

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today again from citizens of the Wadena area.

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

The people that have signed this petition are all from Wadena.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition concerning the water crisis in North Battleford. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

We pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on the provincial and federal governments to provide immediate financial assistance to the city of North Battleford in order to facilitate necessary improvements to the North Battleford water treatment plant.

Your petitioners come from the communities of Battleford and North Battleford.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of WECADA, the Weyburn Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Weyburn who believe there's a need for an in-patient treatment centre in the city of Weyburn. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support this in-patient treatment centre and provide funding for the same.

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present regarding the EMS (emergency medical service). The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the people from the Antler-Redvers area.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition dealing with the Redvers Health Centre. The prayer reads:

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

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the good people of the Bellegarde; Redvers; Sinclair, Manitoba; Fairlight; and Storthoaks-Maryfield-Fertile area.

I so present.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who expressed an interest in the maintaining and upgrading of the Saskatchewan road network. And the prayer goes as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to ask the Government of Saskatchewan to continue with its foresight and vision of increasing the funding to \$900 million over the next three years to maintain and upgrade our thoroughfares of commerce.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from the city of Regina.

I so submit.

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have petitions by those who are concerned with tobacco smoke and second-hand tobacco smoke, and all the harm that that causes. And they petition to us:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive provincial legislation to prevent children from starting to smoke, to protect all citizens from second-hand smoke in public places and workplaces, and to control youth access to tobacco products.

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

And this is signed by people from Weyburn, Radville, and Ceylon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition for improving cellular telephone coverage. The prayer reads:

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

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

From the citizens of Rabbit Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and present a petition in support of comprehensive tobacco control legislation. And it's signed by individuals concerned about the financial and human costs of tobacco in the province. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive provincial legislation to protect children from starting to smoke, to protect all citizens from second-hand smoke in public places and workplaces, and to control youth access to tobacco products.

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

And this petition is signed predominantly by young people in Weyburn. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

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

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

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from Kamsack, Regina, and Yorkton.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens from the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency in regards to the health care services in the area:

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

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

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

I so present.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to present petitions on behalf of a number of Saskatchewan residents who are very concerned about the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to legislate a total ban on smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces and on school property within the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by residents of Weyakwin, Candle Lake, Paddockwood, Shellbrook, and Prince Albert.

I so present.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition from concerned citizens with reference to the cellular telephone coverage in rural Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cell coverage to all communities throughout the Wood River constituency.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed in total by the good citizens of Rockglen.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition asking the government to provide reliable cellular service in the Wood River constituency.

And 14 other petitions that are addendums to previously tabled petitions.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 48 grade 8 and 9 students from the community of Kipling. And they're accompanied by their teachers Mr. Rod Holowaty and Nancey McCarthy.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague the member from Cannington as

well is represented in this group as the two constituencies meet. The boundary is just a few miles south of Kipling. So we're going to be pleased to meet with the group later on.

I'd like to also acknowledge the work that Mr. Holowaty was involved in in the establishment of the Social Sciences Teachers Institute that this Legislative Assembly sponsors, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd invite all members to extend a welcome to the students, the chaperones, and the teachers from Kipling that have joined us today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleague, the member from Moosomin, in welcoming the school group from Kipling and Corning, Mr. Speaker, and those students from south Kipling who are . . . reside in my constituency, as well as the teachers, Mr. Holowaty and Nancey McCarthy, who taught at the Corning School.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members to welcome them here again to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I am indeed very, very pleased today to introduce a special group of people from Cumberland House; more particularly, Mr. Speaker, they're 18 grade 5 students from Charlebois School. Along with them is teacher, Bev Cheechoo; chaperones, Doug Nabess, Sheila Settee, Wilma McKay, and Aaron Fosseneuve.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned to them that His Highness Prince Charles was here to talk about the . . . not only the province but also the official opening of the Cumberland Gallery, which is named after Cumberland Lake and Cumberland House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also say in our language in Cumberland, Ta wow, which means, you're welcome. And I'd like all members to welcome our special guests from Cumberland House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the legislature, 29 grade 4 students from St. Josaphat in my constituency, and seated in the west gallery. Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Pack, and their chaperone, Mrs. Dore.

And I'm looking forward to meeting with these students, I think a little after two o'clock. And I'd just like to ask all members to join me in welcoming these grade 4 students from the school of St. Josaphat in my constituency.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you I want to join my colleague from Cumberland to welcome the guests from Cumberland House.

And I know that the amount of travel and the amount of work that goes into organizing a trip all the way to visit the Assembly, it's a tremendous amount of work. And I want to thank the students for taking the opportunity for travelling the many miles to come and see how the Assembly works.

And I will also point out, Mr. Speaker, that there is good competition between Cumberland House, the hometown of the member from Cumberland, and my hometown of Ile-a-la-Crosse. And we usually beat them in hockey. And they are an older community than Ile-a-la-Crosse. There is a Cumberland Gallery, but the Athabasca Gallery is much older.

And I want to point out that I'm certainly glad that they're here, and they're most certainly welcome here and I hope they learn a lot from the proceedings today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Restoration of Old Government House

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1876, Battleford was declared the capital of the then North-West Territories. Two-thirds of present-day Canada was governed from the building that still stands on a hill overlooking the forks of the Battle and Saskatchewan rivers.

Monday I participated in a news conference at Old Government House to launch a new initiative. At the request of the town of Battleford, we are circulating a petition asking for the restoration of Old Government House. I can think of no more important project for our province's centennial than its restoration.

I congratulate the efforts of people like Mayor Gail Sack, Len Taylor, Chair of the Friends of Government House, and Father Mann of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Together with the member for Battleford-Cut Knife, I will be presenting a petition to this House asking that Old Government House receive the recognition it is due.

Mr. Speaker, it was such a pity when Governor Dewdney bought up a bunch of land in the pile of bones area and then moved the capital there. We should not compound that error by allowing the most historic building in this province to be lost through neglect and decay.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Library Services for Aboriginal People

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past couple of weeks, there have been two very encouraging announcements on programs designed to address the needs of First Nations and Metis people as they move towards full participation in the social and economic life of our province.

The first was the launch of the framework for co-operation, a program which brings together three levels of government, Metis and First Nations organizations, and the private sector to

achieve the goal of full participation in the social, economic life of this province by all of our people.

A second related announcement is aimed at improving access by all Aboriginal people to public library services through a Minister's Advisory Committee on Library Services for Aboriginal People. The committee has been established to identify ways to encourage and enable all Aboriginal people to use the educational, cultural, and entertainment library services available to most, but not all, of us.

The committee consists of librarians from all areas of the province. It will make its recommendations this fall after holding meetings, also in all areas of the province to enable full participation by Aboriginal people.

(13:45)

This committee will do good work, and I congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs for establishing it. It is my hope that the opposition will join with us in working to ensure every success for these very important endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wesmor Community High School Wins McKercher Cup

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with a distinct pleasure I rise this afternoon to bring further recognition to the Prince Albert area. On April 28, Mr. Speaker, the legal firm of McKercher, McKercher & Whitmore presented the McKercher Cup at the second annual Canadian Bar Association's provincial high school mock trial competition.

This prestigious award, Mr. Speaker, went to Wesmor Community High School from the city of Prince Albert, a school that I had a direct hand in helping to create. Wesmor defeated teams from Regina and Saskatoon in the final competitions.

The team was coached by Dipak Dookum, a social science teacher at Wesmor, with legal advice of the help of Jocelyn Putland and Mark Hillenbrand.

Mr. Speaker, the team consisted of Hayley Kinash, Dan Dulmer, Jennifer Andrews, Jasmine Wolfe, Terra Lennox Zepp, Mandy Ethier, and Lauren Bunes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating these talented young people on this remarkable achievement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Interprovincial Association on Native Employment

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend the Interprovincial Association on Native Employment conference this morning.

The IANE (Interprovincial Association on Native Employment Inc.) organization has been in existence for 25 years. Its main

responsibility is to serve individuals that are concerned with issues related to Aboriginal employment and adjoining matters like training, management, science and technology, and entrepreneurship.

IANE has contributed to the development of an increased awareness and action in employment oriented aspirations and capabilities of Aboriginal people. When they first started in mining, Mr. Speaker, they wanted a lot of tremendous goals. They were pleased when I reported that the employment at the mines today rose from the early 1990s, from 500 people to 1,000 people — over 80 per cent Aboriginal employment, over 50 people in supervision.

They were also very pleased when I reported that there were \$20 million worth of contracts for northern entrepreneurs, and now 200 million.

They also wanted Mr. Bill Hanson who last year got the Saskatchewan Award of Merit. Mr. Speaker, this is a tremendous individual who not only practised the goals in getting a lot of people employed in all the systems, but he was also there in dealing with the theory and the practice. He wrote a handbook called "Dual Realities and Dual Strategies."

So today was a special day for IANE and Bill Hanson. I'll have all members please acknowledge that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Archerwill Resident Receives National Volunteer Award

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, today it gives me great pleasure to honour constituent Doris Dewhurst of Archerwill, Saskatchewan who was recently presented with the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award at a ceremony at Rideau Hall.

The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award is presented to individuals and groups whose unpaid voluntary contributions provide extraordinary help or care to people in the community. The award is given to recipients that have served over a number of years and normally have not been recognized by another national or provincial honour.

Mr. Speaker, the news release announcing this award states of Mrs. Dewhurst: in the early '80s Doris Dewhurst was a member of a volunteer board responsible for establishing home care services for seniors. Herself a senior living alone, she single-handedly organized and prepared one dinner a month at a local seniors' centre for others who lived by themselves.

Although poor health recently forced her to turn responsibilities for the program over to a local church, she remains actively involved in the church and in the community. She makes quilts and baby blankets for the Canadian Lutheran World Relief, and for several years has sewn neckerchiefs for the local scout group.

Of the 28 volunteers to receive the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award, Mrs. Dewhurst was the only one from Saskatchewan.

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Kelvington-Wadena constituency to congratulate Mrs. Dewhurst on receiving this award for her work within her community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Community Projects Receive Funds

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Premier brought some good news for Saskatoon organizations with the presentation to seven organizations in my home city with program grants to assist in providing health, sports, and recreation programs for vulnerable children and families.

The total amount of the grants received by the seven organizations equalled more than \$160,000. The community groups that received the grants from the Associated Entities Fund are:

The Saskatoon and District Labour Council for a project called, “Brush, Floss, and Smile,” a summer program for children who are at risk for dental disease;

The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op for “Seeds of Strength”, a summer youth leadership program developing self-confidence and strengthening youth attachments to both school and community;

The Westmount Community Association for providing social, recreational, cultural, and leisure opportunities for at-risk families;

The King George Community School for a community-based youth initiative providing summer recreation for youth;

“Roots and Wings”, a post-natal outreach service for selected first-time mothers;

Joe Duquette High School for a Working Together project;

And finally, the Absentee Assessment Team wraparound project to assess the issue of absentee youth from elementary schools.

Mr. Speaker, I’m sure all members will want to join me in congratulating these organizations on the receipt of their funding.

Thank you very much.

Former Star City Resident Competes in Judo Championships

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate 18-year-old Frazer Will, a former resident of Star City.

In order to further improve his skills in judo he has recently been training at the national training centre in Montreal. This young man’s dedication and hard work have already earned him a long list of achievements in the sport of judo. His most recent achievement was when he competed as a member of the

Saskatchewan team at the Junior National Judo Championships in Kelowna, BC. There he won four out of five of his matches, earning him a bronze medal in the 60-kilogram junior men’s division. He’ll be going on to compete at the Senior National Championships scheduled in Quebec and then on to a tournament in Italy.

Will the Assembly join me today in congratulating Frazer Will and wishing him further success in his sport. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hemochromatosis Awareness Week

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week, the week of May 25 to 31, is Hemochromatosis Awareness Week. That very few of us know what hemochromatosis is speaks to the need of designating a week dedicated to promoting awareness about the disorder.

Hemochromatosis is one of the most common genetic disorders and one in 300 Canadians are at risk of developing it. This disorder results in an overload of iron in the body. If this disorder goes undetected and is not diagnosed the iron build up can damage vital organs. Complications of this disorder include diabetes, liver disease, abdominal pain, and arthritis.

Because this disorder is hereditary, siblings and offspring of individuals affected by hemochromatosis are carriers of the recessive gene that causes the disorder. The Canadian Hemochromatosis Society has made it their goal to identify the one in 300 Canadians at risk of developing hemochromatosis and the one in nine Canadians who are carriers.

Awareness about hemochromatosis must be raised, more now than ever because we live in a day and age when systemic iron supplementation to one’s diet is an issue in many countries.

Hemochromatosis is the only hereditary disorder in which all of its complications are entirely preventable by early diagnosis and treatment — another reason for raising public awareness.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, I want to thank the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society for the work they do to raise awareness about this very important health issue. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investigation of Alleged Improprieties at the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Liquor and Gaming.

Yesterday the Premier seemed a little confused, Mr. Speaker, about who would investigate the former minister of Liquor and Gaming’s fishing trip. Inside the House the Premier clearly stated he would not ask Justice Wakeling to investigate. Outside of the House, outside of the House, the Premier clearly said he would ask Justice Wakeling to investigate.

Mr. Speaker, which one is it? Has Justice Wakeling been asked to investigate the minister's fishing trip or not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, in response to some of the allegations, a breach of section 133 of the liquor and gaming Act, the new process has been established that Justice Wakeling will look at these allegations and make a determination on them.

The Premier stated that any member of this Assembly, members opposite included, could be deemed in conflict of interest. We have a Conflict of Interests Commissioner to look at that. And the Premier stated he will ask that to be done for our former minister of Liquor and Gaming Authority. That's one process.

But the allegation was also made against someone that was the former head of the Liquor and Gaming Authority as well. And Justice Wakeling will be looking at that and determining whether or not those allegations need to be looked at under section 133 of the liquor and gaming Act.

Mr. Heppner: — Just to quote from the Premier's statement outside the House. And I quote:

Let me make it clear. I will ask Justice Wakeling to include this (that's the fishing trip) in his review.

Mr. Speaker, a story in today's paper suggests the problems at Liquor and Gaming may be a lot more widespread than the NDP is letting on. The story suggests that the senior officials were reluctant to investigate minor violations of their own Act, because those same officials were involved in more serious allegations.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party is aware new allegations are being brought to the attention of Justice Wakeling beyond those outlined by Bonnie Swan's original harassment complaint. The problem is we don't know if Justice Wakeling has a broad mandate to investigate them, or if he has a very narrow mandate only to investigate the allegations of the original complaints.

Mr. Speaker, will Justice Wakeling be allowed to investigate other potential violations of The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act that are brought to his attention?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This member opposite is trying to make it sound like there is many, many things that Justice Wakeling should be looking at. There was another incident three years ago where a member was disciplined and Justice Wakeling will look at the circumstances surrounding that. But I would not like to leave the impression as the member opposite is trying to leave here, Mr. Speaker.

Now Justice Wakeling is going to look at the allegations because we take that responsibly — the responsibility of looking at allegations that are made that pertain to the Act, Mr. Speaker.

When you're looking at conflict of interest guidelines that are in place for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, he will look at those and make certain that they're consistent with the Act, and look at all the incidences of things that how they could occur or should occur, and give some guidance to the Liquor and Gaming Authority as we review those conflict of interest guidelines, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is correct. There's a wide circle of difficulties out there and we hope that Justice Wakeling can check out all of those.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP (New Democratic Party) has been less than clear about Justice Wakeling's mandate. There's one way to clear the air. Will the minister table the documents outlining Justice Wakeling's terms of reference, what matters he is allowed to investigate, and when he is required to complete his report? Will the minister table that information today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Justice Wakeling was employed to look at the allegations that fell outside of the harassment policy of the Liquor and Gaming Authority.

When allegations like that are made, we have a responsibility to follow up. And in this instance we said even if there were not harassment policy that we were looking at, at the time, when such allegations are made we have a responsibility to follow up on that.

Justice Wakeling will be looking at those, as he will be looking at the responsibility of the employee of the Authority in the fishing trip. If there were other allegations that are made while he is doing a review of these things, Mr. Speaker, it is again a responsibility to follow up on those, and he will look at those too, Mr. Speaker.

This member opposite is trying to turn this Assembly into some type of a show trial. Personally, I prefer Perry Mason.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that member prefers Perry Mason to myself.

Mr. Speaker, there were four questions asked on specific information to which the minister said no, no, and no and no. We're not getting any of that information that we just requested.

Mr. Speaker, what role does a minister's office play in awarding liquor franchises?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the member opposite's former question, I responded and answered. Now we have headsets available. The response was the

allegations that were made that flowed from the harassment policy, the item mentioned by the Premier. If there are any other allegations that people know of, they should bring those forward. He would review those. These are not widespread as the member opposite would have us believe.

So the answer to that question is I've already answered that, Mr. Speaker.

Now in a franchise, there's the liquor and gaming Act and we follow a process and procedure in order to award a franchise. There's an advertisement that goes out. There's the chance to compete through that advertisement process. Then employees within the Liquor and Gaming Authority that follow the guidelines of what a franchise should include . . . would weigh the merits of all those proposals and one would be awarded, Mr. Speaker. I would not play a role in that, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the minister wants to go back and answer that other question that we asked for way back then. The minister still isn't giving it. We want the documents outlining those terms of reference. And we also want to know what the timeline is on that.

Mr. Speaker, does Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming consult with the minister's office regarding which business in a community is awarded a liquor franchise? Is it appropriate for the minister's office to be involved in those types of decisions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take under advisement the member opposite's question and get to him on the investigation that's underway. I think that would be more properly handled that way.

Mr. Speaker, on occasion there have been members opposite who have brought to me suggestions that their community is now large enough to have a franchise. And I would ask Liquor and Gaming Authority members to look at their guidelines and see if we can accommodate customers in rural Saskatchewan.

On occasion, Mr. Speaker, people would contact me and say that a franchise is available in their community. What are the steps that could be taken that they could respond to that, Mr. Speaker? And if there were people in that community who have concerns about the operation of their franchise, yes generally those would come to my office. They phone and they would make those kinds of complaints. And we would work with the Vendors Association to follow up on those complaints, Mr. Speaker. I believe that's the type of role I would play in a franchise, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) regional managers review the applications for liquor franchises and make recommendations on who should get the franchise. In her original complaint Bonnie Swan was concerned that some of these recommendations were being overturned for no apparent

reason.

The response she got back from SLGA management was very interesting. The response said that in each and every case, the regional manager's recommendation was overturned by the SLGA president, in consultation with the minister's office — in consultation with her office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister explain why recommendations made by regional managers were overturned by her office? Mr. Speaker, what criteria does the minister's office use in determining who gets a liquor franchise?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, in answering that question I would say within those allegations of harassment, many of them . . . all of them were found outside of harassment policy.

But in concert with the deputy minister to the Premier, Mr. Perrins, there were management/competency issues that need to be reviewed and addressed. And I believe these fall into this area. I can't speculate on what one person was saying to another person, as this member would want to do before this Assembly. I'm following up on the management/competency issues that he's trying to address here, and when that review is complete, actions would be taken.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — The minister is badly out of sync with the questions. The last set of questions dealt with her involvement in the granting of liquor franchises. She never addressed that in her last answer.

Mr. Speaker, SLGA management freely admits that recommendations about liquor franchises made by regional managers have on occasion been overturned by SLGA president, following the consultation with the minister's office.

It is my understanding that the regional managers go through a very thorough evaluation process. I guess that means that the minister must have an even more thorough evaluation or process.

Could the minister explain what is the exact process and criteria for the minister's office in overturning the recommendation from her own regional managers in awarding liquor franchises?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker. The members opposite might be involved in micromanaging areas where they're involved or when they're government, to look at departments and hire and fire and be involved in the winners and losers of franchise, but we have processes in place that have to be followed.

As I say, it's an advertisement . . . publicly advertised tender process for a franchise in an area when there's a population that warrants it and a customer base to support it.

We work carefully with the Vendors Association. And the members of the Liquor and Gaming Authority would hear from the local community, they would evaluate that, and a franchise would be given on that basis. Not on the basis of whether this minister or a member of this Assembly or on that side of the Assembly feels their community should have one, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The evidence from the last two questions clearly indicated that was exactly what that minister was doing, is micromanaging, overturning decisions of her department in the granting of liquor franchises.

Mr. Speaker, here's another problem. Some of Bonnie Swan's allegations dealt with the awarding of liquor franchises. By SLGA's own admissions, some of those decisions were made by that minister's office. Yet the minister is one of the two people who conducted the investigation of Bonnie Swan.

Mr. Speaker, that's an obvious conflict of interest. How could the minister conduct a fair investigation of allegations concerning decisions made in her own office?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, that member can say almost anything about anybody within the Assembly yet, bits of pieces and information and then act like he's some trial lawyer and we're all on trial if someone says something about anything.

Mr. Speaker, there are processes that are to be followed. Allow those processes to go underway.

Mr. Speaker, he would not understand perhaps that there are fair processes in awarding franchises. Some of his members might because I've talked to them about those. And I mentioned if they meet the customer base, if there's not a franchise within another certain location and the mile radius — and all of those things are considered — Liquor and Gaming Authority would look at that, we would follow our processes. And a franchise would be awarded in concert with the Vendors Association and others in that community, being able to respond through the process of public advertising and awarded on that basis, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grants to the Third Party in the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Education minister. In the 1999 election campaign, the Liberal leader pleaded with voters to elect him and send a strong Liberal opposition to Regina. Remember that, Mr. Speaker?

But then immediately following the election, the three Liberals who survived the election joined the NDP. And now the NDP has introduced a new law to make the Liberal/NDP merger official.

Mr. Speaker, the only purpose of this new legislation is to consolidate the Liberals fully into the NDP government and pay

off the Liberal MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) with another \$65,000 of taxpayers' money.

Will the Education minister confirm the only purpose of this new legislation is to provide another \$65,000 payoff to the Liberals for agreeing to join the NDP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. I just want to remind members that the purpose of question period is for members of the opposition, or indeed any private member, to be able to ask questions of ministers in their area of competence and in where a minister is responsible . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order, order, order. Order. Order.

The minister is obliged to answer questions under his or her area of responsibility. The question that the member has asked itself is in order if it is asked of the minister that is responsible for that area but not for anybody that is responsible for a . . . as a leader of a party — second or third party. I just want to bring that to members' attention.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that this Act that's being introduced into the House — the Executive Council amendment Act, 2001 — deals with an issue that has not been faced by this legislature before because we haven't had a coalition government.

What this does, Mr. Speaker, is provide to the Liberal caucus nothing more or nothing less than what they should be allowed to have. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that thinking people will recognize that there are three political caucuses represented in this legislature — one of them being the Liberal Party.

There is an agreement — a coalition agreement — between the Liberal caucus and between the NDP caucus which forms this government. What this does is bring to the year 2001 an update to the circumstances with respect to caucus funding where a Liberal . . . where a third party sits in a coalition position with the government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they may not like it but that's the appropriate and the proper thing to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, how much further can the hypocrisy of this NDP government go? Bill No. 33 specifically refers to the Leader of the Third Party. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Third Party is the Minister of Education. I am directing my responses to the Leader of the Third Party in reference to Bill No. 33.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I just want to bring to the attention of the member that the Leader of the Third Party is not obligated in question period to answer questions, except as . . . Order! Order, order. Order. Order . . . except as a member of a cabinet with a collective responsibility, but not as the leader of a third party. Carry on.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, in the 1999 provincial election the Liberals made dozens of promises that they obviously have no intention of keeping. Even worse, in almost two years since the Liberals joined the NDP government, the Liberals haven't even had a sniff of input on NDP government decisions.

The Liberals have a caucus of zero MLAs, and they already have a caucus budget of \$160,000 that is being used to support failing NDP policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, will the Government House Leader direct the Minister of Education to do the right thing and say no to Bill No. 33, legislation that does nothing more than deposit another \$65,000 in the Liberal bank account as a payment for joining the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, speaking about commitments by Liberals, the member from Canora-Pelly as leader of the Liberal Party made a commitment that he was elected as a Liberal, he would stay as a Liberal. And now he sits with a bunch of Tories, Mr. Speaker. So he shouldn't be talking about promises.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, he also referred to this money going to the Liberal Party. And I say that is totally, absolutely out of order. It's incorrect and he knows it. That is no more correct than saying money that goes to the Saskatchewan Party caucus goes into the pockets of the Saskatchewan Party.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask him to withdraw that statement. It's inaccurate; it's untrue. That member knows it and he should be honest with the people of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the people of Canora-Pelly for electing me as the Saskatchewan Party . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, a lot of people have been trying to figure out just what the Liberal caucus staffers have been doing. Well, Mr. Speaker, finally we've discovered what the Liberal caucus research staff has been up to for the past two years. They've been trying to figure out just how to get the NDP to funnel the Liberal caucus even more taxpayers' dollars, and to do absolutely nothing but prop up a tired and dying NDP government.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, the only purpose of the NDP legislation introduced on Monday by the NDP is to funnel another \$65,000 payoff to the Liberal leader's office for joining the NDP.

Will the Minister of Education do the right thing? Will he

refuse the NDP's \$65,000 payoff by opposing this pathetic excuse for legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, speaking of research staff, I want that member to explain whether or not the research money that they're using comes from the PC (Progressive Conservative) metro fund.

And I also want that member to explain whether the Saskatchewan . . . the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is a front for caucus, for political donations. The former leader of the staff . . . or the Leader of the Opposition who sits over there taking swipes and half swipes . . . And I want to just, while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, mention the increase in travel that that person refused to forward. These guys have increased their air travel in a year by over 300 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, it is truly amazing. We have an NDP government that mismanaged the province's drinking water to the point where hundreds of people are sick, and yet the doctor continues to support them.

We have an NDP government that fires ex-RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officers for doing their duty and yet the ex-RCMP officer from Melville still supports them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — And now we know why, Mr. Speaker. It's all about the money. Money for the Liberal MLAs who sell their support to the NDP for \$100,000 cabinet jobs. And now for money, the money for another \$65,000 Liberal payoff.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: if the Minister of Education refuses to do the right thing, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs stand up and vote against this latest \$65,000 payoff?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this government will support this legislation because it brings this legislation into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, all this does is allows the Liberal third party to have the same caucus funding that they would have had there not been a coalition government. They have the same responsibilities to contact people. They have the same responsibilities to answer phones. They have the same responsibilities to do research that members of the Saskatchewan Party hire their caucus staff to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, speaking of being sick to the stomach, Stockwell Day, the member from Rosthern, credibility — all on the same level, Mr. Speaker. And I would suggest to you that those folks should stick to their . . . (inaudible) . . . deal with legislation and deal with real issues before this House.

We've got an agriculture community that's concerned about

drought, about prices, and not a question, not a day, nothing, Mr. Speaker. They focus on nothing issues. And that's all they're about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the answers that we've been just given. We have Bill No. 33 that was proposed this week. We look at its creation and we wonder . . . the people of Saskatchewan are wondering why.

We have an NDP/Liberal coalition that has basically assumed the responsibility for the two members opposite. That caucus has the ability to funnel their correct moneys to do the research. They have constituency allowances that will allow those members to do the research.

The question then to the leader . . . to the House Leader opposite: what is the real reason for the introduction of Bill No. 33?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Listen to what he says. He says that they argue the legislation regarding the third party is worded the way it is because the additional grants are intended for parties who actively criticize government policy. That's what they said.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the rules regarding tax credits on political donations are what they are — to prevent political parties from simply changing their name in a pathetic attempt to try and bring some credibility to themselves.

The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, could issue tax credits today if they were concerned about the old history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 47 — The Miscellaneous Statutes (Domestic Relations) Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 47, The Miscellaneous Statutes (Domestic Relations) Amendment Act, 2001 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 48 — The Miscellaneous Statutes (Domestic Relations) Amendment Act, 2001 (No. 2)/ Loi corrective (relations domestiques) de 2001 (n° 2)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 48, The Miscellaneous Statutes (Domestic Relations) Amendment Act, 2001 (No. 2) be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to table, on behalf of the government responses, to written questions no. 208 and 209.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 208 and 209 have been tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce, sitting on my left, Dr. Paul Boothe, who is the deputy minister of Finance, and on my right is Mr. Kirk McGregor, who is the director of the taxation and intergovernmental affairs branch of the Department of Finance.

And, Mr. Chair, I would like to move motion no. 2 for interim supply, and I would like to move resolution no. 1 which reads:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$479,635,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 2002.

And I so move.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and welcome to your officials, Mr. Boothe and Mr. McGregor, this afternoon.

Just a few questions, Mr. Minister, on the second interim supply Bill that we're seeing in this legislative session. Could you explain to the people of Saskatchewan the need for an interim supply Bill at this particular date, May 30?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I would be pleased to explain that, Mr. Chair. Technically speaking the government should not be spending any money until it's authorized by the Legislative Assembly. And that authorization occurs by the Legislative Assembly voting off all of the estimates for each department and agency, and ultimately passing the budget, in effect.

But that doesn't happen usually until the very end of the Legislative Assembly which may be in June or July or August or September — we don't know. But the fiscal year begins on April 1, and you can see therefore that the fiscal year begins on April 1 but the opposition and the government may choose to pass the budget in June or July, August, September, or even October, or later.

And in the meantime, while the legislature debates the budget, which is important . . . Because that's the right of the members of the Legislative Assembly, the opposition, and the government members to debate the budget as long as they want and ask as many questions as they like. And that's part of the democratic process.

But as we do that, people still need to be paid. The money has to go to the hospital so that the nurse can be paid, the doctor can be paid, the operations can continue. The schools have to be funded; the road crews have to be out on the highways; the community groups have to be funded; the foster parents have to be paid in April, whether or not the budget is passed.

So earlier the opposition and the government passed an interim supply Bill that said that even though we haven't passed the budget yet, the government was authorized to spend money in April and in May so that people could have the money they're entitled to and need for the system to function, while we continue to debate the budget and other matters in the Legislative Assembly.

Now we're approaching the end of May and we're about to start the month of June. We need permission from the Legislative Assembly to spend money in June, whether or not the budget is passed. So today I'm asking the House for that permission, and that is what we call interim supply.

And if we don't have interim supply, then we could not spend any money in June, which would mean that the people that rely upon the government for the money of the taxpayers to be given to them would not get that money. Which would mean that the hospitals would shut down, the schools would shut down, the foster parents wouldn't be paid, and so on and so on. And so we have interim supply today to allow the government to function.

(14:30)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for that explanation. And one question still related to today's date and the need for a further one-twelfth interim supply.

Could you indicate to the people of Saskatchewan whether the majority of that sum of money which you are requesting, which is about \$479 million, is the majority of that money expended at the very beginning of the month to, as you have mentioned, health districts, municipalities, school boards, and the like? I know today is May 30 and we're only two days away from June 1, but is there a need for this to be put in place in the month of May?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The answer, Mr. Chair, is yes. The majority is grants that would be paid out toward the beginning of the month, although some of it would be paid out toward the end of the month.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, there are two I guess exceptions to the requests, as your document has highlighted by the asterisks that you have placed near the sector of Energy and Mines.

I note that Energy and Mines is not just requesting a further one-twelfth on top of the two-twelfths already granted by way of the first interim supply, but there's an additional 7.5 million being requested for Energy and Mines. And I know this is Energy and Mines Week and the like, but could you explain to the people of Saskatchewan what the additional 7.5 million is beyond the three-twelfths that they will already have received for the months of April, May, and June.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the \$7.5 million is owed to SaskPower for sending out the energy rebate which is being paid out all at once or over a short period of time as opposed to throughout the fiscal year.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, will that rebate be actually paid out by SaskPower or will it involve another department?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It actually won't be paid out as such, for the most part, in the sense that it's mainly a credit on SaskPower bills. It will be credited against customers' bills by SaskPower. In other words, if my bill would otherwise be \$50, then my bill would be \$25, and I would receive a credit for the other \$25.

But we will reimburse SaskPower the full amount of those credits. But there are some instances where individuals will have to be sent out a cheque for \$25. And that will be certain instances where they are not SaskPower customers but they're entitled to a rebate nevertheless.

In some cases by the way, it will be the city of Saskatoon and the city of Swift Current that would give the credit and would be reimbursed because they have their own electrical utilities.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the other departments that will be receiving more than the three-twelfths to end of June will be the actual legislative branch. And in fact, people will receive 100 per cent of its funding by the end of June. Is there a reason for why the legislative branch requires all of its funding up front in the first part of June?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — My understanding is that their estimates are dealt with separately from the other estimates and that they have already been voted off, so that they're already entitled to receive their money.

That's what I'm advised by officials, and I'll confirm whether or not that is the case.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move a second motion for interim supply. The resolution no. 2 reads:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002, the sum of \$479,635,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I should, before I make another motion, I want to point out that two other officials have joined me. They are Mr. Terry Paton, the Provincial Comptroller, who's sitting to the left of Dr. Boothe. And behind me is Mr. Glen Veikle, who is the director of the Treasury Board branch of the Department of Finance.

And I would like to thank the official opposition for their co-operation in terms of granting interim supply to the government, and also thank the officials.

The committee reported progress.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Bill No. 46, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to and the Bill read a first time.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly and under rule 55(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 39 — The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2001. This legislation will be good for miners and good for the mining industry in Saskatchewan. Miners support it. The Saskatchewan Mining Association supports it.

Mr. Speaker, to understand what this Bill does and why it is being put forward at this time, a little background is necessary. In 1997, the Tripartite Mines Regulations Review Committee, with representation from business, labour, and government, was struck to review the mines' regulations and to recommend changes.

This was the first comprehensive review of the regulations since 1978. The review committee is proposing that the regulations be amended to carry forward and update many existing requirements to reflect modern mining practices, correct impracticalities, and improve health and safety requirements.

After completing its work last July, the committee asked the industry and unions to review and comment on its proposals. It was in this context that questions related to the authority of the chief mines inspector arose.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan a chief mines inspector has traditionally exercised a good deal of discretionary authority.

That's because Saskatchewan has many kinds of mines and mining operations. We have gold, uranium, potash, coal, and diamond mines, to name a few. Some mines are hardrock, others are open pit, and in the case of McLean Lake uranium deposit, which is the richest known uranium ore body in the world, we're going to have a mine where the mining is done by remote control.

In short, Mr. Speaker, given the great diversity of mining operations in the province, it is not possible to write a set of mining regulations that can definitively answer every question about every situation. So someone must have some discretion when the regulations are applied at an individual mine site. And that someone is the chief mines inspector.

However The Occupational Health and Safety Act as it is currently written does not make any provision for the exercise of that authority. And that brings us to the amendment before us.

Mr. Speaker, The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2001 defines the traditional positions of the chief mines inspector and provides the legal basis for the exercise of this traditional authority. I hasten to add that both the mining industry and labour wish to retain the traditional authority exercised by the chief inspector.

In November 2000, the Saskatchewan Mining Association wrote to the Minister of Labour asking that legislative amendments be introduced to address the authority of the chief inspector of mines. The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour wrote a similar letter in March of 2001.

Mr. Speaker, to accommodate the expressed wishes of the SMA (Saskatchewan Mining Association Inc.) and the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) in this matter, amendments to The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 are required. This Act then provides the legal basis or framework for the work Saskatchewan's chief mines inspectors have been doing for decades.

(14:45)

The Act before us also takes steps to ensure the chief mines inspector is qualified to occupy the position. It says the minister shall appoint to the job someone who is, and I quote:

... a professional engineer or a professional geoscientist who holds a valid licence pursuant to *The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act*, or who is eligible for a licence pursuant to that Act, and who has training or experience in the mining industry.

Mr. Speaker, this point is important and I want to stress it. To do the job effectively, the chief inspector must be qualified in the engineering or geoscience professions. This Act ensures that only a professional engineer or geoscientist occupies the position of chief mines inspector.

Like the legislation itself, the rationale for it is straightforward. As I mentioned a moment ago, in 1997 the Tripartite Mines Regulations Review Committee was struck to review the mines regulations and recommended changes.

This amendment Bill is critical to the successful enactment of new mines regulations anticipated later this year. It is critical because it provides the legal authority for the chief mines inspector to do the job. And as I also mentioned, both the Saskatchewan Mining Association and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour have asked for the legislative changes necessary to do that.

Mr. Speaker, if the Act is not amended in this legislative session, new mines regulations will be delayed another year. I don't want to see that happen. The Saskatchewan Mining Association doesn't want to see that happen. The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour doesn't want to see that happen. And quite frankly I hope that members opposite don't want to see it happen either.

Mining is important to Saskatchewan. The new regulations will update existing mine requirements, improve health safety, and correct impracticalities.

The stakeholders that will be directly affected by this legislation have specifically asked for it. It provides the legal foundation for Saskatchewan's chief mines inspector to do work everyone agrees needs to be done. It is needed to ensure the new mines regulations anticipated later this year can work to the benefit of everyone involved in this important industry. And for all the reasons I've gone through this afternoon, it's good for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 39, The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2001, and to invite all hon. members to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to speak to Bill No. 39, an Act to amend The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993.

As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, this amendment sets out the responsibilities and duties of a chief mines inspector, and specifies that the chief mines inspector must be a professional geoscientist who holds a valid licence pursuant to The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act or who is eligible for a licence pursuant to that Act.

Mr. Speaker, mining is extremely important to this province, and it's important that we take our time with this and do the research and make certain that the industry's on side with this Act.

And at first blush, I don't see much wrong with it, to be frank. But you know, mining . . . the total value of mineral sales in 2000 was \$2.4 billion, extremely important to the economy of this province. And we shouldn't rush into any kind of legislation that may or . . . jeopardize that in any manner.

Saskatchewan's mining industry spends more than 2 billion annually on wages, and goods and services. Saskatchewan's mining industry paid well in excess of 200 million in royalties and taxes to the provincial government in 2000. Roughly

equivalent to the total highway's budget.

Mining is Saskatchewan's third largest industry, Mr. Speaker, after oil and gas with annual sales of 6 billion. Saskatchewan ranks fourth in Canada, after Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia in terms of total value of mineral production.

Saskatchewan's mining industry creates direct and indirect employment for approximately 20,000 people in this province, Mr. Speaker — 20,000 people that stay here and earn substantial salaries, averaging more than \$55,000 a year, annually, including benefits.

Saskatchewan has the largest reserves in the world of potash and uranium. Saskatchewan coal produces approximately 70 per cent of the province's electrical power. In addition to potash, uranium, and coal, Saskatchewan has many other mineral resources, including base and precious metals, sodium, potassium sulphate, clays, and promising potential for diamonds.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has excellent potential for future resource development, and mineral resource development and will continue to be one of the primary engines for economic growth in this province, assuming that we don't make any big mistakes.

Saskatchewan's mining industry is very environmentally friendly and leaves a tiny footprint in comparison to the size and magnitude of the production and the contribution of the economy of this province.

The mining industry has a strong social and environmental conscience in mining and work in harmony with the environment. Expenditures are in the areas of treatment, monitoring, research, and reclamation.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, at first blush this Bill appears to be quite sensible and something that we can probably pass in this House.

But we need some time, and I think the industry needs some time to discuss it. It's relatively new. Some members of the industry aren't aware of all the implications and we want time for feedback from them as well. And accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on this matter.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 30

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Trew that **Bill No. 30 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 32 is probably a Bill that's got a lot of good stuff in it, but there are a few things that we need to discuss and a few things that we need to look at and we will do that this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Bill C-32 essentially tries to take our provincial legislation and put it in line with federal legislation. And what it deals with in specifics is looking at leaves for new parents and the amount of leave time that that can be, and what business has to do and who has to give certain amounts of leave, and ask permission or give notice that they're going to take some leave, and also the time that they have to allow before they come back to work.

It's a piece of legislation that we looked at very closely and we're going to look at fairly closely as we go through this, basically because, from our side of the House, we have a fairly strong commitment to families, and that's what this one deals with; and we also have a strong commitment to business, and that's what this one deals with.

So any time that we get, from the people across the way, a Bill that involves those two things and we are never quite sure where they are on those issues, we need to look at those very closely.

We look for example — and they're already waking up over there and starting to comment. When we look at this government in business, and we look at some of their records — the kinds of things that this government loves to put money into business and by that, choosing winners and losers.

And we have a member over there right away saying that that's progress. Well I suggest to you that that's not progress; it also isn't always profitable. Most of the time it isn't. Because when government chooses winners and losers by putting money into business, very often, very often it doesn't work out that way. That in fact the taxpayer, through that, loses money.

The other thing that happens is it happens to distort the marketplace. So that you take government money, and you add that taxpayers' money into one particular aspect of business, and then the other ones that don't get that particular help, they're just not . . . they're at a disadvantage, Mr. Speaker.

Bill C-32, Mr. Speaker, as I said, lines this up, the business aspect and family aspects, and it extends EI (employment insurance) benefits for new parents and provides provincial job protection that's compatible, as I said, with federal laws.

Most of the other provinces have already made this legislation and put it into place, so this isn't something that's new in Canada particularly, and I believe we're also not the last ones in that. We're basically just following along what many of the other provinces are doing.

And when you try to mix the right interest of family and business, that's always a very tough decision, Mr. Speaker. Because when we deal with families and the need for parents to be with their children, that's a very emotional kind of a thing, and we need to address that. On the other hand, we also have to make sure that business isn't left in a situation where they're unnecessarily hurt or harmed by it. And so when we look at these pieces of legislation, we look at those issues very, very closely.

We understand that many people in the business communities are concerned when this federal law changed because it increased cost to employers. At least that's what they

envisioned it would do, by increasing the amount of EI time for new parents.

So when this legislation came down, there was a number of things that were involved in that, and one of them specifically was the amount of time that was allowed. This change will allow up to 89 weeks of parental and maternity leave between two parents — 52 weeks for the mother and 37 weeks for the father.

So there are some definite changes that have taken place there. And many of the concerns raised by the business community are legitimate. However, we have to keep in mind that the federal government made these changes despite those reservations. They were told about them but it came along anyways. Those changes to EI are reality and it makes sense that the laws that are in place at our provincial level.

Now we have to balance off and go through this and see very carefully what each one of these areas has to give. What benefits are being given to new families, to new parents? And what is the cost to business going to be? And how can some of the concerns that business have, how can those be accommodated? I mentioned a few of those and we'll go through this particular piece of legislation and discuss those.

I guess what we would like to see overall, and it's been one of the emphases, Mr. Speaker, of the Saskatchewan Party is to try and set up tax rules that aren't going to punish families where one family stays home . . . where one family member stays home to take care of their family instead of both of them working. If we had the proper tax structures in our province, there'd be a lot of parents who would say we can stay home. One of us can stay home. We don't both have to work to go ahead and keep food on the table and keep our cars running and keep our taxes paid. That's the kind of system we would like to see but it isn't in place.

It's positive that the government has seen, Mr. Speaker, has seen fit to extend the provision for an employee to give notice to an employer of their intention to return to work prior to their 52-week leave period. This is important to allow employers to make necessary arrangements, because if the employee can give only a week or so notice and say I'm coming back in seven days or I want time off in seven days, then suddenly it forces the employer into situations where they cannot hire the proper people, the best people, to fill in during that interim where the families are going to be at home with their new children.

Similar at the other end. The employers have responsibilities to their employees and they need to know well ahead of time, Mr. Speaker, when these people who are filling in in the interim, when those people are going to have to be given notice and say that their time of employment is over as interim employees.

(15:00)

The business community has asked for notice at the other end as well, prior to leave commencing. And because of this, there is a window of up to 12 weeks prior to the birth of a child where a parent can begin leave. It would also seem reasonable that increased notification period prior to that leave to minimize disruption on the workplace which allows the employers the

proper time to get their replacements, to do the hiring, to do the training, and to do all those sorts of things. In Alberta, there's a requirement of six weeks prior to the start of a leave.

And as we know, you know, a pregnancy isn't usually much of a surprise, at least not during the nine months. So people know quite well when they need to take that, need to take that time. And that means they do have the opportunity to give six weeks' notice because they know in most cases very well when their time will be and when they're due. So I think these sorts of things are there.

Now as I said earlier on, this is an interesting Bill because it tries to balance off very carefully the interests and concerns of new parents, new moms and dads, and their new children, and the employer as well.

And so we want to look at those sorts of things and make sure that these things work well. We want to make sure that parents get those times that they need off, that they get those times off. We also need to know that the employers are given the necessary leave that they need, the notification times.

That I think if we can get this working correctly, Mr. Speaker, we can have a workplace that is very sympathetic and comfortable with having parents stay home with their new children, without being able to say, well, every time this happens, my employee runs out the door and then I'm left stranded. If we have enough time and notice given on both ends, that stranding won't be taking place.

So generally, Mr. Speaker, we support that Bill. There's some sense and practicality in it. But there are a lot of issues that are in there and a number of people that we do want to contact, get some more feeling from business communities, from parents' communities, family interest groups to see where they are. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move adjournment at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 1

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 1 — The Partnership Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this particular amendment was brought forward by the minister, I was really quite pleased to see it for a number of reasons. Primarily it's a Bill that's going in the right direction to give some of our professions the ability to compete directly with other professions in other parts of Canada.

This Bill is modelled, I understand, after a couple of other Bills that are already in place — one in the province of Alberta, one in the province of Ontario. And I believe the intent and the focus of this Bill is going in the right direction.

The Saskatchewan Party in fact supports this kind of a Bill

because it's the kind of Bill that was requested by the different professions. Generally speaking, the professional people and other people in business try to get themselves into a corporate situation for various reasons — either for tax reasons, for continuity reasons, for estate planning and so on. Here's an opportunity that gives businesses and professions just another option that allows them the protection of a limited liability partnership. And so as I said, the intent I think is correct, and it is also demanded and asked for by those people involved.

There are a couple of issues that I hope that will be clarified certainly when the regulations come along, but I would like to think that we need clarification on some of those things already.

There's many situations that the normal corporate structure doesn't necessarily fit. And the limited liability partnership seems to fill in between those areas of the normal partnerships that we have now and the other corporate structure that has been in place for some time and will be dealing with in another Act. And so I think it's important that we try to accommodate those people in our province that find this would be a real advantage to them, and an advantage to their business and their occupation.

The Bill states that this would be particularly beneficial for eligible professions. And I have a problem trying to get an understanding of what eligible professions means in this particular Act. Does this apply only to the normal professions that we think about in terms of being doctors, lawyers, accountants, those kinds of professions? Or in fact does this open up the limited liability partnerships to other areas of business and economic endeavour such as business partnerships as well? That is not clear in the Act or anything that has been reported by the minister. That still is a bit of a concern.

I think it's important to have that clarified because there's a lot of situations where business entrepreneurs may find the limited liability partnerships to be of particular advantage to them.

Another concern that we have with this particular Bill would be some of the reporting requirements that they refer to under the amendments and in the Act. I would hope that this does not become an onerous task for issuing the reports. As you know, corporations and businesses try to be as efficient as they possibly can, not only for productivity reasons but for competitive reasons. So I would hope that the reporting requirements that are referred to here is not an impediment or impose unrealistic or uncompetitive requirements on these businesses or professionals. I think that is quite important.

Another aspect of this Bill that is unclear is something that is referred to as the fees or the fees required for registration and also fees that are required for the annual renewal of this limited liability partnership. I understand the need for fees and why the fees are required. I would hate to see that the fees become another form of taxation because taxation adds to the cost of doing business and that is not the intent of this fee, and I hope it's not intended to be that or I hope it will not develop into that kind of a money-grabbing tax . . . for tax reasons rather.

When I read further into the legislature, Mr. Speaker . . . into the amendment, sorry, I found some confusion over the word, the cancellation of the . . . or the cancellation opportunities of

this particular partnership. Now having the protection of the partnership I think is a real advantage under this limited liability partnership. Each of the partners in this arrangement is essentially protected for the indiscretions of other partners. So that kind of indiscretion doesn't ruin the whole partnership completely.

When it comes to the choice of cancellation of this partnership, it might be a little confusing, unless it's stated very clearly in the regulations to this Act, what the actual intent is of this cancellation. And it should be noted that the cancellation of the limited liability partnership in no way restricts or brings to an end the business of the partnership. And I think that's very, very important.

Something else that I think is quite important when we are reviewing this Act, Mr. Speaker, is something in what is called the extra-provincial area of this Act where it's referring to its comparability or compatibility with the limited liability partnerships that are presently in force in Alberta and in other parts of Canada, particularly Ontario.

I would ask if there was compatibility as well with the limited liability partnerships that are presently in place in the United States as well. There's a lot of states bordering Saskatchewan where business is conducted and there is ownership of businesses across border between Canada and those states. And I would hope that the legislation is compatible there as well.

It particularly is a concern in places that are very close to the border, like for instance Lloydminster. If the two legislations are not compatible — Saskatchewan and Alberta — or if the extra-provincial registration will not allow business to be carried on in a like manner, then again there is a complication in the competitive aspect of these businesses. So I think that is a very important part.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of — as I mentioned before — a lot of good features in this particular amendment and it does bring the legislation in line with what is done and what is expected to be done in other parts of Canada and our neighbouring province particularly, and I want to make sure that this moves ahead.

But the concerns that I have highlighted will have to be addressed and I would like to be able to contact some of the businesses or professions to get a little further input. I know the minister's referred to some of the consultations and I think that's important. I would like to pursue that. And I would like to ask a little more time so that we can clarify whether this will apply to businesses and operating businesses as well. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of this debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 19

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate of the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 19 — The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2001** be read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Bill No. 19. This one definitely creates some interest. The other one we

basically talked about a little while back about — some good and bad sides to it.

This one is The Land Titles Amendment Act. Well, Mr. Speaker, the land titles situation, the Land Titles Office in Saskatchewan has been in the news for a long time. This is one of those tricks where the NDP thought that they're the only ones that can invent a wheel.

It's lucky that this whole CCF-NDP (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) mentality wasn't around, you know, a thousand or two thousand years ago or they'd be huddled off in little caves someplace looking to invent the wheel as they see their neighbours going down the road in quad runners. Because on this particular one, Mr. Speaker, the NDP in Saskatchewan thought they had to go ahead and invent a new land titles system. They couldn't possibly phone up another province. They couldn't possibly phone up a state in the US (United States) and say, can we buy your software?

Well we do this for all sorts of things, in many areas with this whole computer age. You buy a little bit of software, you can put it in your back pocket, take it home, and it does a marvellous amount of work for you. But would the NDP government here ever think of doing that? No. They said they were going to go ahead. They were going to go ahead . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There's a few of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, who are trying to knock me about my knowledge of computers. They'd be surprised to know what I can all do on a computer.

However, I know enough about computers that if I don't know how to do something, I get someone else to do it. I either pay them, ask them, beg them or do something else. The NDP had no idea how to do the land titles so did they go ahead and ask or beg or buy anything from somewhere else? No. They said we're going to create this all on our own.

Now, before we go into how well that worked, let's spend a little bit of time, Mr. Speaker, and talk about the need for it. There definitely was a need for it. There is no question about that. I don't think anyone in Saskatchewan would question the fact that there was a need to get our land titles system set up so that it was under the computer system. It worked fast; it worked efficiently.

(15:15)

I'm sure that all of us who ever bought a business or a house and were waiting for the lawyer to get this work done and we say, well we want possession of the house or we want possession of our money — we want possession of something — and the lawyer keeps saying, well it's over at Land Titles.

It's just as good a story as the old thing about the cheque's in the mail. The only difference is when the story is often used about the cheque being in the mail, it usually isn't. However, when the lawyers told us that it's over at Land Titles, that's where it usually was. That wasn't an excuse. And that's because it took from four or five days to two to three and four weeks to get through Land Titles. If there was a whole rush of deals that were made, it would just stack up at Land Titles, and if you

were at the bottom of the list, you just had to wait till you got there.

Now no question that needs to go a lot more quickly. To think that in this day and age we would have to wait two, three, and four weeks for Land Titles to do whatever they have to do to get this all organized just isn't satisfactory. So when government decided they had to go ahead and streamline this system, they need full marks for that, Mr. Speaker — full marks.

But let's look at what they did. First of all they sat back and they said, what's the cost on this going to be? Well they assumed it would be approximately \$20 million. What they didn't do is phone any other jurisdiction as already mentioned — another province or another state — and said what did it cost for you to do it?

Furthermore, why don't we just buy your system? Just send us your software, we'll plug it in to our little machines, and we'll be underway. No, but that isn't how they worked. They huddled off in their little corner, like I said in that little cave some place, and they said, we have to invent something again. So they were going to invent this system for land titles.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the cost didn't end up being \$20 million or 25 or 30 or 35 or 40 or 45 or 50. We're looking at way over \$50 million for a system they could have bought for a fraction of that cost from any number of jurisdictions because we're one of the last ones in Canada to do that. Fact is we may even be the last one by the time ours starts working properly.

So there's a bit of the history of it. And I think that's regrettable because it's regrettable that it again showed when this NDP government decides it's going to start messing with business, they mess up, without fail. To have this particular project, Mr. Speaker, to have an overrun of not 1 or 2 per cent or 5 per cent or 10 per cent, but double and triple the cost. And it's a cost that, Mr. Speaker, is going to be borne by the taxpayer and is not going to be recouped.

I have a newspaper article here and it says, "Money losing Crown casts doubt on future IT ventures." And the statement underneath that, "No concrete opportunities for revenue growth in the land title system."

No concrete opportunities for revenue growth. And who said that, Mr. Speaker? One of the most astute NDP politicians that they've ever had in managing finances. No concrete opportunities for revenue growth, MacKinnon says.

Be interesting to know where this MacKinnon is right now, Mr. Speaker. She's . . .

The Speaker: — I would just remind the member that the use of members' name in debate is not permitted. Only the use of members' name when it's quoted from some article.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will try and correct my ways on that.

So the particular article relating to this particular minister. The question is where is she now? Is she still in cabinet? No. She's not in cabinet any more. She's not in cabinet because she tried

to get the front row over there to go ahead and mind their p's and q's when it comes to running business efficiently and well.

She asked the information from the Crowns and said, we want to know why you're doing and what you're doing and how you're going to do it and what guarantees you have that there'll be some money made. And they said it's not your business — it's not your business.

And where did the present cabinet put her? She's turfed over way on the far side, outside of cabinet — way on the far side. She's over there with the Social Services minister, Mr. Speaker. Nothing to do with cabinet. That's how astute this NDP government and cabinet is when it comes to business.

The one astute person who looked at how well this land title system would work and say it's not a good idea at all. It's not a good idea at all, but the NDP government ploughed ahead and said we'll invent this thing all on our own. It has gone way awry.

Mr. Speaker, this system should have been working years ago, should have been working years ago. It still isn't working properly. Still isn't paid for. Costs are still going up. And it's a shame that we had to lag behind other jurisdictions.

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of a story I've told before but it bears retelling for the people who've forgotten it. When the Minister of Education of some, I think, four or five years ago, the Minister of Education had a plan. She says we have to bring Saskatchewan education up to a good quality level. Again, one of those noble statements that we all agree with. So she had some testing done on the students of Saskatchewan, found out, Mr. Speaker, that we weren't doing very well in our math systems.

Well, so then what could possibly be responsible for that, that Saskatchewan students were doing poorly in math. Well let's look at all the possibilities, and she did, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is a good analogy; in fact, it isn't just an analogy, it just shows exactly how this government works.

She said well it could be that Saskatchewan students just aren't smart enough to figure out math. But that wasn't the case. Saskatchewan students are just as smart as anyone else, and I think in most cases smarter.

Then she said well, it could be the teachers don't know how to teach math very well. But that isn't the case either, because Saskatchewan teachers, as Mr. Speaker will well know, are among the best in the province.

Well then we have to look at something else. Well let's look at class sizes. Our class sizes weren't appreciably different. Maybe it happens to be the text and the curriculum.

At the end of the day when all the possibilities were checked out, the only thing that could be addressed to say here's where the flaw is was the curriculum. And the minister, very correctly and very astutely came to that conclusion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's just like with the land titles problem. How are we going to solve the problem? What did the NDP

Minister of Education do? Did she get out her handy, dandy, little phone and dial up and say okay, start with the Minister of Education from Newfoundland — how are your students doing in math? — and work her way across Canada, and then around the States until she's found the two or three jurisdictions where the students are doing the best, and then say, that's the curriculum I'm going to buy.

And probably in about 10 hours, we could have had the best curriculum in North America and had our students doing very well.

But what did the NDP do? Say, well we'll go huddle off in our cave and we'll try and invent this wheel again. So they got a whole group of people together and said now let's try and invent a good curriculum . . . a good curriculum.

So they worked years on it, and so now we have a new curriculum. Is it doing any better than any other curriculum in other jurisdictions where students are doing well? No. Is it doing about as well? Possibly.

That, Mr. Speaker, is exactly the logic that this government used when they came up with The Land Titles Amendment Act. They're basically saying we have a problem with land titles. Do we go someplace else and find a solution? No, we have to create it all on our own. Budget overruns triple. Not 20,000 . . . or 20 million, pardon me. That number always rather amazes me, Mr. Speaker, that we actually spent \$60 million to have a computer keep track of Land Titles.

Why did it take that long? Why did it cost that much money? Those are questions that that administration must answer. They still haven't; they still haven't.

The one they haven't even come close to answering, Mr. Speaker, is what the difference in cost would have been if they'd have just bought the software from someone else and stuck it in their handy-dandy little Apple machine and away they went.

However, Mr. Speaker, user groups most affected by the new Land Titles system will no doubt be pleased that once it's actually up and running . . . Realtors, surveyors, and lawyers have been forced to wait long periods of time. Hopefully that will be over with.

In Alberta, BC (British Columbia), and Ontario where they have already done this, Mr. Speaker, their waiting time . . . And you remember what I said earlier on, in Saskatchewan it's traditionally been five, six, seven days, up to three and four weeks. Alberta, BC, and Ontario, where they've done this, their waiting time, Mr. Speaker, is just one day.

How great that would have been. And the Finance minister agrees with me. He said, how great that would have been. If we would have just gone up and bought the software from Alberta, BC, or Ontario, we could have purchased it years ago. The Minister of Finance could have stuck it in his handy-dandy Apple and in one day our Land Titles could have had the thing returned.

But not over here, not when the NDP run the system. Hopefully

these amendments that we're dealing with today, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 19, will significantly improve the waiting times for user groups here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said earlier on, when we look at the way the NDP feels they have to invent everything, when we look at how they run their businesses, it gets a very frightening situation because now they're going to try and run, now they're going to try and run this Land Titles system, the one that the minister that I quoted earlier on said there was no opportunity for profit to be made.

Now had we actually bought somebody else's, maybe we could have this used by other individuals, maybe we could find an opportunity and market it, but not now. Overall, we're encouraged by the fact that consultation did take place to some extent and that recommendations were put in place following this consultation.

But as I've already raised, Mr. Speaker, there are numerous issues that are still out there dealing specifically with this Bill, Bill No. 19, and specifically government's lack of planning and poor spending habits.

I've just briefly introduced those problems. We'll need to discuss those in more detail, to check out exactly if this government knows what it's doing, or how badly they're messing up this particular program as well.

And so for that particular reason, Mr. Speaker, as we look through some more of that information, I will at the present time adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 20 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from my inquiries into what The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2001 entails in it, it looks to me to be some very minor, minor amendment to the Bill that was brought forward last year, The Land Surveys Act, 2000.

In looking through this, Mr. Speaker, and I've listened to the minister's comments when he put this one forward, talked in a number of cases about reducing red tape. And I'm hoping that would include reducing the cost that it is for people of the province when they need to find markers and survey pegs and monuments out there when they're doing something with either agriculture, land, or for that matter when they're building houses or whatever, to find the cornerstones for when they . . . of their property.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also said they were trying to make this Act easier to apply, and I would commend them for that if that's what it really is. We talked about replacing the existing

sections regarding primary, secondary monuments with one section applying to all monuments.

And I think really what it boils down to is it did need some amendments to make it simpler even though it was just brought in last year, and probably if it had of been done right last year we wouldn't need the amendments.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting on some feedback from surveyors and such in the province that will be dealing with this legislation. And we would like to get their feedback before letting this pass on. So at this time I would like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(15:30)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — On my right is Ron Styles, the deputy minister . . . pardon me, on my left is Ron Styles, the deputy minister; and on my right is Barry Martin, the assistant deputy minister. Behind me is Don Wincherauk, who is the assistant deputy minister in charge of corporate services. And then behind Mr. Styles is Carl Neggers, the assistant deputy minister for policy and planning division.

As well, I'm joined by two other people, Fred Antunes, the director of operations, planning, and business support; and Cathy Lynn Borbely, the leader of the budget development process in the department.

Subvote (HI01)

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to the minister and her officials, once again.

I'd like to begin today's review of Highways and Transportation with some questions pertaining to the prairie grain roads program. I noticed with interest the headlines in the paper earlier this week, dated May 28, and I see that \$220 million has been dedicated to roads in the province as part of that particular program.

And I do know also that the department wanted to announce this program considerably earlier because of the impact it would have on spring tendering. Now that we've got the details and the agreement signed, would you care to explain a little bit about what you intend to do with this money; the types of projects you plan to direct the money to specifically. And before maybe you go into that explanation, could you tell us what the delay was in getting this deal signed, please?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — My understanding is that they had to sign an order in council and they had to . . . that was delayed.

The cabinet had to agree to the order in council, and that delayed the signing of the agreement. But as soon as the order in council was signed, we signed the agreement, and then we issued our spring tendering, which I've just given you a copy of.

Mr. Elhard: — My understanding, Madam Minister, is that most of the money is going to go to TMS projects. Will it be patching of TMS; will it be replacement of TMS? What is your focus on that particular allotment of money?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It's upgrading TMSs to structural pavement.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) apparently is quoted as being somewhat unhappy with the split of the money. They were hoping to get a 50/50 split for municipal roads and highways, and I believe the split actually ended up being 70/30.

Can you tell me a little bit about the dynamics of that discussion and what happened? What lead you to decide to put more money into the highways as opposed to the municipal roads, in opposition to the position of SARM?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There were four parties to the negotiations — the federal government, the province of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association.

Saskatchewan took the position that we wanted to be able to invest the money strategically into those roads that were in critical condition. And as a result of the work that we did to advance our position, I believe SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) supported our position. SARM had a different position. The federal government, it was their decision in the end and they decided to support the 70/30 split when it came to the allocation of the funding.

I should mention that all four groups will be involved in determining how we're going to spend . . . or allocate that money. And I want you to know that our negotiating mandate was to make sure that the federal funding was strategically invested in those roads that were critical to the development of a sustainable road system in the province.

Our view was that we needed to look at municipal and provincial roads in a more integrated regional road system and we wanted to ensure that there was local and regional participation in the program delivery through provincial consultation with our area transportation committees.

So we know that the federal government funding will not resolve our challenges when it comes to our provincial and municipal highways. But we think that the money will certainly assist us in trying to transform our transportation system to one that deals with the significant changes that have occurred in the grain industry.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In presentations and responses to questions previously, you have referred to the

tremendous transference of grain traffic and weight and volume to roads because of the rail-line abandonment issue. Your predecessor also alluded to that many times.

But the reality is that it's not just provincial highways that are negatively affected. Municipal roads take a great and tremendous beating because of the very factors that you're saying of being deleterious to the municipal . . . I'm sorry, to the provincial roads.

So is there any thinking, is there going to be any effort by the provincial government addressing the concerns specifically of the municipalities in this province as to how they are to come to grips with the real problems that they're facing on roads that they are charged with building and maintaining?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question because it's a very good question and it's a very important question.

As you know, the western premiers and territorial leaders are meeting this evening and over the next two days in Moose Jaw. The Premier, along with the other premiers, have on the agenda the whole issue of transportation. It's a critical issue for Western Canada, and for Northern Canada as well.

As you know, we have escalated the twinning of two national highways in the province of Saskatchewan — No. 1 and No. 16. If the federal government . . . if the premiers are successful in getting this on to the national agenda when they meet with the premiers and the Prime Minister this summer, and if the federal government understands the need for the West in particular to have access to federal funds, given the transformation that's taken place, and if the federal government were to increase funding in the whole area of transportation, it would allow us to redirect money that's going into Highway No. 1 and Highway No. 16 to other parts of our province's transportation network.

I'm hopeful that if we can get out of the western premiers' and territorial leaders' conference a commitment to take this on to the national agenda, and if we can raise the profile of this issue from a western point of view, that perhaps there might be some interest on the federal government's part to participate in not only highways, but that we have issues around ports and airports as well, in order to promote economic development in the West. So we'll see what happens in terms of what comes out of the premiers' conference.

I've met with many municipalities and I've met with SARM, and I can certainly understand their frustration because they too have suffered the consequences of the dramatic changes that have taken place.

I've been speaking to the press recently about what's happened in grain haul in the province, and I find these numbers startling. From 1984 to 1999, grain haul in Saskatchewan has increased by 860 per cent and this is an increase from 245 million tonne kilometres in 1984 to 2.1 billion tonne kilometres. And we estimate — the department has a program that they use to estimate — that by 2005 that figure will increase to 3 billion tonne kilometres.

These numbers project a trend, and it's obvious that our

highways are suffering that trend and it's going to take a huge amount of fiscal resources to try and deal with that trend. I believe strongly that neither the municipalities or the province have the fiscal capacity to generate the kind of revenue that's required to put into our physical infrastructure.

I think what's important for the — and I think we had this discussion before — what's important for the federal government to understand . . . Now they like to talk about the new economy. Well we have a new economy emerging in Western Canada, particularly in this province, and our new economy is the diversification efforts of Saskatchewan farmers and also Saskatchewan business to add value to our agricultural products. That is our new economy.

And our new economy is a . . . it's still a bulk economy. We have to be able to transport it and export it out of the province, and we're exporting it by truck. And we somehow have to get the federal government to understand that there is a significant link between economic development in this province and transportation, and if our farmers . . . And the federal government has made it very clear to us that they're not prepared to compete with the US subsidies and the European subsidies, therefore we're on our own. So we have to diversify our economy more than we have and there's been a tremendous diversification in the last 10 years. But if we are to diversify it more — and this leads to the whole weight question — we need to have a physical infrastructure that can get our product to market, to export market. And therein is the challenge.

And so my job, on behalf of the citizens of this province, is to clearly show that economic development, economic diversification, and rural revitalization is clearly linked to our capacity to have a physical infrastructure which includes highways and transportation, water, telephones, gas, and power.

(15:45)

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, that's a fairly comprehensive answer. And I appreciate you drawing all of the disparate parts together in the puzzle.

I'm going to throw caution to the wind right now and say that, in my view, the abdication of responsibility by the federal government in terms of transportation in Western Canada borders on criminal. You know, it's not a Robin Hood scenario at all — it's theft.

And they're taking millions and millions and millions of dollars out of our economy — this province — and out of other economies in the West and not returning anything approaching a respectable level. Well in fact, they're not returning anything in large measure to this very important problem that we're facing in Western Canada, and specifically in Saskatchewan.

Given the complexities though, given the challenges that you've just alluded to, what are you as a minister doing, and what is your department doing to plan strategically for these challenges over the next decade?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well the member raises a very good question, you know. What is the plan from the department for

the next 10 years?

I think that we were extremely pleased that we were the first government department that was given a mandate to have a three . . . a multi-year, a three-year multi-purpose plan in a sense, in that it helps us plan into the out years in terms of how we . . . and we have money for each of the next three years. And we can show communities where we're going to be investing the province's money in our physical infrastructure.

As you know, we significantly increased this year's budget. There will be a further increase next year and the year after. We are investing in strategic corridors where we see economic activity taking place and where we know that those roads have to be built to a particular standard. So we are moving to primary weight roads in those strategic corridors.

In addition — and you and I talked about this last time and I was supposed to get you the history of weights in the province — but in addition, the province has hired a consultant to look at what do we need to do in terms of our physical infrastructure to promote and encourage economic development activity?

And it's become — and I think I spoke about this last time — it's become clear to me in the last couple of months since I've been the minister that there are economic development initiatives that are taking place in certain parts of the province. And in order for those to go forward, you're going to have to get product to market and people are wanting primary weight roads, or roads that are all-year-round roads.

We are trying to increase, through this year's budget, our TMS (thin membrane surface) surfaces to structural pavement, but structural pavement is not a primary road. There will still be a couple of months a year that they will not be . . . trucks will not be able to go with particular weights down those roads.

So the trick is how do we, through our strategic investments, encourage economic development in rural Saskatchewan — what I call our new economy — and how do we create or have the physical infrastructure to support that economic development? Because you need both in order to revitalize rural Saskatchewan.

So we have . . . I guess what I would say is we have a three-year rollout of our money. We're investing in strategic corridors. But there are other parts of the province that aren't necessarily in those strategic corridors that also have economic development ideas. And we need to figure out how we can promote economic development in various regions of the province.

And what we don't want to do is to — through our . . . how we develop our physical infrastructure — sort of predetermine where economic development might occur, because economic development needs to occur all over the province. So that's one of the things that the consultant is going to help us try and figure out.

What are the economic development opportunities into the future? And then how do we marry our physical infrastructure with those economic development opportunities?

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I appreciate the

inference of not imposing economic development limitations on some areas because of your choice of certain routes as opposed . . . or over and above other routes.

But having said that, there must also be some consideration given, some criteria, some way of determining how much . . . or what activity is going to happen in any given area, how much it's going to amount to, and can you justify building a road there.

So can you give us some indication of how you plan to approach the problem with those particular issues in mind?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, I mean that's why we're working with our area transportation planning committees. That's why I think the consultant is going to be very helpful in terms of . . . Because this is not only about transportation, this is about economic development as well.

And we need to . . . We have regional economic development, REDAs (regional economic development authority) across the province that have done inventories of what might happen in various regions of the province. And there are communities with many good ideas.

And I know you can't have a physical infrastructure all over the place and you have to be strategic.

On the other hand, what I've learned is that, particularly from south of the No. 1 where we have sparse populations, large geographic areas, and lots of TMS surfaces and not many primary weight roads, that people don't want to be left out of economic development opportunities because of those particular factors.

So how do we work with the economic development authorities, the regional area transportation agencies, business people and farmers that are trying to promote various economic development opportunities in their region in order to revitalize their region, when, if you look at some of the criteria that we've used in the past, they wouldn't necessarily be on the list three or four or five years from now?

So it's a matter of how do we put fairness into the process, a transparency into the process so people can understand how we are making decisions when it comes to which roads we're rebuilding, resurfacing, repaving or upgrading.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, surely you're not going to leave that decision up to the best salesman though from the transportation planning area of north or south or east or west.

Would you use a hard dollar figure if you had an economic group in the southeast who said if you rebuild this road we can anticipate \$400 million worth of economic activity that would be stimulated or created because of this? Would that be something you would look at versus another area that said, well, we're only going to be able to generate about \$100 million over the next several years?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well we do that. We do that when the forestry industry is developing a certain part of the province, the mining industry or the intensive livestock industry or the grain

industry. We do that.

But we also have to look at the social side of things too, in that we have people in the province who need to have a surface that we can get an ambulance over or a school bus over or vehicles over. So you try and balance economic development with social development.

Mr. Elhard: — I forgot this isn't a conversation. It's a question and answer period and I'm sorry for almost jumping in there. But I take it that in part of your considerations you do use hard dollar figures when you're deciding whether or not this road we'll pave. And I appreciate the fact that I have access to that information.

One of the earlier opportunities here to discuss these issues with you and members of your department, I alluded to a quote, I think that I had read someplace, attributed to the deputy minister and I couldn't lay my hands on it at that time. But it came out of the *Urban Voice*, I think it was the February 2001 publication. And it wasn't actually a quote, it was a summary of something that the deputy minister had said at the meeting with SUMA at that time.

And he was indicating that the department's new approach is a long-term planning horizon in making budget and spending decisions. Some short-term repair will continue to be necessary, but looking at Highways as transportation routes requiring capital investment is the new planning approach.

And I think that having . . . I guess I'm extrapolating or taking things from this. I'm assuming at face value that this is a definite change and probably something that will benefit both the department and the province over the long haul. So I want to express my gratitude for that change in emphasis in the department.

There's lots of other areas that we need to touch on in the remaining time. But I have offered to give some of today's estimates to some of my colleagues. So if I may, I'd like to turn a few minutes now over to the MLA from Redberry Lake.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I just want to say this, that here's what we're going to try and do. We're going to try and upgrade our primary pavements to a 20-year life cycle. We're going to try and upgrade our regional pavements to a 25-year life cycle. And over the next three years, we're going to upgrade to granular pavement or structural pavement 800 kilometres of TMS roads that are linked to economic development in the province.

We're going to improve our airports because we fly people in and out of the province. And we're going to improve our signage in the province as a safety issue, and our roadside mowing. And we're increasing the number of traffic officers that we have by five in order to deal with some of the weight issues on our roads.

And the road builders, the money that we're investing in our roads will mean jobs for our people, and it will also mean summer employment for students. And we're going to have the No. 1 twinned by 2004.

So in terms of the next three years, these are the objectives for

our department.

(16:00)

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to the minister and her officials.

Two or three points concerning items in Redberry Lake constituency. You and I had a conversation concerning some highway that was resurfaced near Biggar, and thank you for mentioning you were going to fix it.

I'd just like to go in a bit more detail about what really happened to that part of the highway. How much of it will have to be redone?

And my question also: in contracts with highway builders and this particular contract, I assume the taxpayer is not paying for the repairs. Could you just go into some detail on that aspect as well?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I understand that the contractor was completing some of that work towards freeze-up last fall. Some of that work is in reject and repair, and the contractor is coming back to make the repairs or to deal with the rejected parts of that road and the taxpayers will not be paying for it.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Another highway in Redberry Lake constituency is Highway No. 376, running from Highway No. 6 at Maymont north to Highway No. 40. And I believe it was on the list of highways that was going to be turned back to gravel.

Could you comment on that particular highway? Is it going to be turned back to gravel in its entirety? Or by any chance has that been changed and it will be resurfaced?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm told that we have no plans to convert that road to gravel. We're putting more money into repair of TMSs in this year's budget.

I'm not talking about upgrading. This road is not going to be upgraded to a structural pavement. But more money is going into that road in the way of repair trying to deal with some of the failures and some of the dips and potholes that have occurred on that road. So that road will receive maintenance this year.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, recently I had a phone call from the reporter of *The Riverbend Review*, and he is also a farmer. He and his wife farm near Blaine Lake in the Hafford area. And he asked me to pass on a challenge to the Minister of Highways to come out to Hafford and Blaine Lake area and take a ride with him down Highway No. 40 to look at the condition of the highway.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, this particular individual and a number of other people in that area have had a number of problems on Highway No. 40. Last year this individual received damage to his stock trailer and truck driving from Hafford to Blaine Lake because of the treacherous roads and potholes. This year, the same individual has had another mishap, this time on the other side of Hafford along Highway No. 40 from Hafford

to North Battleford.

He would like me to express his concerns about the highway and issue that challenge to the minister again. Two points to the minister: will you take this individual up on his challenge to take a ride with him and his wife on Highway No. 40?

And also what steps are taken or being taken to improve this stretch of the highway? It seems to me that it needs to be resurfaced in some areas and — both on the east and west side of Hafford — seriously needs some improvements.

And I would like you to comment on that highway, please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I've been on that road recently. So I understand why he would like me to be on the road and I have been on the road.

What I can tell the member is there is more money that is going in to our highway repair budget this year — a significant amount of money. There's been a 25 per cent increase and there will be work done on that road in this fiscal year.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, welcome to your officials here today.

As you know I represent Shellbrook-Spiritwood, or the constituency of Shellbrook-Spiritwood. But I have a few questions regarding my constituency just west of me, and it's just outside Turtleford.

On Friday of last week there was an accident that happened just north of Turtleford where the bridge went out. Now this bridge links a lot of the recreation centres going north up around St Walburg, Paradise Hill, and those areas there. I just phoned to see what was happening with the bridge today and it's still in the same shape as it was before. Have you got any recommendations of what you plan on doing in the near future regarding that bridge?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I can tell the member is that we're ready to reinstall the part that collapsed on Friday, but we have to go through this engineering investigation because we need to determine exactly what happened. So there's some technical people that are there examining precisely what happened because we have other bridges in the province that were built at a similar time, similar structure. So we want to make sure that . . . and we're doing inspections on those bridges now, and we just want to make sure that this does not repeat itself.

So there's an investigation going on and as soon as the investigation is over, we will reinstall the bridge. What I'm advised by the department is that that bridge should be back in operation by the second or third week of June.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You're saying that you're going to build another . . . rebuild the bridge in that area to accompany the traffic going north?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, the bridge is not going to be torn down and rebuilt. What we're going to do is we're putting in new piles, new pile caps, and then concrete. The concrete span

will be reinstalled, and then obviously the bridge will have to be . . . the portion that was destroyed will have to be repaved and so on.

And we expect that that work can be completed by the second to third week of June.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In regards to rebuilding that bridge, as you know building bridges, there's a lot of cost. That river, quite a while ago, only obtained a little bit of water. And then you get the years where there's lots more snow and the river comes up. The last number of years there's been virtually no water going through there.

And I'm wondering if maintaining a bridge there and putting all them dollars into maintaining a bridge is worthwhile or is it better to go with two or maybe three huge culverts — which has been recommended by people from there — to alleviate some of the cost and also serve the purpose just as well.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I'm told it's cheaper to repair the bridge than to tear everything out and put a culvert in because the concrete spans are still okay. The thing that needs to be replaced are the piles and the pile caps. So from the department's point of view it is less costly to the taxpayers to repair the bridge than to tear the bridge out and put in a culvert.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In regards to that I also have another concern regarding the RMs (rural municipality) around the area. Now with that bridge gone out there's been extra traffic that's been rerouted and it's been going down RM roads. And now the RM roads are suffering a great deal of structure in their road network and it's causing a great concern to the RMs.

What do you have in plan to do, in regards to the RMs, in helping them compensate some of these problems that they've contributed with right now in the next short time?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well one thing about the Department of Highways, they are very frugal. What I can tell you, it comes from years of tight budgets, I can assure the members of that.

What the department has done is they've rerouted the heavy trucks to other highways and it's light cars that are going down the municipal roads. But if there is damage, the department would be quite prepared to go out and work with the municipalities to see what could be done.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm sure the RMs would love to hear that in regards to what you've just said.

My last question is actually regarding my constituency and that is the highway going north of Spiritwood, up to Leoville, and on to Chitek Lake. It's a thin membrane highway as you know. That highway is just atrocious. Last year at one time there was rumours — and I'm not going to get into rumours — but it was going to be turned into gravel. Being that the highway is mostly used for people going up to the lakes or whatever, what is your plan for that highway in the near future in regards to going to gravel or maintaining a thin membrane surface of pavement?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I can tell the people of Leoville is

that it's not going to be upgraded to a structural pavement. But we've had a significant increase in our budget and we plan on maintaining that TMS as a dust-free surface.

And I know that there's a lot of senior citizens in that Leoville area who are there all year round. We're not just talking about tourists that come through once in a while, but there are people that live there, that need to be able to get out by ambulance or whatever and it's our intention to maintain that road as a dust-free surface. But we don't have any plans presently to upgrade that road to a structural pavement.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. In view of the bridge collapse that was suffered in the Turtleford area, can you tell me the inspection schedule for bridges of those types, and bridges generally around the province, and also liability.

I understand there was damage to a heavy vehicle in that bridge collapse. What about the issue of liability? Does the provincial Department of Transportation and Highways assume liability for that truck?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — They've come loaded for bear so I'm going to give you the full detail. We have over 800 bridges in the province and most of those were built in the 1950s and the 1960s. We have two bridge preservation engineers that do the detailed inspection. In addition there are two bridge superintendents and one bridge technician. And then we have 80 maintenance crew supervisors that are trained for general inspections, looking for defects.

(16:15)

The province is separated into five areas so one area's bridges are given a detailed bridge inspection every year. So each bridge has a complete, detailed inspection done once every five years. And the five-year review is a minimum.

If a problem has been identified, the bridge is inspected more regularly. And this can be done every two years or every year.

In addition, our local maintenance crews, supervisors, inspect all bridges twice per year — once in the spring and once in the fall. And in fact the Turtleford bridge was inspected last November. And it was identified at that time that we needed to replace some piling caps and some piles. And the piling caps were replaced in March and we couldn't replace the piles — I think it was piles 5 to 9 — because there was still frost in the pavement on the base of the bridge, and then there was still frost in the ground.

All inspections are reviewed by our professional engineers who either prioritize repairs or file the inspection report if no repairs are required. And bridges are also inspected if an accident has occurred on that bridge.

Bridges are selected for a replacement program based on a number of factors and those factors are primarily structural in nature.

A condition rating number is assigned to each highway bridge in the province. And the rating is a numerical representation of the condition of the bridge. And the ratings are on a scale of 1

to 10. So a 10 means it's a new bridge and it's prior to a first inspection; 9 means it's excellent, there are no deficiencies; 8 means very good, minor deficiencies; 7 means good; 6 means fair; 5 means a tolerable condition boundary, which means in an extreme event there could be a failure; 4 is poor; marginal is 3, and that's where weight restrictions apply; and 2 is critical, so there's major structural risk.

And we know that we currently have 61 bridges that are past their design life and that's why in this year's budget we've got 5 point . . . Well just a second. Last year's budget we had \$5.3 million; and this year we increased it to 5.95. So we are going to be spending a lot more money on our bridges in the next three years.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for that detailed answer. Can you also tell me, having the data right in front of you, how many of our 800 bridges are ranked number 6 or lower?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What we do is we rank bridges in terms of replacement. We don't have them all here, but we'll get that for you so that you will understand how we do the ranking. And there are numbers that are assigned to the rankings. And it looks as though we have several bridges that need things like spruce piling replacements, or there might be a load restriction on it.

And the department looks at replacements once they hit a ranking of 3 or less — so 3, 2, and 1. So once you hit a weight restriction, then they look at replacing the bridge.

And I can also tell you, the other member talked about culverts. We will replace those short bridges with culverts once they reach the end of their service life. And if the bridge has had it, then we will replace it — for those short-span bridges — we'll replace them with culverts.

So I just thought I'd add that information as well.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The Deputy Chair was wondering if a no. 1 ranking meant a collapsed bridge. But I take it that it's still serviceable, although at a weight-restricted regime.

Madam Minister, I assume that the process of getting approval for a bridge construction is not exactly a simple situation. I assume that the department undertakes their studies; that you have to get some federal government involvement because of the fisheries issue. But I understand further that the Coast Guard plays a role in all of this.

Can you detail for us, you know, what the regime is for coming up with approval for a bridge design?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well we're talking about rivers or water bodies. There are three different processes that we have to go through when we want to construct a new bridge. One is in the environmental front, so you need to deal with provincial environmental regulations and federal environmental regulations because rivers tend to be under federal jurisdiction. Then we have to deal with the federal Fisheries department when we're talking about rivers, and then we have to deal with the Coast Guard when you're talking about rivers that are large

bodies of water.

So it's not an easy task to build a bridge in this province, or anywhere actually in the country.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, the member from Canora-Pelly was telling me a story just a little while ago about a low-level crossing that he is trying to have put in place in his constituency. It's not a situation where there's enough traffic to merit a bridge. But at low water, a low-level crossing would be appropriate to meet the needs of the local traffic and the farm traffic in the area. And yet apparently that low-level crossing is at a standstill because of the Coast Guard's involvement.

What interest does a Coast Guard have in a low-level crossing?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well things don't always make sense but . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I'm told this by the department. But when it comes to rivers and creeks, we have the federal jurisdiction. And so you may have a dry situation but it comes under the navigable waters.

And so while someone . . . From a practical point of view it might make sense because the riverbed is dry to sort of put in some dirt and try and get over it; the argument is that someone may want to navigate down that dry riverbed.

So we're not defending this; we're just saying that's the reason.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's something I think we need to pursue at some point. There isn't enough navigable rivers in this province. And with water levels being as low as they are now, there's even fewer.

We only have a few minutes left for Highways and Transportation estimates and there is so much material that I'd like to cover. Rather than get into anything too detailed or philosophical, I'm going to ask about some specific highways on behalf of some of my colleagues.

First of all, I'd like to ask you, on behalf of the member from Kelvington-Wadena, about Highway No. 38. And in reference to that highway, she handed me a letter to the editor where somebody talked about taking the drive north of Kelvington on Highway 38 to lovely Greenwater Provincial Park, but they were appalled by the deplorable condition of the highway to the park.

Can you give us an indication if that is one of the roads that is scheduled for major repair work this year?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We did 5 kilometres last year and we have nothing major planned this year other than maintenance.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The second specific highway that I was asked to touch on today is No. 39 from the American-Saskatchewan border as it proceeds to Estevan.

I am told that the condition of the highway has discouraged quite a significant amount of truck traffic. Brokers in the area that handle freight brokerage between the two countries are complaining about a loss of business. Apparently a lot of the

truck traffic is coming north into Manitoba and then proceedings west along the No. 1 Highway.

So could you give us an indication what your plans are for No. 39 Highway this year?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We are working on 39 this year, but it's in the Weyburn area and not in the Estevan area.

And we are working on No. 6, which is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member says that there's not a whole lot, but we're not finished with the season yet. And No. 6, we are doing work on No. 6, which also goes into the US, which I believe is still in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency.

Mr. Elhard: — No. 8 Highway north of Swan Plain, is at the request of the Deputy Chair.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We're not doing anything on that road this year other than repair.

Mr. Elhard: — And our final request for specific information is for Highway No. 2 south of Assiniboia toward the US border.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We have a major project east of Assiniboia on 13, but we . . . but 7?

An Hon. Member: — 2.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Oh okay. But we're not doing anything on the road that you mentioned.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, just a couple quick questions regarding specific highways. And first of all let me mention that we're pleased to see the completion of the No. 8 project between the Fairlight work that was done a couple of years ago and Moosomin the last couple of years.

However a highway that continues to be a major problem in the area is 48. And just recently a constituent called. His wife happens to work. They live just outside of Maryfield, travels 48. And I'm not sure if they're travelling that any more because they took the second oil pan out of their vehicle on 48 Highway.

(16:30)

And I'm wondering, earlier on, Madam Minister, you were talking about the fact that your department has been given the go ahead to kind of think long term rather than on an annual basis.

And I would like to know what the department's plans are for Highway 48 from the Manitoba border through to No. 9 Highway, in view of the fact that it's not just local traffic and grain but it's also a fair bit of tourism with the parks in that area, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We are in discussions with the rural municipalities about an alternate truck route in that area.

I would move that we rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

**General Revenue Fund
Rural Revitalization Office
Vote 43**

(Subvote RR01)

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left is Harvey Brooks, the deputy minister for Rural Revitalization. And immediately behind me is Dion McGrath, acting director of policy and planning, on secondment from Agriculture and Food. Pardon me, on secondment from Economic Development. My apologies.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I'm not sure why it has fallen to me to lead the questioning on Rural Revitalization today because I think it's an issue that is very important to so many people. I would have thought they'd have been beating down the doors to participate in this particular session this afternoon.

But I do recognize the absolute essential nature of revitalization for rural Saskatchewan. And I know when the initiative was announced earlier this spring many of us were skeptical about what this particular approach would be able to achieve with the limited budget and with the limited personnel.

And I would ask the minister if she is satisfied that under those limited circumstances, this department is going to be adequately able to contribute to the overall objectives of rural revitalization?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can say to the member I'm not satisfied yet.

Mr. Elhard: — I would like to ask the minister in view of her response then, what it will take to satisfy her.

An Hon. Member: — Don't go there.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, yes don't go there. It will take a lot. And what do I mean by that, and I don't mean to be facetious.

When I say I'm not satisfied, when you think about the government departments, the public service, there is a particular culture, a particular way of doing things. And our job as the office of Rural Revitalization is to make sure that when government departments initiate things, do things, think about public policy, that we're in the loop. And that we obviously have something to say about that from a rural economic development point of view.

So when I say I'm not satisfied yet, it's not a matter of how many employees we have in our department, it's a matter of ensuring that when government departments are thinking about certain things, that we're there to make sure that rural citizens and rural businesses and rural institutions' views are acknowledged, respected, and taken into consideration.

So we see ourselves as the lens for rural Saskatchewan to make

sure that we can promote economic development activity and those kinds of endeavours that will assist in the revitalization of rural Saskatchewan.

And I think it's going to be a while. We're only a couple of months old, but we're making ourselves known. And we now have a deputies' working group from the various government departments that have a lot to do with rural Saskatchewan, like Economic Development, Agriculture and Food, Highways and Transportation, obviously Rural Revitalization, and there's one more that . . . and Executive Council, so the Premier's shop.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, I was negligent earlier in not welcoming the officials to the session this afternoon and I apologize for that.

In view of the response of the minister, can I assume then that the Department of Rural Revitalization is not proactive in developing initiatives for rural revitalization, but is rather a watchdog to make sure none of the other departments scuttle possible rural revitalization initiatives?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No, I would say we're both. We are a proactive department because there are lots of people coming to us because they see us as their entry into government. And then obviously the other role is to make sure that we're there at the table moving things along from a public policy perspective.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, do you have some formalized procedure by which you impose yourself on the discussions? When you learn that SaskTel is going to do something or some government department is planning to do something, do you have a formal mandate to participate in the discussions, or is this something that is going to rely on the goodwill of the department you're involved with?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What's so good about the office is that rural Saskatchewan people are contacting us as their entry into government. And that has been extremely gratifying. I mean I was a bit worried that people would greet this with some skepticism but they're not.

So what I would say is two things: we're formalizing a deputy minister's working committee. Those deputies that are very . . . have key responsibility for various activities in rural Saskatchewan across government. And then secondly, it's just making sure that people who are working in the various departments know that we have a mandate to initiate projects, evaluate projects. We work to alleviate obstacles to rural economic development. We're assessing policy.

I should also tell the member that we have two committees of cabinet — a cabinet committee on economic development and a cabinet Committee on Social Development. And I'm on both of those committees and our deputy is an official to both of those committees. So that's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . pardon me, he's just a deputy to economic development, but I'm on both of those committees.

So my job and our deputy's job is to attend the committee meetings, and when we're dealing with . . . it doesn't matter what public policy we're dealing with, our job is to think about it from a rural perspective, whether it's a rural social

development perspective or an economic development perspective. And I would say we have been quite helpful on many occasions in that process.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Help me if I'm making an incorrect assumption here, but when somebody comes to you and your department, you indicated that you serve as sort of an entry point for individuals with an idea. Do you try to develop the idea or do you just direct the individuals in the proper direction? Some place where they may get a more full hearing?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It would depend upon what the idea is. If it's an idea that doesn't require cross-departmental working, then we would . . . and if it's a well-developed idea, we would direct them to a particular department.

And I'll just give you one example — the Avonlea reservoir, which you may be familiar with. There's a group of people in the Avonlea area that are wanting to increase the water capacity in the area in order to promote intensive livestock in the area.

Now this will require Sask Water, Saskatchewan Ag and Food, SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), and Economic Development to address the concerns of the community in terms of increasing the capacity of the reservoir.

So what we're doing is we've pulled everybody together and we're working to see if there's some way that we can work with the community to increase the capacity in order to promote economic development.

So that would be one . . . that's one example of many.

Mr. Elhard: — I'm glad you gave me that example, Madam Minister, because that brings to mind the issue of the Meridian dam proposal on the border. Is that another project that your department would be involved with?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It has not been brought to the office's attention, but I'm Vice-Chair of Sask Water so I am familiar with that. And I can report to you that the Alberta government and the Saskatchewan government are jointly funding a study into that issue. And we have grave reservations about what is being proposed, but that's why we want to be at the table in terms of the study, to make sure that our citizens' interests are represent . . . or not represented, but discussed in that study. Because it has implications all across the province in terms of water.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, to you through the Chair, when your government first came to power back in the early '90s, one of the first things that was done was the elimination of the Department of Rural Affairs. And I'm wondering, can you tell us how the mandate of your office differs from the department that existed at that time, and would you say now in retrospect it was maybe a mistake to get rid of the department at that time?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well someone raised this. It might have been you . . . or no, someone else. One of your members raised this. Maybe it was the member from Saltcoats . . . about rural

development. And in 1992-93, the former Rural Development department had a budget of approximately 60 million, and they employed about 300 people.

(16:45)

They delivered transportation services to rural municipalities. That is now over in Municipal Affairs. They developed municipal services for RMs. So they had community planning and professional advisory services. That's now in Municipal Affairs. They managed Crown lands, such as leases, community pastures, resource management programs, and abandoned rail lines. That's now over in Ag and Food. And then they had community development services, which assisted in developing local community-based organizations. And that is in Economic Development.

So most of these services that Rural Development delivered are now being delivered in other government departments and agencies.

Our office won't be programming. We're not going to be a program department for rural areas because that programming already exists. What we're going to try and do is to make sure that that programming is more integrated across government to support rural people.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister again. As she is aware, we've had a large and frequent discussion in this legislature about businesses in rural Saskatchewan, especially maybe rural Saskatchewan, who have successfully carved out a niche for themselves in a given area and frequently find themselves competing against their own government.

And I'm wondering, in view of the dynamics of that tension, how is it that you're able to resolve those problems for yourself from a philosophical point of view and especially in view of the mandate your department has to increase economic activity in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well what I can say to the member is we know that we're not going to solve every problem and there will be times when people are disappointed. But I think it's fair to say . . . and we had our experience with the IRON Solutions situation in Outlook, which really was I think an important experience in this sense: that it provided some focus to the issue of Crown corporations in the province of Saskatchewan. How do we ensure that the Crowns continue to survive because they do provide services to our people, they provide head office jobs, they provide employment to our people. And we know with some of our previous experiences when certain government endeavours were privatized, those head office jobs moved elsewhere, and their better paying jobs, and so on.

What we don't want to do is to impede rural economic development. And I think as a result of our . . . We were invited to Outlook. We had an opportunity to meet with people in Outlook. They raised important public policy issues, from my perspective. The deputy minister was there. And as a result of hearing first-hand from people who were affected, it has caused the government to think about these things in a . . . from a wider perspective. And I think that's important.

And there are discussions going on between IRON Solutions and DirectWest Ag Dealer, and they seem to be proceeding very nicely. And I think we have an opportunity to grow a private business and to provide a kind of expertise right here in the province of Saskatchewan that we can take elsewhere.

And so a bad situation, initially; I think there's an opportunity for that situation to turn into a very positive situation for a private business in rural Saskatchewan and a Crown corporation.

But I agree with the member, we are going to have to be very sensitive in terms of how we approach these things because we need to . . . we need two policy objectives. I think from our government's perspective we want to maintain our Crowns because they provide head office jobs, service, and jobs to people in this province.

But we also want to ensure we have a vibrant private sector business community. And I think that there are some partnerships where we can use large corporations, like Crowns, to be supportive of private industry, like small businesses and others.

So it was a good learning perspective and I think we have an opportunity here.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I have no further questions.

I just would like to comment though that I appreciate the fact that you've admitted it was a learning experience and that you have learned an important lesson from it. Because without commenting about the Crowns themselves, I think that that was one of the most frustrating elements rural businesses had to deal with when they looked at large Crown investments coming in and competing with local and maybe often very small business enterprises. So I appreciate your candour and your response.

We have a few minutes left and I'd like to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If we have no time left, that's all the questions for today. Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 16:56 the Administrator entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

Bill No. 301 – The International Bible College Amendment Act, 2001

Bill No. 302 – The Our Lady of the Prairies Foundation Act, 2001

Bill No. 303 – The Providence Hospital, Moose Jaw Repeal Act

Bill No. 304 – The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Amendment Act, 2001

Bill No. 305 – The St. Anthony's Home Repeal Act

Bill No. 306 – The St. Thomas More College Act, 2001

The Administrator: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

Bill No. 46 – The Appropriation Act, 2001 (No. 2)

The Administrator: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

The Administrator retired from the Chamber at 16:59.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.