

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens in Saskatchewan who observe that commercial greenhouses in Saskatchewan are classified differently than agricultural enterprises under the current labour standards legislation. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary amendments to The Labour Standards Act to recognize the needs and realities faced by commercial greenhouse proprietors and employees.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, these constituents come from Biggar, Asquith, and Perdue, and I am pleased to present the petition on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition today is from people who are concerned about the Fyke report.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Kelvington health care centre be maintained at its current level, offering 24-hour acute care, emergency, and physician services, and that laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care, long-term care services be readily accessible to users from Kelvington and district.

The people that have signed these are from Kelvington, Okla, and Lintlaw, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with petitions of citizens concerned with the terrible state of Highway No. 43. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

That your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on the Saskatchewan government to repair Highway 43 from Vanguard to its junction with Highway 4 in order that area residents may have access to necessary services without endangering life and property.

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

Your petitioners come from Glenbain, Vanguard, Neville, and Aneroid.

I so present.

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

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

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

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of petitioners concerned with the need for a new hospital in the city of Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners 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.

The petition today, Mr. Speaker, is signed by residents of the . . . it looks like all of the residents of the Simmie Hutterite colony, as well as by residents of the city of Swift Current, Herbert, Abbey, and Cabri, as well as Tompkins and Shaunavon.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens opposed to possible reduction of services at Davidson and Craik health centres:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that Davidson and Craik health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency and doctor services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from the Craik and Davidson area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson, Imperial, Saskatoon, and Humboldt.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition of concerned citizens from Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency in regards to the cellular telephone service:

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

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

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Spiritwood, Leoville, Canwood, and also from Duck Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens concerned with the high cost of energy. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of Aneroid.

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.

Citizens of the province petition the Assembly on seven matters that are addendums to previously tabled petitions.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to introduce some guests to the House today in the west gallery and it's 49 grade 8 students from Forest Grove School.

And the reason I'm so honoured is I only have had . . . this is the second school group that I've had in the years I've been an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and it's the first one this year. So I'm very pleased to have them here.

I'm looking forward to answering any questions that they'll have later on and have some photographs, and I'm sure they'll be interested in question period.

And as well, my niece and nephew also attended Forest Grove School recently, so I know that Forest Grove grade 8 class is one of the best classes in one of the best schools in one of the best cities in one of the best provinces in one of the best countries in all the world.

So I'd ask all hon. members to welcome them here today. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature Dr. Manana Bakane-Tuoane, the Director General of the North West Province, Republic of South Africa.

Today the director, Mr. Speaker, is accompanied by a delegation of her senior officials who are seated with her in your gallery. This delegation from the North West Province is participating in a governance project between Canada and South Africa called the Canada-South Africa Provincial Twinning Project.

And during their visit to Canada, Mr. Speaker, they are visiting

the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario to explore aspects of governance including our cabinet systems policy development, and implementation processes.

Now I'm particularly, Mr. Speaker, pleased to welcome the director back to Saskatchewan. This is a bit of a homecoming for her in that she earned her Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) in agriculture at our University of Saskatchewan.

And so, I'd ask all members to welcome the director and her delegation to the House this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to join with the Premier in welcoming the Director General of the North West Province of the Republic of South Africa, Madam Dr. Manana Bakane-Tuoane, to Saskatchewan. And as I understand, back to Saskatchewan.

We're very glad to have you and your officials visit our province. And we're very pleased that Saskatchewan is involved in this Canada-South Africa Provincial Twinning Project.

I would mention to all members and to our guests that I have had the privilege, although many years ago, of visiting her country of South Africa — it is a very beautiful land. We certainly wish her and her officials well in their responsibilities, and also hope they enjoy their stay here in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly some 30-plus Métis people from Saskatchewan who are here today to be in attendance for this second reading of The Métis Act, of which they have great concern.

We have in attendance today Darlene McKay — she's a president representing Local No. 7; Jeff Mathieu, representing Lily Plain; Brad Umperville, representing Canwood-Shellbrook; Wayne Durand, vice-president representing Local No. 7, Prince Albert; Doug Fiddler, vice-president representing Local No. 109, P.A. (Prince Albert); Bob McLeod, president representing Local No. 165, Saskatoon; Paul Harper, president representing Saskatoon Métis Local No. 126; Perry Huton, president representing Local 11A; Shirley Ross, representing Longham Local No. 159; Tricia Anderson, representing Local No. 269, P.A.

These representatives do represent 75 per cent of the Métis provincial membership, and I would like to ask the Assembly to give them a warm welcome today and we hope that you enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join the member in welcoming our Métis people from Saskatchewan

on the gallery and also on this gallery, Mr. Speaker. And I think that it's very important and fitting that on National Aboriginal Day, in recognition of the achievements of Métis people, it is fitting that we see this, and also the recognition of Louis Riel Trail yesterday.

So, Mr. Speaker, I add my welcome to the Métis people from both sides of the gallery, and I ask all members again to welcome them. Ta wow.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce a number of students from the great city of Melfort. They're students from the Burke and Broadway school attending grade 6, and graduating from grade 6, I suspect, this year. And they're here at their year-end tour of the capital city.

Accompanying them this afternoon are their teachers, Mrs. Atamanchuk and Mrs. Rusling from Burke School. And Mr. Skjerven and Mr. Zary from Broadway School.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to join me in welcoming the students and their teachers very warmly to the Assembly today. And I look forward to meeting them after question period. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce some folks seated in your gallery.

First of all is my constituency assistant, Shelley Schroeder. Shelly does an excellent job for me at my office in Estevan. And also her daughter Denille. Denille is in grade 8. And she's not playing hooky today, Mr. Speaker, she was recommended in eight out of nine subjects and she's on the honour roll at the junior high there for maintaining an above 80 average throughout the year. So I'd like you to join me in welcoming them.

And as well, I'd like to welcome Mr. Bernie Collins. Bernie is the former MP (Member of Parliament) for Souris-Moose Mountain. I was a constituent of his, now he is a constituent of mine and I would like you all to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House and our guests today, the five gentlemen that are sitting in your gallery, one of whom was just now introduced by the member from Estevan, Mr. Bernie Collins.

The other four gentlemen are part of the Central North American Trade Corridor. They're in town to attend the Farm Progress Show and I had the good fortune of having lunch with them today.

I'd like to introduce to you the president of the organization, Steven Pedersen from Minot, North Dakota; Orlin "Bill"

Hanson from Sherwood, North Dakota; Steve Keim from Nebraska; and of course, Larry Norton from Childress, Texas.

And these gentlemen are going to be spending a few more hours in the city. With any luck at all we'll have an opportunity to meet with the Minister of Economic Development. And I hope that we can encourage more trade activities through these introductions and these opportunities in the North-South corridor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Bernie Collins, the former MP for Souris-Moose Mountain, and the delegates with regard to the North American transportation corridor.

I would also like to acknowledge that Mr. Hanson is a former senator from North Dakota and was intimately involved with the negotiations and strategy around the Souris Valley project that stopped the flooding in Minot, North Dakota. And they're very appreciative to that. So I'd ask all members to welcome him to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join my colleague from Humboldt and my colleague from Cumberland in welcoming all the people, on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca, that are visiting here today, with a special tribute to the Métis people sitting in both the east and the west gallery and I would encourage them all to continue making their visit to the Assembly as often as they can.

And as a Métis member of the Assembly it's a very proud day having as many Métis people today as we should have every day. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Aboriginal Day

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Indian and Métis affairs critic, I am pleased and honoured to rise in the House today to help commemorate National Aboriginal Day. Across Canada today Aboriginal people and communities are marking this day by holding special events and ceremonies and many non-Aboriginal people are truly celebrating with them.

Mr. Speaker, we owe much to the Aboriginal people of this country and of this province. Here in Saskatchewan, Aboriginal people, with their customs, cultures, and communities, have made many contributions to our province. These contributions have helped define our heritage and have added to our diversity.

Today, while the nation proudly recognizes Aboriginal people

and their achievements, we also take this opportunity to honour all Aboriginal people in the province. As Saskatchewan moves into the next century we know population projections have estimated that 50 per cent of the province's population will be Aboriginal by the year 2020. This group of people will be young, educated, dedicated, and ready to work.

More must be done, Mr. Speaker, to encourage our young Aboriginal people to remain here in Saskatchewan. We are counting on them to help our province realize its full potential.

Once again on behalf of all members on this side of the House, we extend our best wishes to all of those celebrating National Aboriginal Day. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to rise in recognition of National Aboriginal Day. Today is both the first day of summer and the longest day of the year. But it being summer is not the only reason for celebration; it's also the day of great significance to Aboriginal communities across Canada.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we join with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people to celebrate their distinct cultures and heritage, their great contribution to this country, in celebrating National Aboriginal Day.

Aboriginal peoples throughout Saskatchewan are encouraging all people to share in the richness of their culture and history. Powwow dancers, hoop dancers, drummers, singers, and musicians will highlight the fifth annual celebration right here in Regina's Wascana Park.

Today is also an exciting day for well-known Saskatchewan sculptor, Lloyd Pinay from the Peepeekisis First Nation. Pinay's bronze sculpture, paying tribute to contributions of Aboriginal people during both world wars, the Korean war, and peacekeeping missions, will be officially unveiled at a special ceremony in Ottawa's Confederation Park.

Mr. Speaker, National Aboriginal Day has been celebrated across Canada since 1996. I would like to congratulate the National Aboriginal Day organizing committee and all the volunteers who make this celebration possible and extremely enjoyable year after year.

As well, Mr. Speaker, to all the people of this province, I encourage you to get out on this first fine summer day to join in the National Aboriginal Day celebrations taking place in your local community. It is sure to be a celebration creating a festive, informative, and just plain fun atmosphere for everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Grain Elevator Companies

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak about a couple of new business ventures in the constituency of Cypress Hills today.

Two grain elevators in southwest Saskatchewan will remain open, thanks to the efforts of local producers and entrepreneurs.

The elevator in Eastend, formerly owned and operated by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, has been purchased by newly formed Eastend Grain Company Ltd., comprised of four local investors. This company's partnership with Great Western Railway Ltd. to move producer cars will certainly be beneficial to everyone involved.

Producer cars can now be booked through either the new elevator operator or the railroad. Once the car is confirmed, the producer can haul the grain to the elevator where it will be stored until the car arrives, giving the producer greater flexibility. That's an improvement over what the producers had previously.

The grand opening of this new business venture will be held Wednesday, June 27.

An initiative to save Frontier's grain-handling system recently became a reality when a group of local investors there were awarded the ownership and operation rights for the Sask Wheat Pool elevator in Frontier.

The new owners of that elevator incorporated themselves as the White Mud Trading Company and opened their doors on May 28.

There are many benefits, Mr. Speaker, in maintaining a grain handling and shipping company close to area producers — not the least of which is convenience. Also, a closer location reduces the number of trucks on paved roads, reducing the amount of strain on Saskatchewan highways. Finally, keeping an elevator in a community means keeping economic benefits such as jobs in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate these two groups on their commitment to their communities, their entrepreneurial spirit, and their foresight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Advertising at Rider Game

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, last night I had an opportunity to see Saskatchewan's finest in action. And no, Mr. Speaker, I was not at a health care centre, which is what the NDP (New Democratic Party) say is the best health care in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Rather I was at the football game last night where the Riders were playing. And it was a very good game, Mr. Speaker. We had an opportunity to see the veterans in action and the rookies, Mr. Speaker.

But that wasn't the most interesting thing to me. It was the advertising. People paying to support the Riders. One of the ads, Mr. Speaker, was from the Edmonton MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) services, the service providers to the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to wonder why, when as the government says we have the best health care in Canada, do the Riders have to go to Edmonton to get an MRI. It's not just the Riders, Mr. Speaker, it's Saskatchewan Government Insurance who sends their people to Edmonton to get MRIs. It's Workers' Compensation from Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that sends their clients to Edmonton to get an MRI.

If we have the best health care services in Canada, Mr. Speaker, why can't government organizations, sports, and individuals get service here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Signing of Forestry Sector Memorandum of Understanding

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, on National Aboriginal Day here is exciting news from northern Saskatchewan.

Last Tuesday on June 12, the province, the forest industry, First Nations and Métis representatives, and post-secondary institutions such as SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies), and GDI (Gabriel Dumont Institute), and also the colleges including Northlands were there to sign an historic forestry sector memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Speaker, the forestry sector memorandum of understanding is built on success and strong partnership between communities, business, and the education and training sector. This agreement provides a true linkage between real jobs and a good, solid education.

Mr. Speaker, this year the forestry training subcommittee, which determines which training is required, received a 15 per cent increase in the budget. This increase along with an estimated \$2 million will give a total of \$3 million in training in the North.

As well, Mr. Speaker, along with 300 positions, 300 new jobs will be created of which 250 will be filled by First Nations and Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, this new agreement supports Saskatchewan's growing young Aboriginal population. By providing jobs and training for youth, we are giving them an opportunity to determine their own future right here in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Response to Health Committee

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A headline in Wednesday's *Leader-Post* proclaims "Health hearings put off due to low response." This is a euphemism, Mr. Speaker, because of course there was nil response. Nobody showed up.

The ones who really have reason to be put off are the rural people with the government deliberately discouraging rural residents from expressing their views on the Fyke report by scheduling all the hearings in Regina.

This, according to the committee Chair, the member for Saskatoon Eastview, is to, quote, "force people to focus on the big picture in health care." In other words, the rural people who will be the most affected by the Fyke recommendations are, in the opinion of the member, unable to see the big picture. What a farce!

This is another example, Mr. Speaker, of this administration's callous disregard for the opinions and needs of rural Saskatchewan. And this from a Premier who promised to bus the cabinet around the province to listen to rural people. It must be a Stealth bus because to date no one has seen it.

The whole exercise is a sham. I call on the government to apologize and to reschedule the hearing where they ought to have been scheduled in the first place — namely in rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Jazz Festival

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Once after giving a completely garbled answer to a question from a group of students, the famed Canadian trumpet player and band leader, Maynard Ferguson, said, and I quote, "Trumpet players should play, not talk."

Well, Mr. Speaker, beginning this evening and continuing until the wee hours of July 1, jazz fans from across the country will once again have the opportunity to hear a superb line-up of musicians.

Musicians who'll be playing at the 15th annual SaskTel Saskatchewan Jazz Festival in Saskatoon with hardly any talk to get in the way.

There are at least five venues from concert arenas to small clubs where daily we can hear jazz, blues, gospel, world beat music, and I understand we are even fortunate enough to have the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band next Thursday.

Something to satisfy every taste, a style to make every finger snap and get every toe tapping.

As well, the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* community stage in Kiwanis Park will be providing free entertainment all day nearly every day, compliments of the Saskatoon musicians' union.

The Saskatchewan Jazz Festival is a labour of love by too many people and corporate sponsors to list, but as we know, an event of this magnitude and quality needs many people working behind the scenes. Over 300 volunteers will contribute their services.

So our thanks and gratitude to producer Carole Courtney, and her staff; to president, Karen Kowalenko-Evjen, and her board of directors; and to the hundreds of friends and sponsors who've donated money and resources so that we, the jazz fans of this province, can come and listen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Safety of Drinking Water Supply

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. The NDP's failure to manage Saskatchewan's drinking water supply is causing some serious problems. Everyone in Canada is familiar with the NDP's failure to protect the people of North Battleford from tainted water. But the NDP's mismanagement goes far beyond the city of North Battleford.

Dozens of communities continue to live with boil-water advisories because their drinking water supply is contaminated. And now, just days after the people of North Battleford were told their tap water was once again safe to drink, the North Battleford health district says a chronic shortage of public health inspectors could once again jeopardize the health of the district's residents.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing about what the North Battleford health district says is yet another public health crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the member is raising is the issue of personnel throughout the health care system; and what we know is that there are shortages in quite a number of areas which are shortages right across the country, and in fact across North America.

So the issue that's identified by the Battlefords Health District around the public health medical officers is a crucial issue, and we are working together with the medical profession, through the college and through the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association), around how we look at this particular area as well as quite a number of other areas of specialty

And so what we know is that we have to continue to work very carefully with the profession when we have these kind of shortages, and we also have to look at what kinds of people we can train here in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we see the NDP spending their time monitoring instead of doing something and taking action. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has obtained a letter from Dr. Gerhard Benade, the medical officer for the Battlefords Health District. It was sent to the Minister of Health, dated July 31, 2001.

In it Dr. Benade warns that the Battlefords Health District could quickly lose all of its public health inspectors. According to Dr. Benade, and I quote:

I am concerned that the public's health will be jeopardized if the authorities do not address the problems of recruitment and retention of these valuable health professionals.

Mr. Speaker, North Battleford has just lived through a drinking water crisis because of lax regulation. And now it appears the health district could soon have no public health inspectors at all.

Mr. Speaker, what specific steps is the minister taking to guard the public health of the people of North Battleford? And what is the NDP doing to ensure Battlefords Health District does not lose all of its public health inspectors?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how I've received a letter dated July 31, 2001, so there must be an error in that particular question.

But what I do know is that Dr. Benade is advising the health district but also the Department of Health around the concerns from that particular district around recruiting more medical health officers.

And what has been put in place by the district is a replacement health officer who will cover the issues that are of concern as they go into their recruiting pattern. Basically this is what happens right across the board.

What we do as a Department of Health, and I think basically as departments of Health right across the country, is look at those areas where there are shortages and see what we can do to help.

We have bursary programs; we have programs that we work with together with the medical profession to get the kinds of professionals that we need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — A correction for the record — it was May 31 that the letter was dated, not July 31. My error.

Mr. Speaker, North Battleford's medical health officer is sounding the alarm because he believes the public health is at serious risk.

Mr. Speaker, just last week the boil-water advisory was lifted in Meadow Lake. But more than two weeks ago Dr. Benade warned the government that there was no . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. It's getting to be very difficult to hear the content of the question and I'd ask for order.

Ms. Bakken: — But more than two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Benade warned the government that there was no public health inspector available to serve Meadow Lake. And Dr. Benade is also warning that soon there won't be any health inspectors in the entire Battleford Health District.

In fact just today we have learned that Dr. Benade himself has moved to Alberta. Obviously there is a serious problem here.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to deal with what is quickly becoming another serious public health crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, Dr. Benade had obtained employment in Alberta basically across the border from

Lloydminster in the district that covers from Lloydminster to Camrose, right to the edges of Edmonton. He advised the district . . . he advised the department many months ago that this was what he was going to do.

When this particular issue came up in the Battlefords area, he extended his term of employment so that he could be there to be part of the crisis that was being dealt with. I talked to Dr. Benade personally, and he was very supportive of the kinds of assistance that was provided by the Department of Health, by the other people.

We need to thank dedicated professionals like Dr. Benade for the kind of work that they do. We also thank them for their advice and ideas about how to continue to provide this care. At this point, that particular district is covered by a backup medical health officer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — . . . of Saskatchewan would like to thank Dr. Benade for doing his job and sticking with it. We would like to know what the government is going to do to create . . . correct the problem that we have in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, according to Dr. Benade, the public health could be at risk in a lot more places than just North Battleford and Meadow Lake.

In his letter to the Minister of Health dated May 31, 2001, Dr. Benade says the public health inspector position in La Ronge has been vacant for more than a year. In Kindersley it has been vacant for nearly two years. In fact Dr. Benade says that fully 20 per cent of the public health inspector positions in Saskatchewan are currently sitting vacant. And at the same time, the Department of Environment is actually luring health inspectors away from the health districts by offering them more money.

Mr. Speaker, it's the same old story. This NDP government has mismanaged the province into yet another crisis. To the minister: what is the minister doing right now to attract and retain public health inspectors in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan do not even want to contemplate what would have happened if we would have gone with the budget that those people proposed in their '99 election campaign.

We have increased the budget this last year by 11 per cent over the previous year. This includes monies for the districts right across the province. And we are going to continue to work with the health districts and with the professions involved and to make sure that we have the staff that will provide these particular services that are needed.

So what we do know is that the only way that we as the people of Saskatchewan can sort out these problems is if we work together. We're going to continue to work together with those

people, and that is the best way to do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have more incredible news out of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming. We now learn that Liquor and Gaming spent a half a million dollars teaching its employees how to get along with each other. Boy, that really worked, didn't it.

They have one Liquor and Gaming employee who was fired for doing his job and then wound up suing SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority). They have another Liquor and Gaming employee fired for raising concerns about improper and possibly illegal activities by Liquor and Gaming officials. She's probably going to wind up suing SLGA too. Just imagine how bad things would have been if they hadn't taken this course.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the total chaos, dissension, and mismanagement at Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming, will the minister be demanding her money back for this course?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, SLGA is offering, through this course, leadership training for all the staff. This includes both management and non-management employees.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the program is vital to developing a corporate culture where employees learn to work together. Leadership training is the cornerstone to the Authority's employment equity initiative and its strategy with regard to Aboriginal partnerships and Aboriginal employment.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority is committed to strengthening the diversity of its workforce to reflect the multi-faceted society of Saskatchewan in which we live. With the help of this program, Mr. Speaker, I'm confident we're achieving that goal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see how many graduates there were of that course because things are pretty bad over there.

Mr. Speaker, of all the incredibly stupid things we've heard out of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming the past weeks, this one does take the cake. Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming spent a half a million dollars on a course teaching its employees to play nice, now, and it still appears the most vindictive, mean-spirited agency in all of government.

SLGA fired a veteran RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officer and tried to ruin his reputation just to avoid political embarrassment. They fired another employee for reporting wrongdoing and they allowed millions of dollars of misspending to go unchecked for years. As a result there are now several police and judicial investigations under way.

Mr. Speaker, the management of SLGA is a complete disaster. Does the minister really think she's got her money's worth out of this half a million dollar management course?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest their cousins, the Canadian Alliance Party might also benefit from this course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know that human resource issues are multi-faceted. There are 800 employees within the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority and there are many, many more people that they relate to through their distribution systems and through their partnerships that have been developed with Aboriginal people, Mr. Speaker.

To trivialize leadership training and the training within the Authority to further the goals of employment equity and partnerships with Aboriginal people is indeed a sad state of affairs, Mr. Speaker.

We have said that their are two employees now out of . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps if the minister would spend less time worrying about the Canadian Alliance and more time worrying about her department, it wouldn't be in the mess it's in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Now on another matter, Mr. Speaker, Liquor and Gaming is now refusing to release the SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) payee list because they say it may interfere with the ongoing police investigation.

Mr. Speaker, SLGA wasn't afraid of interfering with Sergeant Mike Morrissey's investigation. They went back and demanded their precious cabinet documents back from him. The argument is ridiculous. This is public information. This is money that has already been spent by SIGA. It is merely a list of people who receive money from SIGA during their operating year. I am quite sure if the RCMP needed further investigation, they will ask for it.

Mr. Speaker, have the police specifically asked that the SIGA payee list not be released to the public? And if not, why won't they release it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I would not determine and Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority would not determine what is part of a police investigation or should not be a part of a police investigation.

I have mentioned that the annual reports will be released after Justice and the RCMP have a chance to review those. And they will determine and tell us if this is a part of an investigation that they require that information to be handled in that manner, Mr. Speaker. And I would respect their opinion in this matter.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Métis Legislation

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Mr. Speaker, in recent days the Saskatchewan Party has spoken with many, many Métis people who have very serious concerns about the new Métis Act. Many of those Métis people are here today with us. They are concerned that Métis people were not consulted, were not consulted with widely enough on this new legislation.

And they are concerned that the Act does not go far enough in dealing with issues like accountability, ensuring proper democratic process, and the serious problems with recent Métis elections. Many Métis people are demanding further discussion and input.

Mr. Speaker, later today, I will be moving a motion calling on the Assembly to delay passage of this Bill for six months to allow further consultation to take place. We could then pass an improved Act during the fall session.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister support this motion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask all members in the Assembly to please refrain from participating in the proceedings of the Assembly. It is a long and well-established tradition that we ask that members and members only speak or participate in any way.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting on the member across who says that, in six months . . . She doesn't know whether or not there is going to be a session in six months. In other words, she's trying to kill the Bill.

I think in my discussions, in my discussions, Mr. Speaker, people are talking about accountability. And I would say this much, we have made some additions in this Bill in regards to accountability, Mr. Speaker.

And before that, a lot of people were concerned about getting a number of people out in regards to meetings and getting a call for getting a petition and so on. And in the Act, there will be 250 people who can sign a petition.

In order words, minutes, bylaws, audited financial statements must be available to any Métis person or any person who wishes to see them. A qualified auditor must be appointed to conduct, at minimum, an annual audit of records, accounts, and financial statements of the corporation.

In regards to the question in relation to elections, I would say

that we have agreed to hire an outside consultant to review the recent elections.

The Speaker: — Member's time is elapsed.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would advise that member that it is their government, their side of the House who has the authority to call a fall session.

If they do, that would be great. We can deal with this Métis Act. If they don't, they are killing the Act, not us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, many Métis people, many Métis people argue that this Act does not go far enough in a number of areas. For example, it does nothing to deal with the serious problem in Métis elections.

In the last round of Métis elections nearly 25 per cent of the ballots were thrown out, 13 Métis locals were not allowed to vote at all, and several directors had their elections overturned. The minister has acknowledged these problems and she recently initiated a \$25,000 study to look at this issue.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, would it not make more sense to at least wait until that study is completed before passing a new Métis Act? That way the government could take the necessary steps to clean up Métis elections.

Mr. Speaker, will the government put this Bill on hold for six months and come back in the fall with an improved Bill that deals with the problems in Métis elections; a Bill that is reflective of the wishes of the entire Métis membership?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, in regards to The Métis Act, all the Métis people that I have talked to would like to see a strong Métis Act. I feel that this member may be trying to derail the process. I don't think that she wants to support The Métis Act.

What Métis people are telling me is getting the best accountability systems — we've included a couple already and there will be suggestions for more.

But I will tell you; you are simply trying to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I would remind the member that all remarks from the members should be directed through the Chair.

Taxes on Pasture Land

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. This morning the minister announced several initiatives designed to help livestock producers during the drought being experienced in many areas of our province unfortunately.

Many of the initiatives are highly reliant on federal participation. Unfortunately, given your track record in securing any help from the federal government . . .

The Speaker: — Once again, I ask the member to make all his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Boyd: — Given this government's track record in securing any kind of assistance, I don't expect we can hold out much hope, but nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, the concerns of livestock producers affected by drought is very, very real. It's time this NDP government started paying attention to it even more than it already has.

This is the same government, Mr. Speaker, that has driven up taxes on property in rural Saskatchewan on pastures by 28 per cent. In fact, the education portion of property taxes on pasture in this province has increased 28 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government making things more difficult for livestock producers dealing with drought by raising taxes on pasture land?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to say to the member opposite — and he should know this — that in the management of pastures across the province, which has been historical, the fees are set by the value and price of livestock. And this formula has been in place forever. And the member, and the member opposite should know that. So when the value of livestock goes up, the animal grazing unit goes up accordingly, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And so, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should know that the animal grazing unit cost is tied to the value of the livestock. The member should know that. And I've answered that question to him on other occasions.

But what I say . . . and when you take a look at property tax in this province, Mr. Speaker, we consulted with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities). And SARM said to us you need to reduce the property tax in this province. So what did this government do? It reduced the taxes on property in this province for agricultural producers. Not only one year, Mr. Speaker, but two years.

Fifty million dollars we put into this pool, Mr. Speaker. And what did that member opposite and those people across do when we presented this budget, Mr. Speaker? They voted against it.

And I say to the member opposite, on this side of the House we have a long track record of helping farmers in this province. And I say to that member, stay out of this file because every time you get in you cost Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Once again I remind all members, even if it's their last half sentence, to address it through the Chair.

Proposed Pipeline Project in Canada

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I will address through the Chair.

While Saskatchewan Crowns spend like drunken sailors on investments outside Saskatchewan, Premier Klein of Alberta is meeting with the vice-president of the United States and the movers and shakers of Wall Street to seek billions of dollars of investment in Alberta.

Mr. Klein has identified \$44 billion worth of energy projects. Think what even a tiny fraction of that investment would do for Saskatchewan.

The premier's also lobbying to have the proposed Alaska and Mackenzie Valley pipelines go through Alberta. Who is telling the Americans and our federal government that Saskatchewan should be the route for the proposed pipelines? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is nothing is being done. This government does not know how to attract outside investment; it only knows how to start public companies to compete with the private sector, or to invest outside the province.

While Premier Klein promotes Alberta, our Premier doesn't realize that the biggest project in Canadian history could be landed for this province. Is he only interested in things Crown corporations can own? What's he doing to get the pipeline through Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I would think and I say to the member opposite that this government, I believe, has a very good track record with respect to attracting investment, to growing and building this economy. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we have been leading in economic growth in Saskatchewan.

I want to remind the member opposite that we just came off of one of the largest pipeline projects that this province has ever seen, the Alliance Pipeline that came travelling right smack dab through the middle of the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the best economic development tool that we have had is when that member left and sat on that side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if one member of that government resigning can lead to a spike up in the economy, think what would happen to our economy if they all quit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — What a boom that would be.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know this is going to be one of the largest industrial projects in the history of this continent when pipelines transport oil from the Alaska north slope and from the Mackenzie Delta down into the American Midwest. That will

be a huge project.

Premier Klein is in Washington. He's in New York. He's pushing Alberta. Who is pushing Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, there is more to building this province than by buying a music company in Nashville.

Who is saying this pipeline should be routed through our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the member that I was referring to that created the up spike in the economy when he left the government side was that member from Battlefords, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan that we have been working with the business community since we were elected. We have got, I believe, one of the most effective bodies, STEP, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, where we partner with business people throughout this province in all areas of the world to sell the Saskatchewan's advantage with respect to investment and with respect to creating jobs and job opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that our Premier, although a very new Premier, will be very active in terms of promoting this province, as will the rest of the cabinet and the caucus.

And the only one, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is a positive attitude with respect to this province would do an awful lot more than the gloom and doom that comes from that side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 42

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Lorjé that **Bill No. 42 — The Métis Act** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House this afternoon to speak on Bill 42, The Métis Act.

Mr. Speaker, for generations the Métis people have contributed much to our province's rich and diverse history with their many traditions, their cultures, and their communities. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we must also acknowledge that the Métis people have also endured a past fraught with many social and economic struggles.

Initially, Mr. Speaker, we were encouraged to see a Bill of this nature come forward. But that soon changed however, when

many grassroots Métis people approached us because they had some serious misgivings about this Bill.

There are three main areas of concern that grassroots Métis people have with Bill 42: number one, that a 16-member, powerful secretariat that will be virtually unaccountable to the rest of the Métis people; number two, the lack of consultation and discussion on this Bill that resulted in the majority of Métis people not being properly informed about this Act and its consequences; and, number three, the very serious problems that currently exist with the Métis election process.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 42 seeks to establish a 16-member secretariat. As Métis people have interpreted the secretariat in the Bill, this group will be powerful, all-encompassing, and unaccountable for any financial or economic decisions that are made. If this is true, Mr. Speaker, who would not be concerned?

Any public money flowing through a board to the public for designated spending must be tracked and the people that are in charge of disbursing those funds must be held accountable for how it is spent.

Mr. Speaker, grassroots Métis people have said to me that Bill No. 42, if it is allowed to pass, will not be good for the Métis people. They say that the Bill seeks to give a select group of people nearly absolute power over the remaining grassroots Métis people. Those people, those elite powerful group, will be solely responsible for disbursing funding and for making decisions that will impact on all Métis people. And that is wrong, Mr. Speaker, because this goes against the laws that exist in the Métis constitution, laws that the Métis people themselves say they should adhere to.

So if this Bill is allowed to pass, it will . . . so if this Bill is allowed to pass, Mr. Speaker, it will in effect be going against grassroots Métis people and it will be going against the Métis Nation constitution. This is neither fair nor democratic, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I read from a letter written by Shirley Ross, vice-president of Langham Local No. 159, and she writes to me:

If any member of this legislature is in favour of passing The Métis Act in its present form, and by not listening to the people, I have reason to believe that they do not understand our culture and our constitution.

So it's clear, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite, the members of the NDP government do not understand the Métis culture or their constitution. It's also clear that not enough consultation and discussion was allowed to take place. If it had, we wouldn't have more than 50 grassroots people, Métis people, sitting in the gallery today and signing declarations of their protest to this Bill. These people are here to protest this Bill, Mr. Speaker, not to endorse it.

We have all heard the members opposite, the NDP members, say that before any decision is made on any issue they will discuss and consult with the people who will be most affected. Discussion and consultation did not take place on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. This Bill was not clearly outlined nor defined to the

Métis people — the very people that it should be recognizing and respecting and protecting.

We know this because many grassroots Métis people thought this was a Métis election Act. Imagine their surprise, their worry, and their confusion when they started to realize that it was not a Métis election Act.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, the Métis election process has had many, many problems. In fact, these problems became so pervasive that Citizens for Democracy was formed, a Métis group that sought to work towards achieving financial and democratic and electoral responsibility.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, this Bill does not even look at the Métis election process. Nowhere does this Bill even begin to address the problems that Métis elections have had in recent years. What the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has done is agreed to spend \$25,000, an amount matched by the federal government, to hire a consultant to study the Métis electoral process. This was done only after numerous complaints were lodged following a February election that saw nearly 25 per cent of ballots thrown out.

Obviously there are major problems with the Métis electoral process and some changes are likely needed. But Bill 42 doesn't look into that. Bill 42 avoids that altogether. Instead, the Métis people will be forced to wait, who knows how long, while the study is done. And then there will be more time on top of that while it is decided if recommendations will be implemented and how that will occur.

This is a prime example of what the NDP government has become so well-known for. They never deal with the issues that really matter. Things that really need addressing. Things that ultimately define and defend a democratic system. If Bill 42 is allowed to pass, it will have a profound and lasting impact on the Métis community, a community that seeks to have greater impact on the way they live today.

The issue of democracy, Mr. Speaker, an issue that has been foremost in the minds of many grassroots Métis people, is not addressed in this Bill. The issue of democracy, Mr. Speaker, is why there are more than 50 people with us here today. They represent a people that want to see democracy upheld and preserved.

Because of the concerns that I have brought forward on behalf of the members on this side of the House and the members of the Métis association, Mr. Speaker, I want to stress to the members of the NDP that we are not opposed to a Métis Bill. We do however feel that more time is needed so that proper discussion and consultation can be allowed to take place.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I put forward a motion, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

Bill 42, The Métis Act, be not now read a second time but

that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be making some comments in regards to accountability, in regards to the history of Métis people in the province, as well as dealing with the issue of the amendment.

Now in regards to the history of Métis people in this province, I know the history well, as a Métis person born and raised in northern Saskatchewan and coming to school in the city of Prince Albert — high school and then moving on to university. In those days, in the early days, we didn't have any money to get an education and so on, so we did it by student loans and I happened to win a scholarship to go to university and that's how it was done. As time went on, bursaries were made available to Saskatchewan students in the . . . (inaudible) . . . and many Métis people started going to university.

But significantly Métis people said that we needed an institution under Métis control, so we established under the Blakeney government, the NDP government, it was established that Gabriel Dumont Institute was formed as well as SUNTEP (Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program). And as that developed more and more people, Métis people, came in. So it was obviously an NDP government that supported Métis people. And we also know that there is monies available for the organization of the time.

When the members from across changed their name to Saskatchewan Party, which used to be the old Tories, I know one thing — that they blew up \$800,000 during that time when statements were made at the constitutional talks.

And I thought that it's very important to recognize that history because when we looked at historical development, those were very outstanding institutions. There is still no place in Canada where Métis people have made such tremendous gains as in Gabriel Dumont Institute. You will see many people . . . I attended a graduation ceremony in Prince Albert just a little while ago and I saw a lot of the Métis people from the Prince Albert area. And I have attended them in Saskatoon, saw Métis there in Saskatoon and area, as well as in Regina.

And there's been a significant amount of achievements on that. So in many cases there has been success story when Métis people have been given an opportunity to develop and evolve with proper accountability measures, etc., there has been progress.

Now when I look at the situation here on the amendment, I find it problematic because you're getting to Christmas. And I've been in the House for 16 . . . for 15 years. I have seen very few sessions, you know, at Christmas. And I know very well that the member may be saying that because she doesn't know and she cannot decide whether anything can be done in six months.

And it may be a way of simply opposing it. It may be way that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you can use technical words that you are indeed . . . You say that you support it, the question will be this. As I look at the issue . . . and I was at the recognition of the Louis Riel Trail the other day — those are important things.

On that Métis Act, Métis people have been waiting for many years. Every time you do something they tell, wait another time. When they say do it right then, do it when . . . when I say this, the member out of time to speak, allow a Métis person to speak as well in the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would request the minister to make remarks through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I have a tremendous amount of experience working with the Gabriel Dumont Institute as well for many years, and worked with Métis people, my own people, for many years.

And I would say this: that people are always told to wait. At one time I worked at Gabriel Dumont Institute and people told us, oh, the Métis people can't take over their institutions; let's wait some more, some people said.

Let's wait some more, they said. But we did not wait with the Blakeney government, the NDP government. We moved ahead with Métis people and now you see the positive results.

Yes, after many years, there are from time to time accountability problems. Grant Devine had nine years of accountability problems, but \$800 million was spent on interest payments on the Grant Devine government after many years in this House. And those are the people you still support.

So when I looked at this, Mr. Speaker, and I looked at the question of more time, they're always saying more time over there when it comes to First Nations or Métis issues. When it comes to their issues, they say do it now or do it yesterday. That is what they say all the time. But when it comes down to the people, they say wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

I will say this, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Métis veterans that are recognized in this Act, they died for this country. Are you going to tell the Métis veterans to wait for six months? Is that what you're saying? When you look at the recognition of an institution, do we wait for that?

Mr. Speaker, I've been in the House for 16 years, 15 years, and I know the technicalities of how this House can be done. There are people who have talked to me in regards to amendments, in regards to the amendments, Mr. Speaker, and that's what I was talked to prior to the time I come in.

In regards to amendments, Mr. Speaker, we will of course be looking at amendments. I've been in the House many years looking at amendments. And from time to time I know, Mr. Speaker, we can make some reasonable, practical changes on amendments — and we have done that before. The minister assumes that you can do that. She wants to kill it and she doesn't want to give me a practical, reasonable amendment.

So I would say this, Mr. Speaker, that indeed when you look at those amendments, we will await like any system does on any time that we're here, we'll look at practical, reasonable amendments and look at them and we will see what we will do with them. And in that sense, that is what a lot of people do.

But I would say this, in that amendment she gave me, she gave me absolutely no amendment except to increase the time and say wait. I can't support that; you're simply trying to kill it.

So when I look at it, Mr. Speaker, when I see that, Mr. Speaker, there are ways of doing it in the House. I will await to see what kind of practical amendments are being made. I will await . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I would say this . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Just once again ask . . . I want to welcome all visitors to the . . . and I want them to feel welcome in the Assembly but I must insist that they not participate in any way in the debate.

Furthermore, I've asked the member several times to direct his remarks through the Chair. I know that it's difficult, particularly when you have somebody prompting you a bit from another side, but I would ask him to do his best on that.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Okay, I accept your remarks, Mr. Speaker.

I would say this, that in many areas that I've been around, we're always told to wait. The practical side of the question will be such that we will see what type of amendments, you know, are proposed. We will make decisions on that when amendments are proposed.

But to say that we just stop it is not a solution. I think that it's very important to examine that. Look at the real practical solution that demands the issues relating to accountability and democracy. And those were the statements, you know, that were made by me, to me by Métis people that I met with you know just prior to the Assembly.

And I think it's very important to recognize that, Mr. Speaker. I say that as I look into the past, I've seen some systems change over time and I will relate back to the . . . (inaudible) . . . Bills that we do per year.

Even as we do the first phase in the core development of things, I have seen Bills come in here and we'd do something. Next year we'd do an amendment as well. But it maybe we will wait to see in regards to the amendments that are brought in the process of committee during second reading.

And I think that's when to clearly examine it. If the member from there says that he's got some practical suggestions, and in my meetings with the Métis that there are practical suggestions, then we will be prepared to look at it. But, Mr. Speaker, to simply say no and kill the Bill right now is not a solution.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are my remarks, and I think that as a Métis person I've seen a lot of debates in the House. I've seen a lot of debates in the Métis assemblies. I've been in assemblies with a thousand people. And, Mr. Speaker, the debate is very important, you know, to take place. And that indeed over time, changes are made and things come and improve.

When I went to university, I was the only Métis person going to university in 1965 that I knew of. There was three other First Nations persons that I knew of at that time. There may have been more, but those are the ones that I knew. And, Mr.

Speaker, we now see 2,000. We see just in northern Saskatchewan alone, we have 2,500 First Nations and Métis people, you know, taking an education. And these are important types of institutions that the Métis people control.

And I support them. But I supported it. Because I remember one time when the Devine government come in, they wanted to do an assimilation process, assimilative to the colleges and forget about Gabriel Dumont. I fought against that while I was in opposition. I said that we should keep Gabriel Dumont Institute. We should keep the Métis institutions in tact because they do a proper service in the education of Métis people in this province.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, those are my words in regards to the amendment. So I move to go against the amendment on the Bill because she hasn't provided a solution except to kill the Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter into the debate on The Métis Act. And I guess my appeal is to all the Métis people across this great province of Saskatchewan.

It has taken, as the member from Cumberland has indicated, taken a great amount of time and energy and vision and commitment by the Métis people to really affirm their position in our province and to work with the governments of the day to really establish their institutions or lending organizations and their culture.

I think one of the most important points that I want to make in reference to the amendment being proposed by the member from Humboldt, that, first of all, in the six-months time frame that she is proposing, that is four days before Christmas of this year. And she knows very well that there is no plan to recall the legislation or the legislature at that time. There is no plan to call the Assembly to return to Regina.

So the six-month delay that's being proposed by the member from Humboldt is pure political positioning, and it's not fair to the Métis people nor is it fair to The Métis Act.

Mr. Speaker, I will point out this — I will point out this, Mr. Speaker, to the Métis people of Saskatchewan, I urge you . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — My message to the Métis people of Saskatchewan is this, is that The Métis Act is a framework in which we begin to build our hopes and our dreams and our aspirations as Métis people of Saskatchewan. It is a framework. We are not going to arbitrarily say this is what the Métis people want, this is what is best for them.

The Métis Act has many opportunities to revisit it, has many opportunities to do amendments to it, has many ways in which we can refine the challenges associated with the framework of The Métis Act. And the minister has assured all the Métis people through various consultations and meetings that this is going to occur, Mr. Speaker.

There is no question that some Métis people have expressed concern about the MNS (Métis Nation of Saskatchewan) and whether this Act gives new powers to the MNS. Mr. Speaker, it does not give new powers to the organizations. And the concerns have been raised, and we are working with Métis people, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada to address those concerns. This Act fulfills a long-standing promise made to the Métis people.

Because these concerns have been raised, Mr. Speaker, there are two fronts we're going to address some of these concerns. First, The Métis Act strengthens the accountability provisions for the MNS. It provides for a special meeting of the MNS to be held should 250 Métis people sign a petition. Minutes, bylaws, and audited financial statements must be available to any person who wishes to see them. A qualified auditor must be appointed to conduct, at minimum, an annual audit of records, accounts, and financial statements of the corporation, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, Canada, Saskatchewan, and MNS have agreed on electoral reform review as a result of the concerns about Métis Nation election, Mr. Speaker.

And what I would point out to the Métis Nation and to the Métis people of Saskatchewan is this challenge is about capacity building. And the delay of six months as being proposed by the member from Humboldt is just sheer positioning for petty politics, Mr. Speaker, and I charge that member guilty of that offence. She should not be doing that because this is not fair, Mr. Speaker, at all to the Métis people, nor is it fair to The Métis Act.

Now let me explain again, Mr. Speaker, very, very important. As you look across the board at our institutions and the member from Cumberland announced Gabriel Dumont Institute or the Dumont technical institute or SNEDCO (SaskNative Economic Development Corporation) Mr. Speaker, there are many powerful organizations within the Métis group that have shown that they're able to make a significant difference to this great province of Saskatchewan, alongside of the Métis people, Mr. Speaker.

And this whole issue, this whole issue, Mr. Speaker, is a base on which we can build a foundation of a strong Métis house in this province of Saskatchewan. And, as you look at the history, Mr. Speaker, of this coalition government and the previous governments that have been associated with the NDP, they have been very, very fair to the Métis people in terms of the many things that they have been involved with, Mr. Speaker.

And right across the board, whether it's institutions or whether it's educational opportunities or whether it's economic development, the Métis people have always been first and foremost in our Aboriginal strategy as a government, Mr. Speaker. And what I would say, Mr. Speaker, is you do not take the members' words opposite that all of a sudden when it comes to the Métis people and The Métis Act that's being proposed, all of a sudden there's a great concern from the Sask Party.

There's a great concern from the Sask Party and the reason why there's a concern, Mr. Speaker, is I will say again that they want to kill the Bill. A six-month delay, a six-month delay, whether it's in December or January, Mr. Speaker, or February or

March, or whatever the time frame may be, we want to put into place a structure and a framework in which we can build. And if that structure or that framework needs refinements, Mr. Speaker, we invite that, we want to see that happen. But you do not kill the framework before you build that powerful house of people in this province, and that's exactly what the opposition wants to do.

Now a lot of people in northern Saskatchewan and across the province, many people, did not support The Métis Act, Mr. Speaker. And I want to for the record say as one of the Métis persons that voted in this past election in my home community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, those ballots were not counted. My family, my wife, and my oldest daughter and I went down to vote and those ballots were not counted.

But I'm not going to get up and say my ballots were not counted so I'm going to not allow anything else to progress or to proceed. We have to understand that this is about capacity building, as nation building, and that we have to have that diligence to ensure that it does not happen again and that we roll with those particular challenges of building ourselves up as a nation of people as part of this great province of Saskatchewan.

So my appeal for the Métis people across the province, Mr. Speaker, and in the Assembly today, is that let us have the vision and the foresight to allow the structure to proceed.

We can have improvements, Mr. Speaker. And yes, no Métis person should be denied the right to vote. And no Métis person should ever have their vote discounted, Mr. Speaker. That is not fundamentally fair to any nation of people, and I will not support that.

However the most important thing as the member from Cumberland has indicated, past experience will tell you that there is genuine intent on this side of the House to see progress of the Métis people. There's a history, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House to see progress made by the Métis people, Mr. Speaker.

On that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, it is pure petty politics. They call for a six-month delay, Mr. Speaker, and I say today that six-month delay that they're calling for, they hope that it's for the next 20 years that it's a delay. And that's what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker. If we don't allow it to proceed now, it's going to be another 10, 15, to 20 years before we even entertain, Mr. Speaker, a Métis Act.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping this thing up, Mr. Speaker, there's no question, there is no question that the Métis people in this juncture of our lives and in allowing the opportunity to see a Métis Act finally passed in Saskatchewan, next to the birthplace of Riel, which is Manitoba. The two provinces side by side benefited from Riel and some of the work that he has done.

Today in 2001, we're going to pass a Métis Act. And I would encourage all the Métis people across this great province to remember that if you want to build a Métis nation, it's not going to be just the executive or a select few that are going to determine that — it is going to be all the Métis people across

this province. And I being one of them are going to ensure that accountability, capacity building, and building a bright future for all of our children, which include mine, so that the Métis Nation and the Métis people of this great province can indeed contribute and be proud of who they are, where they are, and what they are.

And, Mr. Speaker, on my final point, if we delay the Bill I can tell you right now it's going to take 10 to 15 years before a Métis Act's ever entertained, and that's exactly what the opposition want. And I say to them if there's any amendments done in and for The Métis Act it's going to be in concert with the Métis people, with the Métis Nation, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Saskatchewan — not the cheap petty politics being played by the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to get up again and speak to Bill 42, The Métis Act. As one of the first speakers regarding this Bill, and I made my opening statements by saying, first of all, I'm proud to stand up as a Métis person in regards to this Métis Act.

And like the member from Humboldt stated in the letter that was drafted to her, and I won't take the time to read it all, but I want to reiterate that this is my thoughts also. And I will quote from here:

We want The Métis Act (and I will stand and say the same — I want a Metis Act), but the one that being presented today, Bill 42, our main concern is that the grassroots people are not being fairly represented with this Act, but the power is with the Métis Nation executive.

And I agree with that totally 100 per cent. And you know what surprises me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that today is Aboriginal Day. And in the gallery we have many people of Métis people, and they should be home celebrating their day in their home. But you know where they are? They're here today to try and put a hoist — just a hoist, Mr. Speaker — it's not killing the Bill as the members on that side of the House think it is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — We are just asking for time — time so that the people of the Métis Nation can get a grasp of this Bill and put forth things in the Bill that will represent all Métis people in the right fashion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I stand here and I listen to . . . and this may be off the wall a little bit, and that's regarding the Fyke report. The Fyke report came out, and right away the NDP government stands up and say, we got to study it, because it's not quite right.

And yet here, we have a Bill which is a Métis Nation Bill and they want to ram it through.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — There's no absolute . . . any consultation with all Métis people, just a few. And that's what's wrong. And that's why the member from Humboldt, along with myself and all the members on this side, all we're asking for is a hoist.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. I appreciate the help members are trying to give me. The floor belongs to the member for Shellbrook-Spiritwood.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Métis Nation Bill is a very good Bill in some of the contexts in there. But there's a lot that's wrong, and that's why the Métis people are here and that's why we support a hoist.

And all we on this side of the House are asking is the government over there to not play politics with this and just stop and realize the impact of what this is going to do to the Métis Nation people, and give it six months. Six months for consultation with all Métis Nation people and we can be back here. It's up to that side of the House to call the session back to deal with this very serious issue.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, as all members on this side of the House are going to, and I would hope that the members on that side would take a step backwards and just stop and think what they're trying to ram down the throats of the people up there and the people in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 15:00 until 15:10.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 20

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Hermanson | Elhard | Heppner |
| Julé | Krawetz | Draude |
| Boyd | Gantefoer | Stewart |
| Eagles | Wall | Bakken |
| McMorris | D'Autremont | Kwiatkowski |
| Brkich | Hart | Allchurch |
| Huyghebaert | Hillson | |

Nays — 28

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill 42 is a very important issue in Saskatchewan. It deals with in part our history, and in part, Mr. Speaker, our future. But in listening to the debate and to the commentary that was going on around the debate, Mr. Speaker, I was very disappointed in

some cases.

The member from Yorkton seemed to be indicating from his chair, Mr. Speaker, that only members of the Métis Nation should be allowed to speak to this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker. Well I have to disagree with that sentiment. Mr. Speaker, we are all elected in this House. We all represent members who are Métis in our constituencies, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, some of us have a closer association with the Métis; some of us do not. In my own case, Mr. Speaker, I am not Métis. But we have a very close neighbour, Mr. Speaker, who was the great niece of Louis Riel.. Mr. Speaker, my parents are the godparents to her eldest child. We visit back and forth, Mr. Speaker. We know each other very well. Mr. Speaker, in fact Yolande even taught me how to dance. I don't do it well, but she tried.

Mr. Speaker, in my own family, my wife has Métis ancestry. Her mother's side comes from the Red River Settlement, Mr. Speaker, and were Métis. So while I personally have no Métis blood that I know of, my family certainly does.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Northern Affairs talked about the Native veterans, the Métis veterans. He's talking, Mr. Speaker, in large part, to those who fought during the Second World War, 1939 to 1945. Well, Mr. Speaker, 1944 was when Tommy Douglas and the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) a.k.a. (also known as) the NDP were elected, Mr. Speaker.

They were in power from 1944 to 1963. They could have done something in that time, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the veterans in the Aboriginal community. They didn't.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP were in power from 1971 to 1982.

(15:15)

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

Mr. Harper: — To ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the member from Cannington for allowing me the opportunity to introduce a guest. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House, two gentlemen sitting in your west gallery — a long-time good friend of mine, Vince Folk, and with him today is Miles Pelletier. And I'd ask all the members to offer them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and to members of the House through your office, I'd like to introduce a gentleman from the constituency of Cypress Hills, Mr. Mike Storks, sitting in your gallery. Mike is a newly appointed member of the Economic Development Committee of the area. He does a very good job. Maple Creek has benefited from his ability already and I'm sure that it will benefit substantially more in the future.

I'd like the members of the House to welcome Mike to the Assembly today. And I hope that he goes home with new inspiration to do an even better job.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 42 — The Métis Act (continued)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the NDP were in power from 1971 to 1982. They could have recognized the contributions of the Aboriginal and Métis veterans in that time. They could have brought forward a Métis Act in that time. Did they do so, Mr. Speaker? No.

Mr. Speaker, when I was elected here in 1991, the members opposite, a good many of them, were elected to government at that time. This is 10 years later, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Cumberland could have brought forward legislation recognizing Métis and Aboriginal veterans, could have brought forward legislation dealing with the Métis Nation. Did he do so? No, Mr. Speaker.

And yet today, when the people of the Métis community who are, some of them are visiting today — 75 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of Métis community is represented here today in this House, in the galleries — they are asking, Mr. Speaker, give us more time to look over this Bill, to understand it, and to get their concerns and needs represented in this Bill.

And what does the minister say? What does the Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) say? No! Twenty years, from 1944 to 1963 they had; 11 years from 1971 to 1982, they had; 10 years from '91 to today. Have they done anything? No.

Now there's a Bill before the House. They want to rush it through before the community, the Métis community, has a chance to look at this Bill, understand it and ensure that it meets their needs, Mr. Speaker.

No. For whatever reason, this government is in a rush on this Bill. Doesn't want to allow the community and the people involved to have a say.

Mr. Speaker, there is a need to give some more time to this Bill. Since they're unwilling, Mr. Speaker, to give six months, perhaps they will allow even a few more days.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Bill be now adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 7 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2001

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his official.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me is Mr. Brian Smith, who is the head of the Public Employees Benefit Agency, which is a division of the Department of Finance.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, welcome to Mr. Smith this afternoon.

We have a few questions on Bill No. 7, more for clarification, and I've raised some concerns in debate on this Bill, Mr. Minister.

And I note, Mr. Minister, in your address under second readings, you made reference to a number of different superannuation plans that will be affected by the changes introduced in Bill No. 7. You also mentioned a number of the plans, Mr. Minister. And my question is, how many individuals will be affected by those various plans that you identified back on May 2; and are the plans of each of those agencies that you identified fully funded?

So sort of a two-part question, Mr. Minister: could you tell us how many individuals will be affected in each of those benefit plans; and are those plans fully funded?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I can advise the member that with respect to the pension plans affected, which amounts to six pension plans, there are 3,069 active members, 196 deferred members, and 7,906 pensioners. So there's 7,600 people that are already on pension . . . 7,906 people on pension and 3,069 active members — those would be people still working and paying in — 196 deferred members.

And in answer to the second part of the member's question, of the six plans, four of them are not fully funded and two are fully funded. The four that are not fully funded — in other words, they have unfunded liabilities — would be the Public Service Superannuation Plan, the Saskatchewan Transportation Company plan, the Anti-Tuberculosis League Superannuation Plan, and the Liquor Board plan.

The two that would be fully funded would be the Workers' Compensation Board plan and the Power Corporation Superannuation Plan.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, while there doesn't seem to be many changes in Bill No. 7 that are of

significant costs. As you indicated, a number of those are to ensure that we comply with federal law. I'm wondering, with the main proposal which of course is to address the benefits paid out to a spouse, have your officials costed that out as far as what you see as annual cost to the plan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The officials have not done an estimate of the cost, they have not costed it out, but they have concluded that the cost would not be materially significant, which is why they haven't costed it out. They don't think that it will affect the liabilities through the costs to the plans much one way or the other.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, I had the opportunity to meet with executive members of the Saskatchewan Government Superannuates Association, as I indicated to you back in debate on this Bill. And they indicated the changes that would be coming about as a result of this Bill to the various plans.

There was major concern, Mr. Minister, as you've indicated today, four of the plans are not fully funded and two are. But there was more concern expressed in the area of indexing in that some of the people that you've identified, the 7,906 individuals do have plans that are indexed and change as the cost of living changes.

On the other side there are people who belong to the various pension plans that you mentioned who do not have that indexing and rely on government on an annual basis to either change it by a certain percentage, change their pension benefits by a percentage relative to the cost of living, or not change them based on what the government decides.

Have you had the opportunity, Mr. Minister, since I raised this issue in debate, to look at what the many executive members feel is discrimination against individual people who happen to belong to one pension plan rather than someone who belongs to the SaskPower pension plan, for instance?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I'm not quite sure, Mr. Chair, what difference it would make if somebody belongs to the SaskPower pension plan, the old plan which is part of these plans, in the sense that . . . in terms of automatic indexing.

But I would point out to the member that these plans are defined benefit plans. And under a defined benefit plan the member of the plan is entitled, as the name implies, to a defined benefit. The benefit is determined on the basis of a formula — a certain percentage of the income that the person had while they worked in the public service, multiplied by some factors, including the length of service of the individual concerned. And so the individual is entitled to that defined benefit.

And I'd like to say that the government guarantees that the retired employee will receive the benefit that that employee is entitled to receive. That's a commitment that the province has been meeting since, I think, at least the 1920s and will continue to meet. That's part of our policy.

Now when we can, in addition to the defined benefit that the member is entitled to, we have provided ad hoc increases. In other words, defined benefit plus. In most years we add on

something to the defined benefit as the province can afford it.

If the member is saying that — and I'll invite the member to say whether this is what he's saying because it is a very interesting question — if the member is saying that there should be legislated indexing on top of the defined benefit, in defined benefit plans, the member certainly can so indicate. But I'd like to advise the member that if the member proposed that, the debt of the province would probably increase, just like that, by a sum in the neighbourhood of \$400 million, which is a significant amount of money.

(15:30)

What we've been trying to do, Mr. Chair, is to reduce the amount of the indebtedness of the province, even if we can't always be all things to all people. And part of that is our policy to award people ad hoc increases but only as the province — the people, the taxpayers — can afford it. That's our policy.

I hope that's also the policy of the members opposite because as I say — and I invite the member to say if his position is that there should be guaranteed indexing of defined benefit plans — because if that is the position of the opposition, it will automatically increase the debt of the taxpayers.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, what I am trying to obtain from you this afternoon, if you could clarify, is the point raised by the executive members of SGSA, which as I mentioned before is the Saskatchewan Government Superannuates Association, is that they have indicated to me and it's my understanding — and please clarify if I'm wrong here — is that there are certain pension plans, one being the SaskPower pension plan, where there is an automatic indexing that takes place each and every year; and that other pension plans, which there are, as you mentioned, thousands of people who belong to the pension plans, that there is no automatic indexing. And you made reference to the fact that you deal with that on an ad hoc basis and that you will change the amount of pension benefit on an ad hoc basis.

Is there a difference between the plans that you've identified in the legislation that are being affected by this Bill, that relate to indexing?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, there is not. The member is incorrect. There is no difference with respect to the amount of increase awarded each year as between the plans that have an unfunded liability and those that have a surplus.

The member has been provided with information that indicates that there is some difference in what the retirees get. There is no difference. The information that the member has been given is incorrect.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. That's exactly what I needed you to say, and I appreciate your openness and your frankness there.

Mr. Minister, are any of the changes that you're proposing in Bill No. 7, are they retroactive? Are they going to come into place on assent of the Bill? I didn't notice when the . . . For instance, the spousal change that we're looking at, when do

those changes come into place?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — All of the changes, Mr. Chair, are prospective. And they come into effect on the date of assent.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, for clarification purposes, the main clause in this Bill of course is dealing with spousal benefits. Could you explain why there's a need to address this. And I know that you've indicated that even though an employee did not select the highest benefit payable to his or her spouse upon, you know, the sudden death of the individual, that now they would be entitled to that benefit.

Can you explain how that will work by using just an example of an individual that will now change the amount of the benefit even though they may have made a decision, I guess at the time of their employment, or I don't know whether there are annual requirements for people to indicate what benefits, what spousal benefits they would wish to have in place. How will the legislation amend and change that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well we're removing the requirement that an employee has to make a decision that if he or she dies before retirement that their spouse should get a higher benefit. And the reason we're changing it is simply because it was a hardship that if your spouse was in the public service and had died and had not bothered to make the election to give you a higher benefit, that you wouldn't receive the higher benefit.

And yet since the spouse had died and would never be in receipt of a pension himself or herself since they've died before retirement, it seemed only fair to use the contributions that that person had paid into the pension plan to give the surviving spouse the highest benefit possible. And since the actuaries have told us that we can do so without increasing the liabilities of the plan, it seemed to be the fair thing to do.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, a final question. You've indicated that . . . your official has indicated that the costing is not there, and I accept that. But in past, as I'm sure you've looked at before you put this clause amendment together, how many people do you think this will affect, that they actually pass away before their retirement in the various pension plans. Have you got any idea on how many spouses will actually receive this enhanced benefit?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We believe that it would affect three to four surviving spouses approximately per year.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 8

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. On clause no. 8, Mr. Minister, you've indicated authorizing boards to charge fees for services provided by the board and prescribing the amounts of those fees.

Could you describe what you think will be the services that would become chargeable, and that indeed will actually the

persons who have retired will incur an additional cost for asking for some specific information as I understand it, and what do you expect the amount of those fees to be?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We do not have any amount of fees in mind. That would have to be set by regulation.

And an example of why you would charge a fee might be upon the marriage breakdown of a member of a pension plan. That member or the spouse of that member may request of the pension plan or the court may request that the plan do an evaluation of the person's pension, what it is worth, for the purpose of calculating the value of matrimonial property on a marriage breakdown. And some of this can be quite time consuming and complicated.

And I don't think it's contemplated that every single question asked of the pension plan administrators would be charged. But I think the feeling is that if a particular member of the pension plan has particular legal difficulties and puts the plan to more time than usual, that it's more fair for that person to pay a fee for that service than to have the public generally paying for the service. So that's an example of the type of fee that might be imposed. But I have to say, Mr. Chair, at this time we don't actually have in mind a very quick imposition of fees. It's simply in the future to enable the plan to charge a fee if that seems like the reasonable thing to do.

And it is not so much designed to raise a lot of revenue or impose a lot of fees as to say that, if somebody asks for an extraordinary amount of service, it's more fair that they pay a fee for that than to have everyone else paying for it for them, especially if they get into more legal difficulties than the average person.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I would like to, before I do that, thank the official opposition for their co-operation with respect to this work in Committee of the Whole concerning this Bill, and also to thank Mr. Smith for his assistance.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 14 — The Provincial Auditor Amendment Act, 2001

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated to my left is Mr. Terry Paton, who is the Provincial Comptroller, and behind him is Ms. Lori Taylor, who is the manager of the financial management branch in the provincial comptroller's division of the Department of Finance.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And welcome to the officials that you have with you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, the process for developing The Provincial Auditor Act, the changes to The Provincial Auditor Act, has been an

extensive one and I think it's been a good one. And I know that you've stated for the record back on May 2 in your address, sort of the process that was followed.

And for the record, Mr. Minister, could you confirm or would you state the process that was involved in how the actual amendments came to being for the amendments that you propose today in Bill No. 14.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to do so. This Bill has involved a very open and complete process, in fact, which involved the government, the opposition, the Public Accounts Committee and people from the private sector, as well as of course extensive consultation with the Provincial Auditor and his staff.

In February of 2000 — so that goes back almost a year and a half — the Provincial Auditor tabled a special report in the Assembly with his recommendations for amendments to the Act. And the government then established an advisory committee, which was composed of experts from the private sector to give us some advice as well. And that was headed by Dr. George Baxter, who is a professor of accounting at the University of Saskatchewan. And there were other experts from the accounting field that worked with him.

The Public Accounts Committee, of which the member opposite is the Chair, then reviewed the Provincial Auditor's recommendations and the advisory committee's recommendations. The Provincial Auditor and the Provincial Comptroller's division worked together as well.

And so by the time I presented this Bill to the legislature, it had been worked by the Provincial Auditor and his staff, the Provincial Comptroller and his staff, the private advisory committee, the Public Accounts Committee. And I'm very pleased that all of those people were able to agree on the provisions of this Bill, which seeks to make, the . . . to strengthen the independence of the Provincial Auditor's office and increase public accountability.

And I'm also very pleased to report that the Bill received support, not only from the government members but also from the opposition members in the Public Accounts Committee. They were able to unanimously agree on the contents of the Bill.

So there was a very extensive process, which involved everyone, allowed everybody to have their input, and at the end of the day resulted in everybody also agreeing on the contents of the Bill that we have before the House today.

(15:45)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for that historical bit of information.

Mr. Minister, the committee recommended a 10-year term and that is what is being introduced . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McCall: — With the kind leave of the member from

Canora-Pelly, to introduce guests.

The Chair: — I think it takes the leave of the entire committee, but is there leave granted by the committee?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to call to your attention and to the attention of the members of this place, two people seated in the west gallery. There's Gail McMartin, who hails from Watrous country, and Sonya Gail from Yorkton. They're good citizens of this province. They make a great contribution to their committees and to the larger whole, and I'd enjoin you to welcome them here to this place today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 14 — The Provincial Auditor Amendment Act, 2001 (continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, as I was indicating, in section no. 4, the appointment of the Provincial Auditor, the recommendation 3.2 indicates — actually it's 3.1(2) — indicates that the term of office will be 10 years.

Mr. Minister, your officials, I'm sure, have looked into other provinces and is this a normal period of appointment for the position of auditor in other provinces and is this something that we're copying, or are we the lead on this?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — There's no consensus in every piece of legislation but, generally speaking, the term of a provincial auditor in legislation across the country will be 8 to 10 years.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the other things that committee members struggled with for a while was trying to determine the salary of the Provincial Auditor and the proposal is the recommendation of the committee that says that it be tied to the average of the salaries of government deputy ministers. Is this also a practice that is followed in other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Again, not every province is the same. But it is not an uncommon practice to tie the salary of the Provincial Auditor to the deputy ministers' salary. So this is something that would also be done in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Chair, to the minister. The changes to the Bill indicate that the auditor now will prepare an annual report on operations and prepare a business plan, which the auditor has been doing very well over the past years that I'm familiar with.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, do you expect now that this is going to be mandated by this Act that these things must be done

through the Public Accounts Committee, do you expect any changes to the reports? Or do you expect that the reporting procedure that the auditor has followed in preparing his business plan and his annual reports will follow in the same fashion?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I don't expect any change to the way in which the Provincial Auditor conducts his business and his planning. I think what the legislation does is to formalize what already exists. In other words, it now sets out in law what the Provincial Auditor has been doing and so I don't think it will lead to much change.

Having said that of course, the Provincial Auditor being an officer of the Legislative Assembly will, if he deems it appropriate, change the way he conducts his affairs — give more reports, fewer reports, consolidated reports, special reports, and so on as he deems it necessary. And that's as it should be.

But nothing will change as a result of what the legislation says; only as a result of however the Provincial Auditor may exercise his discretion.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, clause 13 of the Bill, specifically section 20, changes to section 20 dealing with the Audit Committee. And I want to point out clauses (2), (3), and (4) and ask for your interpretation of how you feel the Audit Committee will work.

If you note, Mr. Minister, clause (2) said:

An audit committee is established.

And then no. (3) indicates that the Audit Committee is going to be five persons that are the unanimous recommendations from the Public Accounts Committee to the Speaker.

But then no. (4), Mr. Minister, and I'm wondering how you see this working when it says that the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee pursuant to the names, the unanimous recommendations:

... is to be made only after the public accounts committee has consulted with the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Crown Corporations.

We had a lot of discussion about the Audit Committee and when the Audit Committee might be used and who would be eligible to sit on the Audit Committee, and then I noticed that you've, in clause no. 4, you've said that there has to be consultation with the Crown Corps Committee, the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

What did you mean by consultation and does there have to be approval by the members of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to approve the unanimous recommendations of the PAC (Public Accounts Committee) committee before they go to the Speaker? We just need clarification of what you mean in clause no. 20(4) of the clause 13 of the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, it will be up to the Public Accounts Committee to name the members of the Audit

Committee. And the meaning of subsection 4 of section 20 is simply that before naming the members of the Audit Committee, the Public Accounts Committee will consult with the members of the Crown Corporations Committee. However, consultation implies simply that they will talk to them.

If the members of the Crown Corporations Committee cannot agree with the Public Accounts Committee, then it's quite clear under the section 20 that it is the Public Accounts Committee that will nominate the members of the Audit Committee.

So they need to consult with the Crown Corporations Committee. They do not have to have the agreement of the members of the Crown Corporations Committee.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for clarifying that, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, this Act comes into force on assent, and the changes to The Provincial Auditor Act, as you've indicated, were necessary before we moved forward. We have currently in the province, an acting auditor for the province, Mr. Wendel, and who is doing just, you know, I think an outstanding job of ensuring that the reports and the various investigations are done.

Now that this Bill will come into force, Mr. Minister, how long a process do you think will be in place before we move towards the selection of a new auditor?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Actually, Mr. Chair, I could be asking the member opposite that question in the sense that the hiring of the new Provincial Auditor will be, actually, in his control and that of the Public Accounts Committee and not in the control of the Minister of Finance — myself — or the government.

Once the Bill is passed and given Royal Assent, then the member opposite as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts Committee have the authority to commence the process to hire a new Provincial Auditor.

And I don't want to tell the member opposite how to conduct the affairs of the Public Accounts Committee; he knows that better than I do. But I would presume that what he will do is ask the Clerk of the committee to work with the Public Service Commission to commence a process to advertise for a Provincial Auditor. Then a certain length of time will be given — perhaps weeks or months; it will be the committee's decision — to get applications in. They will then have some process to review them, probably in consultation with the Clerk's office and the Public Service Commission. And ultimately they'll make a recommendation to the Legislative Assembly and so on.

So as soon as the committee can commence the process, they will be free to do so.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 19 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I do that I'd like to thank the official opposition, and in particular the Finance critic, for their assistance here today with the Bill. And also I'd like to thank the opposition Finance critic in his capacity as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee for the

good work that that committee did with government members also to achieve unanimity in support of this Bill, which I think is a good one for the reasons indicated. And I'd also like to thank Mr. Paton and Miss Taylor for assisting us here today.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 27 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2001

The Chair: — I invite the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. Sitting to my left is Mr. Kirk McGregor, who is the assistant deputy minister of taxation and intergovernmental affairs in the Department of Finance. And right behind Mr. McGregor is Mr. Kelly Laurans, who's the director of corporate taxes and incentives in the revenue division of the Department of Finance. And seated behind me is Mr. John Meldrum, who is the vice-president and corporate counsel at Saskatchewan Telecommunications — SaskTel.

(16:00)

Clause 1

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

Bill No. 27 consists of six clauses so it's a very short Bill, but I think it's a very important Bill in everyone in the province of Saskatchewan understanding the changes.

And, Mr. Minister, I noted with interest your comments in second reading of this Bill back on May 11 when you stated that basically the changes today were a technical amendment due to the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) federal changes that have come into force. And you talked about the need for replacing the existing tax structure with another tax structure.

But you also, Mr. Minister, started to indicate that this Bill was necessary to allow SaskTel the ability to charge users of its hardware, of its transmission lines a fee and that fee had to be worked out through this new tax calculation.

So, Mr. Minister, with reference to your comments of May 11, could you indicate what changes CRTC was requiring of Saskatchewan and, in this case, of your department to ensure that we kept pace with what CRTC required us to do? And could you explain what you meant by a new tax system versus a user fee of those people who would use SaskTel systems?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair. What has happened in the last number of years, as the member will know, is that SaskTel has gone from being regulated in Saskatchewan to being regulated by the CRTC, the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission. And that is a federal body.

And CRTC requires that there be a uniform allowable return on equity for all telecommunications companies of 11 per cent on utility operations representing after-tax earnings. In other

words, the CRTC will regulate how much money each telephone company can make, and that's what they do. And they say you can only have a certain rate of return.

Now if the move we're making today is not made, SaskTel would be put at a disadvantage with respect to other telecommunications companies in the sense that it would be required to pay . . . to charge its competitors less in order to have the prescribed rate of return, because the competitors also buy from companies which paid capital tax, which SaskTel doesn't do.

So what this Bill does is simply to say that SaskTel will pay the capital . . . the corporate income tax, and that then will put SaskTel on the same footing as the other companies, thereby allowing SaskTel to charge private companies that use its services the same amount of money that other telecommunications companies would also charge those companies that might use some of SaskTel's services or infrastructure.

So really what it does is to put SaskTel on a level playing field with other telecommunications companies.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the part that was confusing to me is that in your comments you've indicated that SaskTel similarly would charge its competitors who use some of its services a notional charge for corporate income tax.

And now you've indicated that that charge that's currently levied for those users of SaskTel would no longer include this corporate income taxes, if I'm reading this correctly, and that you would be replacing . . . SaskTel would be replacing that corporate income tax by this new structure that's created, which is a definition of telecommunications capital and the definition of a telecommunications capital tax; that you would put those two into place and that there would be a new calculation of a tax.

I'm not sure. What difference does this make for the actual user? Is there a change in the amount of fees? If the corporate income tax that was calculated and charged is now being replaced by this new telecommunications capital tax, is there a difference?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, there is no difference in what the user pays. We're simply replacing what was a notional charge with an actual charge, and this legislation changes the notional charge to the actual charge because the CRTC has indicated, and in fact in one case, you know, has said you can't put the notional charge in there as part of your Bill to the user. You have to have an actual charge.

And the only persons that would benefit if you didn't bring in the actual charge would be the private companies that may use SaskTel services, the cost to whom would go down because SaskTel would not be able to take a notional charge into account in calculating its cost of doing business. The CRTC says you actually have to pay the capital tax in order to properly calculate what you charge the user.

But I would indicate that in terms of the user which would be,

you know, another telecommunications company I suppose, that user would only be put in a position by this Bill that SaskTel would be able to charge the user the same fee that Manitoba Telephones or Edmonton Telephones or some other company might charge. Not more, but we don't think they should do it for less either, and that's the point.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, to the Minister. The section 58 amended, which is clause no. 5 of the Bill, indicates that the rate for the calculation of the tax payable is going to be prescribed under this section.

Who will determine that tax rate as defined under the definition of 13.2? Who will determine what that tax rate is?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It would be set by regulation, so that would be determined by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, one final question. Under the system that is operating today that SaskTel has, how many companies would be affected by the changes as proposed in Bill No. 27?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It would be less than 10 companies, Mr. Chair.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the official opposition for their co-operation with respect to the progress of this Bill through the House today. And I'd like to thank these officials from the Department of Finance and also from SaskTel.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 51 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2001

The Deputy Chair: — Will the minister be introducing any new officials?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair. With me is still Mr. McGregor, to my left. And sitting behind me is Mr. Arun Srinivas from the taxation and intergovernmental affairs division of the Department of Finance.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Welcome to your new official this afternoon, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, Bill 51 is a very extensive Bill in regards to its size. It's dealing with 33 clauses, a number of formulas, Mr. Minister, that look complicated to most people — and I'm sure they are.

Mr. Minister, could you confirm that the amendments proposed in Bill No. 51 deal entirely with the proposals that you announced back in the provincial budget?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I can confirm that except with the

additional comment that there are some provisions that deal with very technical matters that are requested by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, which are not substantive in nature. But with respect to the substantive components of the Bill, these are designed to implement the income tax changes which follow upon the tax reform that was announced in the budget of 2000 and continued in the budget of 2001.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, for a number of years now we have been stating — we, meaning the Saskatchewan Party as an opposition — we need to grow Saskatchewan, we need to encourage business, we need to encourage job growth. And we see by the latest statistics from Revenue Canada that indeed Saskatchewan has not grown. We have one of the worst records since the Great Depression.

And we recommended that we look at the corporate tax rate. The business corporate tax rate that is in place in the province of Saskatchewan right now is 8 per cent. And it's a position that we've taken that we need to ensure that Saskatchewan becomes more competitive and we've indicated some pretty drastic changes are needed in this to grow Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, your changes this year indicate that the rate of 8 per cent will be reduced to 6 per cent, effective July 1 as I understand; and that the limit, the \$200,000 ceiling will be increased to \$300,000. Is that change also coming into effect on July 1?

And then the other part, are you contemplating any other changes? In light of the dismal job creation record in the province, are you proposing any other changes to the small business corporate tax rates?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well with respect to the premise of the question, Mr. Chair, I would point out that the job numbers that the member is referring to compare the number of people working in Saskatchewan in May of this year to May of the year 2000. And the reality is that May of the year 2000 is the month in which more people were working than ever before in the history of the province. It was a very, very high number.

And it's quite true that the number of people working on a month-to-month comparison, that the member is referring to, has gone down. But the reality is that each and every year there are more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before in the history of our province, and I'm quite confident that that will continue.

In answer to the member's question, the change in the small business corporate income tax rate from 8 per cent to 6 per cent will occur on July 1 of this year. The ceiling on that tax rate will go from \$200,000 to \$300,000 on January 1, 2002.

(16:15)

And in answer to the question, will we consider doing more in the future, we are always open to suggestions. We are always considering changes. If there are changes, they'll be announced in the budget of 2002 which I look forward — if I have the opportunity — to present to the legislature at that time.

I'll certainly welcome any suggestions from the opposition. I

have noted carefully the recommendations of the economist in the paper that the official opposition released yesterday, and I note among those the observation by the opposition's economist that the job losses are not really related to tax rates — at least he doesn't mention tax rates — but related to the fundamental problems that we have in the field of agriculture, which is also something that the Minister of Economic Development has been saying.

So there appears to be verification of the government's position from the economist hired by the opposition members. Certainly we're all concerned about the farm situation. We're also concerned about the tax situation. And we will do — as we have done for the last five years at least since we've begun to reduce income taxes — we will be doing what we can as we can afford it without jeopardizing the services that people rely upon like health and education, and without putting the province back into deficit and increase the debt.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you've indicated that in this current fiscal year the business tax will be affected twice — once on July 1, once on January 1. So there will be, you know, changes that will take place to the total amount of the tax that the province receives from this area.

Mr. Minister, it's my understanding that about 65 to \$70 million worth of tax comes in from this particular sector of small business, and in light of a change from 8 to 6 per cent effective July 1, in light of 200,000 limit being increased to 300,000 limit on January 1, 2002, what have your officials concluded will be the total cost of actual revenue that you will no longer receive for this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I believe, Mr. Chair, that the reduction in the small business corporate income tax from 8 per cent to 6 per cent would probably mean a tax savings to the small businesses concerned of approximately \$19 million to \$20 million for the rate reduction. And for the change in the threshold, probably approximately \$3 million per year.

These are only estimates. We don't really know what the impact will be. But I would estimate somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$24 million tax savings to small business as a result of the budget measures this year.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, you've indicated that number and you're saying this year, so your suggestion is that for a full fiscal year, with the implementations of a new 6 per cent rate and a \$300,000 limit, that that indeed will be much larger for a full fiscal year. Is that a correct interpretation?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. And I may have been imprecise also in the way I answered the question, for which I apologize. The figures I was giving would be annualized — that is the benefit for a full year.

I believe that for this current fiscal year that we're in, because the changes come in throughout the year in July and January, I believe that the savings as a result of the reduction of the rate to 6 per cent would amount to approximately \$10.4 million. The increase of the limit to 300,000 this fiscal year would amount to about \$300,000, for a total this year of about \$10.7 million,

growing to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 22 to \$24 million per year thereafter.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for clarifying that because those were the numbers that I was using based on the January 1 implementation of being only a short period of time. So I thank you for clarifying that.

Mr. Minister, in light of the fact that small businesses in Saskatchewan will have their overall taxes reduced for this fiscal year by about \$11 million — 10.7 — do you expect to see an economic spinoff in that we should see job creation growing in some of those businesses who've had the opportunity to save some tax actually enlarge their small businesses?

Would you speculate and look into your crystal ball — and I'm sure many of your, your economists have had a chance to look at that and say, we believe that a change like this will be good for Saskatchewan because it will do something positive — could you indicate what those positive measures might be?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well certainly what we hear from the business community very loudly and very clearly, they feel that the most important thing for us to be doing right now is to cut the small business corporate income tax rate. They think that that will create a more positive business environment leading to the creation of more investment in small business, and of course small business is a big generator of jobs.

Having said that, it's very difficult to quantify these things. It's the view of the advisers in the government that the small business corporate income tax rate is one factor among many that will determine the strength of the economy, the number of jobs we have, and whether the small business sector is growing, whether employment grows. And I think generally speaking that's correct.

There are factors like what's happening in the United States, what's happening in Ontario to their economy, what is happening to the Canadian dollar, indeed what is happening in Asia because we are an exporting jurisdiction.

So I think that a variety of factors come into play. Certainly competitive taxation rates are one of them. But I don't think there's a direct, quantifiable relationship that I can describe today that would say that you cut the tax by one point, you create X number of jobs. I think it has a positive impact. In terms of being more specific than that, time will tell.

But it certainly is our hope that reducing the corporate income tax rate for small business will in fact have a positive impact on the job situation and put more people to work in the province of Saskatchewan. That's important to the government, it's important to the people, and it is certainly one of the objectives of the budget.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, has made presentations to you and of course they, on a regular basis, compare provinces, compare tax rates, and present charts to your department and to the official opposition, and of course lobby on behalf of their members which, as you've indicated, Mr. Minister, the change to the small business

tax was appreciated by members of the CFIB and those businesses that are not members of CFIB.

Mr. Minister, the change in Saskatchewan will still mean that when you do a comparison, if I look at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business latest charts, that in Saskatchewan our tax rate will still be one of the highest in Western Canada. We also note, Mr. Minister, that there are other categories.

You've indicated that your change that you've proposed will change the limit from 200,00 to 300,000. But that still creates only two categories — one below 300,000 and one above 300,000. In many other provinces there is an intermediary category, an intermediate category that doesn't jump automatically to the 17 per cent rate that you have here currently in the province for anything above 300,000.

Is there any consideration to looking at a new intermediate rate of taxation for companies that are going to be larger than \$300,000 but not, you know, super large in terms of really, really big businesses? Has your department taken a look at creating a new class?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Actually, I'm not sure that intermediate rates are all that common at the provincial level. I think the federal government has an intermediate rate. I'm not so sure that most provinces do.

But I should point out that we actually do have an intermediate rate when you take into account the treatment that is given to the manufacturing and processing sector. We have a variety of tax incentives to them which effectively decrease the amount of tax they pay pursuant to their corporate taxes.

So what I would say is when you're comparing corporate taxes, you always have to be very careful to look at the whole picture. For example, while it's true that our corporate tax rates are higher than some jurisdictions, there are also jurisdictions that have payroll taxes which we don't have. They include Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland.

And then some provinces have health care premiums which are often picked up by business. They include British Columbia and Alberta.

And I don't make the point that our taxes are lower in all categories. But I simply say while we may be higher in some categories, we are in fact lower in other categories that affect the business community. And having said that, if in the future we can do better, then we certainly will examine all suggestions including suggestions that come from the members opposite. We listen very carefully, and if there are suggestions that are affordable and will serve the economy well, then we're very willing to consider them in the future.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, a final question deals with the clause no. 23, new section 51, and it's just for clarification, Mr. Minister. If you would take a look at the Bill, which is page 7 of the Bill, I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what the actual numbers mean there when the description is that the actual amount expressed in dollars as set out in the formula in section 17 is to be \$3,618.956263. And it indicates that on three numbers. Like why do we have six

numbers on the right side of the decimal? Could you explain what that means or maybe one of your officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The reason is . . . not actually to confuse the members opposite or the Minister of Finance by using numbers like that, but because with respect to these types of credits, we are replicating the federal amount. And we want our amount to be the same as the federal amount, so that if there is a federal credit, that the Saskatchewan taxpayer will also get the credit.

And the reason the amounts become as precise as they are is that the federal government has started out with certain amounts, and those amounts have then been indexed to inflation.

And so they've gone from, you know, a set figure in dollars and cents to a different figure, as the result of their indexation is taken into account. And then we are latching onto that system and using the same numbers so that our amounts will be the same as what they use in Ottawa.

(16:30)

Mr. Chair: — Thank you, committee. This is quite a lengthy Bill. It would be nice to be able to go page by page. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 33 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the official opposition, and in particular the Finance critic, for co-operation in moving this Bill forward today.

And I'd also like to thank the officials from the Department of Finance here.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 7 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 14 — The Provincial Auditor Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 27 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 51 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Centenary Fund Vote 70

Subvote (CF01)

The Chair: — I invite the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated to my right is Mr. Cal Kirby, who is the director of facilities planning at K to 12, Education. To my left is Mr. Glen Veikle, who is the assistant deputy minister at the treasury board branch in the Department of Finance; seated to his right is Mr. Tony Antonini, who is the director of facilities and administrative services at Post-Secondary Education. And behind Mr. Veikle is Mr. Don Wincherauk, who is the assistant deputy minister at corporate services for Highways and Transportation department.

And seated two seats behind Mr. Antonini is Mr. Rick Pritchard, who is from the environment protection branch of SERM. And behind me is Mr. Larry Chaykowski, who is the acting executive director of business operations and information technology at Municipal Affairs and Housing. And to his right is Mr. Don MacAulay who is the director of parks at SERM.

And the reason there are so many people here from so many departments is because this is an initiative that crosses departments and each of these departments is responsible for part of the Centenary Capital Fund.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again, welcome to all the officials that have joined you, Mr. Minister, this afternoon for discussion of the Centenary Capital Fund.

Mr. Minister, I note your comments back a year ago, in fact, when you announced the Centenary Fund and you indicated that this was going to be a four-year project that was going to expend over the course of four years \$120 million through various departments.

And as you've indicated, Mr. Minister, you've introduced officials from six different departments and those are the

departments that are responsible for approximately \$5 million each year.

Mr. Minister, the first year of the Centenary Fund projects is over, back on March 31. And I'm wondering if you could explain to the House and to people of Saskatchewan, what accounting procedures you have put in place to ensure that the auditor of the . . . the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan, the Legislative Assembly, sees the accounting or the record keeping for the Centenary Fund for each and every one of the departments to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan know where the \$30 million was spent for the last fiscal year before we begin the expenditure of a second \$30 million?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The accounting in each department would be the same as with respect to any monies the department would receive. In other words, the Provincial Auditor has jurisdiction to account each department. The Centenary Fund would allocate funds to the department; the Provincial Auditor would audit the disposition of those funds in the same way as he will audit the disposition of any funds.

So the rules are just the same as always and the Provincial Auditor will audit the books with respect to the Centenary Fund in that way.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, in light of some of the concerns raised by many organizations and other levels of government in the province being able to access monies from the Centenary Fund, I'm wondering if you've had any thought or if you've had any suggestion made by people of the province that the Centenary Fund and allocating it in this manner could have been much more efficient if indeed the \$5 million was just allocated to the budgets of the various departments.

And I'll use the example . . . as you've indicated, you have a gentleman here from the facilities department of the K to 12 system that I believe has an excellent program in place to ensure that they deal with requests of boards of educations, the B-1s that come in, and the procedures that they deal in prioritizing the requests, and finally administering the capital projects.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, is this a duplication that you have now created through this Centenary Fund, or are you actually relying on the existing departments and the existing coordinators in each of those departments to allocate monies towards infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, I don't believe a lot of duplication is created. I believe that the money simply allow the departments to do more than they might otherwise would have been able to do.

In the case of the Department of Education, K to 12 for example, the monies are allocated using the same sort of prioritization system that is used in any event — the consultation with the stakeholders, the school boards, and so on to determine the most important capital priorities. What the money does is just enable them to do more.

And so I think where there are existing systems for allocation of

funds, those systems are used. It's just that there is a higher amount of funds so that more can be done.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, if I'm to interpret your answer then. If I look at your estimate document and I look at the expenditure for Education, I look at the expenditure for Post-Secondary Education for capital, if I was to look at Education then and say the budget under the Education column indicates that the planned capital expenditure for this fiscal year, this budget, is 24.167 million, and in Post-Secondary for instance, it says Post-Secondary capital is 29.83, then what you've indicated to those departments is that in each case their budgets are increased by \$5 million and all of the regulations, all of the rules that they put in place to determine where capital is spent will be followed for the same monies that are now coming from the Centenary Fund. Is that accurate?

(16:45)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, that's correct, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, for a number of times now we've had the Associated Entities Fund which is different than the Centenary Fund, where there's been criticism of the fact that it has become a political fund where ministers go around the province allocating resources to projects. And now the same criticism is being levied to not all of your departments, Mr. Minister, but specific departments that are now responsible for their sections of the Centenary Fund.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what systems you've put in place to ensure that there is equal access for all people and all groups that wish to apply for funds from the Centenary Fund through the municipal entity, first of all, that is responsible for a portion of the monies; through SERM which is responsible for regional parks and the developments there.

What systems have you put in place to ensure that there is no interference by the ministers responsible for those sectors; that there's no interference from the cabinet? That indeed the department that is responsible for the Centenary Fund monies has put in place a process that is known to everyone and the actual application forms are distributed to everyone to ensure that the funds that will be applied for can be allocated in a correct, proper manner.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I'm not quite sure what the member means, Mr. Chair, by no interference from cabinet. We must remember that in a cabinet system of government, cabinet is ultimately responsible for the expenditure of public funds. And certainly cabinet and cabinet ministers will play a role in the allocation of the funds under the Centenary Fund. That is the job of cabinet.

In the case of the Department of Education, as I've said, and the Department of Post-Secondary Education, as I've said and the member has said, there is a process by which the funds are allocated and that process is followed.

In the case of the Department of Highways, they have their priorities based upon the needs of the highways system and they allocate their funds accordingly.

In the case of the Department of Municipal Government, which would implement or administer the Centenary Fund with respect to three areas — namely heritage and parks, municipal infrastructure, and social housing — they have an open process whereby people can apply for funds.

In the case of the Department of the Environment, which has also been involved of course with the environmental cleanup and I believe heritage and parks aspects of the program, they have been assessing their own priorities.

But I would have to say to the member that in both of those cases, when you look at a list of where the monies have been spent in provincial parks or improving roads in rural Saskatchewan, there's so many infrastructure needs that I'm sure that the member would agree that all of the projects that have been designated for funding are projects that are of benefit to communities throughout the province.

And I think that it's fair to say that the monies are being spent on infrastructure needs that the people have identified throughout the province. There's no frivolous projects here. These are things that need to be done — to fix the schools; to fix the roads; to improve the provincial parks. And the civil service is certainly doing a very good job, I think, identifying these needs.

In the case of Municipal Government, inviting members of the public to apply for funding. In the case of other departments, using their established criteria and procedures.

And so I think the program has been working quite well. Of course there are so many infrastructure needs and a need for long-term planning that the monies have pretty much been totally spoken for, even though we're only in the second year of the program.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you have an advantage in that the first year for the Centenary Capital Fund ended back on March 31 of this year. And I'm sure that your officials from the various departments that are responsible for each of those segments of the fund have reported to you as to where the monies were allocated and the expenditures.

And I'm not in any way suggesting that any of those projects were frivolous, okay. Those were needed and necessary projects and you have an idea where that money was spent.

But, Mr. Minister, one of the . . . and you've picked highways and roads and I'll stay on that one for a second if I might, Mr. Minister.

In my constituency and in some of the other areas that we've had discussion with the Minister of Highways, for instance, there have been collapses of bridges, the complete collapse of a bridge. In my constituency, a bridge over a river has been declared unusable by the Department of Highways, by the person that is responsible for that.

And the RM of Sliding Hills has inquired with the minister, now the Department of Fisheries, Department of Coast Guard to try to obtain funding for the reconstruction of a new bridge.

They recognize that this road is not being used as a super grid would be used and the traffic on that road is limited. So they recognize that the construction of a new bridge is expensive and may not be the best spent money.

So they've approached the Minister of Highways. They didn't know about the Centenary Capital Fund, that indeed now they would like to put in a low level crossing across the river.

First of all, they had problems with the Department of Fisheries who said, well, spawning is going to be difficult. And finally, when an official came out there and recognized that the water in the spring is 10 feet above where the low level crossing would be, that shouldn't be a problem for the fish and, in fact, they could swim through the culverts if they wanted to stay at the bottom of the river.

And then, the second part was that the Coast Guard has now said no, this will create a situation where the river will no longer be navigable. And the Minister of Highways, I asked her this question and she said that's the decision of Coast Guard. It's going to cost another \$120,000 for rebuilding of the bridge because that's a need of the Coast Guard.

So I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, when we talk about the Centenary Fund and trying to allocate resources — and I really wonder about the last answer you gave — did you imply that the \$30 million for each of the next three years has already been spent and that projects that may be thought of next year are indeed out of luck because the demand is so great that all of that money is allocated?

Because here, we have an RM that needs assistance, that the Highways department is saying that the \$311 million that they have in their budget is allocated already and now you're telling me that the Centenary Fund is out of question as well.

So there is concern at that level that do all people in Saskatchewan know how to access funds from the transportation, highways, and rural roads section? Are there applications in the social housing section? Are there applications for parks and heritage projects?

Do all people in the various communities in the various service clubs, in all of those areas, do they have the information from your various departments that inform them how they can access monies through the Centenary Fund, not only in this coming fiscal year, 2001-2002, but in the two subsequent remaining years?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the amount of money available through the Centenary Fund is a limited amount of money. And I guess I would say this, that there won't be enough money in the Centenary Fund to meet all of the infrastructure needs that we have in Saskatchewan. I mean dealing with the question of the roads and the bridges, the allocation to the Department of Highways and Transportation is \$5 million per year for four years.

And as the member knows, Mr. Chair, and I know also, the amount of money we need to spend just on our portion of the highways and roads each year is at least \$300 million. And this year the budget is spending more.

And rural roads, we're giving \$23 million to the RMs (rural municipality) each year to maintain their grids. And what I meant to suggest before was that I don't think \$5 million a year for four years — and we're into the second year — is going to resolve all of the highways and roads needs. We need many more millions of dollars and tens of millions of dollars and, well, hundreds of millions of dollars each year to do that. And I simply meant to say to the member that it won't take very long for all of the money in the Centenary Fund to be spoken for.

Having said that, of course we're only in the second year. It is a four-year program. And if any municipality or other organization feels that they have a project, which is worthy of consideration, they can certainly contact the Minister of Highways and ask that consideration be given.

And I'm sure that I can't commit that the monies would be provided; I don't know how many requests there would be. But certainly I would say to the member, we would want to consider any such requests and I would not want to be heard to say that everything was decided and those requests would not be considered. Because if something more important comes along, then you should have a look at it.

But I'm simply making the point that when you get right down to it, it isn't enough money to meet all the needs that are there, and it isn't even all that much money in the scheme of things compared to the amount of money we need to spend each and every year on highways, schools, universities, SIAST, and so on.

So having said that, I want to assure the member that we are more than open to having people that are interested in accessing these funds contact the minister concerned. And it's simply a matter of writing the Minister of Municipal Affairs in the case of municipal infrastructure; writing the Minister of Highways and Transportation in the case of roads and bridges projects; and bringing matters also to the attention of the Minister of Education or Post-Secondary Education, or the Environment for that matter.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I don't have a copy of *Hansard* from last year at about this time, but I'm sure you recall, Mr. Minister, I raised the concern about applications and the fact that deadlines had come and gone before people were informed.

And I did relate to you, Mr. Minister, about a couple of applications that came out of the Leslie Beach co-operative. And one of those was for a short road system that needed to be paved, and it was a joint project of the golf course of the RM of Foam Lake and the Leslie Beach co-operative, and they had applied for assistance because Highways department had said this was not a project. I also indicated to you at that time that there was a project to upgrade the park facilities at Leslie Beach and apply for the improvement of instituting underground electricity.

And I recall at that time, and I'm paraphrasing and I might be wrong a little bit, Mr. Minister, but you said, all worthwhile projects, all projects that should be considered — very similar to your remarks today — and you said, but the \$30 million is a small amount of money and it's allocated in all of these other

areas and it's probably spent for this year, but those are great projects and reconsider it. Again same projects, no assistance.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, when you announced in the budget of a year ago, you said that the Centenary Fund was going to help address specific infrastructure needs, and then you created the six areas. I'm wondering if your departments have given any thought — and as you've indicated, we do have two years left — has your departments of . . . especially the area of municipal control, housing, and the environment, parks and heritage properties, have there been specific criteria put in place that says that the Centenary Fund monies in these specific areas will be given out based on applications that will meet this particular criteria?

And I single out those, Mr. Minister, different from the K to 12 education system and the post-secondary capital systems because those two I think operate on an entirely different kind of system. And probably Highways does as well.

But when you look at the very specific requests of small service clubs — the Leslie Beach co-operative, a small project put forward by the RM of Foam Lake and the golf course, and I'm sure that there are many other projects in all of Saskatchewan that have put forward — do the people that are submitting these requests, do they know what the criteria is and what kinds of things are in place from the various departments so that they can be . . . understand why in one instance they're accepted and then maybe in another instance they're not accepted?

(17:00)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, in answer to the question, with respect to the Department of Municipal Affairs, they set priorities as follows. They wanted to emphasize libraries, public safety facilities, parks, and other community facilities that would help the communities to celebrate the centennial.

I'm advised that they wanted to stay away from the sort of projects that would be funded by the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program and concentrate on the libraries, the public safety facilities, the parks, and other community facilities that would be consistent with celebration of the centennial in 2005.

Now having said that, the problem of course is that — and I'm sure that the project that the member is describing is a worthy project, and perhaps it will be funded at some point, perhaps not, I don't know — but I am advised that, just to give an example of the accessibility of the application process for municipalities, and community organizations, parks wanting to apply, that Municipal Government, of \$20 million that they will have over the course of four years to expend, they have already had \$67 million worth of applications.

So they obviously don't even have a third as much money as people are applying for. And I think that's to be . . . that's not a surprise, it's to be understood. And unfortunately it means that they've had to select some projects and try to prioritize. But there have been many worthy projects that I think we'd all agree would be very good projects to undertake that we have not had the resources to fund.

So the priorities are as I've described, and the reality is like everything else in life — the demand for the money is quite a bit larger than the amount of money available, unfortunately, and so they have not been able to approve all of the applications that they've got. In fact probably, you know, less than about one-third of the applications that they have received.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, while I understand the approval process of capital requests at the K to 12 structure and I understand that they're very similar in the Post-Secondary department, could you indicate now the \$67 million worth of requests through municipal infrastructure for the Centenary Fund of only 30 million — or sorry, no, it will be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 20 million, it'll be 20 million. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Who determines which of the projects are going to receive the funding? Is it a committee? Is it the deputy minister of Municipal Affairs? Is it the Minister of Municipal Affairs? Who actually evaluates the projects and says that the \$5 million for this year will be spent on the selected projects as indicated on this list?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The officials who work for the Department of Municipal Affairs evaluate the projects and they make their recommendations through the budgetary process.

Mr. Krawetz: — When those officials make those recommendations through the process then, the funds are accessed from the Centenary Fund and then are paid directly from the Centenary Fund to the various municipalities or service clubs? Or is the money paid from the Centenary Fund, or transferred from the Centenary Fund through to the Department of Municipal Affairs and then the funds are paid out from that particular department?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Once a project is approved, the funds would go directly from the General Revenue Fund to the project.

Mr. Krawetz: — Okay, Mr. Minister, then if I take you back to my first question about accountability and reporting and auditing from the first year — and again because the March 31 deadline is just passed — where will the people of Saskatchewan see the reporting, the accounting, and the auditing of all of the projects that have received funds?

Will they have to see it at the local level, for instance — and I use the example of a municipality receiving certain amounts of funds for redoing a particular park — will the reporting for each and every project that received the \$30 million, will it be reported through this Assembly so that we are assured that all \$30 million are accounted for?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the monies would be reported to this Assembly through the public accounts. In saying that the monies would be paid directly from the General Revenue Fund to a park, for example, that was recommended by the Department of Municipal Government, that should not be taken to imply that the monies would not nevertheless be considered under the administration of the Department of Municipal Government for the purpose of auditing.

So the Provincial Auditor certainly, as I said before, would have the authority to audit the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the monies that may have been sent from the General Revenue Fund to a park, for example, would form part of that audit. And the Provincial Auditor would do what he and his office do very well, which is to make sure that those monies go to the purpose for which they're intended.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you've indicated one example of \$67 million worth of requests from one of the departments. Could you indicate, Mr. Minister, or could your officials indicate to us as to how many projects were approved last year, in the first year of the funding, that are relying on a continued support from the Centenary Fund for more than one year? In other words, they may also be receiving assistance from the Centenary Fund in the current fiscal year, the third fiscal year, and the fourth fiscal year.

Are there any projects that have that type of funding commitment from any of the departments that are involved in the distribution of the Centenary Fund?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'd be very happy to provide the member with that information, but I do not have a detailed . . . I don't have the number of departments . . . or projects that may be ongoing. And I'd be happy to put that information together and send it over to the member. And the officials will put that together and we'll send it in writing.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. And I'm not sure whether you would have the answer to this question. You indicated in your responses that the Centenary Fund applications, that you were trying to encourage the departments to stay away from projects that would receive assistance from the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program.

And as we've witnessed over the last number of months, Mr. Minister, the infrastructure program in water and sewer is in need of some serious overhaul in the province of Saskatchewan. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, whether you have an answer from your department as to whether or not any projects have been approved under the Centenary Fund to actually allocate monies for sewer and water infrastructure improvements in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In the area of northern water and sewer, we have allocated \$2.5 million per year from the Centenary Fund.

And I should say that the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program and the predecessor to that, which was the Saskatchewan infrastructure program, have been focussing quite a bit on water and sewer. And one of the . . . when you really look into what's happening — this is off the Centenary Fund a bit — but when you really look into what's happening on the infrastructure spending side, most of those projects are water and sewer. And so the Centenary Fund has a slightly different focus.

But I do want to say that I understand that under the infrastructure program, every community that has had a boil drinking water advisory which applied to the infrastructure funding for their water and sewer system, received funding for water and sewer. All of which is to say, on the water and sewer

side, I think we have in fact been making significant progress.

Even before Walkerton ever happened, or North Battleford, communities were starting to work on water and sewer. That's continuing. Water and sewer will get much more emphasis than any other area. When you look at the whole infrastructure program out of the Centenary Fund, it's \$2.5 million per year in the North for water and sewer.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in your release last year, you indicated that you would address northern water and sewer needs, and that you indicated that the criteria used to allocate money from other categories within the Centenary Capital Fund will ensure that a minimum of \$5 million a year will go to the North. And I think I just heard you say you've allocated 2.5 million to the North for water and sewer specific projects.

Mr. Minister, does this description that I just read to you, which are your words from your budget, does this mean that in each of the other categories, you have allocated some of the 5 million that was for instance targeted for the K to 12 capital structure or the post-secondary structure, that you took some of those monies from each of the six areas, and allocated . . . or pooled them together to ensure that \$5 million was allocated to the North per year; and that of that 5 million, you've now said well we're not going to be worried about ensuring that each of the categories are met, that you've said now you can in the North spend 2.5 million of that 5 million on water and sewer. Is that a correct interpretation?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. Of the 5 million per year, 2.5 million for a few years could be water and sewer. There would be Highways money going into the North, social housing. It would be across the piece.

And I should say that I think that the main commitment is that over the course of four years, we want to spend \$20 million of that money on northern projects. Now I don't want to say to the member of the House that it will be exactly \$5 million per year in each of the four years. It could be that one year we'll spend 6, and the next year it may be 4, and so on.

But at the end of the day, after the four years is done, that \$20 million would have been spent in the North, for an average of \$5 million per year. That money would come out of each area into the North, and at least each of several areas. It may not be that in each year every area puts money into the North. But the money would come out of those categories into the North, at an average of \$5 million per year.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, then if I interpret your explanation, is that these six areas that you've allocated the \$5 million to each of those six areas, that it may not be that each one is reduced by about 800,000, which would make up the, you know, required 5 million. And that indeed would leave 4.2 million, if I used the example of the K to 12 schools which were supposed to receive 5 million.

What you're saying then is that department may not have had its budget reduced from 5 to 4.2 because \$800,000 would have been allocated from that specific section to make up the \$5 million that was necessary for the North.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, it's correct, Mr. Chair. We're not taking an average amount out of each category. Municipal Government is providing the 2.5 million I think last year and this year for water and sewer; and other departments . . . other categories may provide a lesser amount.

We want to spend \$20 million over the course of four years. Those amounts will not come equally out of each category, and it may vary from year to year which category is making up that \$5 million. And there are no set amounts in those categories.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for that explanation, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if there are groups in the province of Saskatchewan who are looking at projects that they would have in their communities, in their municipalities, in other areas, whether they're related to upgrading of parks or heritage properties or municipal infrastructure or bridge construction — is there hope that these projects . . . rather than saying hope, is there any type of hope that the people who would put together an application form to receive some funding under the Centenary Fund would still actually be able to allocate the Centenary Fund in each . . . in any one of the remaining two years past this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In answer to the question, Mr. Chair, I would say this: that there is certainly a hope that if there's a proposal that a community has and it's submitted, there's a hope that that would be funded. And certainly I can assure the member that it would be considered.

But I have to be completely straightforward and indicate to the member that, for example, in the area of heritage properties — that's one of the categories of the Centenary Fund, heritage properties and parks — there is approximately, I think, \$7 million available throughout the four years to fix heritage properties. But the amount of applications that the Municipal Government department has already received is somewhere in the area of \$80 million in projects, so that we have to be realistic and say that the amount of money available doesn't allow us to approve every application that we get.

And so most people that apply — unfortunately, and I think regrettably, from my point of view and I know the member's point of view, we can't do everything — so most people that apply would not get funding.

Having said that, if somebody has a good idea that should be considered, I think they should send it in. We can't promise that it would be funded, but it certainly won't be funded if it's never considered. And it may be that something comes along that really is a higher priority than something that may have already been submitted.

So I would say that people should apply if they have a project, but they should go into the process with their eyes open and with the realization that there are many, many more applications for funding than the funding available. And that's just a fact of life.

So most of the applications would not be approved; but certainly we would want to say to people: if you've got a good idea, send it in and we'll take a look at it.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, you've raised a good question that is in the minds of many people in Saskatchewan because they're not sure about the criteria. And I'll use the example that you just gave us about the heritage monies.

You've indicated that about \$7 million is available over four years for improvement to heritage properties. Then I guess, Mr. Minister, a group could come forward and lobby the department responsible for allocating this money so extensively that that department would allocate the full 7 million to one project. So the other numbers of millions of dollars worth of projects are all out of luck because the \$7 million has been allocated to one project.

And I know, Mr. Minister, in the past, whether it's been provincial governments or federal governments or whether they've been through sporting grants that I've been associated, usually there are limits placed on the amount of money that can be allocated to any one project. Usually there's a funding process that is put in place regarding the amount of people that are affected based on a per capita allocation of grant. There's certain criteria that is there, Mr. Minister.

And what I'm hearing from so many different people in the province of Saskatchewan, they don't understand. They do not understand the criteria that your departments have to evaluate projects, to in any way consider them, because as you've indicated, if a huge project comes forward and your department recommends it, all the money's gone.

Now what kind of a system have your officials put in place to ensure that: is there a maximum amount of allocation of funds to a particular project; do you want to establish that indeed a hundred projects are financed in each and every year? What criteria have your departments put in place?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well this would be evaluated by the officials. There is no maximum amount but we would be cognizant of the fact that we don't want to spend all the money on one thing. We want to spend the money on as many different things in as many communities as we can, while at the same time not spreading it so thin that you end up doing nothing at all. So we're endeavouring to do as many as we can.

I'm advised that last year there were 14 projects in heritage and parks, so it wasn't one project certainly. It was at least fourteen and we will try to do as many as we can, recognizing that we probably won't do all of them.

But I know one area that we're putting money into is the regional parks. And there's a fund of \$500,000 for regional parks — which I believe there are about 104 — to try to access funds for improvements within regional parks. That half a million dollars a year, presumably, would be spread to a number of regional parks.

In the area of highways, I know that there are a lot of projects within provincial parks that will touch on a lot of areas in the province. So I don't think we're spending all the money in one place. I think it is actually being spread to many parks and roadways within parks and highways and environment projects around the province.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one final question. You've indicated that your officials will put together some information that will be sent over to the official opposition.

Mr. Minister, I'd ask, in light of what you just said that there are 14 projects that were approved for funding under the heritage allocation of funds — and I'm sure there are many projects in each of the K to 12 system and the post-secondary system and highways, etc. — would your officials be able to put together a list that indicates the projects that have received or have been approved for funding for the last fiscal year, 2000-2001, that would be able to be sent to the official opposition?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I would be pleased to ask the officials to prepare that, to provide it to the official opposition, Mr. Chair.

Subvote (CF01) agreed to.

Vote 70 agreed to.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I know we've had a fairly productive afternoon and I want to thank you and your officials that you have in the Assembly right at this moment, plus all of the other officials that have been present this afternoon to assist in answering some of the questions that people of Saskatchewan have asked.

And I want to thank you for your co-operation in actually supplying the information at a future date. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the official opposition for their co-operation in moving these estimates along and their very good questions. And I'd also like to thank the officials from various departments for their assistance here today.

The committee reported progress.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Chair: — The first item is item 31, Bill No. 24. But by previous mutual agreement the committee will recess, by leave, for 1 hour and 35 minutes. Is that agreed?

Leave granted.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.