

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Briercrest and Drinkwater.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present a petition from people in the Wadena area that are concerned about the reduction of services to the Wadena health centre. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And this is signed by folks from Kuroki, Wadena, Elfros, and even Calgary, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present a petition in support of comprehensive tobacco control legislation on World No Tobacco Day. And this is signed by people who are in support of comprehensive tobacco legislation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive provincial tobacco 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.

I so present. And this is signed by people, generally from Saskatoon, but as well from Martensville.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of petitioners concerned with the state of the hospital in Swift

Current, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the city of Swift Current. They're from Hodgeville and from Val Marie. They're from Cabri, Beechy, Ponteix, Ferland, Elrose, Mankota, and Aneroid, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency who are concerned about the proposals put forward in the Fyke report. And the prayer reads:

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn, Pangman, Moose Jaw, and Yellow Grass.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too present petitions regarding the EMS (emergency medical service) service in Saskatchewan. 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 people in Redvers, Storthoaks, Bellegarde, and Alida areas.

I so present.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who have expressed an interest in maintaining and the 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 Colonsay, Allan, Saskatoon, Young, and Watrous, Saskatchewan.

I so submit.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present dealing with the Redvers health care 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 and doctoral services available, as well as laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to the users from our district, southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba, and beyond.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Antler, Redvers, Fertile, Manor, Moosomin, Regina, Bellegarde, Glenavon, and Maryfield, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed on behalf of residents of Prince Albert and Meadow Lake, and the petition has to do with tobacco smoke and 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.

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

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition for improved 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 the districts of Rabbit Lake, Hafford, Blaine Lake, Leask, Radisson, Borden, Perdue, Maymont, Mistawasis, and Muskeg Lake.

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

Signed by the good citizens from Rabbit Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also 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 signatures are all from the community of Kamsack, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here signed by the good citizens of Saskatchewan concerning two of the government's Crown corporations, SaskPower and SaskEnergy, who both recently announced some rate increases for residential and business customers:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Chamberlain, Holdfast, Emma Lake, Prince Albert, Fort Qu'Appelle, Biggar.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today too to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned with the centralization of ambulance services. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the signatures to this petition come from the community of Wynyard.

I so present.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise with a petition in support of comprehensive tobacco control legislation. And the petition reads:

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.

The signatures are from Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition today regarding concerned citizens in my constituency and cellular telephone coverage:

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

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

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

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by folks concerned about the energy costs. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from Neilburg, Marsden, and Macklin.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition from citizens in rural Saskatchewan reference the cellular telephone coverage. 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 cellular telephone services to all communities throughout the Wood River constituency.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the signators on this are from Coronach and Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

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 and signatories come from North Battleford,

Speers, Saskatoon, Glenbush, and Meadow Lake.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

The petitions are 12 in number and they are addendums to previously tabled sessional papers and petitions.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome and introduce to you, through you to the legislature, a number of people who are in the gallery, your gallery, today because it's World No Tobacco Day. And I'd ask them to stand as I introduce them.

Mary Smillie, who's the president of Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction; Lynn Greaves, who's from Saskatchewan Public Health Association; Lisa Williams, from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan; Andy Caswell, from the Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan Division; Shaine Peters from the Students Working Against Tobacco; and Dawn Anaquod, who is with the FlyHigher Team at Riffel High School.

I'd ask all members to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, I'd like to introduce to you 12 grade 5 students from Scotsburn School in Estevan.

They are sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they're accompanied by their teacher Carolyn Walliser and chaperone Terry Walliser.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Lynn Greaves, Mary Smillie, Lisa Williams, Andy Caswell, Shaine Peters, and Dawn Anaquod who are here with respect to World No Tobacco Day.

As Vice-Chair of the Special Committee on Tobacco Control and on behalf of the official opposition, I welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today, on behalf of the member for Kelvington-Wadena, to introduce a group seated in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, a group of 47 grade 4 students from the Wadena Elementary School.

Along with the 47 students, Mr. Speaker, are teachers Denise Nelson and Tracy Ziola and chaperones Lynn Ziola, Kathy Kanash, Kathy Kristianson, Danny Yablonski, and Bobbi Flanders. I also note that the bus driver is Kerry Holderness, even though I don't believe Kerry is up there right now.

But I'd like all members of the Assembly to welcome this group from Wadena, and I'll be glad to meet with you at 2 o'clock and answer any of your questions. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the students from Wadena.

And in particular, I want to take special note of one young woman who is here, Kailey Christianson and she has some surprise guests today, Mr. Speaker, because the caretakers in the apartment that I live in, Iona and Ralph Christianson, are her grandparents and they very graciously decided to come over and be my guests today so that they could meet with their granddaughter.

So I hope that all members of the House will welcome the Christianson's, Ralph and Iona, as well as Kailey.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I have other special guests here today as well. There are 36 students from one of the finest schools in the constituency of Saskatoon Southeast. I am referring of course to St. Luke School. They are seated in the west gallery giving us high-fives because they know what great students they are.

They are great students courtesy of the wonderful tutelage of Leona Gusikowski, Gail Dust, and Darryl Holowachuk. And they are well-behaved students, courtesy of the chaperoning of the Melissa Gusikowski. So I would ask all members of this Assembly to please make them welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a government member on the Tobacco Control Committee, I too would like to take this opportunity to welcome those people who are here for No Tobacco Day.

And in welcoming them, I also want to thank them very much for the incredible commitment, hard work, dedication that they have put into this cause. The amount of information that they provided for the committee throughout the hearing process was truly wonderful.

I thank them deeply, and I hope that all people here will also join in thanking them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and

through you, I want to introduce a number of guests coming from the Athabasca Basin, and these are communities that are 75 miles south of the Northwest Territories border. They've come a long way to visit the Assembly today.

I'd like to welcome vice-chief of the P.A. (Prince Albert) Grand Council, Ed Benoanie. I'd like to welcome the mayor of Stony Rapids, George Mercredi, and the assistant chief to Black Lake, Edwin Boneleye. And with the three gentlemen from the far North visiting us, of course, we have Fred Beek with SERM, and also Nancy Cherney with SERM and they're here to talk about the RAN (representative areas network) program.

But very briefly I want to say a few words in Dene, because we often hear Cree and French and other languages on this side of the Assembly. And I would say to them in Dene.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Dene.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I'm not familiar with Dene, but I think the member snuck one in there, and I would remind him of the rules of the House.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, a young lady from Aylmer, Quebec who is visiting us here in the legislature today.

Her name is Natasha Nystrom. She has just finished her first year of a two-year program in CEGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel) where I understand, and in our discussion she tells me, that she has had her first political science class.

Natasha has a name that is well-known in Saskatchewan. Her father has been a Member of Parliament for many years representing Saskatchewan constituencies. And I'd like to ask all members to welcome her to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) in welcoming guests from the very far North of this province. I had the great honour and privilege to share lunch with them today, and so I would like to welcome Edwin Boneleye, Ed Benoanie, and George Mercredi.

And I'm afraid that my Dene is nowhere near as good as the Minister of SERM's is, and I won't sneak one in. All I will say is, etlanitã.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome our esteemed guests from the Far North. We welcome you here to the legislature today and we certainly wish you the very best in all of your endeavours.

I ask the members of the Assembly to join with the official opposition in welcoming in these great members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

World No Tobacco Day

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is World No Tobacco Day. Why should Saskatchewan be concerned with World No Tobacco Day? Saskatchewan loses 1,600 people each and every year to tobacco-related deaths — the equivalent of four jumbo jets crashing each and every year and killing everyone on board.

The average starting age of new smokers is only 13 years of age, Mr. Speaker. Tobacco-related deaths are the most preventable cause of death in North America. The financial cost attributed to tobacco use in Saskatchewan is \$266 million in health care costs, absenteeism, and lost productivity.

Rural and urban residents in Saskatchewan are in favour of banning smoking in public places where children have access. Research studies that look at hard data such as sales receipts and employment statistics report no loss of business in Canada, the United States, or elsewhere in the world which implement smoke-free public places and workplaces.

Saskatchewan's ready to take the next step to protect its citizens from the harmful and deadly effects of tobacco. I encourage all members of this Assembly and all citizens of Saskatchewan to take to heart the 2001 theme for World No Tobacco Day, "Second-hand smoke kills, let's clear the air."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement is also to recognize World No Tobacco Day.

The United Nations has declared today, May 31, as World No Tobacco Day. And here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we hope the young people of the province hear our message.

Mr. Speaker, a recent report released by Health Canada indicated that teen smoking in Saskatchewan was well above the national average. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's young people have the second highest smoking rate in Canada — fully 31 per cent of our province's young people are smoking.

Some facts on smokers, Mr. Speaker. Ninety per cent of them start in their teen years. On average they start smoking at 13 years of age and smoke one pack a day. Mr. Speaker, it's important that our young people be reminded once more of the negative effects of smoking. Not only is a person's health affected but too soon is a lifestyle.

There is also the financial impact. Over the course of a smoker's lifetime literally thousands of dollars have gone up in smoke.

Mr. Speaker, as Vice-Chair of the Special Committee on Tobacco Control, I heard first-hand from young people across this province who are very concerned about the high rate of smoking amongst their peers.

Mr. Speaker, we know that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. All of us have a responsibility to make sure that our young people are educated and informed about the dangers of smoking and that we do as much as possible to discourage them from starting. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Funding for Special Needs Children

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week, when making a statement about Child Care Providers' Week, I spoke about the importance of making sure that children get a good start. Making sure that all children, regardless of their social and economic circumstances have equal opportunity to pursue a healthy and fulfilling life, should be the goal of all citizens in our society. And it is a task that this government takes seriously.

This is why the Minister of Social Services announced this morning that as of June 1, new provincial funding will benefit more than 100 special needs children in Saskatchewan. As a part of the Kids First initiative, spaces to accommodate a 108 children will be opened in the Early Childhood Intervention Program.

Both infants and preschoolers will benefit from the program. Children with developmental delays, FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome), autism, attention deficit disorder will receive early childhood intervention services in their homes. This program will be administered and provided by six community-based organizations already involved with providing early childhood intervention programs.

Mr. Speaker, as a very wise and progressive man once said, the measure of any community is the amount of social and economic security which it provides for even its humblest citizen.

I believe that this expanded program begins to attempt to provide just that — opportunity for even the most vulnerable children in our society. And I believe that this government's commitment to the children of Saskatchewan proves that we believe every person in this province is valued.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Induction to Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Dennis and Jim Korte of the Humboldt area have joined the ranks of the baseball legends in the province. The two have been elected as members of the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame. Both Dennis, who is the mayor of Humboldt, and his brother Jim will be inducted into the Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Battleford on August 18.

Dennis and Jim have been involved in the baseball scene in Muenster and Humboldt since their youth. Both started off playing in Muenster, and when Dennis moved to Humboldt they played against each other.

Jim is involved as past president of the Saskatchewan Baseball Association, president of the local baseball league, a coach, and still plays a little twilight baseball. He has also been involved on the provincial and national level.

Dennis has also been very involved on the local, provincial, and national level. As well he spent a lot of time behind the plate calling the game. From 1980 to 1984 he was the national umpire supervisor for Baseball Canada. In 1987 Dennis received the Saskatchewan Baseball Association's award of merit, and in 1988 he received a life membership.

Mr. Speaker, the Kortzes are well known in the Humboldt and Muenster area for their involvement in baseball and are very, very deserving of this award.

Congratulations to Dennis and Jim Korte.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Yorkton Hosts Cultural and Sporting Events

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week I gave two members statements in the time of one. Because there is so much good news coming out of Yorkton, it has to be done in multiples. Today I'm back to do a repeat performance, a double performance, Mr. Speaker.

The 54th annual Short Film and Video Festival was held last weekend and a great time was had by all. And as national recognition for the significance of the international festival, it was given the provincial title for Outstanding Cultural Event Award by Attractions Canada at their celebrations in Halifax — the same event that recognized the Moose Jaw Tunnels, as mentioned by the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow on Monday.

The film festival was competing against events from all of provinces and territories and the award is welcome and appropriate. My congratulations again to the officials and volunteers of the festival.

And from culture to sports this weekend, Mr. Speaker, Yorkton is hosting the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association track and field championships at the Kinsmen Century Field. We are able to host this event as a legacy of the year 2000 summer games. The facilities built for the games enable us to bring the track and field meet to Yorkton.

And, Mr. Speaker, the community spirit that brought the summer games is now bringing 12,000 athletes, coaches, parents, and track fans to Yorkton and a significant boost to our local economy.

So there you are, Mr. Speaker, four good news stories from the shining city on the plains of eastern Saskatchewan. And a lot more good news to come, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mining Industry in Saskatchewan

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Assembly today to share some of the concerns of the mining industry.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure, along with other members of both sides of this House, to attend a function yesterday to hear the president of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting.

Mr. Speaker, the message brought forth by Logan Kruger is one of tax cuts and investment. Logan Kruger told the audience yesterday that governments should stop discriminating against an industry that provides thousands of jobs and produces billions of dollars in exports from this country — both things extremely positive for Saskatchewan and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kruger states the mining industry faces more red tape and higher taxes here than anywhere else. He says that is the wrong message to send investors. The companies that want to put their money in Saskatchewan but are unwilling to do so until the provincial NDP (New Democratic Party) government changes their current unfair policies of regressive taxation and bureaucratic brick walls.

One issue that especially bothers the industry, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan resource surcharge — one that the industry feels has to be ended to help grow Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope, along with my colleagues on this side of the House, that those in attendance at this speech from the other side of the House were listening carefully to this important message and it didn't just fall on deaf ears over there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spring Road Improvements

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we saw in the budget earlier this year that connecting Saskatchewan to the future would mean providing our communities and our economy with a safe, reliable, effective transportation system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say the time is here now. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Department of Highways and Transportation released an additional list of 20 new highway improvement projects valued at over \$45 million.

Mr. Speaker, there's not enough time to speak about all 20 new announcements, but I would like to take the opportunity to address the highlights of the spring tender schedule.

(14:00)

And they're as follows: 139 kilometres of grading in 16 projects that will take place on 11 highways; 199 kilometres of surfacing in 18 projects that will occur on 11 highways; 252 kilometres of construction in 21 projects on 14 highways; and, Mr. Speaker, 381 kilometres of resurfacing in 33 projects on 19 highways.

And there's many, many more improvements outlined in the spring tendering schedule.

Mr. Speaker, more good news for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investigation of Alleged Improprieties at the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's another day and another reluctant admission from a Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming official. This time SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) president, Kathy Langlois, has admitted to accepting gifts from liquor companies. But she's refusing to say what those gifts were.

Mr. Speaker, as far as we know this is new information. There have been no allegations made against Kathy Langlois for accepting gifts in violation of section 133 of the Act. So Justice Wakeling will not be investigating the matter.

Will the minister of Liquor and Gaming table the list of gifts that Kathy Langlois accepted from liquor companies? And will Justice Wakeling be instructed to investigate this matter?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the member opposite that Justice Wakeling will be reviewing all of the allegations concerning section 133.

Mr. Speaker, in the course of doing business people will be offered a luncheon to come and hear an individual do a presentation. They might be offered, by someone who comes to visit from another country, appreciation for the visit — protocol-type things. There are a number of things. What is appropriate and inappropriate to accept has been judged by conflict of interest guidelines.

Since we're now looking at this question, those are the things that will be reviewed by Justice Wakeling.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The information that I just brought up in question one was not an allegation, it was an admission. And I think that should be brought to Justice Wakeling as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's still very unclear exactly what Justice Wakeling is investigating. We haven't been told. We thought he was investigating whether SLGA employees accepted trips and gifts from liquor companies in violation to section 133 of the Act. However Kathy Langlois says he's investigating whether SLGA's conflict of interest policy contradicts the Act and what changes need to be made. That's a big difference, Mr. Speaker. That's a big difference, Mr. Speaker.

Why won't the minister clear this up by simply tabling the terms of reference for all the investigations? Will the minister table the documents that show exactly what Justice Wakeling has been asked to investigate, and what the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has been asked to investigate. Will the minister table those documents today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I took notice of those questions and I will get that information back to the member. But what I will say is what I said about Justice Wakeling's review.

From the harassment charges there were also a few allegations that there were inappropriate gifts being received by members of the Liquor and Gaming Authority. At the same time they cannot be reviewed without looking at the conflict of interest guidelines in section 133 in which the Authority operates, to make certain that it's very clear when it is appropriate to accept something from an outside individual, and when it is not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, there are times when we've all received a mug; when we've all received a gift. We have a way to address those under conflict of interest guidelines, Mr. Speaker. We want to make certain Justice Wakeling looks at all of these things, and if there is action needed, the Authority would take appropriate action, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Whistle-Blower Protection Legislation

Mr. Heppner: — For the minister to use her terms — get back to me with the terms of reference — is not good enough. We need those terms tabled today so we know exactly what's going on, not presented a year or two from now.

Mr. Speaker, in the first week of this legislative session, I called on the Minister of Justice to support the Saskatchewan Party's call for whistle-blower protection legislation. The minister gave one of the more reasonable responses we've seen this session. He said, and I quote:

I look forward to receiving his legislation on whistle-blowers, and we look forward to considering it with haste and . . . due regard.

Of course the minister seems to have changed his tune now that his government has been caught firing people for reporting illegal activity.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced this legislation about a week ago. Has the minister considered it, and will his government support this much-needed legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind all members of the legislature what it is that section 74 of The Labour Standards Act does. And it says — and this is, by the way, in *Hansard*, on Tuesday — it says:

Discrimination by employer prohibited.

No employer shall discharge or threaten to discharge or in any manner discriminate against an employee because the employee:

(a) has reported or proposed to report to a lawful authority any activity that is or is likely to result in an offence pursuant to an Act or an Act of the Parliament of Canada;

Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear, we're one of two jurisdictions in Canada that has whistle-blower legislation similar to this. One of two jurisdictions in Canada. And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the other jurisdiction is not Alberta.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — So we're told this is one of two jurisdictions. And what good does it do to those two people they've just finished firing for blowing the whistle on this government. They pass the legislation, then they break it, and they act in an ignorant way to their employees.

Mr. Speaker, the other day the Premier made a show of demanding that the opposition — and we know how forceful the Premier is when he demands, don't we — supporting his strongly worded motion that the government officials obey the law. Then before we even had a chance to speak or vote on the motion, the NDP adjourned the debate.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party supports the principle of that motion. We support it. But we need more than a motion. We need to change the law, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if the government and the opposition can agree on one thing following the events of the past few days, it is that we need stronger legislation to protect government employees who bring forward evidence of wrongdoing.

Later today the Saskatchewan Party will ask the government to allow a debate on this important legislation. Will the NDP allow this debate to continue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to share that I had a note saying, in response to this from earlier in the session, that I look forward to reviewing their legislation in the hopes that it might advance whistle-blower protection.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share, I've looked at their legislation, and in three areas it is sadly wanting, Mr. Speaker. The three areas are just this. First, their whistle-blower protection, Mr. Speaker, restricts whistle-blower protection to government only — government only. Our legislation that's been in place since 1994 covers all employees, Mr. Speaker. That's area one.

Area two, Mr. Speaker, where they're lacking, their whistle-blower protection covers within one year of the offence; ours covers for two years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — The third area, Mr. Speaker, the third area . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Treatment for Patients in Emergency Wards

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the 1999 election campaign the NDP made many campaign promises, especially to do with health care. So my question will be directed to the Minister of Health.

One specific promise was that all patients arriving in emergency rooms would get a preliminary evaluation by a health care provider within 15 minutes of arrival.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is definitely not the case. We have a letter from nurses who work in the emergency room at the Regina General Hospital. And they are raising serious concerns about how many patients are being forced to wait many hours in emergency before being assessed.

These nurses say that this past Monday, for example, the average wait in emergency was three to four hours before a patient was assessed by a nurse. And then they had to wait another hour or more to see a doctor.

They believe the situation . . .

The Speaker: — Would the member please put his question.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: what does he have to say to these nurses in the emergency ward who are doing their very best to cope with this situation? Why has he abandoned his promise to reduce emergency room waiting times for patients?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We almost set a record. This is the 31st day of May and this is the first question on health, of me, in question period in this month.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — On this side of the House we are working to build a good health system that's accessible to all . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it almost forgot . . . almost made me forget my discussion of lemons earlier in the session, but I won't go there.

But what I would say is we know that all across Canada there's a shortage of nurses and that . . . and other staff. We also know in emergency wards right across this country there are peaks and valleys in the requirements.

What we know is that in the Regina Health District they have had some high demands and basically have procedures in place

to send patients to the other hospital — they send them to the Pasqua Hospital when that's necessary — and that's the kind of thing that is done when there are these extra demands that are there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health has memory problems. I think we talked about a huge health care crisis; it was called the North Battleford water supply.

Mr. Speaker, the letter from these nurses, the letter from these nurses states that last Monday afternoon there were 52 . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letter from these nurses states that last Monday afternoon there were 52 patients in the Regina General emergency room. They say that for one hour and forty-five minutes that afternoon, the Regina General Hospital was on bypass to ambulance traffic, meaning that all ambulance calls were rerouted to the Pasqua Hospital.

These health professionals believe that the continuing nursing shortage and the bed closures, as a result of the shortage, are directly influencing the pressures on the emergency room. I quote:

We nurses are put in a very difficult position due to lack of staffing. We are unable to care for patients properly. We are not staffed to deal with the volume of patients who we keep for over 24 hours and the unit is not designed for patients to stay long-term.

Mr. Speaker, these nurses believe patient care is being compromised. What is the Minister of Health doing to immediately address these shocking problems in the emergency department at the Regina General Hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I notice that the remark I made about the number of questions on health has actually hit a sore spot.

What I would say is that we are working in this side of the House, the government, to improve the health system. And we've asked the members opposite to participate in that, and we are looking forward to their participation as we look at many of the recommendations that Mr. Fyke presented.

What we do know is that there is a shortage of nurses and other health care providers. We want to thank those health care providers who are going the extra mile now, as we deal with those shortages. But we are working together with the professional organizations, with the unions, to train more nurses. We're also looking at ways that we can encourage some nurses who have gone on to other professions to retrain, to come back and work in the field. We also are working with the health districts so that they can provide the best care possible for all of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's just stay with the facts. The nurses at the Regina General say that more patients are having to stay overnight in the emergency department because of bed closures in the wards, due to the nursing shortage.

On Tuesday afternoon alone there were 22 patients waiting in emergency for a bed on the ward. The nurses are very concerned because they know that the summer bed closures to allow for staff vacations haven't even yet begun. They say that there are already 45 beds closed at the General Hospital due to staff shortages, and there's plans to close another 48 beds and two operating theatres in that hospital. In total over 124 acute care beds will be closed by the end of June through to the September long weekend.

Mr. Speaker, in light of these facts how does the minister ever expect the emergency room departments to cope with the pressures on the system with these summer bed closure plans if they are already experiencing difficulties with the existing bed shortages?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this is the first question . . . field of questions in 31 days. What I would remind that member is that when he ran in 1999 their platform was to freeze health spending.

We have increased the amounts over the last two years. We're working with the local communities, the health districts, to make sure that we have the services that we need. And what we are going to do is continue to improve our system so that we do have . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order. Minister of Health, 30 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we thank all of those people who are working very hard to cope with the demands. We know that they also require some time for vacation. And so that's what the hospital administrations do — is try to organize vacation which will allow for them to get some respite and get regenerated for the hard work that's ahead. And what we want to do is make sure that we work to have the best workplaces for those people. And we're working at that right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: the shocking thing about this letter is the way it was signed. It was signed, and I quote:

A group of concerned RNs in emergency who are not willing to give their names for fear of being fired for speaking out against the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, they go on to say in their letter, they go on to say in their letter, Mr. Speaker, that they feel that there will be more resignations throughout the district if staffing is not improved.

Yet they summarize all their expressions with a . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Order. I must be able to hear the question in its entirety. Members of the Assembly, I just would ask you to lower the noise level so this can be heard. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they summarized all of their frustration on all of these facts by expressing a fear of being fired by the NDP because they simply raised concerns about the health system that that minister is responsible for.

My question is: is it not enough that the NDP government is providing no relief for our health care professionals? Must they also be afraid that they will lose their jobs if they raise their voice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this government cares about health care every day, not once every 31 days.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We do not believe in freezing the budget in health because we know that there are public demands and we have to work together with the health care providers to make sure that sufficient resources are there to provide the services that people need.

We also know that the workers in emergency wards and other places do end up with some very, very stressful days and they end up having to work together with their management people and also with those of us who have broader responsibility for funding of the whole system to try to address those needs.

We also have to work to make sure that we have sufficient people trained to do the job. We're doing that. We've increased the number of nursing positions. We're planning to increase it again.

And we will continue to work to provide the best health care for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Whistle-Blower Legislation

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* recently reported that the number of Canadians who still respect their elected officials is the same as those who believe Elvis is still alive. It wasn't reported if these are the same people.

Mr. Speaker, I hear some chirping about credibility. I would remind them that when I left cabinet, it took four of them to replace me in my cabinet responsibilities. And those four, those four did not include the members for Dewdney and Regina South.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order.

Mr. Hillson: — The Premier has often told us that sometimes we have to set aside partisan differences to do the right thing. The Whistleblower Protection Act is such a time.

The private members' motion the NDP adjourned on Tuesday and wouldn't allow to come to a vote has no legal effect. If the NDP truly believes civil servants should not be threatened with dismissal for doing the right thing, they must support this legislation.

My question for the Premier: will the NDP follow its own pious pronouncements and set aside partisan differences to do the right thing? Or is this another case of preaching one thing and doing another?

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand up and talk about our whistle-blower legislation that's been in place since '94. Our whistle-blower legislation — one of two provinces in Canada, one of only two provinces in Canada that has whistle-blower legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I've already outlined two areas where the proposal of the opposition is lacking. Let me point out the third area and that is with respect to taking an employer to court. Their proposal says you can take an employer to court and you might even win some damages. What they don't say is it's only moneyed employees that can afford the court case. What ours says is that Labour Standards will, will take the employer to court and will in fact find . . . on a finding of guilt that employer will be fined.

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined not one, not two, but three areas where their proposal is lacking over ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grants to Third Party

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, when Lynda Haverstock was leader of our party, she struck a chord with voters talking about the need for a code of ethics. Sadly there hasn't been much talk about ethics lately.

Now the Liberal caucus is asking for another \$65,000 in caucus grants in spite of the fact the caucus office is doing nothing. The last entry on the Liberal caucus Web site is eight months old and is two news releases of mine. The most recent statement by the Liberal leader on the caucus Web site is a year old.

The Liberal leader does not speak to Liberals. He does not attend executive meetings or other Liberal functions. He does nothing to inform Liberals or others about where our party stands or what it is doing. Most of the caucus staff have been dismissed. The last time he communicated with our party it was to threaten to sue us.

Mr. Speaker, there is no communicating going on, so why does he need another \$65,000 in caucus grants to communicate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to answer this question. And I want to say the only reason I will

answer it is because it does, in some small way, refer to an Act that's before this legislature. But I want to say to you that the tone of this is totally out of order and I want to tell you why.

Mr. Speaker, our role in question period is to answer questions on policy and government programs and I will do that as it relates to the Executive Council Act. Mr. Speaker, these changes are made to recognize the fact that there is a coalition scenario in this province. This legislation never envisioned that and what this does is puts the Liberal caucus on a level playing field with the Saskatchewan Party caucus and the NDP caucus.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I might want to say that there was a little release that was released by the Saskatchewan Party and it's nothing but snake oil. It is inaccurate and it's the kind of voodoo economics, it's the kind of edition that you would expect from Conservatives and Alliance and Saskatchewan Party people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — It's touching to see the NDP House Leader get up to defend the Liberal leader in this House. It's just too bad the member for Prince Albert spends so much of his time standing behind the bull with his mouth open.

Mr. Speaker, when opinion polls are published in June, it will confirm that the Saskatchewan NDP is going the way of their cousins in Ottawa, in Ontario, and BC (British Columbia).

If the Liberal Party in this province's only role is to prop up an unpopular government, we will end up being even more hated than the ones we're trying to save. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has placed our party on the Titanic and the iceberg is just ahead.

The Liberal leader said in Prince Albert that he would leave the coalition after this session. If that is the case, there is no need for this legislation. Or was our leader's commitment to scrap the coalition just rhetoric?

My question is: what is this money for? Is it to extricate the party from a coalition that has been disastrous or will he continue to do nothing to preserve the party he has led with such single ineptitude?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I'm interested very much to hear the comments from the former member of the Liberal caucus — the member who has done so much for party unity in the last three or four months. That particular member who basically . . . who went on an agenda of looking after his own leadership ambitions and was willing to compromise his principles and integrity to do that, Mr. Speaker.

But let me just talk a bit about the issue at hand. When we were talking about caucus research grants, and I must remind the members opposite that they are members of the Board of Internal Economy, and what do they say about that in clause no. 7(2):

. . . in order to assist each caucus in performing its function

within the parliamentary system, the Board of Internal Economy shall provide funding for research, information technology, administrative services, and other operating expenses of the caucus in the amount calculated in accordance with the clause.

And they agreed to provide each caucus with \$160,000, plus information and technology grants. Those members there agreed to that, and now they criticize it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to raise a point of order.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education. State your point of order, please.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period, the member from Canora-Pelly made some disturbing accusations in his line of questioning. I waited until today to raise this point of order because I wanted to review *Hansard* to make . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. I must be able to concentrate on this, Members. I would ask for silence.

(14:30)

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I wanted to review *Hansard* to make sure I heard the member from Canora-Pelly correctly. Mr. Speaker, I quote from page 1432 of *Hansard* where the member from Canora-Pelly states, and I quote:

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?

Mr. Speaker, on page 1433 of *Hansard* the member goes on to say:

. . . 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.

He continues on, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

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.

Mr. Speaker, again quoting the member from Canora-Pelly, from page 1433 of yesterday's *Hansard*:

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, I refer you to page 141 of Beauchesne's

Parliamentary Rules and Forms, 6th Edition. It states, and I quote:

Besides the prohibitions contained in Standing Order 18, it has been sanctioned by . . . (use) that a Member, while speaking, must not . . .

(e) impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a Member. (and)

(f) make a personal charge against a Member.

Beauchesne's also states on page 142, and I quote:

. . . a Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case;

Mr. Speaker, these accusations made by the member from Canora-Pelly on behalf of his caucus colleagues are offensive and slanderous. Therefore I ask you to rule that the member from Canora-Pelly apologize to this Assembly and that he unequivocally withdraws his disturbing accusations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The first . . .

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order, the first thing is that under our rules it has to be timely, Mr. Speaker. Therefore on points of order they need to be raised, in particular dealing with question period, Mr. Speaker, immediately after question period, not . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The proper procedure is to raise points of orders dealing with question period immediately after question period, not a day later, Mr. Speaker.

Further the contentions being made by the Minister of Education about the payoffs of this legislation to the Liberal caucus is indeed true. They are receiving those funds, Mr. Speaker, but in no way, shape, or form did the member from Canora-Pelly impugn that this money was being used for any illegal activities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I would like to bring to the members' attention on page 141 of Beauchesne's, item 481(e):

. . . it has been sanctioned by usage that a Member, while speaking, must not . . .

(e) impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a Member. (or)

(f) make a personal charge against a Member.

While I find that the line of questioning in yesterday's question period is in order, I find that the use of the language of the words, payoff and sell support, to be unparliamentary.

Therefore I rule that the point of order is well taken and I would ask the member, who I see is not present today, to withdraw those remarks when he returns and to apologize to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40 — The Teachers' Dental Plan Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to outline for all members the substance of the amendments included in this Bill. The changes are all minor and straightforward and are needed at this time as a result of the new provincial collective bargaining agreement for teachers.

The teachers' dental plan is one of the benefit programs whose terms and conditions are negotiated as part of provincial teacher bargaining. As members will know, a new collective agreement was signed by the government, teachers, and trustees last fall. As part of the new agreement, the parties agreed to a minor change that will bring greater consistency in the application of dental plan benefits to teachers in a small number of registered independent schools in the province.

Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now, teachers in the independent schools known as historical high schools have been eligible for dental plan coverage. These schools have a long-standing relationship with the public school system and they have received provincial grants through the Department of Education.

There are also a number of independent schools that offer alternative programs for students with special needs that cannot be accommodated within the regular school setting. I am referring specifically to Ranch Ehrlo in Regina and to the radius program in Saskatoon. These schools are fully recognized by the department and also receive provincial grants.

The amendments in this Bill remove the wording that restricts coverage specifically to the historical high school teachers. The new provisions set out generic criteria that apply to historical high schools and alternative schools and could be applied in the future to any similar schools that might be established, Mr. Speaker.

The criteria requires any such school to be registered or otherwise recognized by the department and to be in receipt of operating grants from the department. Coverage will not apply if the teachers in the school belong to a trade union and have the opportunity to negotiate their benefits directly through their own collective agreement.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment does not extend coverage under the dental plan to a large number of additional teachers. The changes only affects a few teachers and has been agreed to by

the parties to the collective agreement. The additional cost is expected to be minimal; perhaps as high as \$10,000 a year relative to the current plan costs of almost \$6.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, the other amendments in this Bill are housekeeping changes to repeal redundant provisions and update terminology. As I've indicated, these amendments are required in order to implement the provisions agreed to by the parties to the provincial collective bargaining agreement for teachers and these effects are to be retroactive to October 11 of the year 2000, which was the date on which the collective agreement was officially signed.

Mr. Speaker, I am therefore pleased to move that Bill No. 40, An Act to amend The Teachers' Dental Plan Act be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, as we all know that benefits are very important, particularly as they are negotiated through the collective bargaining agreements with the civil service, with the nurses, the health care workers, with teachers. As well, Mr. Speaker, they're certainly of benefit to those people in those unions and to their families, Mr. Speaker.

And I note that in this particular Bill that the government seems to be correcting some of the terminology that is used which, Mr. Speaker, is simply a housekeeping item and we find that those kind of corrections are proper.

Some of the things though, Mr. Speaker, in light of some of the information that is coming forward about the government operations, I think, brings into question this very kind of benefit, Mr. Speaker, in the sense of how is it being utilized, how is it being scrutinized, and is it being done in a proper fashion, Mr. Speaker.

Because, Mr. Speaker, we all know that from time to time, in all walks of life, a time rises some moral dilemmas, Mr. Speaker, in which some moral hazard, Mr. Speaker — I think is a proper word for it — and it challenges people's integrity and sometimes they are found to be somewhat lacking.

Mr. Speaker, we're concerned that when those kind of things happens, if other members of the group — in this case the teachers' dental plan — need to have the ability to bring those kind of items forward to be dealt with.

As we saw today in question period, Mr. Speaker, the nurses have a great deal of concern about some of the things that are happening in their workplace and yet they have fear of being fired, Mr. Speaker. If they raise those issues with the proper authorities, if those issues are found out by the government, they may very well be fired, Mr. Speaker.

That's why it's important, Mr. Speaker, that in things like a teachers' dental plan, in all types of government workplaces, that there be protections available not just, Mr. Speaker, for your teeth but for your very livelihood if you raise issues, Mr. Speaker, that are of concern to general society or if they're concerned with the work operations, Mr. Speaker, and how

things like this plan are administered, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to move:

That this Assembly do now proceed to item 13 under second readings for private members' Bills and orders, Bill No. 203, The Whistleblower Protection Act.

Seconded, Mr. Speaker, by the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

The division bells rang from 14:42 until 14:52.

Motion negived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Boyd
Gantefoer	Toth	Stewart
Wall	Bakken	McMorris
D'Autremont	Weekes	Bjornerud
Brkich	Harpauer	Wakefield
Wiberg	Hart	Allchurch
Peters	Huyghebaert	Hillson

Nays — 27

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

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to respond to the ruling on the point of order please.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

RESPONSE TO RULING ON POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to indicate I believe that there was a ruling made by yourself that language that was used yesterday during question period was unparliamentary. And if you have ruled in that fashion, I apologize for the use of that language.

Mr. Speaker, also while I'm on my feet I would also like to raise a point of order.

The Speaker: — I just would like to interpret to the member that I appreciate his apology. I would just ask that he would withdraw the remark as well.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that you asked for my apology for language that was unparliamentary, and if you have ruled in that fashion, I apologize for that language that you have

ruled as unparliamentary.

The Speaker: — No, I understand that, Mr. Member. I asked for a withdrawal and an apology. I thank you for the apology; I ask you for the withdrawal.

Mr. Krawetz: — Most certainly, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and I apologize for that language.

The Speaker: — Now I recognize the member on his point of order.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday also in *Hansard*, and I would ask for your interpretation on the language used by the Government House Leader when he suggested, very clearly suggested that the PC (Progressive Conservative) metro fund and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation are somehow financially connected to the Saskatchewan Party caucus and that caucus reamed . . . is benefiting from some financial assistance.

I would ask that you would rule . . . take those words under advisement and rule on that.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, a second point of order also, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that during . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'd just as soon take points of order one at a time. I want to know if there's anybody else that has a comment on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I think if you will review *Hansard*, you will find that the remarks that I made were not linked to any individual member of this House.

The Speaker: — Members, if I had a specific reference, I may be able to make a ruling at this stage. However, the reference is quite general and I would have to look it up.

So I will take . . . I will take the member's point of order under advisement and bring back a ruling.

I recognize the member on his second point of order.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, *Hansard* is available and I could quote from that, but I will move to my second point of order.

Mr. Speaker, earlier on this afternoon at approximately 2 o'clock I introduced a school group, and I very clearly stated to the people and yourself that I was going to be visiting and meeting with that group at 2 p.m., at which time I did.

It is my understanding that reference by yourself, Mr. Speaker, was made to my absence in the House, and I would ask that you review *Hansard* for your comments as to the fact that I was out of the House, and whether or not you actually made reference to my absence from the House.

(15:00)

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, the . . . I would bring, first of all, to the member's attention that rulings of the Speaker are not to be debated in this House. So I would just ask members to accept the ruling of the Speaker.

If the members have occasion, or have question about rulings of the Speaker, there are procedures to deal with that. They should bring these items to the attention of the Speaker through the House leaders and through the Rules Committee.

A ruling of the Speaker has to be final in this House, otherwise the House would completely go into chaos.

Mr. Krawetz: — On my point of order, I would like to make a comment.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to make it clear. I am not in any way arguing with your ruling. You have asked me to withdraw my comments and apologize. I did that.

Mr. Speaker, you have also made a ruling that you will take my first point of order under advisement and rule on that tomorrow. I accept that.

Mr. Speaker, the question that I'm asking is that I believe that in this case yourself, Mr. Speaker, you made reference to my absence from the House even though I had clearly stated to the House that there was a school group that I would be meeting with. And I would ask you to review that.

It is not a ruling. It is a comment made by yourself and I'd ask for your interpretation of that.

The Speaker: — The Speaker will deal with that matter through the House leaders committee.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40 — The Teachers' Dental Plan Amendment Act, 2001 (continued)

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to enter into the debate on Bill No. 40, The Teachers' Dental Plan Act, Mr. Speaker.

And as going through it we realize . . . and the speaker before me talked a little bit about how this impacts the teachers, as well how is it going to impact the many other interested groups, whether it is the teachers and how it's going to impact school divisions, that type of thing, Mr. Speaker.

A lot of this we need to go into further and check out just exactly the impact on a number of groups. So, Mr. Speaker, at present I'd like to move that I'll adjourn debate on this Act.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 41 — The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to outline for all members of the Assembly the

background and the major elements of these amendments to The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act.

I should perhaps begin by clarifying the pension plan to which this legislation applies. There are two superannuation plans for teachers in Saskatchewan. All teachers who began teaching in the province since July 1980 belong to what is now called the Saskatchewan Teachers Retirement Plan, or the STRP for short. The STRP is essentially under the governance of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and the terms and conditions of the plan are determined by teachers themselves through their own internal procedures.

The other plan, Mr. Speaker, is the Teachers' Superannuation Plan, sometimes known as the old plan. This plan is administered by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. Its terms and conditions are all subject to negotiation through provincial collective bargaining and are set out in detail in The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act.

The amendments included in the current Bill all arise from negotiations between the parties to the provincial collective bargaining agreement. Most of the changes were included in the new collective agreement ratified last fall, while others have been agreed to since then.

There are four discreet topics covered in the amendments and I will outline each of them individually. First, the definition of contributory service under the Act is being expanded to cover periods of time during which a teacher is in receipt of long-term disability benefits provided that teacher subsequently returns to teaching.

Under the current legislation, a teacher is able to retire on full pension after 30 years of service. That 30 years can include periods of time during which a teacher is absent for medical reasons and receiving sick pay, and other periods of absence such as sabbatical or educational leave.

However, as it stands it cannot include any period during which a teacher is in receipt of long-term disability benefits. For example, a teacher whose career is interrupted at some point by a year of disability would have to work an additional 31st year in order to qualify for that pension. In such cases the current provisions of the plan leave teachers at a disadvantage solely on the basis of having been disabled for a period of time during their career. This is considered unfair and inappropriate.

The proposed amendment will eliminate the problem by allowing a teacher to count such periods of time for purposes of pension eligibility. In a related amendment, Mr. Speaker, the Teachers' Superannuation Commission is being given the authority to make regulations prescribing the minimum amount of time for which a teacher must return to service following a disability in order to qualify for these new provisions. I understand that the commission's intention is to prescribe a minimum period of 40 days of teaching service.

Mr. Speaker, the second amendment deals with restrictions on the ability of superannuated teachers to provide teaching service without having their pension reduced. The current provisions state that a retired teacher can teach up to 120 days in the year following retirement, but only 60 days in any subsequent year.

If a retired teacher goes beyond these limits the teacher loses one day of pension for each additional day taught. These restrictions have now come to be seen as inappropriate and problematic from several perspectives.

There are boards of education, particularly in the northern and rural areas, who have indicated that they find themselves needing to rely more on retired teachers to provide service as substitutes or on temporary . . . as substitutes or on temporary contracts during a school year. The current restrictions make it difficult for them to meet their staffing needs and to maintain program offerings.

At the annual convention of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association last November, trustees passed a resolution calling for the legislation to be amended to eliminate these restrictions.

As well, there was an issue about the appropriateness of these restrictions in the context of the province's legislation governing pension plans as a whole — The Pension Benefits Act. Under this Act, a pension plan is not allowed to reduce a member's pension simply on the basis of the member's employment activity following his or her superannuation.

The Saskatchewan Teachers Retirement Plan is subject to the provisions of this legislation and has been advised that it cannot legally have a 120-day, 60-day rule, or any similar rule in the plan. Although the Teachers' Superannuation Plan is not subject to this general legislation, it seems inappropriate to retain the restrictions in this plan when they are not allowed in the new teachers' pension plan.

At its annual spring council in April, the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation Council also passed a resolution supporting legislative amendments to eliminate these current restrictions.

Mr. Speaker, given all of these considerations, the parties to the provincial collective agreement have signed a memorandum of agreement that the necessary legislative amendments be made to eliminate the current restrictions effective July 1 of this year.

The third amendment in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is intended to address a small number of cases in which the surviving spouse of a deceased teacher is unable to receive that teacher's own contributions and interest from the Teachers' Superannuation Plan. The principle now followed is that with respect to any individual teacher, the minimum amount that the plan should pay out is the money that the teacher contributed, plus the interest that has accrued on those contributions over the years.

While the current provisions of the legislation ensure that this happens in virtually all cases, there are a small number of cases which have fallen through the cracks, so to speak. The proposed amendment will eliminate this problem.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this Bill includes an amendment dealing with cases in which a teacher takes a deferred salary leave and chooses to purchase that period of time for pension purposes. In the case of teachers in the Teachers' Superannuation Plan, the legislation currently provides that the government will make the employer contribution to go along with the teacher's own contribution.

The proposed amendment will extend this process such that the government will now also make the appropriate employer contribution with respect to a teacher in the new plan or the Saskatchewan Teachers Retirement Plan, who takes a deferred salary leave.

This amendment is consistent with several other situations in which the government makes the employer contribution for periods of leave that have been purchased by teachers in the STRP.

As I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, these amendments are all required as a result of changes to the Teachers' Superannuation Plan that have been recently negotiated within the provincial collective bargaining agreement. They have the full support of both the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.

Mr. Speaker, I am therefore pleased to move that Bill No. 41, an Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act be now read a second time.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege again to stand and enter into debate on second reading of Bill No. 41, The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act.

And after listening to the speaker . . . after listening to the Minister of Education talk about some of the different changes, the amendments that will be made with this Act, a lot of them sound relatively straightforward.

I was interested in a couple of them. The one, the second amendment, that he was talking about was the fact of retired teachers and the length that they worked, 120 days I believe it was, their benefits would be docked one day.

And I was interested in that, Mr. Speaker, when . . . I guess a concern I would have on that is that divisions, and I don't think . . . or particularly schools would hopefully be looking at trying to bring new teachers into the force all the time as opposed to just relying on retired teachers.

I know of a number of people that have been through the university that are looking for a job, and they seem to have a tough time, whether it's that they don't want to be in the location or they don't want to be working part-time. But sometimes it's almost too easy for schools or departments of education to just rely on the people that have just been there, the retirees, and keep bringing them back.

The minister cited situations in the North where perhaps finding teachers to fill the spots of a retired teacher are difficult. And, Mr. Speaker, if this is kind of what it's targeted for, I can certainly see that. But we do see some areas where it would raise some concern.

I guess on the disability part where teachers are disabled for whatever reason and have to miss some time, a number of the changes deal with that, a number of the amendments deal with that. And at first glance it looks relatively straightforward.

I was interested to hear that the minister had talked to the SSTA

(Saskatchewan School Trustees Association). They've consulted with them as well as the STA and have found that both of those groups are in favour of it. I just would be very interested in talking to some individual teachers and passing the information on to them to see.

I was interested in one situation that I was involved in where I was talking to . . . stopped in a community and was talking to a couple of teachers. And I was saying what Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, STF, what their ideas were and what they were bargaining for and negotiating for.

And he said, yes, but you've got to realize that's not all teachers. That's not the way we all feel. And they really felt that their voice wasn't being heard, Mr. Speaker.

So this is another example of before we'd want to see this Bill move on any further, although the minister has talked to the STF, I think there are other interested parties, teacher individuals that may want to comment on this.

One other area that I was interested in, and I'm not real familiar with the area, but the minister was talking about teachers that were out of the plan and were going to buy back in and pay their way in, although they don't have an employer per se to match their contributions. And the minister was talking about the government would then match their contributions.

(15:15)

And that's all well and fine, but I would be very interested in knowing what the cost to the provincial government will be, and how widespread this is, and what is the need for this, how large a need is there for this?

I certainly realize that, you know, if they're contributing and they don't have an employer to match that contribution, of course only half the amount will be going in and the government is going to step in here and pay the other half.

And I guess my question would be, and maybe we'll be able to get into it in Committee of the Whole, but what is the estimated cost to the provincial government for the government to pick up their share, to pick up the employers' share for teachers that are buying back in?

And so those are just a couple of the areas when listening to the Minister of Education going through his second reading of this Bill that raise, I guess, a red flag with me and certainly raised some questions that I would have in this area, Mr. Speaker.

So until a number of those questions that I feel comfortable have been answered completely, whether it's individual teachers or the government opposite, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we would adjourn debate on this Bill right now until some of those questions are answered.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Lotjé that **Bill No. 3 — The Historic Properties Foundations Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to discuss Bill No. 3, The Historic Properties Foundations Act.

Mr. Speaker, when looking at this piece of legislation, I notice one piece . . . one of the clauses that jumps out immediately is under section 5(2), and it states:

All property of a foundation, all money acquired, administered, possessed or received from any source . . . (or any) profit earned by the foundation are the property of the Crown and are, for all purposes, including taxation of whatever nature or description, deemed to be the property of the Crown.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this clause will take any gift bequests, donations, and grants which will be then used to enhance historic properties and put them under the authority of a new Crown foundation.

The concern here is that, for example, will the money be directed to the proper destination? I have concerns over this. We would want to be ensured that this proposed Crown foundation receives any monies for a specific historic property, that indeed it makes it to that structure and not go toward anything else.

Mr. Speaker, my concerns also are over this proposed Crown foundation and that the board will be appointed to oversee it. Who will be on that board, Mr. Speaker? How many people will there be? For how long will they be selected?

We are getting phone calls at our office on that, and also on what I had mentioned previously. People want assurance that any money that they donate or bequest makes it to where it is supposed to go. They want to know if that will happen or if any . . . if the government will just say thank you for the cash and place it wherever they please. There has to be a system of checks and monitoring in place to make sure that this does not happen, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I should say that we on this side of the House recognize and value the importance of many historic property sites around Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, one being Government House in Battleford which is in my home constituency of Battleford-Cut Knife. As a matter of fact, the member from North Battleford has spoken in this Assembly recently on this structure's importance.

We held a joint news conference this week along with Mayor Gail Sack regarding Government House restoration. Government House was built back in 1876 as the seat for the government of the then North-West Territories. Two-thirds of Canada were actually governed from that location at one point — my, how times have changed.

So, Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of historic

properties and the need to preserve them. So we can appreciate this piece of legislation. However, Mr. Speaker, more time is needed to study the particular clauses of this Bill, especially the ones I've noted, just to make sure that everything is done correctly to ensure that the money that comes into this Crown foundation goes to its proper destination. I would like to think that the Liberal \$65,000 would be a good start for this foundation. Or is it just another attempt by this government to impose its will on the people by having to intrude on every little detail in their lives?

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hagel that **Bill 29 — The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 2001**, be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 29, the student assistance and student aid fund amendment.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, where the Royal Bank has had the responsibility of the student loans for the last five years, has passed that back to the province once again.

Mr. Speaker, I've had three children go through the student loan system and attend at university, and we're very thankful — them and myself — that their student loans were available. But I believe there's a number of problems, Mr. Speaker, with some of the rules that we have set up right now.

Mr. Speaker, number one is for a student that comes out of university and can't find a job right away. I believe one of the things, when the Royal Bank took student loans over, that the six-month interest-free period was removed. And that definitely hurt students who could not find a job right away, or if they could find a job, who needed that breathing space before they started to pay their student loan back.

The other problem, Mr. Speaker, that many times I've had calls to my office with students that were out of work for, say, a year, year and a half, two years, and I know there's adjustments made for those students. But it still puts them in a precarious situation and in a spot that many of them don't know how to get out of. And it used to be that many of them would see no other alternative than declare bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, I remember too, in the '99 election, that the Liberal Party at that time made election promises. They talked about a thousand dollars towards tuition each year for students. And I believe the NDP promise was for free tuition also for students, one year free tuition. Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing that then, yesterday . . . Nothing, by the way, Mr. Speaker, ever came of those Liberal and NDP promises.

And then now, a Bill introduced yesterday would hand \$65,000 to the so-called Liberal Party, so-called Liberal caucus, which I don't believe is a caucus, Mr. Speaker. They sit on the

government side. Both the member from Melville and the Education minister are members of the government. What on earth would they need research money for to hold a government accountable, when for all intents and purposes they're part of the government?

We're talking, I know, only \$65,000 in this case, Mr. Speaker. But that thousand dollar promise that that Education minister made in the last election, that \$65,000 would have honoured that thousand dollars towards tuition for 65 students. Isn't it funny where that minister, that member's priorities disappeared right after the election, right after the formation of the coalition government, and right after the time that that minister got his portfolio and his 100-and-some thousand dollar a year job. You know what happened, Mr. Speaker? He forgot the students and remembered whose pocket he wanted to line. It was his, Mr. Speaker, not the students in this province.

Mr. Speaker, how soon we forget that the promises that we make . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the . . . Order. Order. I would just ask the member of Saltcoats to be very careful in any use of language in terms of imputing motives on other members.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing how priorities can change when certain situations arise where it could be to the benefit of the individual, rather than worry about election promises made that would help . . . promises that would have helped every student going to university in this province.

All of a sudden those promises disappear — both from the Liberals, both from the NDP. We see no sight of that and guess what? At the same time we see tuition fees going up — I believe close to 9 per cent for the University of Regina, 15 per cent for the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) — and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we hear that less jobs in this province all the time for young people. So what we're doing in essence is chasing our young people out of this province and making it far harder for students to have the opportunity to go to university, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need young people in this province, and the sooner that government — both Liberal and NDP — get it through their minds that without these young people this province is going backward, not forward . . . and that Education minister should know better, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to talk about the students out there that finish university and have a 30, 40, \$50,000 student loan. Those people are put back. It takes them 10, 15 years to catch up when they're in that position and what they have to face is nothing but an increase in tuition fees. It's a bad spot to put these young people in.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read a news release from the Students' Union. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from this news release. It says:

The University of Regina Students' Union is shocked and concerned that the University of Regina has chosen to hike

tuition 8.95 per cent (almost 9 per cent, Mr. Speaker) and restrict accessibility to post secondary education for the people of Saskatchewan.

Something that I had just mentioned, Mr. Speaker. It goes on to say:

This decision comes despite the fact of opposing Statistics Canada reports which show conclusively that higher tuition costs are restricting access to post secondary education and widening the gap between middle and lower class participation numbers.

A recent Stats Canada Report showed that university participation rates for young people from low and middle socio-economic status groups has widened significantly over the last years. In 1986 the university participation rate of lower class was 13.7 per cent and 14.5 per cent for middle class.

In 1994 this gap has widened to 18.3 per cent and 25.3 per cent respectively, Mr. Speaker. The continuing increase of the cost of tuition has only widened this gap further.

It goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

In 2000-2001, Saskatchewan boasted the highest overall tuition increase at 7.7 per cent. With the increase at the University of Saskatchewan at 15 per cent this year, and the University of Regina at 8.95, Saskatchewan will once again be taking the lead in restricting accessibility for post secondary education.

The Government of Saskatchewan must make a stronger commitment to the development of our educational institutions and ensure that education remains accessible to all people.

I hope someone on the government side paid attention to that news release, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to student loans, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to touch today on where two parents are working, middle-income people, and they don't qualify for student loans for their kids because according to the regulations their income is too high. In many cases, Mr. Speaker, these parents who have middle-income jobs haven't the money, especially if they have more than one child in university — and many have three and sometimes probably four in university — certainly cannot afford to pay for it themselves, have to go to the bank and try and borrow money rather than that money coming from a student loan.

So if we change the rules and regulations that these students would fit under and make the student loans accessible to those type of people; I think that's a need we should definitely look at, Mr. Speaker.

(15:30)

Mr. Speaker, once again, I'd like to talk about the problem that students also have when they leave university and don't have access to a job right away, the hardship that's placed on them

by removing the six-month interest-free period. And then also the rules that we have in place dealing with those students when they're out of work for possibly a year or two years, the pressure that we put on these students.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will have actually more questions about this Bill, and we're doing more checking to find out where students and parents sit on this issue. So at this time I'd like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 17

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 17 — The Professional Corporations Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to add some comments from this side of the House in terms of The Professional Corporations Act. These provisions that were outlined by the minister, I think are very positive.

We would be very supportive of these because I believe it is going in the right direction. We've talked about other incorporations, and limited partnerships that I think are very important.

Some of the suggestions that we've made, and concerns raised with the other issues earlier on, apply to this. And I'd like to just relay one or two of those to you, if I could, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's important to put them on the record that we not only support this, but we want to make sure that there's other items that are going to be included, both in the discussion that will be upcoming, but also in the regulations that will be implemented on the basis of these amendments.

One of the things that we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is certainly to keep the people, the professional people, in Saskatchewan, that are here. We also are very anxious to make sure that we put the conditions in place that will be attracting other professions back to Saskatchewan. This is certainly a step in the right direction.

One of the concerns that I have though, Mr. Speaker, would be that the conditions that apply to these amendments to The Professional Corporations Act are similar to the ones that apply to the medical profession. And we also want to make sure that those conditions are similar and compatible with the conditions that presently apply in other provinces.

Particularly in areas where I'm from, I want to make sure that the conditions are similar to the Alberta jurisdiction, because as you know, there's very much of a recognition of responsibility between the two sides of the border. And we want to make sure that whether . . . a professional accountant or a lawyer or a dentist on one side of the border is not at a disadvantage or an advantage to his counterpart on the other side of the border.

So that kind of accountability and that kind of similarity between the two provinces I think is very important. And we want to make sure that that is addressed in this legislation.

Another concern that we have with this legislation is, is it going to be sending the right signals? I think the signals are certainly important. The signals about the advantages of incorporation for these professionals, as far as it goes, I think is very important.

Some of the other signals that we want to make sure that come into effect with this, is that the confidence of the patient or the client to these professionals becomes paramount . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — To ask leave, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I apologize to the member from Lloydminster. It gives me a great pleasure today to recognize a number of young hockey players coming from northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They have travelled a long ways to join in the AAA Major Atom hockey tournament being held here in the city from May 31 to June 3.

And it gives me great pleasure to see some of the players come from Lac La Ronge, from Meadow Lake, and from my home community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Loon Lake, and of course, Beauval, and Canoe Lake as well.

These hockey players have put on many miles, Mr. Speaker. And I can say that, as their MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), I'm very, very proud that they have come forth to challenge from the North. And I wish you every success.

What I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well is the parents that are here today, one is Louis Gardiner. And Louis played in the WHL (Western Hockey League) with the Flin Flon Bombers when he was younger. And he was quite an accomplished hockey player himself, a junior hockey player. And he was one of the, of course, better players in my community, and I was second.

With Louis of course are other people that were no slouches themselves. Terry Helary from Lac La Ronge, and Bobby Merasty from Meadow Lake. And Bobby's here with I believe his daughter or his wife — I'm not sure — Bev. And we also have Louis's wife, Mary.

And if I could take a few minutes to introduce the hockey players and have them stand. We have Louis Gardiner Jr., from Ile-a-la-Crosse. We have Ty Gardiner from Ile-a-la-Crosse. T.J. Hood, from Beauval. Jermey Lovoiillte, from La Ronge. Blake Norman, from La Ronge. Mitchell Helary, from La Ronge. Eric Merasty, from Meadow Lake, Tyson Crookedneck, from Loon Lake, And Craig McCallum, from Canoe Lake.

And I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that of all the hockey moms there are in northern Saskatchewan, Mary's one of the better ones. In fact she made a comment about my hockey career, Mr. Speaker. She made the comment at a fundraiser and said: what does Buckley Belanger's hockey career and the *Titanic* have in common — they're both pretty awesome until they hit the ice.

I want to thank them all for coming and good luck in your tournament.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I welcome our guests. But once again I remind the member to refer himself as the member from Athabasca or the Minister of Environment and Resource Management.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 17 — The Professional Corporations Act (continued)

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to pause and also welcome the young guests and the members that have just been introduced. It's a pleasure to have you here and to observe what's going on in the House this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I want to continue on with some of the discussion that I initiated earlier about the importance of this kind of legislation. And I was talking about the signals that it sends out to the other parts of the community about wanting to make our system a bit more friendly and attract the people back to the province; but particularly to make sure that the people in this province have the competitive advantage as some of the provinces around us, and particularly in my area to people in the province to the west.

These signals that I referred to being very important are in fact those associated with corporations . . . advantages of corporations in other areas of business and opportunity. Usually you think of taxation as the main advantage of a corporate structure. And while taxation is a concern and a benefit to a great extent in professional corporations, it's not the only advantage.

And I would hope that some of the other advantages can also be worked into the professional advantages that are being initiated by the incorporation that we're referring to here.

Some of the other potential advantages would be for the actual personal protection of the professional himself, and that personal protection is very important as a backup to the person wanting to do business and to continue to want to do business in this province.

I've had a recent experience, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the professional incorporated dentists in both of our provinces, and it seemed to me the willingness of the professional that was incorporated was much more willing to go the extra step and to provide the services needed because he knew that his business was going to be able to be protected both tax wise and through other regulations in a neighbouring province. And so I'm very pleased to see this also going to be applied to our Saskatchewan professionals here.

The other item that I wanted to highlight along with the advantages of this particular legislation was to make sure that the services that will be supplied by incorporated professionals

is not going to be under suspect in terms of a different kind of professionalism under the new title. It's very important, and I think the Act goes to great lengths to describe how the professional is going to have to designate his incorporated profession, and I think that's important for people to recognize who will be incorporated, who is not.

But it should not in any way give the people an indication that the service is going to be any different, the professional responsibility to the client or the patient is going to be any different, and I want to make sure that that aspect is highlighted in the Act and also in the regulations because I think that really is very support.

In order to try to stop the outflow of these professionals that I talked about earlier is an important advantage of this. I have to note though, Mr. Speaker, that even though the incorporation of the medical profession which was accomplished in an earlier session was an advantage and perceived to be an advantage, I'm not aware of any documentation that has indicated that the slow . . . that has slowed the outgoing of our professionals out of the province. This being one of the advantages; again it's not the only advantage. So there are other regulations that seem to be discouraging some of our professionals in this province.

And also, these regulations lead to uncertainty. That uncertainty is certainly not the right signal that we want to have associated with this new legislation or associated with the desire to come and stay here in this province.

The responsibility of the professional to the client is very important, and that confidence has to be maintained. And I noticed that the minister in his comments with regards to this Act highlighted that specifically. And I want to make sure that there is provisions in this Act that will make sure that that confidence between the professional and the client or patient remains without undue suspect because of the word corporation.

Often the word corporation, being rather a foreign word in a private sense here in this province, causes people to worry. And I want to alert that that has to be overcome. And as this legislation is rolled out to the public, it has to be presented in such a way that that confidence is maintained and that the rights and privileges of the client professional relationship is maintained.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that I'm reluctant to allow this to move ahead would be the time that is still needed to make sure that the amendments to this Act are in fact compatible with the other professional Acts in our neighbouring provinces. Because you know that that seems to be an attraction for our professionals both in Canada and also going into the United States.

But to make sure that the compatibility is in place between our two provinces, further study and further consultation on our part would be a very useful and desirable thing. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I would now move that we adjourn debate on this amendment.

Debate adjourned.

(15:45)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Women's Secretariat
Vote 41**

Subvote (WS01)

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

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, I have with me today, Joan Pederson, who is to my immediate left and she's acting executive coordinator of Women's Secretariat. Behind Joan is Cheryl Senecal, the senior policy analyst for the secretariat.

Mr. Chair, the last time a question was asked on the partnerships for 1999-2000 and the year previous to that, I believe, 2000-2001. We don't have the listing made yet for 2000-2001, but I could table for the members opposite the 1999-2000. And we tabled the other one the last time, so.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And, Madam Minister, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity, as well as your officials, I'd like to welcome you as well.

Madam Minister, I'd like to talk a little bit about Aboriginal women, many of whom face social and economic barriers to both race and gender.

About a year ago, your department released a report entitled *Profile of Aboriginal Women in Saskatchewan*. This report dealt with many of the social issues facing the province's Aboriginal women, such as education, employment, income, housing, families, violence, and health.

And the report indicated that Aboriginal women over 15 years of age are less likely to participate in the workforce and are more likely to spend a great deal of time caring for children and seniors on an unpaid basis. And it also indicated that Aboriginal women are more likely to have children living with them than non-Aboriginal women and are also more likely to be single parents.

What specifically has your department done in the last year to address these issues and what are some of the goals and objectives for the next fiscal year?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Through the work of the secretariat, Mr. Chair, this government continues to work towards ensuring that effective legislation, policy, and programs are developed to meet the needs of First Nations people and in particular, Aboriginal women.

There's been three comprehensive intersectoral initiatives, including the Aboriginal Internship and Management Development Program, the Early Childhood Development strategy and the Metis and Off-Reserve First Nations strategy that will help to improve the status of Aboriginal women and their families.

There are programs now available through Post-Secondary

Education and Skills Training that we're working on with them.

The Women's Secretariat also maintains a close working relationship with representatives of the Aboriginal women's organizations to build their capacity to better serve their clients and to articulate the issues to government.

Recently we've published a statistical update of the first reporting and it's being distributed.

We would participate in a variety of community-based and intergovernmental working committees to integrate the perspectives of Aboriginal women into the decision-making processes.

And we acknowledge the important role of government at all levels that they would play a role when it comes to working closer with and addressing the issues that the member opposite has outlined.

As a secretariat, we also would be working with those organizations on a continual basis to hear their issues and their concerns and help to put those into all initiatives across government.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, the report also says that there have been some significant gains for Aboriginal women in terms of educational levels. And you did mention post-secondary education in your answer just previous.

Do you know how many Aboriginal women attended a post-secondary institution last year?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — We don't have with us those statistics, and we will try and get that from the Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training area to be able to respond to that member's question.

Ms. Eagles: — Madam Minister, I would appreciate that. And if you could also at the same time get me the information as how they compare to the numbers two years, five years ago, and ten years ago, I'd greatly appreciate that.

Even though we've heard that the statistics appear to be improving, Aboriginal women do say that their main concern is lack of access to education, which then leads to lack of access to employment.

Could you explain this contradiction in how the reports say there have been gains and yet the Aboriginal women themselves still find that that is their main concern?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I would answer in this way, Mr. Chair, and I think what the member opposite is saying that there have been strides made in access to education for Aboriginal women. And the steps that are taken are never enough.

And we identify that as a continuing issue and we have to maintain the profile of that and continue to work with women so that they are able to access the training and the job training initiatives to have programs that will get women into work readiness areas and situations.

But then the next step is when women have the skills and they're trained, then employment equity becomes very important. And this government's committed to principles of employment equity and recognizes that that's one method of enhancing employment opportunities for designated groups, particularly Aboriginal women.

So the fundamental goal of employment equity is to achieve a workforce that reflects the composition of Saskatchewan's working age population; as well, to reduce the social costs of discrimination by improving the access of designated groups to employment.

Many people now are beginning to understand that employment equity is also good business. And certainly in the area of the Public Service Commission working to help in all of those areas meet employment equity guidelines and strategies within government, but outside of government to help people to recognize and utilize the value that is placed on a diverse workforce. And this gives business a competitive edge in understanding the barriers and analyzing the markets.

So when people begin to understand it costs them and it costs government not to address the challenge of diversity in the workplace and inclusion in the workplace, then we begin to see slowly that those strides will also be made. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You talk about your government's commitment, and I was just wondering if you could explain in detail how your department . . . like the changes they have made in the last year to improve access to education and employment for Aboriginal women.

(16:00)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Just by the way the question was crafted, Mr. Chair, and I know the member opposite would know that, that Women's Secretariat doesn't do those programs. We would work with Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training to make sure that Aboriginal women are thought about continually, that employment equity initiatives are thought about.

But in that way I can point out to the member that The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act that has gone forward now has the institute that issues certificates and diplomas, and it's recognized by employers in post-secondary educational institutions.

Working with Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training through the Saskatchewan training strategy and the vehicles of the Provincial Training Allowance and the Saskatchewan student loan bursary for single parents has created opportunities for Aboriginal women to participate in skills training. Along with Social Services, Post-Secondary Education has made improvements to students' assistance programs.

In the area of recruitment, in SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and regional colleges' programs there's a priority for these institutions, particularly in the area of non-traditional programs. And a policy has been developed for the creation of the SIAST employment equity

program to reduce discriminatory barriers and create work places that recognize values and accommodates diversity, and ensures fair and equal access to employment opportunities.

There's the multi-party training plan for the mineral sector, which continues to provide training opportunities for women in the North. The Indian and Metis education development program was created to encourage innovative and responsive and culturally affirming supports to assist Aboriginal students in achieving their educational potential within Saskatchewan schools.

These programs are supported through this fund, the IMED (Indian and Metis education development program) program. And education is also available about violence and intervention strategies.

The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, the northern teacher education program, NORTEP, the Northern Professional Access College, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute provide a broad range of university programs specifically targeted to address the needs of First Nations students, Aboriginal students in the North, and Metis students.

Aboriginal women are highly represented in the post-secondary educational programs, representing about 70 per cent of the students attending SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) courses, for example.

There's in Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, the developing initiative called northern health science access programs, and there are a number of others that we're seeing that are still in the developmental stages.

There are others within different areas, but I think that gives you a good idea of where we're beginning to work on these issues and have programs develop, and colleges themselves like the Indian Institute of Technology who are offering the diplomas and the educational opportunities.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for that in-depth answer. I was going to ask you in my next question what programs and services you had in place in conjunction with Post-Secondary Education, so you've already answered that. And I thank you for that.

Madam Minister, a recent report from the city of Saskatoon says that Saskatoon's Aboriginal population has more than doubled in the past 12 years, which has brought issues such as housing, education, and business to the forefront in the city.

Have you seen this report yet, and if so, do you have any specific measures in place to address those issues that been identified, particularly as they apply to Aboriginal women?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — We haven't seen that report yet, Mr. Chair. But we know that those are issues, certainly, because we know of those statistics. And when you're talking about the area of housing and education, I think we've covered some of the education but would still continue to work on those. Housing, Women's Secretariat is now involved with Municipal Affairs on housing programs, and there are many now that are beginning to take effect.

The neighbourhood home ownership program, and I believe in Saskatoon there are programs through municipal housing — the quint program and other programs like that that have our input.

I'm sorry, I've forgotten the third one, Mr. Chair, so if the member would like to say that again, I will try to give her input.

Ms. Eagles: — I was wondering, Madam Minister, what specific measures that you have in place to address the issues of Aboriginal women with housing, education, and business.

Madam Minister, also with the demographic shift in Aboriginal population expected within the next two or three decades, which will mean challenges for all sectors of the province as they will have to find ways to serve a young Aboriginal population in tandem with an older, non-Aboriginal population. Since roughly half of the Aboriginal population is female, what role do you see your department playing in the coming demographic shift?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, we certainly agree with what the member is saying, and statistically that's been proven. And again we'd say that research reveals that Aboriginal women are the most at-risk population in our province. They have the poorest health, the shortest lifespan, the most children, the lowest labour force participation rate, and the highest hours of unpaid work caring for children and extended family members. She's highlighted all of that for us.

And again, since we don't deliver specific programs, we would say it's very important for us, and particularly Women's Secretariat, to talk about the importance of gender-based analysis and to continue to share with all departments that whatever programs and policies are developing, gender-basis analysis is done on those.

And then to say, with those kinds of issues at hand, that we have to also break that down further to say, at that table when we're going to develop programs and policies that would further the goals of Aboriginal women in employment equity issues, housing, education, business initiatives, we also do that for taxation initiatives, other programs or areas where government is going to put emphasis, that we are indeed raising the levels of women and mature young Aboriginal women involved in all of those areas.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister, Mr. Deputy Chair. One of the main issues that your department remains focused on is the issue of pay equity. Obviously this is an important issue for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women across this province.

Do you have a breakdown of what Aboriginal women are paid in contrast to their male counterparts? And at the same time, if I could get a breakdown of what non-Aboriginal women are paid in contrast to their male counterparts.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Well first, Mr. Chair, I would say in 1998, the Canadian wage ratio was 72.2 and Saskatchewan had the best ratio. We go down the chart, women, it was the average wage earnings of a full-time, full-year worker for women was 27,471, compared to the male which was \$35,925.

So the earning ratio, women earning to men's earnings, was about 76.5.

Then we would take that information, and the statistical update that we've done on Aboriginal women; it would say the average personal income is much lower for Aboriginal women than for non-Aboriginal women.

In 1995, the year prior to the census, the average income for Aboriginal women, including the 9 per cent with zero income, was 10,200 compared with 16,300 for non-Aboriginal women.

We don't have that same type of wage comparison — Aboriginal women to Aboriginal men — but it's certainly the area when we're looking at trying to develop our statistics and update them, that we would take that into consideration and try and develop those comparisons and analysis.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Could you just explain some of the initiatives that you are pursuing in this area, and outline them for me here today?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — In the area of pay equity, of course the work done on gender-based analysis and then developing an initiative that is structurally sound and would carry us over the years to make certain that that isn't . . . the integrity of that isn't diminished and that it becomes a structural process within the employment areas and the pay levels was very important to us.

What we've been doing is, we believe, our pay equity policy is well developed now building upon the respect for the collective bargaining process. It's been proven to be a fair and reasonable approach so now the pay equity initiative for Saskatchewan continues to be implemented. And it covers about 60,000 workers in government departments, in the Crowns, CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), Treasury Board agencies, boards and commissions, SIAST, regional colleges, as well as the health care sector.

Many other groups that have funding from government were saying they would really like to look at what type of an initiative would be carried forward with the job evaluation processes, the structural parts of that in place and would be looking at following those kinds of initiatives.

We also know that pay equity is a part of a strategy to reduce the portion of the wage gap between male and female wages caused by systemic discrimination, so we needed to address that and the undervaluation of work traditionally done by women.

So it involves applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. At this point, we have it in place, as I said, for about 60,000 workers and then we would continue to monitor to make certain with each collective bargaining process that that integrity is maintained.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, I have just one more question for you, and in advance of that, I'd like to thank you and your officials for the time you have given us here today. I sincerely appreciate it and I'm sure we'll have some more later on.

But earlier on you mentioned the Quint program in one of your

answers. Does the Quint program in Saskatoon receive funding from the government, and if not, could you tell me in what manner the government does support this program?

(16:15)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I think what I can say is that I know that Quint does benefit from some of our policy and program initiatives. It's a program that Municipal Housing looks at, and certainly through our work with Municipal Housing we're beginning to analyze that. I know they're a private sector involvement and the city has a role to play.

But further to that, we'll get that information to you as quickly as we can. I'm hearing that this is the last question.

The member expresses appreciation to the officials from Women's Secretariat. I can tell you I had the opportunity to be with them earlier today. This is a mighty group of women who need us all to pay attention to the gender-based analysis issues and the role that we play, too, lends into government. So we appreciate the support from the member opposite.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chair, I move the committee report the Women's Secretariat.

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

Subvote (HE01)

The Deputy Chair: — Would the minister please introduce his officials?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me this afternoon Steven Pillar, who is the associate deputy minister; Rod Wiley, who is the executive director of finance and management services; Lauren Donnelly, executive director, acute and emergency services; Duncan Fisher, assistant deputy minister; Bert Linklater, executive director, district management services; Marlene Smadu, principle nursing adviser; Lawrence Krahn, assistant deputy minister; and Kimberly Wihnan, who is the assistant to the deputy minister.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair of committees. Minister, and officials, welcome. I see by the clock we have about 40 minutes or so today and I'll try to make it productive.

Minister, since this is really the first time that we've had to talk about the department — I know we've had one opportunity in estimates before, but I think we spent the day pretty much on a specific area of the province, so I'd like to back up and kind of look at the big picture today, if I could.

Minister, first of all, I would like to talk about today primarily the overall organization and structure of the department itself in terms of how you organize things and get things done.

On the department Web site, I see the structure under the deputy minister, Ms. Glenda Yeates, and then there are four main associate or assistant deputy minister positions. And I

would like to start by talking, first of all, to the deputy minister. And I'd like the minister to indicate in general terms the responsibilities of the deputy minister, and if you would, I recognize on the Web site, there are some general credentials of the department heads, or the associate and assistant deputy minister.

And I'd like to ask, first of all, the deputy minister of Health, Ms. Glenda Yeates, what are her responsibilities, and if you could, give me some general background as to Ms. Yeates credentials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the individuals who are key in running our health system in Saskatchewan. Glenda Yeates, as the deputy minister, has overall responsibility for the health system in Saskatchewan, and has obviously a number of people working with her in the department.

But her job also includes very key liaison with major players within the health system, including SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), including the various professional organizations. And she has many other people that assist with that.

Glenda Yeates, her education is a . . . she has a master's degree in public administration from Queen's University. And she obtained that in 1981.

And I think basically she's been working with the Saskatchewan government ever since she finished her training — first in the Department of Finance in various positions, and then in Health. And for two years she was the deputy minister of Social Services. And now she's been the deputy minister of Saskatchewan Health from July 1999, so approximately two years.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, are there associations of deputy ministers on a national basis or a Western Canadian basis? Is there an organization or a structure, a liaison between deputy ministers in various jurisdictions as well as the Government of Canada?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer is yes. And I'm not sure if you want me to talk more about that.

But basically what happens . . . in most of the major departments within provincial governments there are liaison committees of senior administrators. And I know that Ms. Yeates has been involved with quite a number of those organizations over the years, both in Health and in Social Services, when she had that role.

She also has some other roles of a national nature at the present time which include the liaison deputy minister on the federal/provincial/territorial Advisory Committee on Health Infrastructure. So she's a key person there as they're moving towards the Canadian health information network and related things.

And she's also a board member on the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, which evaluates health research issues across the country.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. In addition, Minister, is there working committees made up of deputy ministers, interdepartmentally, within the government? And I think for example of an obvious one between Health and Post-Secondary Education, between Health and Social Services, Health and K to 12 education perhaps.

There are many overlaps of service programs and service delivery in the province. Is there an association or a committee of deputy ministers inside the province, intersectorally, and what would such a committee function like?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer to that is, yes, it often happens around particular issues. And for example, I know that Ms. Yeates was Co-Chair of the deputy ministers' steering committee on poverty reduction, from the years '97 to '99. They were the ones that were working very carefully to bring in our Child Benefit in Saskatchewan and had a great deal of influence on the National Child Benefit which, I think, is something we're all proud that Saskatchewan provided leadership there.

Also around some of the early childhood development issues there have been very clear interdepartmental co-operation, and the deputy ministers co-operate; and also at other levels within the provincial bureaucracy, there are similar liaison functions.

Mr. Gantefer: — Are there particular functions, for example, between the Department of Health and the Department of Post-Secondary Education specifically targeted at education programs in the medical colleges, the nursing colleges, the technical colleges, and an identification of demographic needs and things of that nature? Are those things an ongoing thing or are they ad hoc?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think there are a number of mechanisms that would fit into the category of the kind of question that you've asked. As it relates to the nursing, there are some very clear work plans that are joint Health and Post-Secondary Education as we develop the increased number of nursing spaces, as we look at some of the issues around encouraging more Aboriginal people to go into the nursing field. So there are some things there.

There's also a specific committee called, I think, the Health Sciences Advisory Council which includes members from the Department of Health and from the Department of Post-Secondary Education. It also includes members from the health districts and from the universities for . . . I think, yes primarily the universities and the medical school to deal with some of those kinds of issues as it relates to health sciences.

And so what we're seeing is a continued discussion and development of these co-operative processes because there are some major challenges around educating the next generation of health providers. And the Department of Health is working very closely to try to deal with that particular issue on a broad basis.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in your structure below the deputy minister, you have associate deputy minister and assistant deputy minister positions. Can you help me with what's the difference between the two?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There's a simple answer. Basically the associate deputy ministers are appointments of Executive Council by order in council. So they're appointed by the Executive Council, by the Premier. And the assistant deputy ministers are people who are appointed by the deputy minister.

Mr. Gantefer: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I now for sure have learned something today.

In your structure you have associate deputy minister, Mr. Pillar. Would you mind outlining the responsibilities that fall under his jurisdiction, and as well some background on his credentials?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Pillar's list of items isn't as long maybe as some of the others but they are crucial issues. The first one is district management services, so it's all the relationships with the districts. Secondary is finance and management services, the managing of the \$2.2 billion that flows through the Health department. And the third area are all of the labour/management issues.

Mr. Gantefer: — And if you could, Minister, Mr. Pillar's credentials.

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay, thank you for that opportunity. I'm very pleased to provide that information about Mr. Pillar who is sitting beside me here. Mr. Pillar has . . . his education, he has a Bachelor of Arts from York University, Glendon College there. He also has a masters of public administration from Carleton University.

He's worked within the public service for 20 years plus, I think I would say. And basically he spent many of those years within Saskatchewan public service. And he's been the associate deputy minister of Saskatchewan Health from July 1988 to the present.

Ten years prior to that he was the chief financial officer for the Delta School District in Delta, British Columbia; and he came back to Saskatchewan in 1998, where the previous approximately 10, 11 years he had been within the civil service in Finance and other parts of the provincial government.

And so basically he has been raised and educated in Ontario, but his career has been in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. And he's provided very good service to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I certainly want to go over the general structure today, but we will have opportunities in the future to kind of delve a little more deeply into the individual areas of responsibility. I want to make sure that I have time to cover the general structure first.

So I'm not just passing on the opportunity to talk about district issues and financial issues and those things; we will do that at some length into the future.

Mr. Minister, assistant deputy minister, Lawrence Krahn, has a number of responsibilities in departments underneath his jurisdiction, looking at the organizational chart. And I would

like you to please outline his responsibilities in general, and also Mr. Krahn's credentials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. Mr. Krahn, as assistant deputy minister, has responsibility for the medical services and health registration aspects. There's actually two parts to that — there's the health registration plan but also the medical services. In his responsibility are many of the issues around dealing with the doctors and their compensation issues and all of the other recruitment, retention kinds of issues.

He's also responsible for the drug plan and extended benefits. He also has responsibility for the provincial laboratory services and the corporate information and technology services.

Mr. Krahn has had 28 years in government service. Before he was in government service, he worked for the Bank of Montreal in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and was in some of the various managerial positions there.

Then he started out in Saskatchewan Health, back in 1974, working in finance and administration. And basically he's worked in quite a number of different areas within the department over all of these years and was appointed to assistant deputy minister just a number of months ago.

But basically he brings a broad experience within the department and skills in the financial field. And he also has served the citizens of Saskatchewan for a long time and done a very good job.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Minister. And as well in this area there are a number of issues that we'll want to talk about in more depth as we have further opportunities.

I note as well assistant deputy minister, Duncan Fisher, has a number of responsibilities. Would you outline for us, Minister, in general, Mr. Fisher's responsibilities as well as his credentials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Fisher's responsibilities include the acute and emergency services in all of the areas there. That obviously includes the whole EMS review and those kinds of issues.

He has the community care and all of the related issues there — the home care issues, population health services, and basically all of the things that we do that look at the broad population and the health of the population on a broad basis. And the primary health services area — the everyday kinds of health issues that are further developing.

And one of the special areas that he's had responsibility and has worked on for a number of years, both in his previous positions within the Department of Social Services and now in Health, has been the Kids First program or the Early Childhood Intervention Program and so he's continuing with responsibilities there.

Mr. Fisher has been working for the government just over 12 years. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University. And I think he's behind me. He also was fairly well-known as a hockey player in his day.

He has served in various positions within the provincial government. His first few years of government work were actually in New Jersey and he came back to Saskatchewan to work in continuing care in Saskatchewan Health.

Worked in Saskatchewan Finance, Saskatchewan Health. He also spent approximately six years working for the Regina Health District as vice-president of community services, and then returned to the provincial government in November of 1998.

Since January of this year, he's been the assistant deputy minister in Saskatchewan Health.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much. When the minister mentioned that Mr. Fisher had some notoriety on hockey, I'm reminded of the member from Athabasca's comment this afternoon where he said he and the Titanic had something in common — they both look good until they hit the ice. So we'll hope that his hockey career is not the same.

Mr. Minister, the principal nursing adviser, I know the member from Last Mountain wants to make sure that I understand that she was born and raised in Cupar. But other than that, Mr. Minister, would you outline again the responsibilities of the principal nursing adviser and her credentials as well?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. Ms. Smadu's responsibilities include primarily working in nursing policy issues, and that includes both working very closely with nursing organizations including SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) and the psych nurses and the LPNs (licensed practical nurse) and also with SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) and the other labour organizations. And she also has a role, a broader role in the whole health provider, education, and recruitment/retention issues that we're looking at on a broader basis.

Ms. Smadu has basically a background obviously as a nurse. She graduated from the Grey Nuns Hospital School of Nursing, and then went on and got her Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Saskatchewan; got her masters of adult education from St. F of X (St. Francis Xavier) in Antigonish, Nova Scotia; and then finally her doctorate in education from Nova South Eastern University in Florida, about six years ago.

She's worked within the government service for 19 years. And prior to taking on this role last summer, which is a crucial role as we see in the future of health care in Saskatchewan, she was an assistant deputy minister in Saskatchewan Health for two years.

And prior to that she worked as the executive director for Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, and before that as an educational consultant at SRNA. And previous to that she was the nursing educator at Wascana.

And I don't have here about the roots for her, but I know that she's very proud of her roots in the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Minister, on the structure . . . the positions on your Web page that are on the right-hand side of the illustration, with the principal nursing

adviser, communications, policy planning, and human resources. They are all sort of separate standing agencies, are they not? And am I interpreting the structure correctly — there are the three deputy ministers with those three broad areas of responsibilities, and then these four areas on the side are separate agencies. Is that correct?

And if it is, could you then outline the responsibilities of the communications department, and the credentials of the individual in charge of that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay, we'll start off with the . . . first with the communications area. And basically what I would say is each of these three areas — communications, policy and planning, and human resources — are branches within the department and they are headed by executive directors who report directly to the deputy minister.

The principal nursing adviser has a role that's not exactly the same as that but she also reports directly to the deputy minister. The head of the communications department, the executive director is Marg Moran McQuinn, and she's worked for the government for 26 years, has a Bachelor of Science in home economics degree from the U of S and she's served in this position since last July. Prior to that she worked in communications in a number of different departments over the years — Economic Development, Energy and Mines, Executive Council — and she's worked in a number of different areas.

When she first started out in government she was in the Department of Consumer Affairs. But she has broad experience in communications and has the responsibility in that area.

The second area is the policy and planning branch and the executive director is Patrick Fafard. Patrick holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta, Master of Arts from York University in Toronto, and a Ph.D. from Queen's University. He's served as executive director, policy and planning branch, from November '99 to the present. He was seconded for a while working with Mr. Fyke. Prior to that he had worked in Executive Council.

In 1998 is when he came to the civil service in Saskatchewan and he left a job at Queen's University as assistant professor in the School of Policy Studies. Prior to that he'd been a lecturer at the University of Waterloo. He had worked in the Ontario government — Intergovernmental Affairs area — prior to going back, getting his doctorate, and going into teaching. So basically he's worked for the Ontario government, the Alberta government, and the Saskatchewan government now for the last three years.

(16:45)

And the third area is human resources. The executive director is Kelly Kummerfield. She's worked for the government for 10 years. She has a Bachelor of Admin from the U of R (University of Regina) and a certificate of health care administration. She's worked as the executive director in this branch for the last six, six and a half years. Prior to that she'd worked in Saskatchewan Health as the assistant director. She also spent a number of years as the director of human resources for the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation, and prior to that with

the City of Regina.

So she's also somebody who brings experience from another place and then many years of experience within the department. And all of these people have I think good credentials and good perspective and good experience to help us provide good service for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Minister, I appreciate the overview. The member from Regina South questioned the appropriateness of asking you to outline the structure and the individuals with their credentials in these departments.

I think that I certainly want to be on the record as saying there was nothing derogatory intended by this process. I think by putting these credentials on the record it is pretty clear that individuals have credentials and have impressive credentials in their respective fields. And I think it's important to understand not only in this House but the people that are watching is the qualifications of people and their experience in terms of running a very, very complicated and complex department. And I think that that is an important exercise.

Mr. Minister, in the brief time that we have I understand that there is work being done in the department in terms of setting up working committees — I don't know what the right organizational word is — in looking at the implications of the Ken Fyke report. You mentioned that Mr. Fafard had spent some time assisting Mr. Fyke, and I wonder if you would outline the organizational structure that you're putting into place in order to prepare to respond or to evaluate the implications of the Ken Fyke report.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate this question because it gives me a chance to talk a little bit about the importance of working together with all of the people within the province as we respond to a number of the challenges that Mr. Fyke has identified.

What we are working on within the Department of Health, and actually within the province, is to take a look at a number of the issues that have been identified and work together with people within the Health department, other government departments if that's appropriate, health districts, professional organizations, and other places.

And we have sort of seven areas that we've identified but I like to think there's really eight committees. And I'm very pleased to congratulate you on being on the eighth committee, which is the Standing Committee on Health which is listening to the public's responses because in many ways that's a very crucial part of what we're doing.

So we have the Standing Committee on Health and all of the work that, that's going to be done there as we have people give very, I think, formal responses but also suggestions about what things are . . . the medicare commission got right, what things they didn't get as right, and also how it will affect different parts of the province.

But we're looking at the seven areas. Sort of primary health care and rural infrastructure, how that fits together. This also

includes many, many of the issues that are pan-province, they cover the whole province.

We have another committee that looks at specialized services but that includes many of the issues around the education of our health providers and the College of Medicine and all the health sciences issues.

We have people looking carefully at finances, accountability. Sort of the governance of the districts and how we can actually measure the effectiveness of some of the things that we do within the health system.

We have a very good idea, innovative idea, around a quality council for Saskatchewan but it's one that we don't necessarily have a lot of other examples of how this might work and so we have a group that's taking a look at that.

We have groups working around the human resources issues. We all know that a very large percentage of what is spent in Health relates to making sure that the workers are properly resourced. And so that's a key issue.

We have some of the . . . another area that's basically financial ones around long-term sustainability. That's one that has many ties with what Mr. Romanow's looking at too which is longer term financing of health in Canada.

And then we also have a group that's looking at how you allocate funding to Health boards and other groups within Saskatchewan that are providing health services.

Basically what we're trying to do is respond and figure out all of the different places the different issues will arise. And what we're trying to do, obviously, is to listen carefully to what people say. And as I say, the Standing Committee on Health in that process will be very helpful as well.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Minister. In terms of these committees, are they internal to the Department of Health? I believe you said that there was some communication happening, but are the formal committees internal to the Department of Health or are they including people from the medical professional associations, SAHO, the SRNA, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, etc? How is the makeup of these committees structured in general and specific?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What I would say is in every area we will include internal departmental people, health district people or representatives, and external people which includes the college . . . yes, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the SMA, (Saskatchewan Medical Association), the nursing organizations, basically a broad spectrum of people that we know that are crucial to, you know, working with the health system.

And we're also obviously being very cognizant of all the different parts of the province in trying to make sure we hear very carefully what people say from some of those areas.

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — With leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well it's a surprise even to me, Mr. Chair, but in the gallery above there, my granddaughter, Serena Thompson, has come to the legislature. And we're going to the Hellenic Pavilion after . . . Mosaic to receive an Athen's 2004 pin.

So if everybody could join me in welcoming her to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much. I'm always happy to make time for grandparents. Being one myself, I appreciate the opportunity.

Minister, do any of these committees that you're structuring supersede some of the round table committees that have been struck in terms of the nursing profession? And there's, I believe, I'm aware of a number of round table committees that are operating currently. Are any of these committees being rolled into the special work that you're doing in regard to Fyke or they will continue on their projects independently?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's my understanding that all of those round table type of committees will continue.

Often many of the people that are involved in those will also be working with us as we look at Mr. Fyke's report and listen to the people of Saskatchewan as we figure out our overall vision and plan for the province.

But clearly the various issues that the different specific committees are working on, they will continue and there's no plan to supplant them with this.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm sort of being notified that we're drawing to the end of our time.

Before I take my seat, I would first of all like to express my appreciation for the department officials. I have had the opportunity of working with departmental officials in past experiences on Public Accounts and at different times in the past. And I certainly want to thank them for their support of yourself today in the answering of these questions in estimates and look forward to the oncoming hours that we will spend doing this in more detail.

And finally in expressing my thanks, is to also ask the minister where the globals are at in terms of their preparation for the global questions that generally are prepared in order for us to

make this process easier?

So I'll take my seat and await that answer.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — They're coming soon, is the message I have.

The committee reported progress.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, because I will not be in attendance at the House tomorrow, I would like to bring down a ruling on the point of order raised this afternoon by the member for Canora-Pelly.

The member asked the Speaker to examine remarks made in yesterday's question period by the Government House Leader to determine whether statements referring to the PC metro fund were in order. I deferred my ruling so I could obtain the specific remark, and I thank the Opposition House Leader for identifying the specific remarks.

I've examined the remarks of the Government House Leader from page 1433 of yesterday's *Hansard* to see if any statements made by the Government House Leader would impugn dishonourable action on any member or members of this House.

While I do not find any specific language that I can require the member for Prince Albert Northcote to withdraw, I do ask members to be very careful and measured in their remarks. The nature of the tone and wording of remarks posed as questions prompt responses of equal tone and wording, and vice versa.

Statements made in the emotion of debate occasionally come very close to impugning dishonourable motives without actually doing so, by using broad references.

Therefore, while the specific point of order is not well taken, I do urge members to be careful not to impugn bad motives on other members, either directly or indirectly, by using broad references.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.