparisons, at least twice, that we're running a service that is efficient and effective for the dollars spent.

And I would also add that where charters make sense — and we have a good working rapport with outside charters as well — they would say that for many services their operation has to rely on a mainstream of business being done, and some of the kinds of meetings, and the maybe prolonging of those meetings and the layovers, and those kinds of things, are factored into that. So the comparisons we've used have been very favourable to the service that we provide.

**Mr. McMorris:** — I guess what I'd like to do is kind of — and maybe I'm hung up on hangars here — move to another hangar that SPMC is in charge of with the CVA (Central Vehicle Agency) vehicles. I believe that's an old hangar facility and there's some problems with that one too, and mould. I believe that they've had to shift some people outside in temporary work units, trailers, what have you.

What is the government's plan in that respect? That building — I know I've been in it many, many times — is quite an old building. Are they looking at moving that whole service from there into another facility, or are they looking at trying to fix the problems that they have in that building? Just I guess a couple questions around that, maybe just the government's intent to begin with.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — The member is correct, Mr. Deputy Chair, that this is another hangar building, and talking about service and years of service, both those building over the years have provided excellent service to us.

This one is about 60 years old. So again when the mould was discovered, as he mentioned, our major consideration would be employees first and they've been relocated. We've looked at the area of contamination; we've contained it and sealed it. And now I would say in both instances we're into the preliminary review of whether it's good to utilize these facilities any further and prolong the life of these, or to look at a new facility or locating to some type of leased space. We will consider all options and we're very early on in that stage.

But these buildings certainly have given us a long life and usage over a number of years, and this one, a hangar and is over 60 years old, would certainly say it's had a useful life.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, just one final question than. So I guess the CVA situation is similar to the exec air hangar out where it's depreciated out completely and the cost then would not be factored in to the per mile or kilometre cost of running CVA vehicles, which I guess in a way would kind of distort the numbers of how much it truly does cost per mile.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — You know, Mr. Chair, I thought I heard for a moment a half-baked idea coming from one of the members opposite. I can't quite be sure but I thought I heard that.

This would be right. These buildings have been depreciated over a number of years but again, they're old buildings. So we would consider the maintenance costs, the janitorial services, all

of the costs of a building that you would use for those kinds of services. So we would factor those in but again the depreciation over a period of time. Those costs have been depreciated in the costs of earlier times but we would factor in all of the maintenance and janitorial.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In 1999, SS . . . Saskatchewan Property Management released a five-year strategic plan, a business plan. Can you give a brief description of this plan, business plan, and update its progress. And it's now into between the second and third year.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — I did have that in my initial remarks to the member opposite but I think I will just go through some of that again for the member, the bits and pieces I saved, and then from our memory and the information that I can provide to him.

This past year we've seen many continued and positive and innovative changes at SPMC. The corporation is now in year three of our five-year strategic business plan developed in 1999. The plan lays the groundwork for where the corporation wants to be for this new millennium.

This last year we saw the development of four strategic priorities based on our strategic business plan. Our strategic priorities provide a positive, focused course for our corporation for the next two years. It'll place focus on, number one, our customers, viable lines of business, our people, and investing in assets that support our strategic objectives.

Now the four strategic priorities based on the strategic business plan would focus us on a positive course of direction to again provide efficient and effective services to our customers. It would allow us to look at what are our viable lines of services and how we provide them and to look at our employees and how to develop employees and the developing of the corporation and value the employee. And investing in the assets for again asset renewal, but assets into the future, and how we best provide those accommodation services.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. A question to the minister regarding the E. I. Wood building in Swift Current, owned by the Property Management Corporation . . . owned and operated by the Property Management Corporation, specifically as it relates to an energy efficient . . . efficiency audit, I think, that they either approved or spearheaded along with SaskPower.

And I think there was a contractor that was involved in the audit, and several pieces of work were prescribed for the building. And I wonder if you could inform the committee, Madam Minister, as to what requirements your corporation put on this project that any work that would be done as a result of the audit would have . . . would put a priority on tendering the work locally within the communities where the work was being done, in this case the city of Swift Current.

(21:45)

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Swift Current building, the E.I. Wood Building, is going through that

process — having the audit done with Honeywell through the SaskPower processes and the partnership that we've established.

But our policy would provide opportunities for any work greater than \$25,000 to be done in that building going out to public tender. If it's less than \$25,000 of work that's needed or services, then an invitational tender goes out and that would provide for some local opportunities as well.

For the member opposite, I will get the final result of that to let him know if it falls in one category or the other to assist him into understanding whether there would be public tendering in this case or the invitational tender would go out. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, I thank you for that. I look forward to that information because my understanding is from local contractors is that there was no opportunity to bid on some of the projects.

One of them I'm a little bit aware of and I don't know the details. Was it tender for acoustic ceiling tile or I guess it would also be more energy efficient ceiling tile, something of course that many contractors in Swift Current would be more than capable of at least tendering on and I would argue would have a chance at successfully tendering on them. But I was under the understanding that on that particular part of the work being done at E.I. Wood but that there was no such opportunity afforded them. And if I'm wrong then I'll accept the correction. And I'd ask you to address that if you can and also I look forward to that information. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Yes, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member opposite for that example because we will look at this particular building and the amount of work. And again I said, one would be greater than \$25,000 it would go out to a full public tendering process. But the invitational tender call would also include some local opportunity. So we need to give him that information so he's able to speak to that and we would endeavour to provide that to him. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my officials this evening for their support and advice to me in trying to answer the questions from the members opposite. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, I move the committee report SPMC and move to Energy and Mines.

The committee reported progress.

**General Revenue Fund  
Energy and Mines  
Vote 23**

**Subvote (EMO1)**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I'll ask the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Seated to my immediate right is our deputy minister, Ray Clayton. To his right is the acting assistant deputy minister of

resource policy and economics, Trevor Dark. To my left is the executive director of petroleum and natural gas, Bruce Wilson. Immediately behind me is Donald Koop, the assistant deputy minister of finance and administration. And to his right, and behind me and to my right, is George Patterson, the executive director, exploration and geological services.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Good evening, Mr. Minister, and welcome to the staff once again from the Department of Energy and Mines. You are always very helpful and we appreciate what you can do.

I thought that seeing as we're at the start of Provincial Mining Week, we might focus a few questions in this area that's so important to our province's economy. Mr. Minister, the mining industry in our province faces many issues. One of them is the fuel tax on diesel fuel that they face, road tax on fuel used off-road. Some of this fuel is used on roads that they build themselves on mine sites and the bulk of it is used in mining operations specifically.

What can you share with us in this regard? Is there anything afoot to change this? We seem to be the only province in the country that still charges this road tax on off-road fuel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — This response, most appropriately, should be directed to the Department of Finance who would deal with this.

But let me just say this generally. I know the Department of Finance has dealt with this question a number of times. I don't think the door is ever closed on it. But my understanding is — and I don't want to speak on their behalf — but my understanding is that the concern is really around the issue of, the term they use, leakage. So that they would need to be able to ensure that the usage was off-road, if they ever did decide . . . was entirely, I should say, off-road if they actually did decide to go down that — pardon the pun — down that road.

But if you want to ask that question with more detail, I'm sure the Department of Finance would be able to answer that question more specifically.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister, it seems leakage isn't that big a problem in the other nine provinces in this country.

As Minister of Energy and Mines, have you been lobbying Finance to make these changes?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — I think probably the most appropriate response is that the Department of Finance . . . this started sometime last fall, a committee was struck. The Department of Finance, Department of Energy and Mines, and the Mining Association together sit on a committee dealing with a whole host of issues and I know that this issue is in the agenda for discussion. And so again I say, I know that the door is not closed on that issue.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm very happy to hear that.

Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister, we also hear about tax

structure problems in Saskatchewan that the mining industry is facing. They also mention the overlap and duplication of government in

Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister, we also hear about tax structure problems in Saskatchewan that the mining industry is facing. They also mention the overlap and duplication of government involvement in this industry. My question, Mr. Minister, regarding this is what is being done here, what assurances can you give the industry that this overlap is being reduced?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — I don't want to be presumptive in the question, but I'm assuming the member is really specifically asking the issue mostly around the issue of uranium, I think probably because that's where we hear most of the concerns. You may or may not be aware that the department has ongoing discussions with the new entity I guess it is, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission that deals with overlap to try to ensure, especially with our Department of Environment here in Saskatchewan and with the federal agencies, that we don't overlap too much as it pertains to specifically the uranium industry.

In the other areas I think that criticism, I think, is probably not nearly as valid. There doesn't seem to be, from my perspective anyway, nearly as much overlap as we acknowledge exists in the uranium sector.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, that's good. I'm glad that this committee is studying the overlap problem in the uranium industry. Has any progress been made though? Is there anything forthcoming to reduce this overlap?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — You asked whether progress is being made and I am informed that progress indeed has been made. They have their work plans in place. The objective is so that there would be one regulator in place, and the report is to be brought forward with those recommendations.

Originally they had set it up over an 18-month period. Again I am told that the first six months there wasn't a lot of progress made, so we are probably a year away from a report to be made to us.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, the industry talks about the regulatory burden they face. Mr. Chair, we need to grow Saskatchewan and the mining industry feels the regulations they have to go through are burdensome. What update, Mr. Minister, can you give the House in this situation? Are any changes being planned to help the mining industry in this regard?

(22:00)

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Again acknowledging the regulatory burdens that do exist, we have an industry government group or body that has been established with, in fact, its first meeting to take place on June 9 of this year, in a matter of a couple of weeks, to start to address some of these issues.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair,

Mr. Minister, they also talk of the licensing process and what needs to be done here in terms of streamlining this and in effect possibly speeding the process up. What assurances, Mr. Minister, can you give the industry that this is being done?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Again, not to be presumptive but I believe this question is most specifically directed towards the uranium industry again. Again we acknowledge the issues around licensing. The federal government, through actually Minister Goodale from the province here in Saskatchewan and our Department of Environment, tell us that this is a high priority for them and in fact that they do want to make progress on this file as well.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, has any thought been given to the Department of Energy and Mines being a facilitator, expeditor for the licensing process between the three levels of government and between different departments within those levels of government in order to cut red tape and time lag for the licensing and approval process for the mining industry?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — I think unofficially the department acts in that role quite frequently on a day-to-day basis and that was really . . . For me personally when I met with especially the oil and gas sector, many of them, as I was introducing myself to them as the new minister, they talked often about their concerns that they had but they also talked about the department here in Saskatchewan and how quick they were to respond to concerns that they had. So that tells me that, in fact, the department does respond to issues. And as they tell me, almost on a daily basis, they act as facilitators in an unofficial capacity.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The capital tax resource surcharge is a huge problem that this industry faces. It prevents, Mr. Chair, prevents the industry from investing in Saskatchewan and hinders growth. What progress is being made? Is it a priority for Energy, Mines, and Finance to get this tax reduced? I believe we're the only province in the country that imposes this tax any more. It's usually one of the first things that the mining industry, in particular, complain about when we talk with them. Is there any progress being made on this tax, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Again, this really is an issue that is in the jurisdiction of the Department of Finance. But having said that, I personally know from the limited time that I've been in this portfolio that it is clearly an issue with the industry. There is no question of that.

But I guess speaking generally, from our perspective as well and as a member of government, clearly we have to try to balance revenues off with the priorities of the public of Saskatchewan. And the . . . as our Minister of Finance says so many times, the pie is only so big and we have to, as a government, establish what our priorities are.

In closing in the response that we acknowledge that it clearly is an issue with the industry, and we continue to work with Finance to address that issue.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm certainly happy to hear that. I have in my hand the document that purports to be

financial highlights of the first quarter of the year 2001 for Cameco Corporation, and it shows changes from the first quarter of year 2000 to the first quarter of 2001 in several categories. Revenue, down 51 per cent. Earnings from operations, down 86 per cent. Cash provided by operations, down 46 per cent. Net earnings attributable to common shares, down 89 per cent. Earnings per share, down 94 per cent. And it goes on to cover a few more categories that are all down as well.

Mr. Minister, I understand that the price of uranium is low and has been low for some time now with an oversupply worldwide. But what conditions are causing these dismal results so much worse than last year's results, in fact?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Yes, I would speculate on a few factors. First of all, there is a general oversupply caused by some of the following. There's the secondary supply as a result of the dismantling of nuclear weapons. So that's one of the things that attributes to this. The reduction of supply by strategic investors and also, generally, utilities holding less inventory than they used to hold.

Now I think that one of the bright spots though, certainly with respect to this industry, is if we look into the United States who have been operating in the last number of months, particularly in California, with the rolling blackouts, they are I think particularly interested in uranium as a source of generating electricity.

And I know from speaking to that industry, they are also optimistic. And you may have heard in the past week or so some of the public optimism that they've been talking about in the industry and I think the optimism is justified as well.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, is it the opinion of you, Mr. Minister, and your department that this glut, this secondary supply problem of uranium will have disappeared or nearly disappeared by the time the Cigar Lake project will come on stream in say approximately 2005?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Not being an expert on this myself, I know the industry has been speculating that this oversupply they anticipated will probably last for several more years yet.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I have here a newspaper clipping or photocopy of one, I believe, from *The Leader-Post*, April 28. It states:

Revenues from potash operations . . .

This is referring to IMC (International Minerals and Chemical Corporation (Canada) Ltd.

Revenues from potash operations decline 16 per cent in the first quarter of the year to 223.4 million due to lower domestic and export shipments. Sales volume decreased 18 per cent to 2.1 million short tonnes compared to record company shipments in the first quarter of 2000.

It goes on to say:

IMC global net profits for the quarter were 14.7 million or 13 cents a share versus \$39.3 million a year ago.

Mr. Minister, in the view of you and your department, what is causing this recent slippage in potash?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — I think it's general within the potash industry, I am told, that throughout the year there is certain months that are generally not so good and other months that historically are generally quite a bit better. And while this year hasn't started out particularly good, there is, I am told, optimism within the industry that we should still have a pretty decent year with . . . as it pertains to potash.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, this article that I quoted from compares the first quarter of 2001 to the first quarter of 2000. My question really was — and I'm sure I didn't make it clear — what conditions have changed in the last year, first quarter over first quarter, to cause this kind of slip?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — The two main apparent factors are the, first of all, the late spring in the US (United States) and secondly, sales to the Chinese are down this year.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, do you expect this to be an ongoing problem with China? The seasons in the United States are of course an off-again, on-again type of thing, could be the same thing next year, might be back to normal. But the Chinese situation is what I'm concerned about. Is that going to clear up any time soon?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — I'm told the China markets are very cyclical — they've been up and down over the years — and again the industry is fairly optimistic about this. There's no reason to believe that this is any protracted or sustained downward trend by any stretch.

(22:15)

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Picking some numbers here from a *StarPhoenix* article regarding the Fort à la Corne diamond project, sample values they say came in at 148 to \$179 US per carat, with revenue per tonne of kimberlite processed estimated at between 28 to 33 US dollars per tonne. This caused Kensington director Murray Tildesley to predict a \$50 Canadian per tonne profit should a mine go ahead.

Are these numbers, Mr. Minister, holding up as far as we know? Apparently this mine would be able to produce 60,000 tonnes a day at this price. That's \$3 million a day. Does it still appear with the latest results that this is holding up and can we expect that this project will go ahead?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — The industry really is in the midst of evaluating just the very issue you raise and we would be of the view that it would be inappropriate for us to speculate on values.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I am holding a government news release entitled, "Government to Boost Geo-Science Funding". It says changes include a 50 per cent decrease in fees for registering a mineral

permit. What is the cost in Saskatchewan to register a permit now?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — The price will be dropping from 30 cents per hectare down to 15 cents per hectare. I just want to take the opportunity . . . actually it just fits in perfectly with this question you've just asked. I note the president of Claude Resources, Neil McMillan, in the paper from *Saskatchewan Mining Journal* of just a few weeks ago, says that, and I quote:

You have to give the provincial government credit for trying with the measures they have come up with. The new investment tax credit and the geo-science initiative is money very, very, very well invested, McMillan says. They've done a good job with it. They've done a good job, period.

And that's the end of the quote.

So they're pleased generally, the industry is, with this initiative.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. This news release goes on to say changes are also planned in the mineral disposition regulations to clarify and update the land administration system. What changes, Mr. Minister, would that be?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Here's three of the main changes that are being proposed. We're going to limit the number . . . the amount of time, I should say, that land can be held without exploration taking place on it. We're going to give an extra 10 days for registering claims, and we're going to clarify a number of the definitions within the sector.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, switching now to the oil and gas industry. Referring to a recent article in the Regina *Leader-Post* from Wednesday, May 2 entitled, "Drillers going full bore." Mr. Chair, the article begins by stating that Saskatchewan could see a record number of gas wells drilled this year, close to 1,800. That's from a forecast done by the Petroleum Services Association of Canada. But continuing in the next paragraph it states that a senior government official says that PSAC gas well forecast may be too optimistic.

My question for the minister is could he clarify this. How many gas wells will likely be drilled? Will it be 1,800; will it be closer to 1,300? I think 1,300 was the total last year?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — We are running slightly ahead of last year and last year was an all-time record.

We would be of the view that 1,800 is slightly optimistic. It would represent literally a 50 per cent increase over last year which, while we do believe will be ahead of last year's all-time record, we don't believe right now that we would hit the 1,800.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, 4,240 wells, you know, are expected to be drilled in this province according to PSAC. Now that's up 9 per cent from last year. Last year was a record year for drilling.

Where are the numbers at right now? Are we on target with this

forecast or are we closer to the numbers of last year at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — On oil we are actually down a little bit from last year. I'm looking at the most recent records that we have, that is to May 18 of this year. So May 18 this year as compared to May 18 last year, on the oil wells, we're actually down a few wells and on the gas, we're up from last year.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, this government official that makes these predictions, Mr. Bruce Wilson, executive director of the petroleum and natural gas division of Saskatchewan Energy and Mines, also says in this newspaper article that lower prices for heavy oil could reduce the number of wells drilled in the Lloydminster area.

Could the minister please update this Assembly on this particular situation? Will there likely be less wells drilled in the Lloyd area this season?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Again in the Lloydminster area, this is with the most recent statistics to May 18, we are in fact down slightly, but it's very, very slightly overall in the number of wells.

And of course, the issue with heavy oil is the higher differentials that currently exist in that sector.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, it doesn't seem like there's much of a change, percentage wise, but how will all of this change in projected drillings change your numbers and financial forecasts. If Mr. Wilson is indeed correct about the number of wells drilled being less than what PSAC is predicting, could the minister explain how this could possibly affect the province's finances?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — I think the best way to answer that is that our estimates are consistent as it pertains to drilling, as it pertains to revenue. So our projections in revenues would be based on what we had predicted in drilling, and those numbers are consistent, if I'm explaining myself, I think. Period. I'll leave it at that there. The numbers are consistent based on the wells that we projected that we would drill in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Chair, this is a convenient time to break off. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the officials. They're always a great help to us in estimates and we appreciate it very much.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 22:28.