

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Carrot River Valley concerned about the exorbitant increases in long-term care fees. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate a reasonable, annual deductible amount for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I apologize. This is with respect to the prescription drug deductible.

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this petition is signed by the citizens of Hudson Bay.

I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning on behalf of citizens of the province who are concerned about the exorbitant long-term care fee rate increases. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

Signatures on this petition this morning, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Foam Lake, Tuffnell, and Mozart.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increase for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Bangor and the city of Yorkton.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, to presenting a petition and reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by people from the communities of Melville and Yorkton.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by individuals all from the community of Yorkton.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise this morning to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are deeply concerned about the huge increases in long-term care fees. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And this is signed by the good people of Estevan and Lampman.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan who are concerned about long-term care fees. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And it's signed by residents of Bengough, Regina, Ogema, Pangman, and Weyburn.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens, and specifically constituents of mine, concerned about the issue of long-term care fees and the increase imposed by the government. And the prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increase for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, all of the petitioners today are from the city of Swift Current, save for a couple from Cabri, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here dealing with tobacco legislation:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Findlater and Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present a petition from citizens concerned about increased fees in long-term care homes. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Yorkton, Theodore, and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Thank you.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition of citizens concerned about the changes to the crop insurance program. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

And the petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are from Allan, Colonsay, St. Denis, Meacham, Saskatoon, and Young.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned with the massive proposed increase in long-term care fees. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increase for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Melville, Springside, and Yorkton.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of the province that are concerned about the fee increase for long-term care. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from Yorkton, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise again today with a petition from citizens who are outraged by the long-term care service increase. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increase for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of Yorkton and Saltcoats.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers no. 23 and 31.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 35 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: what conditions would justify a union rejecting a qualified worker from attaining a membership within a said union; and further to that, what avenues of appeal are available to workers in this situation?

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 35 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: are silage trucks in the alfalfa dehy industry in Saskatchewan required to use clear fuel or

can they use farm fuel?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, there's a very special group from the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers who are here this morning to observe the proceedings and to . . . they have toured the building already, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly when people from the Saskatchewan Rivers constituency come to Regina it's a major excursion and so they'll be doing many things, I'm sure, throughout the city of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, it is the grade 8 class from Red Wing School. Red Wing School, Mr. Speaker, is located about 3 miles north of the city of Prince Albert. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Chris Elchuk, and by their principal, Mrs. Donald Hansen. With them also are three parent volunteers who are attending today to help keep the rather rambunctious young children, I'm sure, under somewhat control. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope the young people enjoy the proceedings today and that you enjoy your time in Regina. And at 10:30 I look forward to spending some time with you.

Mr. Speaker, to all members of the Assembly, please join me in welcoming the grade 8 class from Red Wing School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was asked as I came into the House if I might happen to know the four distinguished gentlemen that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud to say I am, and I appreciate the opportunity to introduce to you and to my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly, four gentlemen who are just on their way to Laval, Quebec. And, Mr. Speaker, they are Mr. Bill Barmby, Al Miller, Dan Hobbs, and Harry Parachoniak. Would you gentlemen please stand.

These gentlemen are going there . . . They've won the provincial team Legion cribbage championships here in this province. And now they're going down to bring back the national crown from Laval, Quebec.

They will be playing up to 20 games if they get down there and when they do get . . . I'm sure they will. And you know, they've told me that, because I'm a member of the same Legion, Mr. Speaker — I'm proud to be — they told me that, they said, you've got to know, Ron, that the jokers are not only in the decks of cards that we play with.

So I want everybody to please welcome them and wish them all the luck to bring back that national crown for our Legion.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, someone who's very well known to this Assembly and to the people of Saskatchewan. We have

behind the bar on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, Gordon MacMurchy, who of course served in cabinet, serving the people of Saskatchewan for 11 years from 1971 to 1982 with great distinction, Mr. Speaker, as well as representing, of course, the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood.

So I wonder if all members of the House could give Mr. MacMurchy a very, very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery today we have some guests and representation from my constituency, so I'd just like to recognize Bob Ivanochko who does a lot of important library and historical work in the province.

But I don't know what happened today. Bob managed to attract some other guests to sit with him. And I'd like to also introduce Sabrina Cataldo and Sarah McQuarrie, two of the most capable young women you'd care to meet. So if the members could join me in welcoming them today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues in the legislature nine grade 5 and 6 students and their teacher, Ms. Sandy Jost.

These students are from the Regina Huda School located in Regina Coronation Park in my constituency. It will be my great pleasure to meet briefly with this group at 11 o'clock, as I understand it. I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming this fine group of students and their teacher.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today flags on the Legislative Building fly at half-mast as we commemorate Saskatchewan workers injured and killed on the job.

Back in 1988 I was approached by Nadine Hunt, who was then president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, to ask if I would introduce a private member's Bill to make April 28 a statutory Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. I was very proud of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, when that Bill passed unanimously, making Saskatchewan the very first province in Canada to legislate the Day of Mourning.

Mr. Speaker, April 28 was the chosen day because it was on that day in 1914 that Canada's first Worker's Compensation Act was passed. April 28 is a day to share the grief of families who have lost a father, mother, son, daughter, sister, or brother on the job.

Mr. Speaker, it saddens to me to report that since last April 28, 25 people have died on the job in Saskatchewan — 15 through

accidents and 10 as a result of workplace-related illness. Two of these 25 workers were under the age of 25.

Mr. Speaker, for ourselves as legislators this is a day to recommit ourselves to legislation and action in support of good occupational health and safety practices and programs. We do this for those who make up the backbone of the Saskatchewan economy — Saskatchewan workers — for them and for their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:15)

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also ask all members in the House to join with me today in recognizing Sunday, April 28 as a National Day of Mourning.

Mr. Speaker, April 28 is a day that we have set aside every year to honour and remember those workers who have been killed and injured on the job. Here in Canada, Mr. Speaker, on average three workers are killed every day and hundreds more injured. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, young people are the most likely to be killed and injured on the job.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to imagine the despair and anguish felt by those who have lost loved ones through a work related accident. To all those that have recently suffered a loss of a friend or family member through a workplace accident or illness, we extend our deepest condolences and pray you will find comfort and strength with those around you.

Mr. Speaker, workplace accidents can be prevented. It is up to all of us to make our environment as safe as possible. By committing to work together we can ensure that the workplace is safe for everyone, not only those of us working today but for the younger people who, Mr. Speaker, are the workers of tomorrow.

Again I ask all members of the House to recognize Sunday, April 28 as the National Day of Mourning. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Avonlea Prairie Thunder Girls Triumph

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to the Avonlea Prairie Thunder girls and their coaches, Wayne Watson and Brad Mohr, on becoming Western Canadian champions in female hockey in Calgary recently.

In that series they won three games and tied one in the round robin to play against Manitoba in the final game, winning that game 4 to 0. Bobbi Ross scored all four goals. They are proud of their record of four shutouts against British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba, and a 1-1 tie against Hockey North.

To get to the Western Canadian finals the girls defeated the Melville Prairie Fire in semifinals with a 15 to 3 total point score in two games. Then they defeated the Regina Sharks in the best of three final series. Once again, congratulations to the

players and coaches of the Avonlea Prairie Thunder.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wanuskewin New Learning Site

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the University of Saskatchewan signed an agreement with Wanuskewin Heritage Park to create a satellite campus on the ancient Cree gathering place. This plan has the support of the Elders in Saskatoon's Native community. The goal is to create a greater awareness of Native issues on campus and to help position the University of Saskatchewan as one of the top universities in North America for expertise in Native issues.

Michael Atkinson, the university's vice-president of academics, said:

It sets the stage for development of services, programs, and activities that we can ultimately situate in Wanuskewin.

Sheila Gamble, an official from Wanuskewin who participated in the drafting of the agreement, believes that this will increase the awareness of Aboriginal people, both on and off campus and provide students with a greater understanding of Wanuskewin.

Mr. Speaker, this is an excellent initiative and one that I'm proud to have occur in my city.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Frank Edward William Hanton

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday I attended a funeral to say farewell to a long-time friend, a fellow pilot, and a war hero, Mr. Frank Edward William Hanton.

Frank was an extraordinary citizen who had an exceptional career. He played briefly with the Boston Bruins prior to the war, then became a pilot during the Second World War. His war record was outstanding. He was the top Allied train buster during the war. He shot down nine enemy aircraft in air-to-air battle. He won the Distinguished Flying Cross and became one of the guinea pigs after he was badly burned from crash landing a damaged aircraft.

The guinea pigs, by the way, were nicknamed because of the many new surgical procedures that were used on these patients — they were in the experimental stage — including plastic surgery.

Post-war, Frank flew with Trans-Canada Airlines before joining the Manitoba government air services, until 1978 when he moved to Regina to become the director of Saskatchewan government executive transport and air ambulance service.

In addition to being involved in the Canadian Fighter Pilots Association, the Air Force Association, and numerous other associations, Mr. Hanton also served two terms as aide-de-camp

to a Lieutenant Governor and was honorary colonel of the Flying Training School at Moose Jaw.

Frank accumulated some 37,000 flying hours during his career. For anyone that flies, they will realize that this is quite a outstanding achievement. Frank Hanton was truly a Canadian hero.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Girl Guides Annual Meeting and Awards

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you. During volunteer week, we've recognized many, but not nearly all of the volunteers who help make our province the best place in Canada to live.

Well I want to mention yet another group. Last Saturday I attended the annual banquet and awards evening of the Saskatchewan Council of Guides Canada, an organization lovingly maintained since 1910 by literally thousands of volunteers. It was a very enjoyable evening, Mr. Speaker, and to me a very educational one.

The evening was expertly chaired by a constituent of mine, Claire Brown. During the evening Claire and the provincial commissioner, Sheila Fahlman, told me a number of facts about the Guides, some of which I pass on to you.

Did you know, for instance, that the first Girl Guide unit in Canada was formed in Moose Jaw in 1910? And did you know that those cookies we all buy and should be buying again this week were first baked in Moose Jaw and sold there and in Regina and surrounding area?

Did you know that annually the Guides in Regina collect about 50 tonnes of food for the food bank? And that they are partners in the Second Glance Magazine Reuse program which assists over 35 community agencies in a variety of literary purposes?

And much, much more, Mr. Speaker. For nearly a century the Guides have been an integral part of our provincial as well as our national community.

As I left the Guides meeting, I was given a badge that said simply: you go, girl. And they do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

IMC Esterhazy Donation of \$40,000 to Yorkton Hospital

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hats off, Mr. Speaker, to International Minerals and Chemical, Esterhazy, who made a \$40,000 donation to The Health Foundation of East Central Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this \$40,000 went towards the purchase of a much needed hemodialysis unit for the Yorkton hospital. Hemodialysis is literally a life-saving treatment and each treatment can take three to four hours.

Mr. Speaker, instead of having to make the long journey to Regina or Saskatoon three or four times a week, and thanks to IMC (International Minerals and Chemical Corporation

(Canada) Ltd.), eight more local area patients can now receive their hemodialysis treatment in Yorkton.

IMC Esterhazy's gracious donation will be very much appreciated by not only the requiring . . . those requiring dialysis, but also by their families and friends as well — people who would often have to accompany them on their round trips.

Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House know that rural residents are faced with long and tiring journeys to access much needed health care. IMC Esterhazy's gift will make a difference in the lives of many east central residents.

But IMC Esterhazy's gift also means much more, Mr. Speaker. In the words of general manager Don Hood:

We need facilities and equipment that not only provides vital services to our residents, but that can attract and hold onto (our) doctors. (This is our) . . . key to our health care success.

Mr. Speaker, again I ask everyone to join me in thanking IMC Esterhazy for their gracious donation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canora Credit Union Grows at Twice the Provincial Average

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, more good news from rural Saskatchewan. With the end of winter things are starting to turn green. But in Canora, Kuroki, Sturgis, and Wadena, there's twice as much green.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, credit unions are thriving in rural Saskatchewan. But the Canora Credit Union is having a particularly good year. This year the Canora Credit Union's growth was twice the provincial average.

Total assets reached a new record of \$130 million, a growth of \$14 million, or 12 per cent. Member deposits increased by 13 million to a new level of \$122 million.

Strong growth was experienced by all branches located in Canora, Kuroki, Sturgis, and Wadena. The overall growth of the credit union reached 12 per cent.

Strong growth and sound fiscal management, a strategy employed by this government, returned the sum of \$275,000 to members. This raised the total of patronage payments over the past four years to over \$1 million.

Furthermore, it was announced that the construction of the Canora office building is nearing completion. The plans to move to the new location in May, with a grand opening in June, are well underway.

Mr. Speaker, strong growth, sound fiscal management, increased jobs, and a climate for investment. Sounds like a recipe of success to me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Increase in Long-Term Care Fees

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we raised the concerns of Ken Stevenson and the 138 per cent long-term care fee increase that he faces.

He works full-time and after his payroll deductions, his net income will fall over \$500 short of what he'll have to pay for long-term care after October 1.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health says that situations like Ken's will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Well the information the Department of Health circulated to long-term care residents and their families certainly didn't indicate that at all.

And I'm sure that there are many other disabled people in Ken's situation who would like to know exactly where they can line up to get the exemptions that they require.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister elaborate on exactly who in the Department of Health will make the decision on how much disposable income a person in long-term care should be allowed to keep?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there has been a system for many years that deals with the assessment of long-term care fees. It's done with the information being gathered in the health districts by the people who actually work with the individuals who may end up in long-term care. That information is sent to an assessment department in the Department of Health here in Regina and they work with the information, work with the people, make sure that all of the parameters are understood, and then a fee is assessed.

And that's the process that's been there for many years. That process will continue because there are more questions now; we have had some more people working together with them.

But we have to remember it's October 1 when this comes into place. We have a number of months for people's individual situations to be assessed so that an appropriate fee can be set for that person.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's an obvious question. The minister says that long-term residents may have their financial situations assessed on a case-by-case basis that'll determine what the appropriate difficulties that people are going to have to experience as a result of this enormous fee hike increase.

Well what are the guidelines for this assessment? Does someone in the department have the minister's permission to determine that one long-term care resident can have an exemption when another one can't? Is there someone who determines how much a long-term care resident spouse is forced to live on when they are not in the unit themselves? Is there

someone who'll decide if they can reduce Ken Stevenson's fees so he won't have to go into debt in order to pay them?

Mr. Speaker, who is the person in the department that is going to act as judge and jury to determine how much money long-term care residents can keep?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this process has been in place for a number of years. And it does have base policy points that it works at. For individuals who have a concern, they send the information to the department, working with the local health district officials often, and the information is gathered and it's done on a basis that follows the policies and the regulations that are set out in this particular area, and the fees are calculated.

And that's the process we've had for many years. We will be using this same process here. I ask the member opposite if he gets people who have concerns to make sure that they raise the questions with the appropriate people, because unfortunately the kind of information and the way that the members opposite raise these issues just causes problems for everybody.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that no one is going to have to pay more than their net income for long-term care fees. But, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member may start over.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier said yesterday that no one will have to pay more than their net income for long-term care fees, which means — which means, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Mr. Gantefoer: — The members opposite are trying to mask the fact that what the Premier was saying was that indeed they may take all of their net income and that was quite all right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty obvious that this government did not consider what they were doing when they decided to move the fee increases from 50 per cent of income to 90 per cent. The minister says, we're going to carry on as normal. Well, Mr. Speaker, taking 90 per cent of people's income is not normal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is pretty obvious that this government clobbered together this fee increase in order to balance their budget. Mr. Speaker, instead of having half the department working on creating exemptions, why doesn't this minister do the right thing and simply cancel this outrageous fee increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we increased the amount in this particular area from \$10 million . . . by \$10 million to \$337 million. Those are Saskatchewan taxpayers that pay that. We don't get any federal funds on this amount at all.

And what we are doing is we are asking some of those people who have a little more income to contribute more to the cost of the long-term care. But there isn't anybody who will be asked to take any of their assets to pay for this. We're only taking it from their income . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley to maintain order — help us maintain order.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's been a curious week. When we talk about money and increased cost to taxpayers, we usually hear very strongly from a fellow named Mr. Richard Truscott and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. We haven't heard a peep from him. We haven't heard from any of these people at all about the taxation issues as it relates to this whole issue. Because what we're trying to do is work within the resources that we have and ask some of the people who have a few more resources to contribute in this particular area.

So I ask the members opposite: their plan in '99 said, let's freeze Health. Well they'd be way behind now. What are they doing now? Are they saying let's increase taxes to deal with this? Where are they going to get the money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know what the government is trying to do, but why don't they do the right thing and roll this program back to where it was?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health keeps saying that he hasn't received any letters regarding long-term care that we've been reading in the House. But, Mr. Speaker, in the majority of cases, the letter has gone directly to the minister's office and has been cc'd (carbon copy) to us.

In fact, I have a copy of an e-mail right here in my possession dated April 23. It's addressed to the Minister of Health and to the Premier. And in it, Mr. Det Gaul writes, and I'm quoting now:

On March 28 I e-mailed both of you expressing my concerns on the unfair large increase in long term care fees. As of this time I have not received a reply from either of you gentlemen.

Mr. Speaker, it's almost one month since Mr. Gaul e-mailed his concerns to the Premier and to the Minister of Health.

Why has he not received a reply from either members of the NDP (New Democratic Party) cabinet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, when we receive letters from the public, we respond to those letters. And we do so in an

orderly fashion to make sure we get the right information. Because so often they are writing because they've received some kind of misinformation from the members opposite. Now we will be responding to the individual that is mentioned.

But my point from before was not that we don't get some of the letters, it's just that there appear to be many letters the members opposite read, but they don't send them over here. So I would appreciate them providing me a copy of the letters that they have read in the House so that I could make sure that we do have them so that we can respond to them.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is what being government is all about; it's responding to people, making sure that they get the appropriate information, and making sure that the kinds of misinformation that the members opposite spread all over the place is countered by the logical, practical points that are needed to deal with the particular problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to table a copy of the letter that I just quoted from for the minister's sake.

Furthermore, the list of complainants must be fairly long if it's taking more than a month to answer those very important letters.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's response to the people who have concerns about the long-term care fees should contact his office for information is really pretty tough to swallow when people can't even get a response to their original letters.

Mr. Gaul makes several points in his e-mail which I hope was at least read by the minister or his staff. He says and I quote again:

. . . you state the wealthy should pay more. This is the rhetoric I expected from you. The fact is someone with \$50,000 of income is NOT Wealthy. You targeted people in middle income (ranges) more than wealthy people.

(Here's an example) Someone with (a) \$24,000 annual income will pay 86 . . . per cent of his income in fees . . . Someone with \$77,000 (of) . . . annual income will pay 66 per cent of (that) . . . income in fees.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gaul describes this tax grab perfectly.

Will the minister explain why the NDP believes someone earning \$24,000 a year is wealthy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are putting in \$337 million out of a total cost for the long-term care system of \$445 million. We are . . . And this money comes from the Saskatchewan people and that, I think, shows a very strong commitment to the people that require the long-term care.

What we've done is we've asked some of the people who have a bit more income to contribute toward the cost of this particular service. And we will continue to work with people to make sure that the appropriate fees are set to relate to their particular situation. And what I would remind the member opposite is that these kinds of increases are coming into effect October 1.

We are working with people to assess what their particular situations are. Many of them, it's fairly straightforward. Other times, there are some challenges. And what we need to do is make sure that we continue to work with everybody to get the right kind of fee set, so that people can get the appropriate care and that we can have a system that's sustainable in the long-term.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I have another letter from a person concerned about the long-term care fee hike. It's an e-mail from Mr. Cliff Belter who asks and I quote:

What happens to a couple making \$3,300 per month in pensions with one person in a care facility?

And he goes on to say:

What happens is that the payment to the health Board is \$828 plus 90 per cent . . . for a total of \$2,903. (This) . . . information on rates was taken from the Sask Health site.

He says:

My question is how does the one not in the facility survive on \$397 per month and what will your party do about it if you are the next Government?

Mr. Speaker, I will answer the last question for Mr. Belter by assuring him that the Saskatchewan Party will cancel this unfair tax on long-term care for the residents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — But, Mr. Speaker, it's up to the minister to answer the first question.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Would the member go directly to the question.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, it's up to the minister to answer the first question: how does the spouse at home survive on \$397 a month?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely disappointed in that particular member because I think he has more common sense than what that particular letter that he read. Because this is exactly the issue that . . . This is exactly the issue that has been discussed over the past month.

The system works whereby if the party that goes into the long-term care home has a lesser income, then you use that

smaller income. So for example if it's the wife that goes in and basically she just has her old age pension and maybe a supplement, that amount is used for calculating the fee.

If the husband or the person with the higher income goes into the home, then you look at, well what are the total income between the family, and you divide that income between them. And if there are challenges there, there are other programs around special support or drug plan or other things that can be of assistance.

So, Mr. Speaker, it does no good for any of us to have a member, who I think knows what I've just said, come and read a letter like this when he could explain that to the person himself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gaming Agreement with Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Liquor and Gaming. Yesterday the NDP announced the government has signed a new gaming agreement with First Nations. This agreement is for 25 years, by far the longest agreement in the country.

Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of gaming in Saskatchewan received intense scrutiny after the financial scandal at SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) was revealed. But there are still questions about Liquor and Gaming department's role in the controversy, and the public trust surrounding this deal is very fragile.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why a 25-year agreement was necessary and why the people of Saskatchewan should believe that being locked into this deal for 25 years is a good thing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to respond to the member's question. She did raise the word trust and that's a key word here because there is trust between this side of the House and First Nations. And we respect that mutual trust.

The 25-year agreement, Mr. Speaker, still allows us to speak to one another on a variety of issues. We have stricter accountability issues written into the agreement. Mr. Speaker, this is good for the First Nations community, it's good for the people of this province. It's necessary First Nations continue . . . have a predictable and stable network. Communities benefit, the Aboriginal community benefits through employment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what their position is of the opposition now. At one point the leader said, this is great; let's get it signed immediately; let's hurry up. And all of a sudden there seems to be a change in the word trust. Who do they not trust, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the recent histories of problems both with Liquor and Gaming . . .

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent history of problems both with Liquor and Gaming and with SIGA and the fact that there are still many questions about the investigation into former SIGA members is the reason that there are concerns about this new agreement.

There has been absolutely no public consultation by the NDP or the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) about the new gaming agreement and what it would involve. The people of Saskatchewan should have had input into what the NDP was proposing to commit them to. And they should have had input into the steps that the government would take to ensure regulation of the industry.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP not held public consultations across the province about this new gaming agreement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member, and I'm sure the members will know, that in business agreements . . . There are a lot of them — Weyerhaeuser — agreements that we sign with people as a matter of mutual trust, confidence in one another, respect for people whose efforts are to create economic activity for the benefit of their people, for this great province of ours, and to contribute to a great number of programs that a number of the members opposite continue to criticize.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really not sure whether these folks support economic activity and opportunities for First Nations people. There seems to be a question in the opposition's mind about whether we should be trusting First Nations or not. We do, Mr. Speaker. They've proven they want to be our partners and we will continue to have confidence in them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

Use of Proceeds From Lottery Licences Issued by Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask another question on another topic. I have here a copy of an application for a lottery licence from Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming. It says right on the liquor licence application, and I quote:

The Criminal Code of Canada requires that proceeds from charitable gaming be used for charitable or religious purposes only.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister of Liquor and Gaming confirm that this is the law, that lottery licences are issued if the proceeds are used for charitable or religious purposes only?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure whether the member is talking about charities or whether she's

talking about our gaming industry. There are laws and provisions for lottery licences and there are . . . they are in place. And any time that people request licences, for a variety of lotteries, for charities, they are dealt with on the basis of each individual circumstances. And we'd be happy to respond to those inquiries and determinations, under what circumstances the lotteries and what charities are involved within the context of those applications.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from the member from Saskatoon Meewasin to her NDP supporters. She is asking them to sell lottery tickets with the proceeds to go to the NDP election campaign. The letter also notes that the Saskatoon Meewasin NDP has been issued a lottery licence by Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming.

Mr. Speaker, that licence application form clearly states that proceeds from a lottery are to go to charitable or religious purposes only. Yet proceeds from this lottery are going right into the NDP's election war chest.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how did the Saskatoon Meewasin NDP association get a lottery licence from Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is typical of the opposition. They come in with some facts — and we do not have all the facts, they haven't shared those with us. I'll be happy, I'll be happy, I'll be happy to have that response . . . I'll be happy to respond to that question if that letter is tabled. I'll be happy to review if there are some misappropriation, we will certainly deal with it.

I want to see those letters. We get lots of those letters and we deal with them. If they're within the guidelines, within the law, by all means we approve them. If there's any question about them, they're not approved.

So, Mr. Speaker, I need the letter. I need the details. I need all the facts before I can stand in this House and factually respond.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sending a copy of the letter to the minister of Liquor and Gaming. The facts are, Mr. Speaker, that proceeds are only to go to charitable and religious organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the lottery licence clearly states that that's where it must go. As far as I know, the NDP is not a charity or a religious organization. Yet somehow SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) gave them a lottery licence.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear this money is to be used for the NDP election campaign. It says right in the letter, as the minister will see, one of the main ingredients for the victory is money. The profits from this lottery is designed for political education in preparation for the next election.

Mr. Speaker, how did the NDP get a lottery licence when lottery licences are only supposed to go to charity or religious groups?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the questions and I appreciate the concerns. And I believe we have one side of the story. Here we have the facts and I appreciate very much the letter — I will look into it.

All of these requests do not always come through the minister's office, but I would be more than happy to look at . . . not unlike the '80s.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind everybody in this House again that sometimes we forget the reasons we were sent here. My understanding is we were elected on behalf of our constituents to come here to work together to solve problems and issues, not to indicate mistrust . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that these situations are brought to our attention. And we deal with them — we deal with them on a daily basis. If there's a concern, we try to work together to resolve any issues or concerns and make sure that things are done properly. I welcome members opposite if they have any kinds of these situations brought to their attention, I will certainly review them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue taken somewhat lightly by the minister of Liquor and Gaming.

Mr. Speaker, the issues are, one, the letter states that the main ingredient for victory is money. The profits will be used for political education and preparation for the next election.

Based on these facts, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will the minister stand in the House today and tell us how he thinks this should be dealt with, and whether the NDP association from Meewasin should have received a lottery licence?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has my assurance that I will look into this in depth. Now that they've been good enough to supply me with the details and the information, it will be reviewed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Prince of Wales Scholarship Fund

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the House today in my capacity as the Minister of Learning.

Mr. Speaker, in a few moments, it will be my great pleasure to introduce the first reading for the new provisions to The Education Act, 1995, authorizing the government to establish the Prince of Wales Scholarship Fund.

Mr. Speaker, this time last year the Premier announced the scholarships as the province's gift to the Prince of Wales during his visit to Saskatchewan. These scholarships reflect the special interests of His Royal Highness in youth and in education.

In his remarks on April 28, 2001, His Royal Highness expressed his delight in the Premier's choice of the Prince of Wales scholarships as a gift and added, and I quote:

I much look forward to meeting my scholars in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the province's new Prince of Wales scholarships are available to grade 11 community school students to assist them in completing their secondary education. There will be 10 annual scholarships at a total . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, students will be nominated for scholarships during grade 11 and will receive their award in two payments, in the fall and in the spring, during their grade 12 year.

Mr. Speaker, nomination forms have been provided to community high schools. By the end of the current school year, the first recipients to receive scholarships from the program will be selected by representatives of Saskatchewan's community schools.

Mr. Speaker, guided by the spirit of the Role of the School Task Force we have more than doubled the number of community schools across Saskatchewan. Last fall we expanded the program into secondary as well as rural schools.

Mr. Speaker, there are now 17 community high schools in Saskatchewan, as well as 11 K to 12 community schools where grade 11 students are eligible to be nominated for this Prince of Wales scholarship. Mr. Speaker, community schools are having a positive impact in meeting the diverse needs of children and youth, their families, and their communities. With the future vision of School^{PLUS}, we are encouraging the adoption of the community school philosophy in all schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of Saskatchewan Learning to administer the Prince of Wales Scholarship Fund with the support of community partners. Individuals and organizations will have the opportunity to make additional contributions and eventually increase the number of scholarships awarded annually.

Mr. Speaker, through community education and with assistance from the Prince of Wales Scholarship Fund, we are building on student success at school and we are building on the future of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were privileged

last year as a province to have a royal visit here, and it was also exciting to see the positive response that we received there when the Prince of Wales Scholarship Fund was announced.

The role of the community schools in Saskatchewan was part of what this is all about. It's just unfortunate that this concept's been around since about '91-'92 and it's taken this government until the last year or two to actually get involved in that particular program.

The scholarship program, the Prince of Wales, is available to grade 11 community school students to assist them in completing their secondary education. There will be 10 of those annual scholarships at a total value of \$500 each.

Now the Community Schools is an excellent program and I think this works in very well with that particular program to give special students with special needs in situations, to give them the opportunity to complete their education. And it's one of the highlights I think of this session that we're probably doing, is to do this sort of thing for the youth of tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 34 – The Education Amendment Act, 2002 Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 34, The Education Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

The Speaker: — Why is the member . . . Minister of Labour on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly to make a statement in regards to the Day of Mourning.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Day of Mourning

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sunday is the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

April 28 is a day to mourn, a day to remember the men and women who have given their lives to build this province and this nation. And it's a day to renew our commitment to doing everything possible to reduce the terrible toll taken by workplace injuries and deaths.

Twenty-five Saskatchewan workers have died in the last 12 months as a result of workplace accidents or illnesses. Thousands more have been injured. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to all those who have experienced a workplace

tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to read the record . . . read into the record the names of the 25 people who have died on the job this year. I also ask that when I have finished reading the names that the hon. members would rise and observe a moment of silence in their honour.

Merle Henry, Murray Lautermilch, David Ouellette, Kimberley Ginther, Aaron Toms, Aaron Kennedy, Kevin Malaryk, Brian Thera, David Surine, David Cardinal, John Davies, James Chase, Bruce Thimm, Joseph Kainberger, Gerald St. Amour, Lawrence Parchewsky, Allan Kuffner, Ray Marriott, Richard Labiuk, Cory Nedelec, Kevin Kindrachuk, Albert Fix, Roy Ferguson, Alan Boyden, and Bertrand Blais.

The Assembly observed a moment of silence.

(11:00)

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave to reply.

Leave granted.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and speak to this very important issue regarding the National Day of Mourning.

Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are also aware of the significance and impact of this Sunday, April 28. Every year, April 28 is the day that Canadians from across the country honour their friends and colleagues who have been killed or injured on the job.

April 28 is the day that we take time to pause and remember not only those who are no longer with us but also those whose lives have been forever changed because of these most tragic of incidents. We also remember those who have suffered a serious work-related injury or illness and are now struggling to come to terms with the many life changes that this signifies.

April 28 is also a day for remembering that workplace safety begins with each of us, not only as individual workers but also as members of a team. By committing to work together with all sectors, we know that workplace accidents can be prevented.

In Canada, approximately 1 worker out of 16 is injured at work. Or in other terms, that means about every 10 seconds someone is hurt at work. On average 3 workers are killed every day. Here in Saskatchewan 25 people were killed last year and many more were injured.

It is also deeply troubling to know that many workplace accidents often involve young people, the workforce of tomorrow. In fact nearly 17,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 19 are injured every year. These young people are often still attending school and working at part-time jobs.

All of these are sobering statistics and ones that cannot and must not be ignored. It's crucial that ongoing education and prevention training is provided to ensure a safe work environment for everyone.

It's interesting to know that Canada was the country responsible for initiating the Day of Mourning back in 1914. Nearly a century later, April 28 has become an international day of remembrance. Nearly 100 countries worldwide recognize the Day of Mourning. It is a day observed by unions, labour bodies, and councils and all levels of government.

For Canadians, 2002's Day of Mourning marks the 10th-year anniversary of the Westray Mine disaster in Nova Scotia that killed 26 miners. For North Americans, the Day of Mourning is also an excellent opportunity to remember the hundreds who perished trying to save the lives of others during September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

Coping with losing a loved one is not easy. Coping with losing a loved one through a work-related accident is absolutely devastating. There are so many questions that must be answered, so many to be taken care of, and so many memories left to deal with.

To those who have lost a family member or friend or a colleague through a work-related accident, we extend our deepest condolences and pray that you will continue to find strength and peace from those around you.

To those who are struggling to come to terms with the after-effects of a work-related illness or injury, we extend our sympathies and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

On April 28, the National Day of Mourning, what better time for all of us to commit to work together to reduce workplace accidents and fatalities. We will be safer and more productive for it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 20 — The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Consumer Protection Act basically is or does exactly what the title in this case indicates. And it places requirements on companies doing business over the Internet and that's why this Bill becomes so necessary or at least the consideration of it does.

Over the Internet to supply a sales contract within 15 days. So if someone does something over the Internet, basically there has to be some hardcopy has to come back within 15 days. And it also gives the consumer an opportunity to cancel Internet purchases up to 7 days after receiving the contract or if goods are not delivered within 30 days.

Now we have similar pieces of legislation in place for things that happen within our province, sales that happen within the province, where within a certain number of days if we find out that that deal is not what we thought we should get involved in or that we want to get involved in, the opportunity to cancel it.

This also allows for courts to stop unwarranted cancellations, so that if someone is cancelling for things that are of no specific value or reason, the courts can sort of say that cancellation isn't valid.

With the changing face, as I said, Mr. Speaker, of commerce and people doing all kinds of business on the Internet, whether it's with major companies, whether it's sort of through private sales where we're talking about the eBay and this sort of thing, this is becoming something that's fairly necessary. Internet commerce is a growing force. And even though it's only probably in single digits as far as a percentage of business that's being done in our province, this is no doubt going to grow. And so it's good that we look at some preventative measures for, you know, things that are going on that might be of a shoddy nature.

We're only understanding what's . . . what could go wrong and, as I said, we have protections for people doing business in our cities and our communities and in rural Saskatchewan. This at least, what it does do, is put some of those protections on to paper. It requires, as I said, that purchase agreements must be provided within 15 days, because you made the deal over the Internet and now you need some paperwork to ensure that. These are necessary features and I guess we support those particular features. But there are a few other things that we need to mention as well.

Some of the changes here relate to stolen or lost credit cards and some of them . . . and some limits that are being put on liabilities that are there for the credit card holders in those cases, as I said, of lost or stolen cards. And I don't think any of us would have any concern with that.

The minister stated that this piece of legislation is a result of a template agreed on by the ministers of Justice across the country. And I believe we're probably going to end up with half a dozen to a dozen pieces of legislation in the House this session, Mr. Speaker, where, because of this meeting of the Justice ministers across the province], we're looking to sort of streamline and do things in similar fashion in each province.

And to a large extent, we support that, provided that those particular initiatives are actually valid and are good initiatives. Just because we happen to have, you know, just a little less than a dozen Justice ministers get together to contemplate these things doesn't mean that they're always what the people of the provinces or the people of Canada want.

We do have some questions about the enforcement of this Bill in the wake of a global marketplace. So you make a deal with, you know, some company, some organization in Texas or Australia or China, wherever else, and if we find out that that purchase, that deal that was made, that interaction of business isn't what we thought it should be and we feel that we've suffered an injustice there, what in the world can the province of Saskatchewan do to address companies in other countries, in

other parts of the world.

And so when we look at that we have some problems.

Does this have an effect on international commerce? What are the enforcement mechanisms? And I think that's the key thing.

It's nice to stand here as individual legislators and say we have concern for people doing some purchasing through the Internet — and yes, we all do. But just to go ahead and say here's a piece of legislation — and we now say that this can't be done — but the people we are talking about are out of country, it doesn't give us any opportunity to enforce that. Those are important questions.

International rules are very, very difficult. We see that with the difficulties that happen on all international scenes throughout the world.

And so we're waiting back for some more word from people who are consulting on this Bill. We have some definite concerns about it; the concerns that I've mentioned right here. And we're going to want to have some information from the government side on what they think the opportunities are to enforce this on a worldwide scale. And that part hasn't shown up in this particular piece of legislation at all.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn this Bill at this time.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 21

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 21 — The Collection Agents Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Collection Agents Amendment Act. This one I think is one that will need a lot of discussion because there are ramifications to this particular Bill that I really feel the government hasn't looked at at all.

At first blush they would probably say, well, we just don't want the average consumer to be harassed by a collection agency. Okay, if the operative word there is, being harassed, I don't think anyone would be concerned about that. However, there are some other things that need to be taken into consideration here.

We have in those situations someone who's purchased something and they're not paying for it. Now, as far as the business person's concerned there is very little difference in the effect of purchasing something, charging it, not paying for it, and just taking it and walking out. The financial impact on that particular business — there's absolutely no difference between whether it's stolen or not paid for.

And so I think we have to look at the gravity of the situation, Mr. Speaker, when we're asking what is the total effect going to be.

On the one side I don't think we need to pass or we ought to pass any piece of legislation that allows consumers to willy-nilly go and purchase something, not pay for it, charge it, and essentially being given a very soft attitude toward those ongoing charges which they are refusing to pay for.

Businesses throughout this province, Mr. Speaker, have some of the old tradition still left that this province was built on, and that's a tradition of trust. And it's a very, very important thing in this whole business concept where the person comes in and says, okay can I charge this? I want the product but I don't want to pay for it today; I'd like to pay for it at some particular time. And in general, Mr. Speaker, what business will do, they will have some date on that month and a certain number of days from there at which that payment is supposed to be made.

Now usually that will give the person who gets the credit some place between maybe 20 days to maybe 60 days at the most, in most cases, leeway in which to pay that bill. Now what's happened is that that person who's had the product has had use of the product, has not paid any usage, has not paid any interest on it for that period of time — that cost has been borne by the business person and now it becomes due. Okay? So a notice will have gone out saying you need to pay this.

First of all the person who purchased it knows very well they walked out of that business with that particular bit of product, and they know the commitment was made that this is charged for a certain number of days. So they're very well aware of that. The paperwork comes through — they still decide not to pay for it. Now it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that we need to leave almost every recourse open to the business to get the money for that product. If not, the effect on that business is absolutely no different than if that particular item had been stolen.

And that sounds very serious but it is very serious because there are many businesses that have very large charge accounts, and if they can't collect that it is some very serious hardships on the business. Not only is that a hardship on the business it probably comes back to be a hardship on other good customers; customers who pay their bills either directly, immediately, or do not misuse their charge capabilities. Because the company in order to stay in business has to get the money from some place they then are forced to get it from the paying customers.

(11:15)

And so your good paying customer actually has to subsidize the ones who are intending to renege on their bills. Now this particular Bill comes down a whole lot to, you send a letter or sue them, and it closes the door on a lot of options, many options that collection agencies had. And, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure if the members opposite are aware of that because most of them seem to have a very small knowledge of business transactions.

Businesses do not like to go to collection agencies because collection agencies, Mr. Speaker, are moderately expensive. They take a good-sized cut out of what they're going to collect. And they need to do that, Mr. Speaker, because they're not going to be able to collect on every particular bill that they're given to collect on. Which means that on those that they can't collect on . . . The agreement is usually such, if we can't collect

on it, I guess we're not going to charge the business for the work that we did. So they have to have some fairly high fees on those sorts of things.

So business would just as soon not have to go to a collection agency because it cuts into the money that they could possibly make. In fact in most cases they're left with less than their wholesale cost of goods if they do collect through a collection agency.

So this is not something that businesses enter into willy-nilly and say, well we've got some bills over here, let's just fire them off to a collection agency and they can go ahead and collect it. Because they're not going to get back enough money to have made that transaction worthwhile in the first place.

So I think we need to understand that, and I don't think the people opposite have any concept of exactly how that operates.

Now once it's given to a collection agency, they need to have numerous tools at their disposal to be able to collect these bills. They need to be able to find out where is this person at, because they may not have given the correct address when they charged this.

Because there are individuals, Mr. Speaker, who when they go in to charge something, have absolutely no intention of paying for it. There are others, Mr. Speaker, who do intend to pay for it and then due to some circumstance in their personal lives, find it unable . . . find themselves unable to make those payments.

Now in most cases, and I would say almost all cases, if they find themselves in those circumstances and they go to the business and say, okay I charged this. I intended to pay for it; my circumstance, however, is now totally different. I've lost a job, there's been a disaster in the family, and so I can't make this payment. Can I make some sort of arrangement, some sort of accommodation?

And the business, as I said earlier on, is going to say, I'm better off to make this accommodation and pay the bank some percentages on the money that they have to use to cover that rather than go to a collection agency immediately because that's a fairly major cost.

So businesses are not going to want to do that. They will make those arrangements with the person who did . . . created the charge account in almost every case.

So the collection agencies by and large go after those particular groups who really may not have had much of an intention of paying for it in the first place or, once the situation has changed, has said, I think I can walk away from this. So there are some very, very definite concerns. And as I said, businesses only use this as last resort.

Now unfortunately there are probably a few collection agencies around that are a little rough around the edges. And I think that's what is hoped is going to be addressed in this. However I think this has gone way too far, Mr. Speaker.

We also have to look at a few other things that are involved in this. It says the most serious amendments prohibits a collection

agency from discussing the debt in the workplace.

So what they've done is say, here's a whole list of places where you can't try to collect the debt; here's a whole list of times during the day when you can't collect the debt.

Well we would hope that the collection agency isn't going to come at 3 o'clock in the morning. However why would they want to do that? They'll be paying someone overtime for that work. So they're not going to want to do that either. And so some of those arguments aren't there. This goes far overboard.

It for example says that the window that the debtor is allowed is between 7 and 8:30 in the morning. So the person obviously knows this because this is going to be public. If you're gone before 7 o'clock in the morning the collection agency can't touch you — can't touch you till 5 o'clock in the afternoon. And those sorts of things do not make any sense in this.

However if we look at what's all . . . also is well covered in here we'll find out that this isn't just businesses that have something to lose. We'll find out that banks, lending institutions, and in fact even some of our Crown sectors may be affected by this.

There are very . . . some very serious concerns around the province dealing with this, Mr. Speaker. This particular piece of legislation at best needs to be amended in a very serious sort of a way so that we're not taking away from good business people the opportunity that they have to collect.

The Speaker: — Now why is the member from Swift Current on his feet?

Mr. Wall: — . . . leave of the Assembly to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you also to my colleagues in the Assembly and to the member for Rosthern whose speech I'm interrupting.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you, a very distinguished couple from the city of Swift Current sitting in your gallery. In your gallery is Dr. Ted Khonje and his wife, Mrs. Persis Khonje. And we certainly want to welcome them to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, members may know that their son Frederick is one of the pages this session and doing an excellent job, a job that's greatly appreciated. And we also know that the Khonjes have contributed greatly to our community in Swift Current, certainly to the health care of the community, but to the community in general.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I just ask all members to join with me in welcoming them here to the Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 21 — The Collection Agents Amendment Act, 2002
(continued)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As soon as this piece of legislation was introduced, I received numerous phone calls from people that have some definite concerns about it; including a letter, Mr. Speaker, from the Credit Bureau of Saskatoon Collections Limited.

And I think when we have those kinds of concerns that are raised — some of which I've voiced today, not in a whole lot of detail — this particular Bill needs to be looked at, as I said, in a major sort of a way, possibly put on hold, and have the government reassess it again for another time. Or at the very least, very seriously — very seriously, Mr. Speaker, amended.

So having said that, I move to adjourn debate on this particular Bill at this time.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 23

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 23 – The Registered Plan (Retirement Income) Exemption Act/Loi portant insaisissabilité des régimes enregistrés (revenu de retraite)** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning to make a few comments of Bill No. 23, The Registered Plan (Retirement Income) Exemption Act.

It appears on the surface, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill is going to implement an exemption from the enforcement measures by creditors for registered retirement income plans.

Mr. Speaker, as we're well aware that throughout the province there are literally tens of thousands of people who have . . . through their life and their career, do not have an appropriate type of pension plan. And, Mr. Speaker, in the communities in the Prince Albert area that you and I come from, there are businesses there — some small, some quite large.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the one very large business in Prince Albert that both of us are well aware of — that both of us have friends working there and are certainly well acquainted with — do not have the appropriate type of pension plans that are going to be able to assist people to retire and move on in a contributory way as they retire from their careers.

So what they do, Mr. Speaker, is that many of these people — or all of these people virtually — have taken out registered retirement plans. And so for all intents and purposes a registered retirement plan is their pension; it is their pension.

And one of the side non-benefits so to speak, Mr. Speaker, from having a registered retirement plan is that, should somewhere

along the line in your career and in your life that what could happen is that should a creditor find it necessary, has the tools in place today to be able to access that so-called pension plan, a registered retirement investment.

And so how do people then be able to protect themselves should something go awry in their lives? A case in point, Mr. Speaker, would be the massive increases for long-term care homes. People may have to be forced to dip into the registered retirement plans. But maybe what's needed is some sort of a way to protect a registered retirement pension plan so that they would have the same consideration, Mr. Speaker, as pension funds.

Certainly we know in this House that, through some of our checkered past, that there has been members in this House who have crossed the line so to speak in carrying out their duties for the people of Saskatchewan. They've been forced to pay a penalty for that.

But one of the things that was mentioned in our checkered past, Mr. Speaker, as we talk about registered retirement income, is that there had been thoughts at one time that maybe what should happen is that, in order to pay their debt back to society, is that there should be some garnishee of their pension plan.

And of course, as we well remember, what has happened in this House is that the former premier vehemently defended that pension plans need to be exempt; people need to be protected for their retirement. Many of them don't have that rich a pension plans. But if they're going to be contributory members of society after their retirement, their pension plans need to be in place. And so, why wouldn't you be able to do that with a registered retirement plan, Mr. Speaker?

So then we see here that on the surface maybe that the Justice minister had presented something here that may be able to take a look at and work with. Now certainly, Mr. Speaker, we sent this out for consideration throughout communities in Saskatchewan to see what people think about it, and they have brought their opinions back to us. And certainly what we've been hearing is that people who are involved in small business in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which of course as we all know which provide about two-thirds of all employment in Saskatchewan, is that most of these people involved in small business in fact are creating a pension plan for themselves through a registered retirement plan.

And so what we see here, Mr. Speaker, is maybe an opening that this side of the House will be able to encourage the government in this sitting to be able to, with some adjustments to this Bill, bring about some protection for people whose retirement is going to be based upon a RRSP (Registered Retirement Savings Plan) or an RRIF (Registered Retirement Income Fund) or a deferred profit-sharing plan, that they will also receive the same type of protection as those people who are in the full-fledged secure pensions, Mr. Speaker.

Now there was mention, of course, both by the minister in his prefacing of the Bill is that of course this Bill may appear to be kind of following under a uniformity with what the Government of Canada is doing and what other provinces are doing in a uniform basis, Mr. Speaker, throughout the country. That would

be very good.

And of course what the Minister of Justice has also told us, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been some consultation on this Bill and specifically, more specifically, with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan. And we certainly want to commend the government for at least once listening to the people of Saskatchewan because we certainly heard that they do that very, very seldom.

And when we of course . . . we certainly want to make mention of the long-term care home fees. They've heard many comments on that. They certainly don't seem to be listening to that.

(11:30)

But at least with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some sort of an indication, maybe in some small way, that they actually have listened to somebody. And actually, maybe, maybe — even though the NDP have a tendency to want to boast in this House about fairness — is that maybe, maybe, when we get a chance to talk to the minister about this in Committee of the Whole at some time in the distant future, is that there actually is a Bill on the order paper this year that will promote fairness. And actually as the Justice minister called it, this Bill will be simply fair — simple being the key term, Mr. Speaker.

Now when we talk about the fairness, the appearance of fairness in this Bill, it would certainly be noteworthy, Mr. Speaker, that we should also mention that some of these other Bills that are being brought forth and some of the changes that are being brought in regulations in this province through the budget is we're not seeing a lot of fairness. So do you suppose, Mr. Speaker, by some strange coincidences that they finally got it right, at least once?

The Minister of Justice made a rather remarkable comment. Remarkable indeed, Mr. Speaker, that the Justice minister from that side of the House, in a move that seems contrary to the mood on that side of the House, on the NDP side of the House — the government side of the House, that is propped up by a couple of independents — and what the Justice minister has said, Mr. Speaker, is that what happens here is that we take a look at people who are retiring, have spent 30, 35, 40 years of putting together a registered retirement savings plan or a registered retirement income fund is that these people, in fairness, need to have some protection from creditors, just as people with . . . in general pension plans such as you and I are going to be able to enjoy, Mr. Speaker, and other members of the House upon our retirement from here.

But what the Justice minister said . . . and he was speaking about the public interest. We find that extremely noteworthy on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that what the Justice minister said that it is in the broader public interest that retiring members of our community not be left destitute.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that seems extremely contrary to what has been happening in this province, and we . . . when we were investigating the budget . . . that this does not seem to line up, Mr. Speaker. It does not seem to line up with what the NDP

government is doing to seniors in long-term care homes in Saskatchewan.

What we see here is a government in confusion. On one part we see a Justice minister, the member from Saskatoon Fairview, making a statement, talking about protecting retiring members in a broad, public . . . broad, public interest that they not be left destitute.

And what did we hear this morning? Is that we heard the member from Regina Lakeview, we've heard the member . . . we've heard the member in past from Saskatoon Mount Royal, and we certainly heard most vitriolically this morning, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle that it is the right thing to do to attack seniors' pensions, registered retirement savings plans, and registered retirement income funds and, Mr. Speaker, to attack deferred profit-sharing plans.

So, Mr. Speaker, who is running this government? You have a minister saying one thing and in the public forum another minister saying another thing. We're going to be hugely curious, we're extremely curious on this side of the House, that when we get a chance to speak — maybe in June or July or August — with the Minister of Justice about this Bill, Bill No. 23, just what does he mean when he's talking about, it is in the broader public interest that retiring members of our community not be left destitute.

So does that mean that on the NDP side of the House there's at least one member over there that has a clear understanding that seniors should not be left destitute? And is he alone over there? Well we're certainly very curious about this, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to be taking some significant time, sometime in the distant future, to be able to talk to the minister. And certainly the member from Rosthern will be spending some time in the next couple of months putting together a myriad of questions, Mr. Speaker, to deal with this issue and to make sure that everyone clearly understands, is this a Bill that's going to protect seniors from creditors. And then how does that line up with trying to protect seniors from the NDP government?

So, Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side of the House have spent the last few weeks speaking to the business community, speaking to people who are most affected with pension future, that is going to retire on RRSPs and RRIFs and deferred profit-sharing plans, Mr. Speaker. They have questions that they're bringing forward and certainly the member from Rosthern has been gathering those questions.

Other members on this side of the House have been also working diligently so that we're going to take some time and work with this Bill to see if it actually stacks up as exactly as the minister may be indicating. Or is it just a smoke-and-mirrors type of Bill, Mr. Speaker, that is going to fall more in line with the attitude on the other side of the House that actually doesn't seem to match what the NDP is doing to attacking seniors, especially those living in long-term care homes.

And since, Mr. Speaker, that we have these questions lined up, I think it would be best that . . . maybe it would be more appropriate at this time that it's time to start moving this Bill into Committee of the Whole.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Corrections and Public Safety Vote 73

Subvote (CP01)

The Chair: — I would invite the minister to introduce his officials and then, if he wishes, make a brief statement.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be joined today by Deputy Minister Neil Yeates. Seated next to him is Don Head, who is the executive director of the corrections division. Behind us, Maureen Lloyd, the acting director of youth justice services and Mae Boa, the executive director of management services. Behind the bar we also have Tom Young, who's the executive director of protection and emergency services, and Nick Surtees, who is the executive director of licensing and inspections branch.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, welcome to the minister. And I think this is his first time as a minister in estimates and I'm sure he's going to enjoy it. And also welcome to his officials this afternoon and this morning.

This is sort of a change from where we've gone in this province for quite a number of years where the whole justice thing and corrections was all under one roof. And so what I'd like for the minister to do — and I'd like for him to do this in some detail — is outline first of all the purpose of the separation as it's taken place and what he sees as specifically his mandate and his mission that he sees with Corrections and Public Safety as he now has it under his charge.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the opportunity to explain a little bit about the reorganization, the rationale behind it, and some of the things that we do hope to achieve here in the department.

There are two main issues that have caused us to look at dealing with the corrections portfolio separate from the Department of Justice where most of this was housed before.

A big part of this has to do with changes that are coming at the federal level in terms of the criminal youth justice Act which will be brought in . . . has been passed and will be implemented, I understand, in early 2003.

This allows us to start to deal with young offenders issues in particular in a slightly different way. And one of the responses that we want as we get ready for that legislation is to be able to look at a greater corrections focus, more of an integrated approach, in terms of corrections.

So this particular reorganization brings together in it different agencies that have been in different departments. Certainly we have adult corrections which has come over from Justice, the young offenders operation which was previously in Social Services, and then a variety of licensing functions that were in

Municipal Affairs.

There are a series of corrections issues that I'm sure we'll have a chance to discuss over the next several times that we're in here, in terms of the approach and certainly some of the items that are happening at the federal level that have caused some of these changes here.

The second big change in the way that this department has been set up is to deal with emergency measures. Certainly one of the issues which I think has been at the top of people's mind over the last six months in particular — eight months — have been the . . . how we respond, particularly to public safety issues, and what kind of emergency preparedness we have. By concentrating this area, by moving it into this corrections branch, we believe that we are better able to focus on how our communities respond, how we respond as a government to these kind of issues and the potential situations that may arise from them.

There is an additional area that we are looking at here. And that is one of the other reasons for the reorganization, is that it provides the Department of Justice with an opportunity to refocus on crime prevention and the issues around prosecutions without having to be dealing necessarily with the corrections aspect.

So those are really the three main reasons why we've undertaken this reorganization. It is, as I'm sure the member opposite can appreciate, taking us some time as we pull together the department and change the administrative structure so that we are able to deal with the issues. This is a reorganization that has been in place now for about a month and we are still moving the pieces together to make sure it's a very seamless transition.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, thank you.

I was going to go down a different road first, but I think you just changed my mind. The emergency measures part, I think, is one I'd like to spend some time on. And that's not a one I had planned on, but I think it's an interesting one.

When you're dealing with the emergency measures, are we looking only at sort of major crises such as we've seen in the United States and that sort of thing? Or basically how far do these go before we just say, this is just an accident or where does the emergency measure component sort of kick in as far as something happening?

For example, if you have a five, six, eight car pileup on the highway, does your department work with how that's going to be dealt with, or this only on a major scale where whatever skyscrapers we have in Saskatchewan are attacked or demolished?

(11:45)

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — For leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just to point out we have a very special visitor and guest in the west gallery, Mr. Chair. I'd like to take this opportunity to you and through you to introduce Mr. Dwight A. Dorey.

Mr. Dorey is the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and he was elected to the position at the organization's annual general assembly on April 29, 2000 for a three-year term of office.

Chief Dorey is a Mi'kmaq from Truro, Nova Scotia, and he has more than 24 years of experience in Aboriginal politics at the provincial, national, and international level.

And I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming Dwight A. Dorey, the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Corrections and Public Safety Vote 73

Subvote (CP01)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To answer the question that has been posed, there is a — as the member opposite and I'm sure all members appreciate — there's a tiered response to how we would deal with these issues.

There are obviously issues which are dealt with at the individual level, at which point people may go on to the municipal level. After we have gone past the municipal level, if the municipalities are not able to respond, there is a provincial response, and there are certainly some areas that the federal government would be responsible for.

I should note that one of the areas that we have moved into this department is responsibility for the 911, the Sask911 program, in terms of how we handle coordination of those kind of situations. So this is a case where we are looking at more of a provincial coordinated way of dealing with municipalities and coordinating our issues with the federal government as well.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you for that answer.

The question that comes up from a lot of municipalities that exist along some of our major highways — and I'm trying to decide from what you said, whether this fits into your jurisdiction, exactly how closely it fits — if there is an accident on a particular highway and the fire department and EMO (Emergency Measures Organization) is called out but it's a fair distance away from that community, so it's definitely out of their particular sphere but the need is there and they send someone out, what responsibility does your department take for the help that was given? Or do you just say to that municipality, thanks for your charity and the costs and the expenses and all of those things, that's your responsibility? Or do you work with

the municipalities to help cover their costs when they sort of go out of their communities to provide these services on public highways?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, this is a . . . Perhaps to work through the example that the member opposite has put forward. If there is an accident on the highway, what would happen is that they would . . . we would assume that someone would phone the 911 system, at which time the appropriate response would be determined.

Now that may be a case where the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) are called on; we may end up having a ambulance dispatched. It may be a case where the fire department is . . . a fire department is needed.

The response is determined really by the nature of the incident and this is part of what, obviously, we're trying to do through the 911 implementation.

Now to speak to the question of liability and cost. Most of the municipalities, as we understand, have some kind of a shared responsibility on this in that we, in our case, simply call who is the most immediate to respond. In this particular case, it's not a question of cost, it's a question of the immediacy of response.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I think I need to follow that one a little further because it is — to the municipal bodies — it is an item of cost. Because obviously, if they're going to send their people out there, their equipment out there, that's at a fair expense.

And living in a community that that exists along highway 11, which has a very bad accident record because of the high traffic that's there, we do have these groups often called out because there's an accident there.

And they're finding that when they submit, submit a bill for the service provided, not to their constituency but provided to the greater constituency along the highway, they're not being remunerated for that. And it seems to me from what we said at the start that this may be under your department.

And so I'm going down two roads here. One, is this your responsibility; and if it is, then why are some of these communities not being paid for their services?

To sort of say, well, we're going to keep our fire department and our EMO (Emergency Measures Organization) sitting here when someone's called in, but it hasn't quite gone down through the Regina route or wherever 911 takes them, they might find themselves being substantially late at the accident to do the immediate service that's needed, because by that time a fire could have broken out and taken a lot of lives.

So is that under your particular department, the way it's set up now; and if so, what can they do for remuneration they've applied for — on the highways, not in their local jurisdiction — that they haven't been paid for?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is obviously an important issue and certainly one which is complicated. The municipalities have responsibility for a policing cost and for a, where it is available,

a fire suppression — costs associated with this. Because the municipalities . . . And we've got on top of this then health districts which are . . . have a different set of boundaries; coordination is a main issue, is one of the key issues.

In the case that we're dealing with, the 911 system, the issue that the province worries about is how we get the response. This does not directly address the issue of the reimbursements. And this is a complicated one. In addition to it, obviously there is an issue of liability that we run into as well.

The question of mutual aid between municipalities and the response is still one which has to respect municipal authority. But certainly we understand the issue that the member's raised.

Now in a particular case, if it happens along a provincial highway — the responsibility — this is something that we can certainly look into and get back to you on.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I think that's one that the communities would like to have clarified because it seems like sometimes they're being remunerated for these and sometimes they're not. And if at the end of the day that they're going to have to bear most of the cost most of the time, they're just not going to show up for those. Just the way the provincial government doesn't send a fire truck out to a small town, we don't expect them to.

If you know the public highways, which is the purview of the province, if it isn't covered there they will probably just withhold that which is something as a person who travels a lot of miles on the highway — and we all do — I don't think we want to see.

Back to emergency measures. Numbers of years ago most communities in Saskatchewan, I believe, were required to create EMO plans, emergency measure plans. That would have probably been, I would imagine, 8 to 12 years ago; somewhere in that vicinity because I remember working through some of those.

Do all communities have those? Do they need to be updated? Or once they were made 10 or 12 years ago, can they sit on a shelf? Where is the government at with that? Do they need to be reviewed and what is the situation there?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The opposition spokesman certainly is starting with the tough questions first. This is a very good question he has raised.

We have about 60 to 70 per cent of the population which is covered by current emergency measures plans. The difficulty is of course particularly in smaller communities. In terms of the number of the communities that are covered, we need to do some more work with smaller municipalities.

Now part of this obviously also gets us into the question of how we manage the risk. Certainly in the larger centres, there is a potential for a larger-scale response and so in that regard the 67 per cent of the population within the larger centres and near larger centres tend to be covered. This is nevertheless an issue that we need to work with the municipalities on. Part of it is a resources issue that we need to deal with them on.

But I think that certainly the member has identified an important issue that we need to continue to work with the municipalities on.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And as I said earlier on, I was on a town council numbers of years ago when this was set up and I know how much work actually is involved in it, because it isn't just, it isn't just taking and saying does their fire truck work and do we have an EMO thing. It involved having lodging for people in case of a disaster. It involved having trucks ready, and we had farm people involved, who sort of had their trucks, sort of identified as individuals we could call if we needed those sorts of help. So it does take a lot of work.

And as you mentioned, the smaller the community, the more difficult it is to get all the components in place when there just aren't enough individuals to sort of fit into those particular slots that are needed.

And I wasn't intending, by bringing up that particular topic, to make the minister in his new portfolio, give him a difficult situation. It just happened to be something that I had some background with and that's why that came to light.

Going back to sort of an overview situation. With the changes that have taken place in the Justice department and now your department as Corrections and Public Safety, what links with Social Services are in place and which ones have been changed?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, I think I, at the start, had mentioned that one of the things we have tried to do is take our time as we put together these functions. Obviously how we deal with young offenders and how we deal with the corrections, we need to make sure that there's a seamlessness as we construct the new department out of its existing unit.

At the current time, the young offenders program still has a very strong linkage with Social Services; in fact, it has not yet been moved directly under Corrections. We anticipate this will be the case in the next month to six weeks, that we'll be in a position to bring them under the administrative responsibility of this particular department.

Once that is in place, obviously we're going to need to maintain the linkages that are there, particularly with child protection services in terms of the way that these programs work. But for the time being, it is business as usual. And certainly as we move young offenders operations under this department we anticipate it will be a very seamless, seamless operation.

(12:00)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, it's my opinion that some of the directions that you're going by taking some of the Social Services aspect and putting them underneath your umbrella has possibilities, I think, of having some positive response from the public.

Because I think very often the public looked at this and said, well Social Services is dealing with this, what's the mentality of Social Services? How much is security of the public a part of Social Services' mentality and mandate? And whether or not it was there wasn't always the issue, the perception was there was

that wasn't a Social Service mandate.

And I think with the events that have happened in Saskatchewan over the last decade or so, when we're talking about crime and those sorts of things, have made this a much more of a major topic and thought pattern in the minds of the public.

Probably a fairly specific question, and either it'll be that you're responsible for this or you aren't. Some time ago when there was an initiative made to change what was happening with the car thieves in Saskatchewan, and particularly in Regina, a member of that core group — and how many there were in that core group seems to vary from 30 to 80 — a number of that core group was sort of picked up and isolated.

Now are they under your jurisdiction now? And if they aren't, would they be under your jurisdiction in the situation that when your change in the departments is finished, would they then be under your jurisdiction?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Certainly we have these car thieves at this point. They are in the secure custody, a large number of them are, so in that regard there is a role here. Justice is the lead agency in terms of the policy for dealing with the auto theft strategy.

I might take this opportunity just to inform members of the situation today. Certainly car . . . the car theft issue is an important one. And it is one which — certainly here in Regina in particular — is of concern to those of us who represent these seats, and I know it's a concern across the province.

A year ago, in April of 2001, we were experiencing in this city on average about 16 car thefts a day, which is quite a staggering number. As a result of the strategy which has been put in place by the government, both in coordination with Justice and Social Services, we're seeing that today we're at about a quarter of that in terms of the daily thefts. Certainly there is no good number of car thefts. And we don't want to say that by any means there's an acceptable number. I think the acceptable number would be zero.

But we have seen that this approach has worked. It has not been without its detractors from the start. There are those who thought we should have taken a different approach. And there were, I know, some concerns within the community as to whether this was tough enough and whether it would be effective.

I want to say that I think that the work that has been done by the Department of Justice officials, by Social Services, and very much by the city police has really done a very good job in terms of helping bring this down.

We will see over the next several months — obviously this is still a new policy — we'll see over the next several months how this works and whether we are able to maintain this.

But certainly the approach that has taken to get these habitual offenders off the streets and then with the other ones to make sure that there are constant curfew checks done to make sure that they are not out returning to their former pattern of

behaviour seems to be having some, some degree of success.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And you mentioned there was some detractors to the program and I am probably one of those. And we'll get into that either later on today or in October.

There were a number of those hard-core offenders just picked up within . . . on that weekend I think. How many were picked up? And how many are still in a custody? And what form of custody are they in?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, one of the . . . this is actually a very interesting set of statistics and I think that all members will find it of interest. There are about 23 chronic offenders who have been identified and who have been picked up and held in secure custody. Approximately half of those are still in secure custody. I think this is an interesting statistic in that it shows that we have half now who are out of secure custody and we are still being able to maintain the reduced rate of theft.

One of the key components of the program is certainly the curfew checks that are being performed. On an average week, we're performing very close to 200 curfew checks. Last week it was about . . . almost 180. Of those 180, there were only 22 potential breaches identified.

So this is a case where I think the youth are understanding that we are serious about this. The police and Social Services officials are doing an exceptional job in terms of making sure that they are doing the curfew checks. And obviously we still have approximately half the habitual or chronic offenders in secure custody.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And as I mentioned in a bit of a discourse that I had here on Tuesday, I believe, I discussed with the members opposite and then for a time specifically with the Minister of Justice. That particular meeting where he announced the new program, and there was a mother there who expressed loud, and long, and very eloquently her dismay with the system that you have of checking up on . . . for the curfew checkup.

And even though I think we're somewhat happy that the numbers have gone down in car thefts, there's still a concern that maybe you just have the worst 12 in there.

You mentioned you had 22 custody violations. Now is there any assurance that those 22 custody violations weren't also linked directly to 22 car thefts? If they were, then that custody violation — or curfew violation, pardon me — becomes much more critical than just going down to the local place for a soda.

So I would like some detailed discussion on how this curfew monitoring works and what assurance there is that those 22 violations weren't sort of a parallel situation to 22 car thefts.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I certainly had the opportunity to listen to the member's comments on Tuesday night in terms of the presentation he was making about this, that concerned a parent.

I want to say that on Tuesday night I think the member was

noting that there was a concern that what was happening is if the police and corrections officials were simply phoning up these youngsters and seeing whether or not they were there.

In fact, the check is actually done in person. And it is random — it is random in terms of the day, in terms of the time. Certainly we are aware that this puts some pressure on the families. It means that they may be woken up at hours that they're not used to being disturbed to make sure that the young offenders who are involved in this are where they're supposed to be.

I don't think that we have a direct number of those 22 potential breaches and whether they were . . . in fact, what the nature of the breach was and . . . (inaudible) . . . they're not there.

What I can tell you is this, is that it is the approach of our government that if someone steals a car in Saskatchewan, that they will be held responsible for it and that they will go to jail.

This is what is happening. We have had 23 of these young offenders in secure custody. More than half of them are still in secure custody. And this has been the approach.

Now if the behaviour is changing — and certainly I think we have seen by the sustained reduced rate of thefts that in many of these cases they have gotten the message — then I would say that this policy is working.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I would like to underline the change that's been happening in this government in the area of Justice. I don't support a lot of where this government's going. There is some movement at present in the Justice department to be a little more firm than they have been in the past, and I think that . . . I'm quite prepared to say that that movement is good. Is it far enough? I would say no, but that's for another time.

You spoke earlier on with . . . having some interaction with police officers and police forces. And I'm wondering when you . . . where exactly is your policy at, as far as dovetailing with the advice you're getting from police officers on how to deal with these situations?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, as I'd mentioned in one of my earlier responses, certainly we have a partnership between the Justice department and Corrections. Justice deals actually with the policing action and so the Minister of Justice may be in a better position to discuss how that relationship is moving forward.

Certainly, once the offenders have been identified, once they are in secure custody and have moved out and are into a curfew situation, this involves directly the Department of Corrections.

Have I myself had an opportunity to sit down with the police on this issue? I'll have to tell you that in the short time that I've been the minister, the answer is no, that we are letting the policy work itself through. And I have no doubt that my colleague, the Attorney General, has been working with the police on this. This may be an issue that is better addressed when he stands up again.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I do understand that as we

go through this we sort of tend to move into the other person's area a little bit, the other minister, and may do that from time to time.

When you're talking about working with some of the professionals out there, such as police officers and those individuals, I would probably just ask that you pay very close attention to what they do tell you.

We just had a situation in Saskatchewan, in the last two days, that showed very specifically that this government doesn't always pay close attention to good advice. And that was with the situation that came up with SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) deciding that if you've got a seven-year, perfect record or whatever else, you get a break on your licences, and if you've got a worse record, you're going to pay some penalties.

The bizarre thing on that is we all know the effect that high speed has on accidents. We know the effect that high speed has on school ground accidents — you know right in front of school grounds, playgrounds, and those sorts of things. And yet when the police voiced some very serious concerns that that wasn't include in the mix, SGI just chose to ignore that.

So I would hope that when you get to the point where you're discussing that with some of your professionals . . .

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And with apologies and thanks for the grace of the member from Rosthern for yielding the floor to me at this time.

It's my pleasure, although something of a surprise, but anyway it's good to see you anyway. It's my pleasure to introduce to the members of this legislature, a group of students from Scott Collegiate, which is located in the beautiful riding of Regina Elphinstone, and is two blocks away from my house. So I get to see the students doing all sorts of good things.

They're with their teacher, Mr. Heuck, and I would urge the members of this place to give them a warm welcome. Give them a round.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(12:15)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

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Subvote (CP01)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I too would like to join with

the member from Elphinstone welcoming some teachers and students. It's always good to have them here and see how the process of the House works. It's nice to see students come when we're not in question period and up to our so-called shenanigans, and see that when we're in some more serious debate that we actually do accomplish a lot I think in many cases.

I would like to move to some extent away from where we're at, at this particular point, and some things relating directly to corrections. And I'd like for the minister to sort of outline what sort of correction facilities we have in Saskatchewan and how many people are basically involved in each one of those as inmates.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, certainly there are, I should say, two things here.

First of all, as the members know that we are looking at changes to The Correctional Services Act and this is changing some of the terminology that we use. And that Act is currently under debate and no doubt we'll have an opportunity to discuss some of this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . This is rare that the members are asking me to speak louder but I will take advantage of the opportunity. Certainly one of the things that we are changing is some of the language around the facilities and that's in . . . will be under discussion under The Correctional Services Act.

At this point we have, in the adult offender population, we have incarcerated in Saskatchewan today about 1,100 adults; there are another roughly 5,400 that are under supervision. We have within the youth population about 330 in custody and this is pretty standard on a daily basis. There are about 2,600 youth however involved in the young offender system.

So perhaps we can start there and if the member has additional questions I'll do what I can to answer them.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I think when we look at this we need to compare this with other provinces and see what percentages are of incarceration, this sort of thing.

Probably following through on that adult one first of all, you had two categories there. How does that compare nationally on a per capita basis?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Certainly our rates of incarceration are high on a national basis in terms of the approach. As you can appreciate, this is a result of various factors — from the way that the enforcement is done, to the type of sentences that the justice system hands out. But certainly this is . . . We are high in terms of the number on a per capita basis that would be incarcerated.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Kind of a vague answer to what was a very specific question, but for today we'll accept that.

The minister gives two reasons, I believe, for that number. He says it's our enforcement and it's how our judicial system deals with them once they're in the courts. And I suggest that those are exactly the wrong reasons.

The reasons that there are so many in there is because the crime rate is so high in Saskatchewan. If our crime rate goes down to zero, I'm sure any amount of enforcement isn't going to catch any criminals. If our crime rate was zero, there's no way our courts would be putting anyone into jail.

So I think we need to go back to that and say that this is something that's been happening in Saskatchewan and our rates have been climbing over the last decade or so. And that's something this particular government needs to take more responsibility for. Now it isn't specifically the Department of Justice that has to be responsible for this. This is essentially the whole front row of government that has to take this responsibility.

Because what exactly has created that attitude that has allowed crime to be so rampant in this province? Is it because our courts have been unbelievably lenient? Maybe somewhat lenient, but not to the extent to create that. Has it been because our enforcement officers haven't done their job? I believe not. Now we're down on enforcement officers. We know that, and that obviously is a part of it, but definitely it can't be the major part.

And I think the major part of the blame has to go solely on the shoulders of the cabinet as such to say we have, for different sorts of reasons, created in this province an environment that is responsible for this, and I think that's one of the unfortunate things.

Spending some time on the correctional centre in Saskatoon — and I'd like for the minister to go through in some substantial detail, what would exactly take place to someone who enters a correctional centre in Saskatoon that would fall under the category of rehabilitation.

We'll deal with security and some of those things in another question. But what exactly takes place there that we can say, well these people are incarcerated, and when they come out they are less likely to have criminal tendencies than they had when they entered. So what is taking place there to rehabilitate the people?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, let me start by saying in terms of the specific numbers that the member opposite had asked for in terms of the crime rate, we will endeavour to provide that on a province-by-province basis. I don't have that available today, but we will make that available to members of this Assembly.

I want to start by — before I get to the specifics of the Saskatoon situation — I want to talk a bit about the . . . respond to the issue raised by the member about the causes of crime.

I don't want my previous answer to be taken that to say that incarceration is not related to the crime rate. Quite obviously it is. And if I had not mentioned that in my previous answer, I want to correct that. The question that we have to deal with though, and we have to understand, is that there is a dynamic here between the way that we handle enforcement, the way our justice system responds in terms whether they decide that we should deal with an offender through secure custody, or through open custody, whether we have a probation put in place. These are issues largely outside of the government's control.

Now I think that the member opposite is correct that the community's approach to these issues is changing. Certainly I believe that this as well, that there is more of a sense that the justice system needs to look at the nature of the offence in a more serious way.

Crime rate is obviously also another issue that the Attorney General can address at some length. But there are often cases where one offender may have committed multiple offences in the conduct of the crime. So this is not unusual. We will have many charges — maybe one particular incident that results in four charges.

This is one of those things which drives some of the response. And I know that the enforcement agencies do this in part to identify what has happened, to outline the seriousness of it, in hopes that the justice . . . the justices will mete out an appropriate sentence.

One of the things that we need to focus though on, and I think is important and the member opposite is right, that there is responsibility for our governments. One of the reasons why we have governments is to deal with these kind of issues.

Members on this side of the Assembly are quite proud of the fact that the work we have done tackling what we think is one of the most important causes of crime, and that is poverty in our province. And what we have . . . we certainly take great pride in the work that has been done through the departments like Social Services, in terms of building independence, in terms of the work we've done on the child welfare programs. And the result has been very clearly to bring down the number of children living in poverty.

Now we certainly hope that through that, through things like community schools, that what we're putting in place is the kind of social infrastructure that will help these people grow up into responsible, productive citizens.

The choice to go into . . . to undertake crime is an individual one. This is not a societal one. It is an individual one and as a result the individual bears the consequences.

Whether or not the consequences of the actions are sufficient is certainly a public debate and it is one where I suspect members on both sides would find themselves leaving . . . would not find a strict party separation but really is one more based on their own particular views and the views of the constituency they represent.

That is now . . . that is to address the earlier issues made by the member.

And what I want to do now is specifically deal with rehabilitation issues within the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. We have a number of different programs and I guess I should start by saying we need to . . . one of the, one of the things that we need to understand is that when a person is sentenced to one of the correctional institutions, these tend to not be for particularly long periods of time.

This is not a case, for instance, like we would have with the federal penitentiary where there's a longer period of time to

deal with the deviant behaviour and the dysfunction that may have caused the criminal activity.

There are a number of different issues that come to play here in . . . that may have contributed to this and that we believe are necessary in terms of dealing with the rehabilitation. I can simply read off the list for the members.

Certainly there is programming available for substance abuse. We see this to be a very significant cause and contributing factor in terms of the issues. Anger management — violence, aggression is another one which is clearly an issue that needs to be dealt with. Cognitive skills issues. Employment skills are often something that need to be dealt with. There are cases that we will deal with where there is . . . the crimes are involving a sexual abuse and . . . or we may need to deal with them in terms of their behaviour that way. Domestic violence is certainly an issue which is troubling in our community and there is programming there.

There are other . . . two other areas that we deal with that I think are fairly important in terms of dealing with the individual and trying to help them return to being productive citizens. One is the basic education and literacy issues. This is often just a core part of what we try to do to help these people return to society and be able to move on beyond crime into normal productive life.

And then additionally there may be other issues that we need to deal with — everything from life skills to parenting skills to understanding their impact on victims. These are, these are different issues. As well, we've got vocational programs.

So there's quite a long list and obviously it's not a case that one size fits all. We had about 365 people enrolled in programs at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre last year.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'd like to zero in on one of the rehabilitation programs to see exactly what's happening in that program.

As you mentioned, and I appreciated that, that essentially at the end of the day to be involved in crime or not to be involved in crime is an individual decision. And that's why we have people from the poorest families turning out to be the most productive citizens, and individuals from the families that seem to be the most blessed turn out some hardened criminals. So there was an individual decision that took place there.

(12:30)

Having been a vocational teacher back in a different life, it always is something that interests me substantially because it's one of those areas that provides employment opportunity. And if one of the concerns that we have is that the reason that people become incarcerated, and that's because they were involved in a life of crime, is because maybe they weren't given an opportunity to be productive members of society — and the vocational training is obviously a part of that — what kind of vocational training opportunities are provided, let's say again, in the correctional centre in Saskatoon? And about how many hours would someone spend in that if they were there for, let's say, two years less a day?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — In the specific example of the vocational shops and the kind of work that we may have inmates involved in, there are as I understand two shops that, in Saskatoon, two different programs that we may be able to work through. One is a woodworking operation, the other is metal.

Obviously this isn't perfect for all, all inmates. There are certain skills; people have to be adept with their hands and they have to be able to deal with this specifically. We do not have built into this — and part of it is because of the nature of the time that we have people in custody — there is not necessarily a certification process.

The programs are focussed more on skills building. And obviously as well, it is not a case like we might be able to run through SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) or something that we would be more familiar with, where you go through the constant or a regular set of skills. This is very much dependent on the kind of work which is available within the . . . within vocational shops.

So it varies a little bit in terms of what the specific skills are they will learn. But certainly the focus is on building the skills. And this is, in the example that you use, where we have somebody in for two years, obviously these skills that they would be able to gain would be more significant than somebody who's in custody for perhaps only 12 or 13 months.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. So I need to take it from that, I think, that the vocational isn't a key component of what happens there.

You listed earlier on quite a number of programs, probably half a dozen to a dozen. Is it voluntary for inmates to become involved in those based on the advice they're given? Does that affect how long they're there? Or how is this organized for rehabilitation?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — When an inmate is brought into custody, certainly one of the things that is done is an assessment of what kind of programming may assist him.

Now in some cases these may be court ordered, in which case, participation is set out; there is no option here, but obviously participation is up to the individual. It is a case where . . . Let's take as an example substance abuse. If this is one of the issues which it's believed will assist the inmate in terms of dealing with their criminal behaviour and help rehabilitate them, certainly they are made available to this.

It is, I think, important for the Assembly to recognize that one of the changes that we are looking at making through The Correctional Services Amendment Act is to change the way that we deal with remission for good behaviour, I guess is what it's called. If I think is known at this point that basically the inmates are expected to serve two-thirds of their sentence before they're eligible for . . . to have the remission.

Under the new amendments, one of the changes that will be made is that they will be required to earn the time off, so that things like these programs that we've outlined — participation in them and completion of them — will be given more weight in terms of whether or not they are ready to return into the

community.

Obviously once the sentence is served — whether the inmate has undertaken any program or not — once the sentence is served, they are put back into the community, and this is a different set of issues that we deal with at that point.

But for most of the situations we deal with, the programs are available and it is a long list of options available to them. Certainly one of the most significant ones though is the question of the substance abuse program and the anger management/violence issues.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And probably want to go into the substance abuse some time as well.

You mentioned that the early release after two-thirds of the time was served is now going to be based on good behaviour. And I think that's something that's going to get a lot of support from the public. So it isn't just, I can lounge around here and two-thirds is saved and out . . . I go out the back door.

But I do have a question relating to that. Like I said, I believe it has public support. However is this going to then bring about the fact that you're going to have individuals who have served two-thirds of the time but haven't earned it because of good behaviour and therefore need to stay in longer, which has a lot of public support, however that will obviously then put stress on facilities and overcrowding and budget.

Now have you been provided with a budget to deal with this and do we have the facilities to deal with this?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The member is quite right that there is a potential here for it to put pressure on us in the facility management issues. However we believe that the changes to the Act, while also being popular within the community I think in terms of moving the correctional system closer to where the community thinks it should be, I think it also does put in place a set of incentives for those in custody to participate in the programs and earn the time off.

I think it would be a rare circumstance where an inmate would look at simply serving their full sentence and not try to earn the remission. Undoubtedly there will be exceptions and that is . . . I think we should just accept that there are some folks who will have that attitude and it'll be hard to change.

But we do believe the amendments will encourage participation and completion of these programs. And as a result, through rehabilitation, they'll be better capable to deal with their situation when they return to the public.

Is there a particular estimate as to how much additional pressure this will put on the budget? At this point it's not believed to be significant. We do believe that we will continue to work through and we will be able to put the pressure on the inmates to participate in the programs and moving through to completion.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And dealing with the issue of sort of overcrowding and this sort of thing, in the correctional centre in Saskatoon when people come in there's sort of a — and I'm

not sure what the official word for it is — but there's sort of a holding cell that has half a dozen or so cots in there and they're held in that area till there's room for them to find a room sort of for themselves.

Two questions: what's the average number of people that are in that particular cell on a per day basis and are there any programs available to them while they're in that cell or do they have to wait till they get into a room?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The specific room that the member opposite refers to is generally used, as we understand, it tends to have its highest occupancy rates over the weekend, where people have been arrested and are held in basically a remand operation until such time as they can be . . . have their case . . . have the charges heard in court. So this is a very short amount of time that we would see having that kind of a multiple, potential for multiple, bunking.

Certainly facility management issues are an issue that we're going to need to deal with. In your particular case that the member opposite raises around Saskatoon, there are some questions about how we handle . . . We do have some dormitory-style operation there as opposed to single unit cells. These are for longer term stays. There is no doubt about this.

I think we're all familiar with the pressures which are here in Regina with the age of the facility that we're dealing with as part of the Regina Correctional Centre. I can tell you that there are no particularly easy answers in terms of how we deal with this.

And I think, on Tuesday night, the member opposite had some discussion about what was happening in other provinces. This is something all provinces are trying to grapple with in terms of how we handle the incarceration; how do we handle the amount of time people are required to stay. And there are various different issues. We have here a dormitory-style operation set up to a certain extent and we have . . . I mean there are a number of different options that could be looked at. But the member is quite right, that there are certainly capital pressures here.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I know the overcrowding is sort of a many-edged sword because we're looking at do we need more facilities, there's a cost for the facilities, does that money come out of policing, and this sort of thing. So the answers are not always, not always easy.

I want to spend a little bit of time on basically security. A couple of years ago there was a fairly major breakout out of the . . . out of some of the centres. When one of those occurs, what sort of measures are taken to apprehend the individuals? For example how . . . because these are two-years-less-a-day individuals, is it sort of, well I'm here, you're there; would you please just come sit down in the back of the car and I'll take you back. Or is there some point where, you're coming with me now or something fairly serious is going to happen to you.

Like what amounts of force are the prison individuals allowed to take in order to apprehend an escapee and bring them back?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well there isn't a negotiation that goes

on with these escapees. It's not a case of we try and entice them back with . . . It is a case of once they have escaped the prison property certainly this is an issue where we will advise the police immediately in order to have the police participate in this. If the corrections officials however are able to see the incident occur, they are obliged to pursue in order to attempt to keep the inmate in custody.

There are undoubtedly cases where the corrections officials do not see this, at which point once the unlawful absence is noted, the police are advised and we go through the normal process. This is fortunately not a common occurrence. It does happen from time to time and it is certainly a concern. But the corrections officials are responsible for making sure that if they do see inmates attempting to escape that they use reasonable force to keep them within custody.

(12:45)

Mr. Heppner: — In that effort to apprehend an escapee, what other devices, sort of, are at their hand? I mean, do they availability of using dogs or firearms or what sorts of things? Or is it just again take them by the elbow and leading them home?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The correctional officers do not carry sidearms and so they are not armed. However, they do have the other tools that are common in police work today, including restraint devices, and pepper spray is available. I think that certainly these are reasonable measures that they should be allowed to use and we would believe would be effective in helping to keep the inmates under control.

Mr. Heppner: — One of the . . . the key program that you mentioned was substance abuse. And there was an article in the paper probably a month or three ago about a rather unpleasant incident in Prince Albert.

What is the prevalence of drugs in prisons and what steps are being taken to decrease the prevalence of drugs in prisons?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is certainly an issue which is of a concern to us and a concern to me. I certainly don't want us to have any use of drugs within our facilities. Certainly there are cases though where this does occur and we are aware of some rather unpleasant situations in terms of the lengths that some inmates will go to obtain drugs.

One of the sets of changes that we are proposing under The Correctional Services Act is for us to be able to move forward with urinalysis, which we think will be a very important tool for us to be able to make sure that where inmates are involved in substance abuse programs, that they are sticking to the programs and they are not taking in illegal substances. But this is an ongoing — an ongoing — challenge.

The member will also be aware, and I think all members will be from reading the Bill, that there are additional measures in there which allow for enhanced search procedures of all people coming and going into the correctional facilities, including workers, visitors, and the inmates.

So these are difficult measures. They are certainly tough measures. But I think that they respond to a very necessary and

important issue that we have to try and deal with on a very serious measure within the correctional institutes.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I think there's a few directions that justice in Saskatchewan seems to be going down, that they need to probably go a whole lot further down there, but I want to sort of make sure that we support those initiatives.

You mentioned earlier on that the checking on curfew, a lot more stringent than it used to be. You're prepared to wake people up in the middle of the night to make sure that they're there. Don't be afraid to go a whole lot further down that road.

When we're talking about the drug abuse, we will go more into that on another day. I think the urinalysis that is in a piece of legislation I think is very necessary. And on another day we'll need to discuss in much detail a possibility such as boot camps and some of those things to work toward rehabilitation.

Having said that, it being well on into the afternoon at this time, I'd like to thank the minister for his participation in his first day here. I can assure him we'll try to make it much more exciting the next time that he comes back with his officials. And thank you, too, to his officials. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate certainly the questions, the thoughtful questions, put forward by the member for Rosthern today. And the patience of members as we try to pull together a new department here. Obviously there are issues that we will return to the Assembly with more information on.

I too look forward to the opportunity to have some discussion about what additional measures we may want to take. I appreciate the prelude to that discussion on Tuesday night during the . . . some of the member for Rosthern's speech.

And with that I'd just like to thank my officials for their help today.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:54.