

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition regards two of the government's Crown corporations. SaskPower and SaskEnergy both recently announced significant rate increases for residential and business customers. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Saskatchewan residents in Biggar and in Landis. And I'm pleased to present the petition on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today from citizens who are concerned about the EMS (emergency medical services) report and the impact it will have on rural Saskatchewan.

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Kelvington, Saint-Front, Spalding, Naicam, and Quill Lake.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to ask the Government of Saskatchewan to continue with its foresight and its 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 Crystal Lake, Canora, and Buchanan, Saskatchewan.

I so submit.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I present about 100 pages of a petition from citizens of North Battleford hopeful that the Premier's announcement in North Battleford tomorrow will be a positive one. The prayer for 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.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reconstruct and expand the Avonlea dam to meet current water supply demands, allow for sufficient water supply to accommodate proposed economic developments, and reduce flooding that has caused significant hardship in previous years.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Avonlea and Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise yet again on behalf of citizens from Swift Current and area regarding the state of the hospital, of the regional hospital in Swift Current. And the prayer of their 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 petition today, and there's a number of them, it's signed by residents from Swift Current, Vanguard, Waldeck, Neidpath, Ponteix, Gull Lake, Stewart Valley, Central Butte, Kyle, Moose Jaw, Shaunavon, Eastend, and Hazlet.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring forth a petition on behalf of citizens of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are concerned about 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 Bengough, Radville, and Unger.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present regarding the deplorable condition of Highway 35 that goes through the Indian Head-Milestone constituency and further. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency in order to prevent injury and loss of life, and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in this area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

This petition is signed by people in the Lipton, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Qu'Appelle areas.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition from citizens calling for the immediate implementation of province-wide 911 emergency service. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to fulfill its promise to the people of rural Saskatchewan by immediately implementing the 911 emergency telephone system province-wide.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Hafford, Radisson, Krydor, and Richard.

I so submit.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today to do with the lack of funding to non-profit personal care homes. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide subsidies to non-profit personal care homes in the province so all seniors can be treated equally.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Kamsack, Calgary, and Stornoway.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I rise in this Assembly to bring forth a petition regarding health care in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from the good centre of Duck Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens concerned with the high energy costs. And the prayer reads:

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

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

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from concerned citizens with reference to the EMS report and ambulance service in rural Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Ponteix.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Petitions of citizens asking the government to reconstruct and expand the Avonlea dam.

And 10 other petitions that are presented as addendums to previously tabled petitions.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and to all the members of the Assembly, it's with great pleasure that I introduce 35 members of Brunswick School from Melfort, Saskatchewan. These students are brought here this afternoon by their teachers, Brenda Bessette and Randy Steciuk.

Mr. Speaker, I used to live across the alleyway from Brunswick School, and many of these young students were always there at their best behaviour, and I can assure you, they were never the students that used to throw stones at our poodle.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I welcome these

35 students from Brunswick School. We had an opportunity to discuss the issues of the day and they're very knowledgeable. And they look forward to their day here in Regina, and I look forward to them having a great day and a great weekend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly the grade 5 students from St. Olivier School in Radville. I'd like to welcome them and their teacher, Lorrie Bolton. They have with them chaperones, Randy Mazenc, Bev Pirio, and Stacey Turcotte.

Radville is a very industrious town, and I would like to welcome them and wish them all the best as they endeavour to study in Radville, and hopefully stay in Radville when they grow up. I hope they have a great time and I look forward to meeting them later on this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly, Brent Robertson who is sitting up in the west gallery. Brent is with MB Projects Incorporated, a project engineering firm from Saskatoon. It's an amalgamation of two Saskatchewan firms and they are keenly interested in helping build the province. I have known Brent for many years, and I know that he is committed to the development and building of this province. I'd like all of us to welcome him here to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Why thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of grade 6 to 8 students from Stewart Valley in my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, there are 11 students with us today in your gallery; in addition to that there are two teachers with the group — Kevin Regier is here, as is Sheila Pool. Sheila was recently here, Mr. Speaker, participating in the social studies teachers' institute. And so we want to welcome her back.

And we certainly want to welcome all of the students from Stewart Valley to the legislature and wish them a great visit to Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Business Expansion in Saskatchewan

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here are nine good news stories from constituencies represented by opposition members. These are examples of good things happening in rural Saskatchewan that all members of the Assembly should be aware of and pleased with.

In Churchbridge, the Pump House Fitness Centre recently

opened for business. And Helson's Heating, Plumbing and Air Conditioning held its grand opening on June 7.

Two businesses in Esterhazy recently celebrated their openings. Penny's House Cleaning and Char's Wash N'Shine both held their grand openings on June 2.

George Lamb and Merv Hunter of Lamb and Hunter Hardware in Wynyard have opened a second hardware store in Foam Lake. And Foam Lake's credit union recently celebrated its 60th anniversary.

In Swift Current, The Quest Business Centre held its grand opening on May 30.

Wynyard Technologies has expanded their second business, a shrimp fishing operation with a newly built warehouse.

And on a bit of a different note, the Cypress Hills Regional Economic Development Authority will aid in the promotion of tourism in Saskatchewan's southwest. The REDA (regional economic development authority) will be offering assistance to organizers of the Native gathering at Cypress Hills in late summer. It is an event that draws thousands of visitors from around the world.

I wish to congratulate all these businesses on their new ventures. I am sure that all members of the Assembly will join with me in offering best wishes to everyone who contributes to our province's economy.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Student Attends National Science Fair

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a young man in my constituency recently made his first trip to the National Science Fair in Kingston, Ontario. Thomas Kerluke of Elfros, a 15-year-old grade 9 student, passed through the district and regional levels of competition to advance to the nationals where he competed in the engineering intermediate category.

During the nine-day encounter he was able to meet with 450 participants including international visitors from Australia, Taiwan, Japan, and Sweden.

Thomas's entry in the science fair entitled "A Quick Fix for Baler Belts," received an honourable mention in the top 10 in Canada. This innovative system allows one person to repair a baler belt, which may lead to a commercial venture.

This young teen also demonstrated his initiative and desire to ease the often-difficult chore of farm machinery repair.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Thomas and all of the Saskatchewan participants who attended and received an award at this national competition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Royal Regina Golf Clubhouse

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 9, I had the pleasure of addressing the members and staff at the Royal Regina Golf Club about the opening of their new clubhouse.

The Royal Regina, founded in 1899, celebrated its centenary two short years ago. That same year, Mr. Speaker, the oldest golf club in Saskatchewan also received its royal designation from Queen Elisabeth II, a Bill that I was able to help move through this House.

And now we have just recently celebrated the dedication of the Royal Regina's new clubhouse. This new facility is something to be seen, Mr. Speaker. It is a credit to the vision, commitment, and hard work of the directors and members of this fine club.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to formally recognize the volunteer fundraisers who made this facility possible and, of course, the donors. Without people like the late Stan Larkin, this vision would still only be a vision.

Mr. Speaker, the Royal Regina is a vital contributor to the tourism and recreation opportunities in our capital city and has a national reputation that is second to none.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the contributions and accomplishments of the Royal Regina golf course over the past century and congratulate them on their new clubhouse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cross-Country Champion

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and members, I would like to bring to your attention Amber McGowen, a young lady from my constituency who has made a name for herself in our provincial cross-country and track and field world.

She has won seven provincial championships in Saskatchewan high school women's track and field events, and in three of these she has set records. The last record she broke was at the track and field championships in Yorkton this June. She flew by the 26-year-old record in the 1,500-metre event by 3 seconds. Amber has also won two provincial cross-country championships and set five records at the NESSAC (North East Saskatchewan School Athletic Conference) district level.

Her achievements have been noticed in universities across North America and many have been attempting to recruit her. Amber has decided to attend Cornell University in New York and join a running program that offers many exciting possibilities for her.

It is with pleasure, Mr. Speaker, that I ask the Assembly to join me in congratulating Ms. Amber McGowen on her list of many achievements and wishing her the very best in the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Projects for Highways and Transportation

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, as we all should know by now, this government has budgeted a record amount of \$311.7 million for Highways and Transportation, and I would like to touch on just some of the new projects.

An innovative road repair technology is currently being tested on a 13.2 kilometre section of Highway 31 in west central Saskatchewan between Plenty and Dodsland. Improvements have also begun on an 18.5 kilometre of Highway No. 6, north of Regina, at a cost of 2.5 million. Resurfacing 11.3 kilometres of Highway 13, west of Weyburn, will also be taking place. Work on this \$1.7 million resurfacing project will create 31 full-time jobs. And finally, road improvements for Echo Valley Provincial Park is scheduled to begin in mid-June.

Mr. Speaker, fixing our transportation system is not just about paving roads, it's about preserving our economy, creating jobs, and above all, connecting Saskatchewan to the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Commemorative Plaque Unveiled in St. Louis

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, June 10, I was pleased to join with the citizens of the town of St. Louis to celebrate the unveiling of a commemorative plaque dedicated to Mr. Hector Tremblay.

In 1954 Mr. Tremblay, who was the president of the St. Louis Board of Trade, envisioned a park site dedicated to the memory of pioneers who had travelled the Carleton Trail through this area so many years ago.

In the spring of 1955 Mr. Tremblay, along with many volunteers, embarked on making his vision a reality and established Pioneer Park.

In 1966 a centennial project . . . for a centennial project, park improvements were made. Waterworks, a kitchen, and picnic tables were installed and pine trees were planted along the creek.

Because this park was built and named in honour of the pioneers in 1955 and is the site of the original Carleton Trail overland crossings, the government declared it a historic site, and as such St. Louis was entitled to be the proud and happy recipient of one of only two existing authentic Red River carts.

A few years ago, the St. Louis Lions Club took over the park and since then have made noticeable improvements, necessary repairs, and continue with the ongoing maintenance.

To this day, this park stands as a tribute to the memory of those hardy, hard-working, and dearly remembered pioneers. And it is fitting to commend and thank all of those who have contributed to memorializing Saskatchewan history.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Praise for New Canada-Saskatchewan Assistance Program

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Saskatchewan Assistance Program application process has recently been praised.

Radio personality Kevin Hursh made reference to C-SAP as a rare bouquet for a government program earlier this week. He goes on to state that even though due to unforeseen problems, C-SAP was late getting declarations out to farmers, the program has been quick to issue payments.

The declarations were mailed out to producers on May 25. Hursh himself filled out the declaration upon delivery and on June 11 received his cheque from Saskatchewan Crop Insurance. In the words of Mr. Hursh, and I quote, “That is a fast turn around for a government program.”

Mr. Speaker, it seems that people in all parts of Saskatchewan have praise for the efficiency of this government. That is no surprise for the members on this side of the House. Efficiency and consistency have been staples in this government’s operation.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with communities, producers, and industry to address the challenges facing agriculture in Saskatchewan. And unlike our bewildered opposition, we have a plan that supports this government’s goal of a responsive and effective government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Business Expansion in Love, Saskatchewan

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I’m privileged this afternoon to rise and bring recognition in regards to one of my constituents. Mary Marshande from the community of Love, Saskatchewan has decided that the time is ripe for expansion of her tourism business.

Mr. Speaker, Mary has operated a private campground and convenience store since 1990 with moderate success. On last Sunday, June 10, Mary opened her new cottage development with myself having the honour of cutting the ribbon during the opening ceremony, Mr. Speaker.

Mary Marshande told me that she anticipates a change in government is on the horizon and plans to be prepared to participate in the booming economy to follow. It is because of the vision of entrepreneurs such as Mary Marshande that Saskatchewan’s future will be in good hands, Mr. Speaker. The opportunities for tourism expansion has its limits, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately we are no way near that limit.

But visionaries such as Mary Marshande ensures that this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has not completely destroyed the good citizens of Saskatchewan’s initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly please

join me in congratulating Mary Marshande in the expansion of her business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Strike by Health Care Workers

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is day six of the strike by CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) members and day two of mediation between CUPE and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations). And while there may be some movement at the bargaining table, as far as we know at this very moment there is still no deal.

The head of the Regina Health District surgical department, Dr. Mark Ogrady, says the cancellations of surgery due to the strike are making an already terrible situation worse. He says waiting lists are already at an unacceptable level and there is an urgent need to increase the capacity of the system. He says, and I quote:

We need to get back to a situation where we can retain physicians, nurses, and CUPE members.

Mr. Speaker, already 412 surgeries have been cancelled according to the Regina Health District. Once this strike is settled, what plans does the Minister of Health have to help the system cope with the backlog of surgeries and the longer waiting lists as a result of the strike?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as we know, the parties are continuing their discussions and hopefully they can resolve this shortly.

What happens after a labour disruption has taken place is that all of the parties get back to work and try to then sort out what are the things that need to be done. And so what we know is that district management will work together with the department and with their staff in their areas and they will make plans to deal with some of these extra burdens that are on the system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we discussed yesterday in this House, the continuing labour dispute between CUPE and SAHO is having a very detrimental effect on the health of long-term care patients in Saskatchewan.

Today the executive director of the Santa Maria nursing home in Regina says some patients have been confined to their beds for days. She’s concerned about patients developing bedsores, dehydration, and poor hygiene. Nutritional needs are also being compromised in many situations.

Although they are extremely grateful to the volunteers and family members who have come out to provide care, these volunteers and family members are only making up about half

of the level of care that patients normally receive in the home.

Mr. Speaker, hopefully mediation is making progress in this dispute. But in the meantime, what has the minister done to assess the level of care that is occurring in nursing homes across this province affected by this strike?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I have reported before and as is reported each afternoon since the strike has started, there is a method of contacting all of the affected districts to get information from the people who work there about the stresses or the places where there are some specific problems, to see if there can be some resources provided. The assessment continues on an hourly basis. If there is something that comes up, the calls come in.

There is a formal assessment in the sense of a phone-around every morning and every late afternoon. And what we will continue to do is monitor this situation.

Our concern is about these residents. We know that the stresses are in the long-term care area.

We would encourage the parties just to continue to work on seeing whether essential service arrangements can be made for these people. We're monitoring it very carefully.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Regina Health District that CUPE may be reassessing its position in terms of providing extra care to some workers for Pioneer Village and the Santa Maria nursing home. After their original assessment decision not to send workers back to provide essential services, there was a lot of concern about the level of care that people were receiving in the home. And this news of them considering reassessing that position is welcome news.

Mr. Speaker, health officials feel that the health status of many patients is worsening by the hour and could lead to more serious health concerns for these patients.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that CUPE is doing another assessment and may be sending workers back to provide more services for Pioneer Village and Santa Maria home?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't confirm that specific question, but I do know that they are in ongoing discussions between SAHO and CUPE as it relates to a number of the districts. And so my sense would be if that's the information that he has then it's probably accurate. But I don't have that specific information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are very hopeful that this is indeed the case. And, Mr. Speaker,

no one understands better than the long-term care workers who provide care on a daily basis just how difficult the situation is for out-of-scope people, for family members, and for volunteers to provide care on a daily basis. Long hours and staff shortages are something they deal with constantly, and the workplace issues that are part of this labour dispute must be addressed.

These issues are also the same ones that were very much at the centre of the 1999 nurses' strike but today we're hearing more and more often from nurses that these same issues have not been addressed in any meaningful way by this government.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that no matter how well intentioned workers are they just are always let down by this government in terms of commitments about long-term working conditions.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister give these health care providers his commitment that when a deal is reached any agreement dealing with workplace issues will be lived up to by this government for once?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite and the public of Saskatchewan that the people on this side of the House stand with the workers. We are people who stand with these workers.

And what I would like to remind everybody is that on March 27 that member opposite talked about these specific workers as not being important within the health system. We do not believe that, but we also believe in the processes that allow for resolution of these matters.

And so what I would say to the member opposite is to work with the community as we encourage these people to resolve their differences so that the care can be provided for our Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Terms of Reference for Referral to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Liquor and Gaming. Mr. Speaker, last week the Saskatchewan Party asked the minister of Liquor and Gaming to table the terms of reference for Justice Wakeling's investigation of Liquor and Gaming employees and the terms of reference of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's investigation of the former minister.

Yesterday the minister provided the terms of reference for Justice Wakeling's investigation, but she is refusing to release the terms of reference of investigation into the minister's fishing trip.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister refusing to release this information? What is she hiding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite will know, immediately following the request for the terms of reference on the Wakeling review and investigation, I released to him from SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) in writing those terms of reference and again yesterday as a response to the question that they asked.

SLGA, Mr. Speaker, would not be conducting or be responsible for the review by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. That's a totally different process and is not being driven in anyway by myself or SLGA.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Just a few more things, Mr. Speaker, to add to the list of what that minister is not responsible for. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has been advised that Justice Wakeling has now completed his report. Has the minister received Justice Wakeling's report and will she release it today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that Justice Wakeling has compiled a draft report and he has shared preliminary information with Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. It's in draft and he wanted a chance to speak with officials and others before he would complete the final report to me, Mr. Speaker.

And when that is done, as I mentioned, action will be taken immediately following the release of that report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Purchase of Local Company

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the minister responsible for SaskTel.

Last week the NDP government posted the worst year-over-year job loss since the Great Depression. According to Statistics Canada the NDP has driven over 20,000 jobs out of the province in the last 12 months. A lot of people are wondering why that is, Mr. Speaker.

Well one of the reasons is the NDP's government commitment to use taxpayers' money to drive small business out of the province.

Yesterday SaskTel announced the latest example: DLC-West (Data Link Canada West). That was one of Saskatchewan's original, private sector Internet service providers. At least it was until yesterday when the company's owner announced he was being bought out. And guess who's doing the buying, Mr. Speaker? SaskTel.

Will the minister confirm, will the minister confirm that SaskTel has bought a company that already existed here in the province? And if so, why does this government continue to drive Saskatchewan entrepreneurs from the province?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the Great Depression occurs every time that member gets up to ask a question.

Mr. Speaker, first of all any time there is any adverse effect on small business in Saskatchewan, we don't want to hear about that. And it's disappointing if that occurs, Mr. Speaker.

But the facts are, Mr. Speaker, that in this business they are . . . in the Internet business there is huge competition with AOL (America Online), Mr. Speaker, with Rogers. And, Mr. Speaker, in this particular case . . . though I do note the president sent a letter out — Mr. Jim Nickel sent a letter out to all his customers that says the following. It says:

We have always focused on customer service. It is with that in mind that I am pleased to announce we've reached an agreement with SaskTel that will result in DLC-West customers being served with their products and services.

Involving a large local provider (keeping dollars and jobs here in Saskatchewan) is the best solution — and SaskTel fits the bill perfectly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the minister says, the minister says he too is disappointed that the government is driving entrepreneurs out of the province. But he needn't only be disappointed, Mr. Speaker, he ought to do something about it. He ought to stop Crowns from competing with small businesses in the province.

And in case the minister is under any illusion that the owner, who he just quoted, that the owner of DLC-West is happy about being driven out of the province, here's what Jim Nickel the president of DLC had to say about doing business in NDP Saskatchewan, quote:

For the last number of years it's become more and more difficult to operate a business here in Saskatchewan.

That's what he said, Mr. Speaker. He also said part of the reason for the business decision that he's made recently is that SaskTel wouldn't provide him a high-speed Internet infrastructure he needed for his business.

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder business and jobs are leaving our province when the NDP is forcing them to compete with taxpayer-funded Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why is the NDP using SaskTel to drive businesses like DLC-West out of the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — In case the member opposite has forgotten, Mr. Speaker, he says we ought to be doing something. Well we are, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we're doing things like we've done with Brigadier, with SecurTek. And I want to read this letter again, Mr. Speaker, where the president of Brigadier Security Systems Ltd. says the following, Mr. Speaker:

SecurTek has more than 16 dealers in Saskatchewan and is providing a much needed service to Saskatchewan people, protecting lives and personal property and all the while

creating jobs and profits that stay in Saskatchewan.

How can that be more positive for a province needing to be more diversified in its revenue and employment base, Mr. Speaker?

We are doing things, Mr. Speaker, and we're partnering with local businesses and small businesses in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, so that they have an opportunity to stay and survive here in our province, competing with many of the large multinational companies that are competing here in Saskatchewan, not only against the private sector but against SaskTel as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the example the minister uses to demonstrate that they're not competing with small businesses with the Crowns is SecurTek. It's well-known, Mr. Speaker, that that very subsidiary of SaskTel is driving other alarm monitoring businesses out of business in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, while SaskTel is busy driving small business and entrepreneurs out of Saskatchewan, the NDP is using tactics . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Advertising Regarding SaskEnergy Rate Increase

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, while SaskTel is busy driving small businesses and entrepreneurs out of the province, the government is also using taxpayers' dollars to buy advertising designed specifically to prop up a dying government.

Mr. Speaker, of late we've all been hearing about the SaskEnergy ads on the radio and seeing them in the newspaper. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have learned that the cost of those ads is \$75,000. Mr. Speaker, all of that to tell this story to the Saskatchewan people.

These ads should be telling the following story: that the government is charging Saskatchewan SaskEnergy customers \$6.30 a gigajoule while their counterparts in Alberta will be getting it for \$4.95.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP running a \$75,000 campaign claiming to save Saskatchewan families money while the government jacks up energy rates by 24 per cent?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, given the information that that member has provided for the public of Saskatchewan on SaskEnergy and its rates, there may be some logic in SaskEnergy wanting to provide the facts for the public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. There may be some logic in that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, SaskEnergy is fulfilling its obligation to its consumers and to the public of

Saskatchewan with respect to the rate changes, and that is why they are advertising. They're first of all fulfilling their obligation to provide that information.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we live, and SaskEnergy does, in a competitive industry now, Mr. Speaker. Isn't it also logical that they might want to provide for the public and their customers, Mr. Speaker, information about their rates as well? In an industry where the customer and business has an option to go to another sector, Mr. Speaker, I think it's only logical that SaskEnergy might want to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The minister is just defending, using taxpayers' dollars, to sell . . . to buy a \$75,000 advertising campaign to sell a political message which is this: be grateful that we're jacking your rates up by 24 per cent. That's what the minister said just now.

Mr. Speaker, for weeks we've been listening to the NDP claim that they have the lowest gas prices in Canada. Both the Premier and the minister have committed to sell natural gas to families and businesses at the same rate SaskEnergy pays for the gas.

The problem is, is that SaskEnergy has just increased its rate to \$6.30 a gigajoule, while private companies in Alberta are charging their customers \$4.95. And SaskEnergy could be purchasing gas over the medium term for less than the \$6.30 a gigajoule. And now . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Must be able to . . . Order, please. Must be able to hear the question.

Mr. Wall: — Now SaskEnergy is spending \$75,000 to try to convince Saskatchewan families that they should be grateful for paying more for gas than they should have to.

Mr. Speaker, the question is simple. Why is the government spending \$75,000 in taxpayers' money on an NDP propaganda campaign?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Every time that member gets up, Mr. Speaker, he confirms in my mind, and I think in the public's mind, and confirms that he in fact is not the expert that he has . . . that he in fact said he was not, so I agree with him again, Mr. Speaker.

I want to — more for the public of Saskatchewan though, Mr. Speaker — I want to point out some of the facts with respect to the differential in rates between what SaskEnergy is proposing and what that member refers to in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, it represents two very different buying strategies. SaskEnergy, Mr. Speaker, buys collars and insurance and hedges. ATCO, the company that the member opposite refers to, buys on the spot.

So, Mr. Speaker, that price is guaranteed for how long — 24 hours. Twenty-four hours, Mr. Speaker. It's guaranteed for 24

hours. And, Mr. Speaker, if the price goes up and they find their gas variance account in deficit, what do they do? They go to the rate regulator — they can do that within three days, Mr. Speaker — and apply for a higher rate.

The customers from the private company in Alberta have a guaranteed rate, Mr. Speaker, that rate for three days, Mr. Speaker.

I think I would prefer to deal with SaskEnergy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we're not just talking about this issue in the legislature today. People across the province are talking about this ad campaign and SaskEnergy rates. In fact on a popular call-in show earlier today, Mr. Speaker, here's what a couple of callers had to say.

Dennis from Balcarres said, SaskEnergy, they're trying to tell me they're saving me \$170 this coming year in energy. Well I don't know who they're trying to make feel better, but it's not working on me. He says no, I think they kind of jumped the gun a little bit by buying this gas right now because Alberta is buying it for a dollar or so less.

And Dick from Regina phoned in to say, you know, for the second week the cabinet minister in charge of Crowns and now joined by the House Leader, he says, refused to answer questions from the Swift Current . . . (inaudible) . . . MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) on SaskEnergy rates.

And finally, on the subject of this campaign, Mr. Speaker, Ray from Regina had this to say. They're spending money here and there. The propaganda campaign that they're publishing is actually putrid. That's what Ray in Regina had to say.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why is he spending \$75,000 on an NDP propaganda campaign?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asked a number of questions. I want to first of all respond to the first question again, and that is with respect to the differential in rates.

Somehow he portrays and tries to portray for the people of Saskatchewan, the declining gas prices are a bad thing for SaskEnergy customers. Nothing could be more ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be more ridiculous.

In the event of lower gas prices — and everyone has acknowledged including that member opposite, that we have some of the best experts in investing in SaskEnergy — they will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that with reduced gas prices, any savings that can be achieved will be passed on to its customers, Mr. Speaker. We provide that guarantee, Mr. Speaker.

And in addition, as has been laid out by the independent rate review panel, if there is a surplus in the gas variance account triggered by the \$20 million, they as well will go back and apply to provide reductions to SaskEnergy's customers.

Reduced gas prices are a good thing not only for consumers in Alberta, but they're also a good thing for people in Saskatchewan,

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Medical Treatment Provided for Farm Accident Victim

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, today a Cut Knife area farmer, Glenn Blackstock, married with three children lies in critical condition in a Calgary hospital. How he got there is one of the uncounted horror stories in the failure of our health system.

Mr. Blackstock suffered a serious farm accident on June 5. He was transported to North Battleford, given painkillers, and moved to Royal University Hospital. He was scheduled for emergency surgery in RUH (Royal University Hospital) but was bumped. His doctor offered to do the surgery in City Hospital which was scheduled but then cancelled.

Several days later he was finally flown to Calgary — I understand with the intervention of the Health minister — finally underwent surgery on June 11 and during the intervening six days he was on IV (intravenous) with no food. That is five days after a near-fatal accident and in excruciating pain, not withstanding the morphine.

My question for the Minister of Health: how does he explain to Mr. Blackstock and his family, six days of agony in Saskatoon and in the end the cost of a flight to Calgary and the compromised condition in which he was left for that many days without any treatment?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are situations that are quite difficult. We know that throughout the system the people will work with the doctors and with the staff to get the care that can be provided.

I don't have all of the details around this specific matter. I would suspect that the arrangements have been made through the Saskatoon District Health around transferring the patient to Alberta. But what I would say is that we have to be supportive of those people who are making some of these very difficult decisions. I assume from what the member opposite has said that the man has now received his surgery and we wish him all the best.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Health does have the information on this file. And in terms of supporting the health professionals, his doctor did want to do the surgery, was prepared to do it in City if it couldn't be done at RUH, and the system would not permit it because of the bureaucracy and administration. That's my understanding. And I think the Minister of Health is in a position to answer that question.

Mr. Blackstock's condition was seriously compromised by waiting so many days in pain, on morphine, no food. And he continues to be in critical condition.

What can the minister say? Is he looking into this situation? Does he take it seriously? He says we need to support the health professionals, but the fact is Dr. Dust was prepared to do this operation and was not allowed to proceed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the characteristics of the health system that we have in Saskatchewan, that we have in Canada, is that we hire professional people to do the jobs that are required.

Our job, obviously as a government, as a legislature, is to work to provide resources and support for what goes on.

What we know is that certain decisions must have been made within the Saskatoon District Health and then probably in conjunction with the Department of Health, not with my office but with people within the department, around providing this man's care. I don't have all the details of that and I'm not at liberty to talk about that.

But I would say is that we know, in Saskatoon, that the surgeons and the people who are involved with the management of surgery within Saskatoon have been working with consultants from both within and out of the province to address a number of the issues around surgical times.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Child Welfare System

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform you and members of the Assembly that today the provincial government announced a process to seek input from families, community groups, First Nations people, Métis people, front-line workers, and other stakeholders to explore changes to the province's child welfare system.

Mr. Speaker, this government is a firm believer that there is a need to ensure more children and youth are safe and secure within their own families and communities.

Based on the input of staff, stakeholders, and the Child Welfare League of America, we have made significant improvements to the child welfare system in this province over the last few years. We recognize that immediate action was required to address the most pressing concerns in the system and we also recognize that broader system-wide change may be required.

Today I have announced that we are extending our consultations to include front-line service providers such as schools, health districts, and police. The consultations will focus on supporting the community to provide services for vulnerable children, youth, and their families and to reduce the number of children placed in foster care.

On the other hand, we are also committed to providing higher quality care for those children and youth in the care of the minister.

We also seek to increase the involvement of First Nations and Métis government, children, families, and communities in culturally appropriate child welfare services. And, Mr. Speaker, we will also focus on developing better accountability measures for child welfare services.

Today I have also provided a detailed response to recommendations made by the Children's Advocate to improve the system. For children and youth in care, our proposed direction will address and go beyond the issues raised in the Children's Advocate report, *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices*. We are committed to a comprehensive approach to set a broader framework for change rather than trying for a quick fix.

The Children's Advocate has identified all of government as being responsible for the care of children. Her recommendations affect a number of specific departments, such as Health, Education, and Justice, as well as Social Services. The process I announced today will involve these departments and other service sectors in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable children, youth, and their families.

We are committed to a more open and transparent child welfare system and we will be implementing forums to provide the government with valuable information as we move in the proposed direction over the next three years. We are beginning this process now, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage all residents of Saskatchewan to take an active part in providing quality services to some of our most vulnerable children.

Mr. Speaker, the 2001-2002 provincial budget contains nearly \$6.25 million in increased funding to address immediate concerns in the child welfare system. These measures include the addition of 54 positions in child welfare services at a cost of \$2.25 million.

A strong economy and government initiatives aimed at vulnerable families such as the building independence strategy have helped Saskatchewan become the only province to have experienced a decline in child poverty in each of two successive years as reported by campaign 2000.

The Department of Social Services provides services to vulnerable children, youth, and families through child protection services, services for children and youth in care, the 16- and 17-year-old program, and the adoption program. Approximately 6,700 families receive child welfare services from Social Services each year. In addition there are approximately 2,900 children and youth in the care of the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that our process for developing a new direction in child welfare will build on our successes in the past and continue to provide more and improved services for the children of this province in the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today and make a few comments regarding the release that the Minister of Social Services has regarding child welfare in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think it certainly would be wise for us to compliment the government on finally beginning to listen to people and listen to children and listen to the Child Advocate. It's taken this government a long time to realize that there are other people out there who have knowledge in the area of dealing with children and how we can provide those services.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the minister on looking very carefully at the Child Advocate's report, taking the suggestions very seriously, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, beginning to review how Social Services and how children are dealt with through the department.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I was one of the many . . . one of the MLAs on the committee that's looking into the issue of child prostitution in the province of Saskatchewan.

And if there's one thing that our committee heard from the many presentations that were made to the committee, was the fact that it's important for us to begin to listen to those directly affected rather than just listening to people who do not have a lot of knowledge, or may not be totally involved in making decisions without realizing the implications it may have on the people involved.

And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I believe that's what the minister is talking about today in putting together this study and talking to families and to caregivers. Certainly compliment the minister on including the First Nations community, the Métis people, the front-line workers.

As our committee did hear, these people want to have a voice, they want to express their views and put forward their ideas as to how we can reach out and meet the needs of the very young children as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we have in front of us today is certainly, I believe . . . and I hope it will mean a move forward in the area of how we deliver services to children. I guess when we get into estimates, and certainly in other areas, we'll have some questions.

I'm not exactly sure if there was a timeline laid out in regards to this study process, Mr. Speaker, but we do believe it's important to talk to people; but as well to get on with the process of developing programs, and indeed to meet the needs of children so that we don't have reports as we had recently of the number of child deaths that were in the province of Saskatchewan.

The fact that there are certain cases and needs out there that children face and, Mr. Speaker, I believe everyone feels we need to do everything we can to provide for the welfare of children in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said that, we certainly look forward to further dialogue with the minister and we look forward to hearing from community groups as well, as they make their presentations as to how we can deliver a much more efficient and caring welfare service to those in need in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, today I have received a copy of the annual report for the years 2000-2001 from the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner. I hereby table the same.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 231 and 232.

The Speaker: — Responses to 231 and 232 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 10

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 10 — The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise and make a few comments on Bill No. 10. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, The Oil and Gas Conservation Act certainly has provided us with some interesting research. We are certainly well aware on this side of the House that conservation is an integral part of Saskatchewan. It is something that as we look back over our history that at many times throughout the history of Saskatchewan, conservation and protection of our environment has not been well represented.

And, Mr. Speaker, it has become as we reach that time in our history as a province that, that all of us, and especially on this side of the House, have come to understand that protection of the environment and such things as the Bill such as The Oil and Gas Conservation Act needed to be taken quite seriously and needed to be looked at and promoted; that our environment is protected for not only ourselves and our children, but certainly our grandchildren, which we hope, Mr. Speaker, are going to be able to find the opportunities to be able to stay here and work in this beautiful province.

But as we go through the Bill, Mr. Speaker, we notice that the government is setting up a fund or wants to set up a fund in order to be able to deal with orphaned wells. Now as we have found out through some research and certainly help from the government is that there's about a dozen abandoned wells in the province, oil and gas wells, that have not been appropriately decommissioned in an environmentally safe manner.

And it's because of reasons such as that, that the government is feeling a sense of responsibility that something needs to be done about these wells. And certainly that is quite rightly so.

(14:30)

But somehow for some reason or other the government of the day feels as though what would best help prevent instances from happening like this again in the future, Mr. Speaker, would be to put a tax on the oil and gas industry. And certainly we know that as we measure ourselves and the oil and gas industry in this province up against our neighbours, whether that be the East or the West or the South or the North, and certainly around the world, we find that we have an oil and gas industry that are to be the most highest taxed in the world.

And so then we wonder why, Mr. Speaker, the government is not being able to find in their oil and gas revenue coffers the monies that are necessary to be able to handle these procedures as it is. But they feel it quite necessary that for some reason or another, Mr. Speaker, that in order for the opportunities that happen with these dozen gas wells that they never happen again, is that if we tax the industry even further that they may become more recognizable of their responsibilities.

When in fact, Mr. Speaker, what could arise is that oil and gas companies out there decommissioning wells will begin to feel that there's such a tax burden put upon them that any further expenses may actually increase the opportunities for inappropriately abandoned oil and gas wells.

And that would be a great concern to those of us on this side of the House. And of course, Mr. Speaker, what it's going to provide of course is a great burden on the taxpayers of Saskatchewan who certainly don't want to see that.

But we have some questions that had been brought to us by the industry on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and it would probably be more appropriately if we had a chance to ask these questions in Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 11

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 11 — The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak on Bill No. 11, An Act to amend The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act.

Mr. Speaker, it would appear that this proposed legislation would impose a new tax on oil recovered from facilities such as cavern disposal, waste processing, water disposal, or water injection facilities.

And it's a bit of a concern, Mr. Speaker, when we hear about an added tax onto anything in the province, but especially in the oil and gas . . . on oil and gas revenue as we know the oil and gas industry is very vital to Saskatchewan. It's very vital to the government in order to balance its budget. And without the oil and gas industry doing very well in the past year or two years, this government would not have been able to balance its budget.

And it's a concern to the people of Saskatchewan that there's an added tax onto this particular area of the oil production.

Now we're talking about recovering oil from these sites that in the past have not been able to be produced. And it's important to our reserves. It adds to our reserves, adds to our production, but also it's an environmental factor getting the oil out.

Besides enhancing our production, naturally getting more oil out increases our revenues and also increases the jobs and is very beneficial to the province. And when we hear about a new tax onto an area like this, it seems that it will be a detriment to oil production, and will not be enhancing our production into the future.

In the second reading speech the minister responsible mentioned that this is a tax instead of a royalty. And that type of initiative . . . oil and gas groups have expressed concern time and time again. And many of the members on this side of the House have also expressed opposition to high royalty rates in this province on the oil and gas sector.

We really believe that if the government would take a different look at the revenue structure, the royalty structure, the tax structure in the oil and gas revenue, we would, as a province, benefit much more than we are. We would be competing a lot better with the oil producers in Alberta. And of course when we do that we would increase our job creation and encourage more production in the province.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, deals with freehold lease mineral holdings, freehold minerals that are held by individuals, not the Crown. So one of the questions we have, Mr. Speaker, is in regards to the fair share of profits. The Crown will get their share of the profits, but what about the individual that holds the freehold oil and gas areas?

Naturally another question coming out of this proposal is just how much will the royalties . . . will the government take in, and how that will be determined, and what will the number be. How much more taxes will this NDP government bring in out of this new royalty tax structure?

And again, Mr. Speaker, the concern is that raising taxes, or higher taxes, what effect that has on the economy, on the oil and gas production, when we should be looking at proposals to reduce taxes — not increasing them — and by reducing taxes make our oil and gas fields more productive and increase production in those areas so that we can create more jobs and improve the economy that this province needs so badly.

This Bill also seems to give the minister responsible a lot of power in this area to change tax levy amounts; to change credits, deductions, exemptions, and we have some concerns about why the minister would need such sweeping powers, or if this is just another way of the NDP controlling the economy in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this back to the stakeholders and discuss this Bill in more depth with the oil and gas industry and the individuals that hold the freehold areas. And at this time I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 6

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly am pleased to enter into the debate on Bill No. 6, The Planning and Development Act.

Several of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, have already spoken to this Bill and most of them have indicated that . . . As we look at the Bill, it's actually a very short Bill with a few minor amendments. But they are amendments to an Act that deals with land use and development and those sorts of things, so I think we have to be extremely careful and do our due diligence and look at the implications that these amendments may bring to the Bill.

On the surface, Mr. Speaker, the Bill has the potential of making subdivisions . . . creating some hardships in that area, and that's an area that we certainly don't want to aid as far as making the difficulty of subdivisions. I mean within development projects there's certainly good reasons to have bylaws to regulate those sorts of things, but, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at amending Acts so that they encourage development and not hinder them.

These changes appear to give municipal board greater authority over appeals and with regards to subdivisions. And so there are some . . . we have some real concerns in those areas, Mr. Speaker.

Although we have quite a number of questions and concerns with some of these amendments, I think we probably can have a lot of those questions answered in the Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker. And we'll be looking forward to asking the minister some questions about this amendment and raising those concerns at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 15

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to speak on Bill 15, The Credit Union Act.

Mr. Speaker, as with any other Bill, our caucus has reviewed this Bill 15 thoroughly, and because The Credit Union Act was rewritten in 1998, the changes here — I think the minister's words were, tinkering — there are a few changes, a few deletions.

Credit unions have always played an important part in all of Saskatchewan whether it be urban or rural. And perhaps, Mr. Speaker, they play an even more important part now than ever before in small towns throughout this province. We see banks pulling out of the smaller centres and the credit union is there to ensure that the residents of those communities and surrounding rural areas have the available services of a financial institution.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues dealing with the expanded role of the Conduct Review Committee and the impact that will have on the overall responsibility of the board of directors.

We also have some concerns regarding the review of credit union transactions now that they are not under the direct purview of the board of directors and the impacts that will have on overall responsibility.

But, Mr. Speaker, we feel with this too we will be able to ask these questions in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 27

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 27 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a few more comments on Bill No. 27, The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act.

The minister, in his comments on second reading back on May 11, made some clarifications of some of the concerns that we had and I've had the opportunity to review them. But, Mr. Speaker, we do have a few questions that we will be posing to the minister in Committee of the Whole and I think those are more for clarification.

Mr. Speaker, the minister makes reference to the fact that there will be competitors that will be now using SaskTel's infrastructure and, as a result, there was a need to adjust the tax system to ensure that the charge that would be levied on these users would be the correct amount based on recent rulings by CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission).

The changes that are suggested, Mr. Speaker, seem to be routine in that we have an identification or a definition that is now put in place for telecommunications capital. And we see the broad range of the physical kinds of things that we see at SaskTel, whether that's buried cables or switching stations, etc.

But there are also software programs that are suggested as being part of the telecommunications capital. And as a result of that definition, Mr. Speaker, you would then use a calculation to produce what is going to be referred to, I guess, as a telecommunications capital tax.

The minister noted that this will be the tax that will be used to

levy against users of the infrastructure system. And that, I think, needs to be clarified because in one sense he talks about users, and then in his other comments he said: well it's just routine; it's just putting in place what was required by CRTC.

(14:45)

So, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the concerns that have been raised by us and by a couple of individuals that we have spoken with.

The other clause, 58(1) indicates that it will permit the rate and calculation of the special telecommunications tax to be prescribed in regulations. No description as to how much that capital tax will be, whether or not it will be an impediment to any users of the infrastructure program if it becomes too high.

So those are some concerns that I think we can clarify in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest that we can now proceed to have this Bill moved into the committee.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 28 — The Commercial Liens Act/Loi sur les privilèges à base commerciale** be now read a second time.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a few moments to address this Bill. There are a few considerations that I would like to bring to the attention of the House and the government today as a result of the particular Bill that is before us, The Commercial Liens Act.

When the minister introduced this Bill some time ago, he said that basically it was a housekeeping Bill that was intended to clean up some of the outstanding Bills, some of the common law provisions for liens, and a variety of other things that he needed to attend to in this Bill.

And if I could paraphrase some of the highlights of the Bill as the Minister indicated in his initial introduction of the Bill, I would like to do that now, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill before this Assembly is intended to provide much needed updating of the existing outdated Acts and the common law rules regarding the creation and enforcement of liens. This Bill will codify the procedure for a lien attachment and enforcement. And this Bill will also restrict the value of a lien claim, to the agreed upon amount to be paid between the parties involved.

Now most significant for a person who faces a lien claim is the innovation in this particular piece of legislation — and I must say it's the first time I've encountered this — in this particular piece of legislation now, an individual facing a lien can have the validity of the lien and the amount of the lien quickly and easily challenged in court. That wasn't something that was available to people who were facing the consequences of a lien

previously.

And from the perspective of a small business, the updated lien attachment and enforcement procedures set out in this Bill are apparently an improvement as they adopt the well-established and well-known procedures under the personal property registry system.

And, Mr. Speaker, having been involved in the farm machinery sales business for a number of years before I came to this House, I understand how important the personal property registry Act is to farm businesses, and also automobile dealers in this province. And to have that type of legislation in place as it affects liens, I think will be an advantage to various people who provide services to the general public in this province.

Businesses will now be able to pursue the enforcement of legitimate liens from other provinces. And I think that too is a significant improvement in this particular piece of legislation. Previously if the piece of machinery or the particular vehicle that a lien was placed against was moved out of the province, it was almost impossible for the business involved, for the dealership involved, to pursue that lien across extra-provincial boundaries.

So having that capability made available through this particular piece of legislation, I think, is a real improvement. That particular portion of the Act avoids . . . or provides for rather, the avoidance of having to re-litigate the case in the jurisdiction of another province. It can be transferable from this province to other provincial jurisdictions.

And finally this Bill also does abolish certain common law liens as we mentioned earlier. And a whole series of existing liens statutes, such as the garage keepers lien Act; The Hotel Keepers Act; The Warehousemen's Lien Act; and what is left of The Mechanics' Lien Act. It sounds like there have been pieces of that particular Act disassembled from time to time in the past.

But all of those particular pieces of legislation are now going to be replaced by this particular Act, Bill No. 28, The Commercial Liens Act.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just make a few more comments about this particular piece of legislation. While I think that we are . . . on the surface of the provisions of this Act quite satisfied that it will accomplish what the minister has intended, there are some areas that might be a little more problematic that we may want to look at more closely in the Committee of the Whole.

But having said that, I would move at this time that we let the Bill proceed.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hagel that **Bill No. 29 — The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments to make about, on Bill No. 29, The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act as put forward by the government.

I guess mainly this Act is looking at changing the way that student loans are administered and administrated . . . the administration of them from a private institution to the government. And that has some concerns in itself, in and of itself that the government will be looking after this now.

I think there's been some problems over the last couple of years and I've had calls into my office regarding different situations. Whether it was the Canadian millennium scholarship bursary, for example, where the federal government was putting some money into students and the provincial government pretty much swallowed that up. And I guess they spit it out but they spit it out in the proportion that the student would have got anyway just from the original loan.

And so you know, as I say, there's some real concern when the provincial government is going to take this over. And we've been hearing back from a number of groups regarding that.

And it's interesting that the government, when you start talking about student loans and post-secondary education . . . and I think back and I've heard different times as we've debated issues in the House and asked the government questions during question period.

A couple of the questions were regarding the huge increases that students are going to be facing in the next year or two at the different universities. I believe it's 17 per cent in Saskatoon and 9 per cent — I may have those backwards — in the University of Regina. No, 15 per cent increase in the university of Saskatoon — Saskatchewan and 9 per cent.

And listening to the Minister of Post-Secondary Education get up and go on his little minute — I guess is the only time — the amount, the amount that he's allowed in question period, to slam back at ourselves for, you know, our policies during the last provincial election.

But I do want to make mention to the minister, and also any Liberal members that may be sitting on the opposite side, that they had some pretty extravagant promises also in the last provincial election that they have fell far short of — far short of.

I just remember, as a matter of fact . . . and one of the issues that I found very, very interesting was in the last provincial election — now I could stand to be corrected here — but I believe the NDP were promising the first year's tuition free. I believe that's what the promise was. It was pretty close to that — first year's tuition free. And it was the Minister for Post-Secondary Education calls from his seat, yes that was a big hit. Well it was a big hit in rural Saskatchewan I'll say, where they lost pretty much every seat that they held.

But it was really interesting as we travelled during that campaign and that, that promise came out and that's all that was, was a promise — first year tuition free. And to go from door to door and from farm to farm — and that's right at about

the time that there was a bit of a farm crisis going on — and people, to the person said, do you believe those guys? And nobody did obviously, that's why they lost every rural seat in Saskatchewan.

But it was really interesting. And I hear the minister blast on about our platform, but then when you look at what they offered, a free year of tuition, and haven't even come close. I mean this Act doesn't even address it. I mean yes, they're taking over the responsibility of student loans, but I don't see anywhere in here that I could get a free year's tuition.

And you should have heard some of the people. And actually, you know, it was interesting going from farm site to farm site during the campaign saying, will that affect me if I am about to lose my farm, can I go to university for a year free of charge? And I said well as far as I guess the NDP government is concerned, yes, that's what you can do. And they still didn't vote for them, that's right. I believe the NDP . . . or that was the NDP promise. That was the NDP promise.

Now let's revisit. I believe the Liberal promise — now I'm just trying to remember, I've asked a couple of people — but I believe the Liberal promise in the last provincial election regarding post-secondary education was a thousand dollars; okay, here's a thousand dollars a year to go to university from the Liberal government, if they were to form government.

Now I would like to know . . . We've heard all the influence that the Minister of Education and the Minister of Municipal Affairs have had on this coalition government. They've had a lot of influence on this coalition government. You know, you've got the government that promised a free year's university and you've got the coalition partner that promised a thousand dollars, and what have we got? The government taking over the administration of the loan program and nothing about their promises.

So when you hear the members opposite, the government — whether it's the coalition members or the NDP members — talking about the things that they would have done during the election and now you listen to what they can do once they get into power or have been in power, you think that it was two different people speaking is what it sounded like, completely different.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, to go from . . . I guess if I was in grade 12 again and I was going through that last provincial election, just a few years back, when I was in grade 12, I would be looking at a free year's university. But now, now I'm looking at . . . Some people are questioning that it would be a few years back. Quite a few years back. It's relative.

But I think that if I was looking at going to university and at one point thinking I was going to get my tuition free and now realizing that the tuition is going up 15 per cent at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), that is quite a slap in the face. To go from tuition that would have been free up to a 15 per cent increase really, really makes a person wonder.

I believe right now that in this province, when you look at some of the numbers that have been released recently with the loss of jobs in this province over the last year, it is really astounding

and astonishing that we could lose that many jobs in the province in one year. And I know the government talks about the agriculture sector. But a lot of the jobs that we're losing are jobs that people coming out of post-secondary education are going to need to help repay back their student loans.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's just another slap in the face when, if I was in university right now and I'd be looking at the job market in Saskatchewan and reading not our statistics, not any provincial body statistics, but StatsCanada statistics showing the drop of jobs in this province, I tell you, I'd be very, very, very concerned and I would really question where I'm going to set down my roots coming out of university.

I know I've accumulated student loans through the four or five or six years that I attended university. And I know certainly, that pretty much every student that goes through university that is building up and increasing their loans to finish school, are looking at some day these are going to have to be paid back.

But when you look in the province of Saskatchewan and you see that, I believe it's 21,000 jobs last year were lost, you've got to be thinking, are they looking in Saskatchewan to repay their student loans? I don't think so. They're going to be looking out of province. And you know, that's the opposite of what we need to have happen.

We need to employ every student that comes out of our universities in this province, as well as bring a lot of students into the province that have been educated somewhere else, where their education has been subsidized by some other province coming into our province as opposed to subsidizing education for our residents and then have them move out.

It's a backwards cycle that we're in, Mr. Speaker, and if it's not turned around in the near future, we're going to be dire straits. And I think nine and a half or ten years of NDP government has put us in those straits, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to have to turn that around.

So the student loan amendment Act and student assistance amendment Act certainly, although it's more of just perhaps an administration, it just brings back a lot of memories of what promises that have been completely broken and it brings back a lot of concern of the direction that this government is going, which is the wrong direction to help employ the students after they get their student loans.

So due to those concerns and more feedback that we're hearing all the time, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we would adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

(15:00)

Bill No. 20

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I have the opportunity to speak to a Bill that really in my estimation is quite important and substantive in some ways, even though it's only an amendment to a piece of legislation that was brought in last year. These amendments apply to The Land Surveys Act, 2000, which was passed by this House just last session, and it recognizes the modernization of the survey system in this province.

The modernization of course, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, was coordinated with the revised and computerized and vastly expensive land titles system. Now these amendments to The Land Surveys Act were brought in after consultations with legal surveyors in this province and the legal community, the lawyers that act on behalf of a lot of the property transactions.

I noticed with some interest that both professions identified certain changes that would improve the clarity of this particular piece of legislation brought to the House last year, and its application and also the operation of the legislation. And they requested amendments and those amendments have been included.

The interesting fact about that, Mr. Speaker, is that this Act isn't even a full year old and we've already had to bring amendments in after we talked to the groups that were interested. It begs the question I suppose, who did the government consult before they brought the Act in. It's apparent that some of the changes that were necessitated by that piece of legislation were quickly brought to the attention of the government by the land survey groups and the legal community.

This Bill is really more of a housekeeping measure than anything. It's, for example, clarifying what the search of survey records will entail and it revises the sections that pertain to monuments. Now monuments are, in the vernacular of the surveying world, devices, objects, or landmarks that reference a certain parcel of land.

I'm rather happy to see that this kind of Act has come into place and that the whole system will be modernized and updated.

And I'm happy for one specific reason, Mr. Speaker.

Just over a year ago I had a constituent call my office in which he expressed considerable concern with a situation that had arisen between himself and a neighbour and a company that was doing some oil exploration work in his, in his area. And what had happened is the oil company wanted to come in and drill a hole. When they found it successful, they needed an access road. And to put an access road in they wanted to survey the particular route.

When the survey was done — at the expense of the oil company I might add — when the survey was done, it was found that the current survey was quite a bit different from the results of the original survey in that particular area.

Now as you know, Mr. Speaker, this province was surveyed quite some time ago with what was considered to be modern equipment at that time, but it is not modern in any comparison to what we have available today. The new technology that

surveyors are using for these types of surveys are much more precise, much more exacting and produce some different results in some places.

What it, what it provided in this particular situation, Mr. Speaker, is virtually a dispute between two adjacent landowners because the new survey indicated that the old surveyor, the old survey mark was out of whack quite a bit. And there was land that had been farmed by one individual but actually, legally, must have belonged to the other. And now we had an oil company that wanted access there and needed to know exactly where they could put their road.

You can appreciate the concern that this would engender in a situation like that. And the potential for these kinds of conflicts could be quite enlarged around the province.

Fortunately having checked this out, most of the original surveys done by surveyors more than a hundred years ago were very accurate. In most instances over a distance of 1 mile, a survey marker has been out, as a rule, no more than about a foot. And I got that information from a gentleman who works with the Sask geometrics department here in Regina.

But the fact is in rural situations, you know an accurate survey would make the difference between disputes concerning fence lines, where you're going to dump your rocks after you've picked them, who's going to have access, where you can put gates, and who's farming whose land. So the practicality of this particular piece of legislation, updating the survey Act, is obvious I'm sure.

We're encouraged to see this particular modernization of an essential government service and we believe that in this particular case it was overdue. Now as you are probably aware, Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation was necessitated by the modernization of The Land Titles Act as well. And with the computerization and the changes that were happening in the land titles provisions of the Act, this survey had, this survey material had to be upgraded as well. This particular land surveys amendment was necessary to complement The Land Titles Act.

As has been mentioned in this House many times in the last several weeks, because of the controversy concerning the ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) issue, Saskatchewan was virtually the last province in the country to computerize its land titles and land surveys system.

And as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, we believe seriously that the Government of Saskatchewan in setting up their new Crown corporation to look after land titles really attempted to reinvent the wheel unnecessarily, that computerized systems were available in other jurisdictions across the country, and that any mistakes or errors that had been found to apply to computerized systems in other provinces could have been rectified.

Those changes could have been made in a similar system, based on the changes in new technology, could've been introduced here without going through the whole process of coming up with our own specialized and unique system. As it turns out, it was a very costly system.

When the idea of a computerized land titles Crown corporation was introduced in this House, the justification for that was solid but the cost estimates weren't. The cost I think at the time of the introduction of that particular piece of legislation was, at the outside, \$20 million. And as you know from the debate that's happened in this House over the last several weeks, the amount of that particular incorporation of a Crown corporation for land surveys and land titles has now reached \$60 million, and that's after an \$11 million loss by the corporation last year.

So while there is a legitimacy to the idea of having a computerized, modern system in this province, we think that it proved to be far too costly. In fact there was no clear, cost-benefit analysis done, or nobody would've allowed this project to run to a \$60 million tab, which is being picked up by the taxpayers of this province.

Nowhere in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, do we see any mention of cutting costs either. In fact as is the case with most things, when government gets involved with technology, it usually ends up costing the taxpayers a whole lot more than was originally planned. And the ISC losses and cost overruns that I just alluded to a few moments ago, are perfect proof of that particular assertion.

Even more troubling, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the cost overruns and the controversy that ISC has engendered, is the events surrounding a leaked memo that had been written by the previous Economic Development minister, Janice MacKinnon. If you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, in that memo, the minister expressed her concerns regarding ISC's mandate, regarding its business plans and the potential for unfair competition with the private sector.

And what it really amounts to is that the government has just given outside companies even more reason not to consider investing in this province. When you have a Crown corporation with the full authority and all the reserves of the provincial government behind it, it doesn't provide much incentive for other companies and other smaller operators to come here in any attempt to compete for that particular business.

And we've heard of that type of situation developing repeatedly throughout this session, where Crown corporations have been used to expand into the sectors where really small businesses legitimately ought to work and thrive in this province.

So this Bill only serves to enhance the government's family of Crown corporations. It does not look at ways to encourage private sector growth.

And we also know that the former Economic Development minister had very serious concerns about ISC's plans to sell its LAND (Land Titles Automated Network Development Project) system. Now LAND is an acronym that is used by the ISC people to describe their land titles program.

The former minister said that she felt that it was far too costly to develop to begin with, but worse than that, the chances of selling it effectively to any other jurisdiction were virtually nil, and would not allow for the corporation to recover, to recoup its investment costs, let alone its losses.

So at this point, Mr. Speaker, we know that the former minister's warning has so far proven accurate.

And to date, we have one contract on behalf of a \$60 million-plus Crown corporation worth a mere \$150,000 which comes from the Ukraine in Eastern Europe.

That reminds us of many other ill-advised Crown ventures into the IT (information technology) industry, like NST (NST Network Services of Chicago) Cable; Clickabid, the failed auction house, the e-mail auction house — the on-line auction house, I'm sorry; IQ&A, the ag dealer dot-com fiasco; not to mention other big money losers, like Channel Lake and SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) and a few others.

So we can't help but wonder how much the . . . we can't help but wonder how much the head of this new Crown corporation spent in travel last year. You know, you've got to travel all around the world to try and sell a system that apparently no one else wants. The \$150,000 contract from the Ukraine may barely be enough to cover the travel expenses that the head of this ISC Crown corporation spent.

We know that the Crown travel expenditures totalled nearly \$2 million in three years, and we're wondering how much that cost is piling up now, Mr. Speaker.

The government calls that kind of expenditure just the cost of doing business. Well efficient and effective businessmen know that you have to keep your costs in line, and you have to be very wary about what you spend without the promise of very real returns. And so far we've found that the returns are only a small percentage of the travel expenses, let alone the original investment costs.

The opposition believes that with today's technology a lot of the cost of doing business that the government has said is necessary could have been handled by e-mail, by fax, by phone, by video conference, or many other forms of technology that are available.

So, Mr. Speaker, while this Bill will certainly move to clarify and streamline some of the operations surrounding the new Land Surveys Act, it does not address the bigger issues such as the lack of planning and poor spending habits of this particular government. Nor does it address the issue of this government's unfair competition with private enterprise.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I will move that this particular Bill move to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 19

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to

speak to Bill No. 19, The Land Titles Amendment Act.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is trailing every other province in Canada in computerizing its land title's system. But trailing the nation is not new for Saskatchewan under this NDP administration. Now we trail the nation in population growth, job growth, and water quality. About the only thing we don't trail the nation in is hospital waiting lists.

Why did this have to take so long and cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan so much money? User groups affected by the new system will no doubt be pleased once the system is finally up and running.

(15:15)

Realtors, surveyors, lawyers have had to wait for extended periods of time for land titles documents to be completed with waiting periods of up to four weeks — with average waiting periods of about two weeks when in BC (British Columbia), Alberta, and Ontario the waiting periods are one day.

Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, these amendments will reduce waiting times for those who depend on land titles transactions for their livelihood and those who are buying and selling their own property.

Mr. Speaker, one of our major concerns on this side of the House is the government's move last year to create another Crown corporation, Information Services Corporation. At that time it was estimated that ISC would cost 40 to \$50 million. We now know, Mr. Speaker, that the newest Crown corporation lost \$11 million last year, while expected spending has increased to 60 million for the Land Titles Automated Network Development Project, or LAND.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we've also learned that the former Economic Development minister had serious concerns about ISC's plans to sell its land system to other countries through the Internet. That we know of, they'd only managed to secure one contract worth \$150,000 from the Ukraine.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have an article before me from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* dated Tuesday, May 1, 2001. And I quote from the article, Mr. Speaker:

A money-losing Crown corporation set up to computerize Saskatchewan's land titles system and sell the technology to the world has strayed beyond its mandate and may jeopardize private-sector and government investment in the information technology (IT) sector, says a memorandum written by MLA Janice MacKinnon, then minister of economic development and a member of the Crown Investments Corp.'s board.

The article goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

In an interview, MacKinnon said she had two main concerns when she wrote the memo. "First of all, the corporation needed a business plan that showed how it would become profitable."

Her other concern dealt with how the entry of ISC into the

IT sector would affect private (companies).

She says:

“There is a role for Crown agencies. But there also has to be a role for the private sector to grow, particularly in information (sector), because it’s so important to the future of (our) province.”

This brings us to a host of other foolish Crown ventures such as NST, Channel Lake, SPUDCO, Clickabid, and IQ&A but it also speaks to the issue of due diligence, Mr. Speaker.

Did the officials of ISC look at just how marketable their system would be in other jurisdictions? Land title systems, Mr. Speaker, differ from one country to another, one jurisdiction to another, one state, one province to another. Didn’t someone look into this? Since every other province in the country has already developed a system of this type, why, Mr. Speaker, did this government have to reinvent the wheel?

Unfortunately nowhere in this Bill do we see any mention of due diligence being followed. In fact, as with most things, when this government decides to get involved, it usually ends up costing the taxpayers a lot more than originally planned.

Even more troubling, Mr. Speaker, are the former Economic Development minister’s concerns regarding ISC’s mandate, business plans, and potential for unfair competition with the private sector.

We’ve also heard, Mr. Speaker, that the security of property titles may be at risk by exposure to potential computer hackers. We ask, Mr. Speaker, just how secure is this system used by ISC? Can this Bill really guarantee confidentiality?

We also have concerns on this side of the floor, Mr. Speaker, surrounding the money spent to date. We are wondering how something like this could go so much over budget. What about the software — will it need to be updated? And if so, when? How much will that cost, Mr. Speaker?

Then there’s the labour issue. We know that countless hours have been spent transferring the manual system over to computer, and that more hours have yet to be budgeted for. Has this been part of the reason that costs for this program have skyrocketed? Have the many man-hours even been factored into the cost? This Bill does not certainly look at this matter.

Mr. Speaker, overall while we’re encouraged by the fact that the consultation took place and that recommendations were put in place following consultation, there are still some issues that need to be addressed in this Bill, such as government’s lack of planning, and poor spending habits.

Was the labour issue considered in the . . . included in the cost overruns on this project or not? And many other issues that we’re still receiving feedback from, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the floor.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 9

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to enter the debate on Bill No. 9, the amendment to The Power Corporation Act, June 13, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important Act that this session of the legislature is considering. And it’s interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that the Act was accompanied by a government press release as many major issues, major pieces of legislation are.

Often, Mr. Speaker, as you know, the government will table significant . . . when they’re tabling significant legislation that will fundamentally change the province, they will also put out a press release or maybe hold a press conference and tell the people of the province about the details of this Bill. To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge the government did not do it. They didn’t do it in the case of Bill 9 and so you have to have a couple of questions as a result of that.

The first question is . . . well, maybe it’s an inconsequential Act. Maybe it just deals with minor issues that wouldn’t warrant a government press release or a press conference to talk about the details of it. But the fact of the matter is that it is a very consequential piece of legislation. It’s very important, Mr. Speaker, and could fundamentally change the electrical industry of this province forever.

So then the only conclusion you can draw as to why the government wouldn’t accompany this particular . . . the introduction of this Bill with a press release is that maybe they didn’t want a lot of people to know about Bill 9. Maybe they didn’t want the residents of the province to know too much about this amendment to The Power Corporation Act.

And if that’s the case, Mr. Speaker, then you’ll have to pardon Saskatchewan people for asking why? Why wouldn’t the government want people to know about this Act?

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that this Act clearly, clearly paves the way for the deregulation of our electric industry in the province of Saskatchewan. That’s what this Act is all about. Day after day when we’ve raised issues of energy and electricity in this legislature, government ministers have stood up and decried deregulation. They have criticized what has happened in other jurisdictions — namely, deregulation.

And they were doing it, Mr. Speaker, ironically enough at the very, very same time that this Bill No. 9, this deregulation of the electrical industry Act, was being introduced into the legislature. They continue to do it as this Bill was debated in adjourned debates, Mr. Speaker.

Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 9 paves the way for the deregulation of the electrical industry in Saskatchewan.

Now it's true that I think the Bill was precipitated by the announcement last year by the then minister for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) that the city of Swift Current and the city of Saskatoon — who are the two cities in our province that had the foresight and the vision not to sell out their electrical utility to the Crown, to SaskPower — that this government would allow those cities to in fact purchase their power from someone other than SaskPower.

The minister of SaskPower last session stood in the legislature and announced that the monopoly restrictions on whom Swift Current and Saskatoon could buy electricity from would be lifted, and in fact that they could buy power from whomever they chose.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in order to accommodate that, the government of course had to make it possible for other potential suppliers of electricity to get their electricity to the cities of Swift Current and Saskatoon in the event that they chose another supplier other than SaskPower. And so we see that clearly that's part of the reason for Bill No. 9.

But it goes much further, Mr. Speaker. People should understand that it goes much further. Because in addition to providing the mechanism for the cities of Swift Current and Saskatoon to purchase their power and then transmit that power from sources other than SaskPower, it also paves the way for the deregulation of the electrical industry.

And it begs the question: why has the government been so silent about it? Why on one hand have they criticized ad nauseam the deregulation approaches of other jurisdictions, like the province of Alberta? Why have they done that when they have introduced a Bill to deregulate, when they have introduced a Bill to deregulate the electrical industry?

Anybody who has followed the news . . . and the member for Regina South reads the newspapers. He follows the news very closely; he's very aware, he's very aware of current events. He will know that the argument, the discussion they're having in Alberta with what went wrong there is framed around not the structure of the company that's delivering the electricity or the gas, but the structure of the industry, i.e., that it is deregulated, that it is a deregulated industry. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what this Bill will do here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So the government introduced this Bill, Bill No. 9, into the legislature knowing that it paves the way for deregulation. They didn't issue a press release. Not a word about it to anybody. I think it would behoove this government to stand up and explain, explain how this deregulation Bill avoids the pitfalls of deregulation in other jurisdictions.

And the member for Regina South says he will enter the debate, and I look forward to that. And we look forward to asking these questions in committee, Mr. Speaker. And those will be the questions that we have to ask of this government.

If deregulation was the problem — and everybody seems to agree that it is; the manner in which the electrical industry was deregulated in Alberta was the problem that precipitated the crisis that they've just now seemingly come through — then we need to ask very important questions about Bill No. 9 because it

will indeed deregulate the industry in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at section 8.2 of this Bill, that particular section will allow third parties or companies to transmit electrical energy over the transmission lines of SaskPower. And there you have it, Mr. Speaker. I mean, right there in a nutshell is a clear indication that this government is readying the province for the deregulation of the electrical industry.

In section 9.1, Mr. Speaker, they introduce an amendment into section 9.1 that also clearly points the way to deregulation. So does section 38.2. It's all through the Act, Mr. Speaker. It's all through the Act.

And we have not heard word one of assurance from this government that their deregulation of the electrical industry will indeed avoid the pitfalls, of the experience of Albertans, and indeed other jurisdictions such as California that are still in the news today, Mr. Speaker.

So we will be looking for the answers to those questions in committee. And more to the point, we will be looking for answers from the government as to why — as to why — they didn't tell anybody about this Bill to deregulate the electrical industry. It's passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that they wouldn't issue their normal press release and have a big press conference about a very weighty piece of legislation that will fundamentally change the electrical industry in the province.

But maybe it's not surprising after all, Mr. Speaker, because this is the government that has stood up on countless occasions and indicated their unequivocal opposition to any privatization at the same time that they were in the backrooms planning the sell-off of 20 to 30 per cent of SaskTel; when they were in the backroom of completing the privatization of the former SaskComp; the privatization of Husky Upgrader shares; the privatization of Cameco shares. All along, Mr. Speaker, standing in this legislature and in town halls across the province saying they opposed privatization, and in the backrooms cutting deals and selling the assets of the people of the province.

Is that what this Bill is all about, Mr. Speaker? That's a question that we're going to have because they've also decried deregulation in any form, as they've stood up in this House. And they've met with people across the province and quietly, without any fanfare, without the normal attendant press releases and media events, they introduced Bill No. 9 into the legislature of this session, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 9 is all about deregulation.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with those remarks, I would be happy to move the adjournment of debates on this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:30)

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion of the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation that Bill No. 9, The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2001, be now read a second time.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

An Hon. Member: — He moved adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — I'll have to retract that. I'll have to ask the members to just go back for a moment. I interpreted the member's remarks — and I ask for his intention — was to move into Committee of the Whole. Was that the member's intention?

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I think, if you check the record, you'll note that I did move adjournment of debates and that was my intent, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, we're in a little bit of a dilemma here. We have to make a decision really.

I would ask leave of the Assembly to allow the member to restate his intention. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for leave to move adjournment of debate on Bill No. 9.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Subvote (SS01)

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, it's my pleasure, on behalf of the Minister of Social Services, until he's able to return to the committee, to speak on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to introduce the officials for the members of the committee, Mr. Chair. To my immediate left is deputy minister, Bonnie Durnford, and to her left is acting assistant deputy minister, Shelley Hoover.

To my right, acting assistant deputy minister, Bob Wihlidal. And immediately behind me is Darcy Smycniuk, acting executive director of financial management.

We have several officials who are seated behind the bar, Mr. Chair, and I'll just introduce them. Executive director of income support is Phil Walsh; Marilyn Hedlund, associate director of income support; Richard Hazel, executive director family and youth; Dorothea Warren, associate director family and youth; Brenda Dougherty, assistant director child daycare; and Larry Moffatt, executive director of community living.

And I look forward to the questions of the hon. members, and we'll do our best to respond to them. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, first of all, before we get into full debate, I just want a clarification. Is the minister going to be joining us shortly? I'm not exactly sure how far or which way to proceed on some of the questions. Not taking anything away from the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and his abilities to fill in. But I think some of the discussion is going to centre around some important issues like the Child Advocate report. And I would like to understand from the committee how soon the minister might be able to join us so that we're not leaving the minister out of the debate. And maybe the Minister of Post-Secondary Education could just indicate where we're at in that regard and how we should proceed at this time.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the minister I would expect will be here by about 4 o'clock, but the position of the government is consistent regardless of who the minister is and we'll welcome the hon. member's questions, and in the spirit of responsibility to the people of Saskatchewan, we'll do the best to provide the answers we can.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister. And we'll take your word for that as the member from Regina South said, just fire away; it doesn't really matter who's sitting in the minister's chair because it's government policy. So we'll accept that fact. And if the minister takes offence to the fact that he may have wanted to be involved in some of the debate, well that's fine. Maybe on a later date we can get into it.

But, Mr. Minister, I'd like to raise a few questions about the most recent news release. And I believe this news release in regards to consultation on child welfare came about as a result of the report of the Children's Advocate — the most recent report — and a number of the issues, a number of the concerns that were raised at that time.

And it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, as I was indicating in my responses earlier to the Assembly, that the care of children is certainly important. And how we care for our children is a strong indication in our society as to the value we place on a child's life.

And a number of issues, a number of concerns were raised by the Child Advocate in regards to the care of children, certainly the care of children that happen to be entrusted to the care of child and family services.

And I think what the minister was indicating, that the study that he is asking to be undertaken is now a response to the report of the Child Advocate and the fact that he is now asking input from families, community groups, First Nations people, Métis people, front-line workers, and other stakeholders, to explore whether or not changes may be required to the province's child welfare system.

I think, if I'm not mistaken, I understood the minister wants to hear the role of the family, role of these different groups, and working with the department in providing care and providing

services to children. And I appreciate that; I applaud the minister for that.

Because, Mr. Minister, as part of the group, or one of the members on this committee, that's trying to address the problem of children in the sex trade in the province of Saskatchewan and having listened to a number of presenters, it was interesting, Mr. Minister, to hear presenters talking about some of the family backgrounds, some of the social situations these young ladies . . . mostly were ladies that we had come to speak to our committee were involved in.

And one of the issues that really came to the forefront on a number of occasions was the movement from one . . . from, first of all, the family home setting into a foster care setting, and then an ongoing movement from one family to the next and the feeling of instability and the fact that there was really no value on their lives, Mr. Minister.

And so I think it's certainly important that we take the time to not only listen to the stakeholders, but maybe we need to take a bit of time as well to listen to the children that are directly affected so we get a sense of where they're coming from. And I believe the Child Advocate brings that point to the forefront in her report, about the fact that the concern that children have being moved from one caregiver to the next.

And I'm just trying to find it here. I had it underlined here a moment ago, but I'll just go from memory about the concerns that were raised by a family member about a child that had been taken from their home, was placed in the care of a foster home, and then without really notifying the family or the child, being moved to another foster care setting. And the family contacting the Child Advocate indicating that really had upset their child in regards to the movement from one family to the other.

So, Mr. Minister, having said that I'd like to get a better, a more broad understanding, of what this study is going to do; what you hope to accomplish by the . . . or the government hopes to accomplish through the study; and whether or not it will make a difference at the end of the day. I realize we're going to have to take the time to study, to get some ideas together, put our heads around the recommendations that may come out of the study and then begin to implement them.

But, Mr. Minister, maybe you could give us an idea of what the department is really hoping to accomplish in light of the issues that have been brought forward by the Child Advocate, and now the study that is being commissioned.

And as well, Mr. Minister, could you give us an idea of what timelines the department is looking at in regards to the study and when it hopes to receive a report regarding this most recently announced study?

(15:45)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question and, first of all, too would want to acknowledge the importance of the hon. member's involvement on the committee of the Legislative Assembly that is addressing the abhorrent phenomenon of children involved in the sex trade in Saskatchewan. And I would want to in a very . . . to personally

commend the member and the other members of that committee in that important work and to say that I will personally look forward to the final report of that committee.

Regarding the consultations that the hon. member raises in his question here today and having to do with the minister's announcement earlier this day, which was held at Ranch Ehrlo, I think it's fair to say, Mr. Chair, that there are two objectives in the announcement. One is, as the hon. member has indicated in his question, to respond to the advocate's report of last year; and then, secondly, to take the . . . to look at the bigger picture, the broader look at children services.

On the matter of involvement of youth and the concerns that were raised by the Children's Advocate, Mr. Chair, and the importance of young people having voice in their own well-being and their own care, I would point out that the Department of Social Services has developed the youth and care network, effective May of 2000, and has also been working hard to improve both the policy and the practice around case planning for individual children, specifically with the objective of involving children in that planning process.

It's fair to say that the consultations to date have been largely internal. That's not to say they're not important, because certainly review of policy very legitimately involves those who are the professionals charged with the carrying out of case decisions in the care of children consultations, so to this date have largely involved the staff of the department, but also have involved the Child Welfare League of America.

What the minister was announcing then earlier today was a broader consultation, which will specifically invite input from some important sectors of our province. We will want to have input from Métis people, from First Nations, as well as from health districts, from school districts, and from police. Those who are directly involved, and will have their own important perspectives in terms of guiding the shaping of policy and practice for the department in the care of children, and the planning of their cases.

That is not to rule out the opportunity for input from others who will have a vested interest as well. So it's not intended to be purely limited to them, but it is also fair to say that the process is intended to be an ongoing process, and that I think probably three to five years is seen to be the time over which there will be an ongoing process of review, and within that, revision of policy and practice as appropriate.

And therefore it's difficult to respond to your final question . . . the hon. member's final question, Mr. Chair, regarding the timeline. It's seen as a process that by its nature, doesn't have a definitive conclusion to it, but an ongoing process of review of the policy and practice in the best interests of children.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, so as I understand from your final comment then, there isn't a specific timeline wherein you're going to ask these community groups to do their consultations and then do a . . . make a report. If I would understand from your response, it's not necessary to report to the legislature, but an ongoing consultation and report to the department.

Is that what you're saying in regards to a specific time period to give a report in regards to the consultations that you're beginning within your department regarding the child welfare programs?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Let me first of all thank my colleague for subbing in for me. And just point out to the opposition that they did ask last year for an opportunity to have both the Minister of Social Services and the Minister for Post-Secondary Education in estimates at the same time, and now they've had it.

Mr. Chairman, the question of consultation, just to make it clear, we've had our own debate internally about whether what we're doing is a consultation or are we redesigning.

And one day we say, no, we're doing a child welfare redesign. We know what the principles are, we know where we want to go, we know what we want to do. Or is it a consultation to get further input from the community as to where it is that we think we need to go, but touching base with other service providers, groups, stakeholders in the community.

And at the end of the day, and I might say it was at the end of yesterday, we took the point of view that we should not say that this is a redesign and that this is where we're going to so but that we should opt for additional input from the community.

So we don't see this as a process where someone independent or someone will write a report and come back and say here's the result of all the discussions that we've had; but instead that we will do the consultation, that we will seek confirmation that the principles that we've outlined are the right principles, that the values that we think should underlie this process are the right values and that, at the end of the day, that those are right and that those then logically lead us to make enhancement and improvements in programs. And that's the direction that we'll be going.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, just a quick follow-up and then a couple of my colleagues need to get some questions in before they have some other commitments.

But having said that, Mr. Minister, I guess the quick follow-up I would do right now and then we'll get into a little more discussion on it later, is if you're talking about listening to groups and redesigning where you're going, I would just suggest that I hope that it really means that you're going to seek some direction and guidance.

And rather than going to the groups and saying this is where we hope to go, can you help us get there or this is what we want from you so we can achieve our goals, what I'm reading into this is that you actually want to listen to some interested . . . and groups that really would be affected for their input as you try to design a system that really reaches out to meet the needs of the young people and the individuals involved who actually, unfortunately through circumstances beyond their control, need to seek your services.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just invite other members to play some questions and then we'll get to further debate on this issue. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, thank you to my colleague for allowing me to ask a few questions, and welcome to the minister and his officials.

Mr. Minister, I just have one area I'd like to touch on briefly today and that is on the early childhood development. I know that it was announced in the budget that there was going to be \$23 million, I believe, from the federal government over five years into early childhood development. And I see how it has been broken down within your department between Social Services, Education, and Health.

And I know that the government has been putting resources into early childhood development for the last number of years. But within the breakdown of the budget this year, I don't see how much money was spent on that last year. Can you give me an idea of what was spent last year?

(16:00)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chairman, before I provide the answer to the question that was posed by the member for Kelvington-Wadena, I'd like to just revisit again the comments by the member for Moosomin to point out that . . . and to thank the member for Moosomin for not calling me on this. Because last year, when the Children's Advocate presented her report to the Legislative Assembly, I said that I would undertake to provide our response within a year. I believe her report came down in late April and today's response, June 14, that's a little bit more than a year.

And the reason for that is that we did want to take the time to consult very widely with our stakeholders, very importantly with the staff who deliver our services and programs, and to begin the work of fleshing out what a child welfare strategy might look like.

And I might say included in that was very extensive consultations with the Child Welfare League of America. It's on the basis of that work for the last year that we've put forward some principles, some values, a vision as to how we see child welfare redesign taking place.

And it's the result of that efforts that we now want to get input from the community because it has wide-ranging implications for many groups in our society. And we feel we need the comfort of their input and their advice as we move forward and make the changes necessary to what we think is the right way to go, depending on that community input.

Mr. Chair, with respect to the question by the member for Kelvington-Wadena, in terms of early childhood, the dollars that are in the budget this year is I believe some \$2.9 million, specifically for Kids First. And she asked what did the government commit for that last year. Well the answer is zero.

But there are other programs within governments that deal with the question of early childhood development, for example, ECIP (Early Childhood Intervention Program) programs that we supported last year to the extent of \$1.8 million.

There would be . . . I suppose one could take our day care expenditures, which last year was about eighteen and a half

million dollars.

There would be other activities in our teen and young parent programming where some of our staff would be working with teen and young parents and one could say, legitimately, that that's early childhood development work. Oh, you could value that at another million dollars.

There would be involvement of some of our parent aides and our child welfare programs. Some of the work that they would be doing might be akin to early childhood development work or early childhood intervention work. But again I wouldn't be able to put a dollar figure on that.

And that would be in addition to whatever preschool activities and programs might be in place in the education system.

Programming by public health nurses in the health districts to deal with the health needs and sometimes the social needs of young children; post-birth or pre-natal programming; whatever might be going on. And I wouldn't be able to provide you with a figure of that. Hopefully the Minister of Health would be able to do that.

I think suffice to say that Saskatchewan, like all the provinces, we're investing dollars in early childhood development broadly speaking, under that umbrella. But the additional dollars from the federal government enables us to become far more focused on some aspects of early childhood development — in this particular case, fetal alcohol syndrome and the need to provide better supports for families where there are risks to children growing up normally and healthy — that it's enabling us to do that. And we appreciate that. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I do thank the members opposite for their indulgence as I introduce guests that are seated in the Speaker's gallery.

It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, Jeanette Martin, who is a constituent but also a good friend of mine. She's accompanied this afternoon by Pat and Bob Vadus from Connecticut, USA (United States of America). We're very pleased that they would be able to come into the Assembly and view some of the proceedings. And I'd ask all members to join with me in giving them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Subvote (SS01)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And welcome to the minister's guests.

Mr. Minister, I know you said that you spent about \$1.8 million last year. I had an opportunity to visit with the Early Childhood Development Board in Moose Jaw this week, and they talked about the funding that they had last year and I . . . I guess there must have been some funding directly from your department, and I guess that was the \$1.8 million.

They were concerned, of course, about the amount of funding that they will get next year. And I remember the news release from the federal government, jointly with your government, talking about the money that was going to be coming forward this year. So I thought this is probably an opportunity that they weren't aware of, saying hey, there really is going to be some focus on the children that are in need this year.

So when I looked at the budget and I saw 2.889; I don't see the 1.8 that you spent last year and I'm sure that there's going to be . . . this money that came from the federal government is going to be on top of the provincial government money.

So I'm wondering if you can tell me how your budget is flowing out for this department this year.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, part of the budget allocation for early childhood development, (SS10) is the subvote, and it's \$2.889 million, also includes \$370,000 which was . . . I announced that, I think, about a week or so ago.

These were funds that are being sent to ECIP programs across Saskatchewan to help them reduce, if not eliminate, the waiting lists that they have for their programs. And I would think that would also extend to the ECIP program in Moose Jaw. And that would be additional to the funds that are allocated in the budget for ECIP programs under our community living budget which is a separate subvote.

But we felt that it was legitimate to take some of those additional dollars for at-risk children and to use that to eliminate . . . reduce or hopefully eliminate the waiting lists under the ECIP programs. We're confident it'll do that and we're confident that the ECIP programs will be able to continue to provide the very valuable service that they provide for children with developmental delays and disabilities in our community.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, can you tell me how much money you got from the federal government this year for the early childhood development program, from the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — A total figure between our department, Education, and Health is \$10.089 million.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So then you spend \$1.8 million last year. We're spending all of the federal government money that there was transferred through. So then you're not putting the 1.8 in, that you put in last year directly from the provincial budget?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, these federal dollars would be in addition to the funds that we budgeted last year for ECIP expenditures and we will be expending again this year. So total expenditures would be \$10,089,000, but then in addition to that, to carry on with commitments from previous years — whether it's the \$1.8 under ECIP or the eighteen and a half million dollars in child daycare, the funds that we expend in the teen young parent program, for our staff and community supports in those areas. So those expenditures that were in our budget last year will be carried on. This \$10 million is additional dollars on top of what was expended in the previous years.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So where does the \$1.8 million from last year show up in this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — It would show up under the subvote for community living. (SS06). It's not broken down specifically, but if you look at the description, it's assistance to agencies and parents, in program planning for children, adults with mental disabilities.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So then, all right, is it fair to say that groups like the group in Moose Jaw will receive some funding from subvote (SS10) and some from (SS06) because that was where the funding came from last year?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — We'll send it to them in one cheque, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Draude: — So, Mr. Minister, then they are going to be able to get additional funds this year. You said there was 375,000 that was announced recently, but then . . . I think, there's 17 regions I believe is what they told me. Are they all going to be able to divide up some of this money and they can all expect additional funding this year?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Yes. I don't know if all of them can expect it. We went through a process with their provincial board, ECIP Saskatchewan, where we examined the waiting lists in the various regions, where the greatest needs were. I'm not sure that every region necessarily had a waiting list of any import. And some communities may have received more than others. But again, depending on the waiting lists in those areas, subject to a consultation that we did with their provincial board . . . (inaudible) . . . Saskatchewan.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Yates): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Wall: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wall: — Merci, M. le Président. Je vous présentez une groupe des étudiants de l'École Oman. Mr. Chairman, joining us in the east gallery is 48 students from Oman School, Mr. Chairman.

They are grade 5 students; nine of them are in the French

immersion program at l'École Oman School. And they're accompanied today by teachers: Mr. Franz, Mrs. Mann, Mrs. King. And also joining the group are chaperones: Mrs. Wiebe, Mr. Berger, Mrs. Funk, Mrs. Dyck, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Giesbrecht, and a good friend, Pastor Tim Ramage is also with them today.

I think they've already enjoyed a visit to Regina. They've seen many of the attractions, maybe saving the best to last, Mr. Chairman, coming to the legislature. And I want to welcome them here. It's a pleasure to have kids from Oman. It's also the school of my kids, and a great school in the city of Swift Current.

So I just ask all members to join with me in welcoming this group of grade 5 students from Oman School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Social Services

Vote 36

Subvote (SS01)

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, back on May 3, I discussed with you a case in Kelliher, Saskatchewan that a constituent . . . on behalf of a constituent of mine. What I might do is just to . . . I believe this constituent has written to your department on behalf of the problems she is having with her son. And we talked about the program that the mother was made aware of or searched out on her own; it's called Opportunities for Independence in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

At that time you had indicated this, that as far as your information that you had, it was a non-residential program. Well in fact, Mr. Minister, we have information and letters from that program that says it is a residential program and that they do not, to quote from a letter that my constituent received from the people with Opportunities for Independence:

They do not preclude referral from other provinces.

Now the mother wrote to your department on May 3, coincidentally the same day as we discussed this issue in estimates, asking for your help. And on May 25 your department . . . you replied to her indicating that she should contact the acting director of adult care and community living for further discussions and so on, with a treatment and services for her son.

(16:15)

So she did that. And since that time she has again been in contact with my office and feels that nothing is really being done; that her son is falling through the cracks. In her letter, Mr. Minister, to your department, she states:

That it seems everyone is waiting for the next person, and in the process, they are just waiting for my son's problems to expand.

And in fact, Mr. Minister, it saddens me to report, but her son's problems have expanded. He is presently . . . and he was at that time when we discussed this issue, he was in a special care home in Yorkton with an ankle bracelet. He is in the court system.

I am told that he was working at the Saskatchewan Abilities Council in Yorkton, and I believe very recently he inappropriately touched a female co-worker, and was charged for that action and will be in the courts, I believe it is later on in July here.

The mother is very, very concerned that her son, who is 20 years old now, and according to the information she's provided me with, and also to you in her letter, with an IQ (intelligence quotient) that is, I believe, in the 57 to 60 range. That there really, according to the information that she's been able to get from your department, there really . . . Saskatchewan doesn't have a program for her son that you referred to community living program.

In the estimates, the last time we discussed this in estimates I believe you mentioned and I was made aware of a pilot program that's in operation here in Regina. And the mother talked to Mr. Jeff Reddekopp about the possibility of her son getting into his program, and she was told that there's absolutely . . . there's no space for him.

And the mother feels that the only ray of hope for her son is this Opportunities for Independence in Winnipeg. And it is, as I said, it is a . . . they do have a residential component in their program. And one of the problems in her mind, and I think in mine, is that there is no funding. She's been told there is no funding for her son to get into the program in Winnipeg.

And I guess my question to you, Mr. Minister, is that if there is . . . if this service isn't available for this individual in the province, will you consider funding that individual so that he may be placed in this program in Winnipeg?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I would like to say to the member that I would encourage the mother of the boy to continue to work with the department to see if the programming response that's there now might meet his needs. Having said that, if in the opinion of the department the programming does not meet the young man's needs, we could look at extending the Regina pilot project to the Yorkton area so that he might be served by that program.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, so what you're saying then is that if the current programs that your department has aren't sufficient to deal with this individual, you will make a commitment to the mother that the pilot program that is presently operating here in Regina will be . . . it'll start one in Yorkton. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Yes, we'll find a way of meeting that young man's needs, Mr. Chair. We're very concerned about the situation. We're not entirely convinced that the regular work of the department might not meet the young man's needs. My understanding is that he is in a home where he is being cared for, in Yorkton; that we can and do provide programming assistance. But if that doesn't meet his needs,

then yes, we will look to extend services from elsewhere to meet his needs.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you for that commitment, Mr. Minister. I would just advise you of some of the comments that the mother has made to myself in the form of a letter. In your letter you had advised her to contact Mr. Wayne Phaneuf. I'm not sure if that individual is in Yorkton, acting director of adult care — it's in Yorkton? Yes, I see by her letter, yes, he is in Yorkton. And she talked to him, to Mr. Phaneuf:

And he advised me that his department . . .

This is the letter I'm quoting that she sent me:

. . . that his department can do nothing about the situation; the only thing they do cover is the residence of her son.

In other words, basically I am told that rather than having her . . . rather than her son being in jail, he's in this special care home with an ankle bracelet. And as I had indicated earlier, was participating in activities at the Yorkton special facility for people that . . . a facility that deal with people with his problems, and where he reoffended, I guess.

And she feels that your department is looking after his residence and his daily needs but nothing to do . . . you're not treating his problem that deals with inappropriate sexual behaviour. And to date, she hasn't been given any indication that there is anything within your department other than this program here. And her greatest fear, Mr. Minister, is that after her son goes through the court system, the justice system, that he'll end up in jail. And this is certainly not an appropriate place for him.

And so will you have committed then that there will be something for him in the near future then? Because she feels very strongly. She's done a lot of work, spent a lot of time on the telephone talking with the folks in Winnipeg. And they have written her, and from the letters that she's provided me with copies of, they feel that — they obviously require more information and so on — but they feel that they may be able to help her son.

So what you have said here today is that you will provide those services to her in Yorkton then . . . or to her son in Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, we agree with the member that it's far better that we ensure that the treatment support is there to help this young man, as opposed to paying for his incarceration at a later date. So we will undertake to ensure that the services that he requires will be provided to him.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening to the Minister of Social Services and to his officials.

Mr. Minister, I would like to just bring to your attention some concerns that social workers have presented to me surrounding limited term positions. What I'm hearing from them is that they're . . . one thing is that they're really overworked, but they're wondering why the limited term positions are the positions that they can get. And they say this is not good, because brand new intake workers don't know the system when

they come in. The worker has to relearn the system again, and basically sometimes workers are in for five years before they get orientation training.

So I guess part of the question I have for you is, why does the department insist on limited term positions for intake workers?

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I wanted to take some time to review what in fact has been taking place.

The Department of Social Services, indeed I think the Government of Saskatchewan, has taken the position that there should always be a rigorous process within the various departments so that where positions are being filled on a temporary basis, on what's called a non-permanent basis, that we review that and look for ways to convert those full-time equivalents which are being filled on a temporary or non-permanent basis, to make them permanent full-time equivalents. We've been I think fairly aggressive about that since 1991 . . . so as one of the complaints about the previous government about allowing too many positions to become non-permanent full-time equivalents.

Last year in the budget, I believe in Social Services, there was an increase in 200 full-time equivalents, approximately 200 full-time equivalents, roughly about 10 per cent of the staff. Because we did have people on staff. They were working, but they weren't there on a permanent basis, and we changed that to a permanent position.

I'm interested to hear the member's questions, because other questions that have come from the opposition side have tended to criticize us for taking on staff or turning non-permanent positions into permanent full-time equivalents.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, to me today it makes no difference about arguments between political parties and what should be done. To me what's important is that there is limited term positions that social workers are told that are available to them. They are saying that when they accept a position, start in a position, and try to get to work, for one thing, they need to have some training.

They are saying that oftentimes — just aside from the training issue — they're saying that they are turned over too frequently and then another hiring is done for another person to come into that same position. Now they're wondering why there is not more continuity with giving them full permanent jobs rather than just these term positions.

And the other concern that they wanted me to relay to you, Mr. Minister, is that they're told that they will be able to access training so that when they get on the job, they're basically ready to go, and they understand the system and know it well, but that the training is only offered at specific times.

And they're also told that if workers . . . if you can't manage the time, then if you can't manage to do it because you're overworked or you got to, you know, apply yourself to your work so you can't get to the training at the specified time, well basically, that's too bad, you don't get it.

So that it seems to me a very . . . it's not a very valuable service that's offered to these workers if in fact there is no sort of structure in where they can get training, maybe before they start their job.

They pointed out to me too — and I hesitate to mention Alberta again because I know how it aggravates your members— but they said that in Alberta there is a really positive structure put in place. When someone is hired they get a one-week training period, then three weeks of practical work, and again a one-week training period, and then three weeks of work again. And this is done throughout a three-month period to ensure that these workers have their training and they can make the best use of their time when they're on the job.

So that was just a suggestion that they thought was a very good thing happening in Alberta, and they'd like to recommend that possibly it happens in Saskatchewan also.

And, Mr. Minister, in addition to that, there came a concern to me . . . came to me rather from a school counsellor who is finding that there can be no sharing of files when this counsellor is trying to work with a child in the school. And she felt that there should be a sharing of files between social workers, social counsellors, and mental health so that people can . . . there can be a continuity of service for the child that they are tending to.

Apparently they can't, or they will not, share any files as to what they have found out about the child or the child's, for instance, the child's mental health, which would be really valuable to a counsellor coming into the school to ensure that they've got some background on the child and they know they can more effectively help the child and help him quicker. And because there's policy in place that there's no sharing of these files, it's making it very difficult for specific people that come to try to help the child.

So I'm just wondering if you could comment on why the sharing of files cannot be a policy of your government, and if you're going to be doing anything to change that.

To my knowledge, Mr. Minister, there's been a lot of talk about integrated services, sharing services in schools and so on. And I guess it's one thing to be mentioning that and the value of that, but if you don't give people the tools they need and the rights they need and the authority they need to be able to share those services better for the benefit of the children, what good is it just talking about it?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, there is in fact an extensive protocol that enables us to share information, even if we don't provide all of the file, the specific file to someone outside the department, we are in a position to share information from those files with, say, teachers or guidance counsellors or school administrators and people in other departments.

If there is some concern or need for information because of some behavioural problem or whatever that a child might be exhibiting and that child is in our care, then we are in a position to share that information, subject to a protocol that has been established and in a way that respects the privacy concerns of the individual involved. Because you will know that through

legislation there are limits on the extent to which one can provide information — for example, about young offenders — to the public or to other people, but there are protocols that are there that enable this sharing of information to take place.

Now if there is a specific problem somewhere, then for sure don't hesitate to call our office and we can track that down. But I would tell you that there is a very extensive protocol to ensure that that kind of sharing information can take place and is taking place.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, as it was described to me, this is not taking place. There is not only a resistance but an absolute unwillingness to do this.

And you know, if I can just give you sort of an example of what can happen when this sharing is not taking place. If you have a mental health worker who then, you know, moves out of a community of work, goes somewhere else and does not have the file accessible, for instance, for a school counsellor, but nonetheless the child is left at the school for care and for counselling and so on, if the school counsellor does not know of the mental health background of that child, she would have to start, you know, doing some very basic fact-finding and so on that would really delay helping the child.

So this is where the problem comes in. They are not able to be able to access files by other workers that have been working with that child. And it's simply been brought to my attention that that is the way it is.

And I understand that you say there's a protocol that provides for sharing of this information. Well in actuality, from what I'm hearing, it's not happening.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — All I can say, Mr. Chair, I'm very surprised to hear that in light of the fact that we do have extensive case protocol for sharing of information among, between professionals in the community to deal exactly with the issue that the member raises.

But if there is a specific case or a problem in a community somewhere in Saskatchewan that the protocol isn't being observed, and if that pertains to my department, I would certainly encourage the member to call my office, to give us the particulars so that we can track it down and make sure the protocol is working as it is intended to do. Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I certainly will get back to the people that brought this concern to my attention and invite them to do that very thing. I'm just hoping that the protocol as it is in place right now, or you say it's in place, is made known to all social workers, mental health workers, everybody out there that are trying to work with these children. Because if they have no knowledge that this is the case, then that would cause a problem in itself.

Mr. Minister, I have a constituent of mine that has written to you. Her name is Sandra Richard. And, Mr. Minister, I think that you would recognize the name of Sandra Richard as being the foster mother of Karen Quill, or the past foster mother of Karen Quill.

Now the very unfortunate death of Karen Quill has brought a lot of attention, public attention to this legislature, as well as to the attention of people across the province. There was a whole investigation done into the death of Karen Quill; the Child Advocate did that and she came up with some recommendations. And one of those recommendations was that there should be an assurance by Social Services that there is not going to ever be overcrowding in homes again.

Sandra Richard brings her case to me and her case points that out. She points out that to this day things have not changed, and this letter dated to me was on March 19 this year.

She says:

But to this day things have not changed because I know of homes around here that are still overcrowded.

So, Mr. Minister, I think you better take a serious look at that because we have had a number of deaths of children again reported by the Child Advocate in this province, and whether or not you're looking into that and finding out why, I'm not sure — I would hope that you are.

In addition though, Mr. Minister, to Sandra Richard making that point, she informed me that she's not any longer able to have a foster home. She tells me that before the time of Karen Quill's death when her home was overcrowded with children, she brought this overcrowding to the attention of her supervisor.

And whenever she would bring that to the attention of her supervisor, that she had too many children, that she could not handle them all, that in fact it was jeopardizing the children's safety and well-being, Social Services would just simply tell her that she was a good foster mother and to go ahead.

(16:45)

Now, Mr. Minister, because of that negligence by Social Services, especially when it was drawn to the attention of supervisors — and I'm not sure if supervisors brought it to your attention or not at that time — but nonetheless this woman took the right . . . went through the right channels. She took the correct approach and she informed Social Services that her home was overcrowded.

Now Karen Quill died as a result of this woman not being able to attend to . . . However, the death of Karen was ruled an accident, which meant, I guess, that nobody was at fault. Ms. Richard brings to my attention that even though nobody was deemed to be at fault, there were a lot of accusations towards her. She lost her right to have a foster home and she is now without a job.

She has asked for a meeting, and she received a meeting, at which Yvonne Skrudland from Social Services met with her on May 9 of this year. She says that she was asking for some compensation because this was not her fault and she, as a result, lost her ability to foster.

She also went through a waiting period of a year while there was deliberation over whether or not she would be entitled to a home again, and in that year she was kept on hold not knowing

if she would be able to find another job, go look for another job, move out of the province, or what she should do.

So basically she stayed put. This woman feels she should have some compensation coming. She states that the birth parents, or relatives of Karen Quill, received \$45,000 for being blood relatives. That was a compensation paid by the province to them. So they were taken care of.

She says that no Social Services supervisors lost their job because they were negligent in not taking her cry of help seriously. They are all working; they all have their pay. She is sitting now without any avenue for having any way to make any money, and certainly is unable to continue her home.

So, Mr. Minister, I, first of all, would like you to address this for me in all aspects, I guess, of what I put forward to you. But first of all, I'd like to ask you why when this woman cried out for help to Social Services, that cry was not being heard. She did the right thing. And I'm wondering if the supervisor in that area brought to your attention that this home was overcrowded.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, first of all with respect to overcrowding, is overcrowding in foster homes still a problem? There continue to be some situations where the limit for the number of children in a foster home is exceeded, and that limit is four. And there are four situations where this happens.

One is to try to keep siblings together. We have a foster home and we take five siblings into care; we will, if you like, exceed the limit of four by placing those five into one home. There may be situations secondly, to place a child into a familiar setting when a child is returning to foster care. On occasions to accommodate emergency placements. And four, to help other foster families taking respite, we will also do some doubling-up, if you like.

We do have an automated tracking system in place to monitor these situations and to assure proper support.

If the member, in addition to hearsay, has specific instances of overcrowding that do not meet these criteria, we would be pleased to receive that information and to investigate. But as the member can appreciate, we cannot proceed on the basis of hearsay that she is presenting before the Legislative Assembly.

With respect to the specific case that the member raises, I could not comment on a specific case as such. I would say that where complaints are raised with respect to foster parents, generally speaking we investigate. We involve the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association to provide support for the foster family. But I would not go any further to comment on the specific case in public.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and at this time I would move the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I'm advised that Her Honour is here for Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 16:53 Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

Bill No. 30 - The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2001.

Her Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to this Bill.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 16:54.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:56.