

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Carrot River Valley who are concerned about the government's intentions with respect to 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 increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

This petition is signed by the citizens of Hudson Bay and Prairie River.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand today to present petitions on behalf of citizens throughout the province of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the fee increases in long-term care. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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 the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Peterson, city of Humboldt, the community of Cudworth, Naicam, and St. Benedict.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan regarding long-term care fees in the province. 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 as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, each of these signatures, and there are a number of them, are from the fine community of Elrose in the constituency of Rosetown-Biggar.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today by people who are concerned about 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 tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence should be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena, Kuroki, and Watson.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning on behalf of citizens of my constituency who are concerned about the government's changes to the crop insurance program. 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.

Signatures on this petition this morning, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Kinistino, Gronlid, Wakaw, and Melfort.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of constituents concerned about overfishing at Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The communities involved in the petition, Mr. Speaker, are Esterhazy, Gerald, Churchbridge, Rocanville, Bangor, Tantallon, and Langenburg.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with crop insurance premium rate hikes and reduced coverage. And the prayer reads:

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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Moose Jaw, Caronport, and Caron.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I have a petition signed by residents from the community of Eastend concerning changes that were made to the recent . . . recently to the drug plan. And 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition this morning from concerned citizens of this province concerned about the changes to the prescription drug plan. And 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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this is signed by people from my constituency, namely the city of Estevan.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province. The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Francis, Weyburn, Lampman, and Odessa.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are concerned about the long-term care fees. And 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 the petition is signed by residents of the town of Bengough in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of people who remain concerned about the issue of increasing long-term care fees. The prayer of their 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 increases for the long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are all from the great city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition dealing with the same issue.

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Kenaston, Girvin, Davidson, and Craik.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I have a petition from the citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the harmful effects of smoking in public places. And the petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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 found 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.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from the good people of Prince Albert.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduced coverage. The prayer reads:

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.

Signed by the good citizens of Borden, Vanscoy, Cando, Radisson, and Biggar.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition of citizens concerned about the extremely dangerous conditions of Highway No. 15. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its highway budget to address the concerns of the serious conditions of Highway 15 for the Saskatchewan residents.

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

And again the petitioners demonstrate how well travelled this highway is. They are from Imperial, Simpson, Watrous, Nokomis, and Airdrie, Alberta.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition in regard to the Besnard Lake situation, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives to bring about a resolution in the Besnard Lake situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

And the signatures on the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Lanigan, St. Gregor, Annaheim, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Humboldt.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of the province concerned about the increases in long-term care homes. 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 Unity, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition from citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about crop insurance and where it's going. 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 is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of Eastend, Dollard, and Shaunavon.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petition has been reviewed and is hereby received as an addendum to a previously tabled petition being sessional paper no. 17.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce and welcome school safety patrollers from across Saskatchewan seated in the east and west galleries.

I had the pleasure earlier this year of declaring April 29 to May 4 as School Safety Patrol Week, and CAA (Canadian Automobile Association) Saskatchewan, as part of that week, has a big jamboree here in Regina. And today we have over 180 school safety patrollers and chaperones in the galleries.

And what I'd like to do is introduce from the 22 communities represented by school safety patrollers and at the same time have their MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) stand up.

We have patrollers and chaperones from Carrot River — and would they stand, please. We have patrollers and chaperones from Estevan. We have patrollers and chaperones from Gravelbourg and Hudson Bay and Kindersley; Lanigan, Nokomis, Maidstone, Martensville, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, North Battleford. Prince Albert — we've got a big crowd from Prince Albert — and Regina, there we go. And Rosetown and Rouleau and Saskatoon, there we go; Strasbourg, Turtleford, Unity, Warman, Watrous, and Weyburn.

Here we have our school safety patrollers and their MLAs, and I'd ask everyone in the Assembly to welcome them here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Learning in welcoming the school safety patrollers here, on behalf of the official opposition. We like to think we're doing an important job here in the House, but we all know that you're doing the important job and that that's making sure students go safely to and from school. So welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:15)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly through you, a visitor from Aurora, Ontario who's seated in your gallery. Her name is Carol Bohner and she has never visited the West before. This is her first visit west and of course her first visit to Saskatchewan. But we hope it won't be the last and I hope all members will join with me in welcoming Carol to our legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce someone sitting in your gallery, Ms. Maureen Murray who works for CAA and does a tireless job in organizing the school patrol for the province. I've had the opportunity in my past life to work with Maureen on a number of committees dealing with traffic safety, whether it was school bus safety courses or a number of things. She's a great promoter of safety in the province, and especially anywhere around the streets of our . . . streets and highways of our province.

So I'd ask all members to welcome Maureen Murray.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Women of Distinction Award Winners

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night at the Centre of the Arts, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Minister for Industry and Resources, the member from Regina Dewdney, and myself attended the 21st annual YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) dinner honouring the nominees and winners of the Regina Women of Distinction awards.

Last evening was a celebration of women's exemplary contributions to their communities. Also, this event is a major fundraiser for the vital programs sponsored by the Y.

Just to be nominated, Mr. Speaker, is to be a winner but the awards last night went to the following: for arts and culture, a tie between Andorlie Hillstrom and Donna Lowe; the award for business, labour, and professions category went to Sandy Larson; the community or humanitarian service award was tied between Melissa Rezansoff and Wendy Sinclair.

For her contributions to a rural community, Kim Engel was recognized; for health and wellness award, it was presented to Dr. Shannon MacNeill; and for a lifetime of worthy achievement in teaching, writing, and community involvement, Dr. Eleanor Bujea was applauded.

Science and technology went to Heather Stanley; sports and recreation to Mart Kroupa of Esterhazy; and the Young Woman of Distinction was Crystal Clark, a young woman who is a friend of many of us here.

Our congratulations to all nominees and to winners. Thank you,

Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join the member from Regina Wascana in recognizing the very important and prestigious event that took place in Regina last night, being the 21st annual Women of Distinction Awards taking place at the Centre of the Arts.

Women from all over southern Saskatchewan, from all age groups and backgrounds, were recognized for their outstanding contributions to their professions and their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition attended this event along with the member from Humboldt, the member from Kelvington-Wadena, the member from Melfort-Tisdale, and myself. I understand that there were a few members from government present as well.

I would like to acknowledge all of the winners of this most prestigious award. Mr. Speaker, the YWCA promotes women as equal partners in society and supports the economic, physical, and social well-being of women. It has been an important part of Regina and the surrounding community since 1911.

The YWCA has had a positive effect on the lives of many women and children, particularly those who have faced family violence. The Saskatchewan Party supports the YWCA's efforts and congratulates all of the nominees and the award winners in each category.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Safety Patrol Jamboree

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague the Minister of Learning has proclaimed, as we have learned, the week of April 29 to May 4 as School Safety Patrol Week in the province.

Throughout this week schools and communities throughout the province have recognized the more than 6,000 patrollers for their outstanding contribution to safety, the safety of their fellow students.

As part of the activities, 185 school safety patrollers and chaperones have assembled in Regina for the kickoff of the Annual Provincial Safety Patrol Jamboree.

Mr. Speaker, this event is hosted by CAA Saskatchewan and is the 12th such jamboree. Participants from 22 communities have enjoyed visits to the legislature, will be going to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) training academy, IMAX theatre, and Science Centre.

The RCMP tour, always a favourite for patrollers, includes a first-hand look at equipment and techniques used in emergency situations. Mr. Speaker, the tour also includes a demonstration from the Regina Police canine unit, which definitely shows the

patrollers how they take a bite out of crime.

Mr. Speaker, CAA Saskatchewan has been sponsoring school patrols in the province for more than 50 years, and the success of safety patrol reflects on the teamwork and dedication of all the people involved. I am sure all the members of the Assembly join with me in saluting the efforts and appreciate the role of all these safety patrollers.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

2002 Relay for Life

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the launch of the 2002 Relay for Life took place at the Nipawin Credit Union April 9. Jean Eberle, a 43-year cancer survivor, was on hand to cut the ceremonial cake. Jean has also been named honorary chairperson for this event.

The event is being held May 31 to June 1 in Nipawin. The Relay for Life is a 12-hour overnight relay with the purpose of raising funds for cancer research and support services for people living with cancer.

Organizers are confident they will meet their goal of having 250 to 300 people participate. If that goal is achieved, Mr. Speaker, funds raised would exceed \$34,000.

One hundred and fifty cancer survivors from the Northeast are expected to participate in the relay and almost 300 volunteers have been recruited.

A highlight of the event will be the special luminary ceremony, in which candles surrounding the track will be lit in memory of persons who have succumbed to cancer and in celebration of those who have survived. Representatives of each of the 10-member teams will continue to walk around the track throughout the night. There is a full night of activity planned while the relay is in process.

I would also like to mention that Lorna and Gar Williams are co-chairpersons of the Nipawin Relay for Life. And I have heard from many people they have put a great deal of time and effort into making this a successful event.

I would ask all members to join me in wishing the participants and the organizers of the 2002 Relay for Life all the best in their upcoming event.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, today, May 3, is National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day.

One of the purposes of this day is to draw attention to the silent killer, a disease that affects thousands of people across this nation and within our province. Diabetes especially affects those within our First Nations communities — it being the number one killer amongst our Aboriginal people.

Consequently, this day is for communities, for families, and for friends to join together to walk in the name of diabetes and to remember the ones who have passed on due to the effects of this disease.

On this score, in Regina, the organization, Linking Voices, is working to promote a healthy lifestyle to prevent and manage type 2 diabetes. And tomorrow, Saturday, May 4, Linking Community Voices will be hosting a community walk in north central Regina. They invite everyone to support this day by running, biking, or rollerblading.

And I had the privilege of taking part in this . . . in last year's walk, Mr. Speaker, and I know from experience that the event coordinator, Tammy Mirasty, and the many volunteers put on an excellent event. And it's time well spent, Mr. Speaker.

The seriousness of diabetes is often overlooked, as is the high rate by which our Aboriginal communities are affected. This is why today is a very important day. It is a day to recognize the danger of this disease. And I encourage the members of this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan to get out there and support National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Safety Patrol Week

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, School Safety Patrol Week is wrapping up in Saskatchewan. And all across the province, schools and communities have been recognizing the important work done by local safety patrollers.

Mr. Speaker, this past week, more than 6,000 patrollers have been honoured for their outstanding contribution to ensuring the safety of their fellow students. Their tireless hard work and dedication to ensuring everyone's safety is indeed something to be proud of and all members of this House salute them.

One of the highlights, Mr. Speaker, of School Safety Patrol Week is the annual provincial jamboree hosted by CAA Saskatchewan. This year marks the 12th annual jamboree. Over the past couple of days, the city of Regina has grown by 185 young people and their chaperones who've descended upon our fair city to enjoy some of the sights and sounds.

Mr. Speaker, jamboree participants representing 22 communities across the province have visited the RCMP Training Academy, the IMAX theatre, and the Science Centre. And of course, no visit to Regina would be complete without a stop at the legislature and we welcome you all here today.

This year also marks the 50th year that CAA Saskatchewan has sponsored school patrols in the province and we applaud them for their continued support for our young people. Again, a special salute to school safety patrollers across Saskatchewan and a big thank you for all your hard work right throughout the year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Melville Legion Members Victorious in National Competition

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One week ago, I was pleased to stand and introduce in your gallery four distinguished gentlemen from Melville Legion No 61 who were travelling to Quebec for the Royal Canadian Legion national cribbage tournament.

Well this Friday, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Dan Hobbs, Harry Parachoniak, Al Miller, Bill Barnby, all from Melville, have returned from Quebec and they have returned victorious. These . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — These four men . . . These four men placed third at the Royal Canadian Legion national cribbage tournament in Laval, Quebec. In all, they managed the mental stamina and physical endurance of 18 games over three days to claim the third day prize.

And I have reliable sources, Mr. Speaker, who tell me that, although they are back, they have already reclaimed their seats in the Legion lounge and are practising for next year's nationals in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I would welcome and ask all members to help me and congratulate these four fine gentlemen from Melville Legion No 61 in Melville.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Response to United States Trade Sanctions

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture now is not the only sector of our economy under attack by unfair US (United States) trade measures.

Yesterday, a US panel voted to go ahead with a 27 per cent tariff on softwood lumber exports. Our lumber industry could be devastated by this action. Our agricultural industry could be devastated by the new US farm subsidies and yet, the federal government has been slow to respond because these trade actions might — and will definitely — affect Western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for Western Canada to develop an unprecedented, united front. Today I am proposing that in response to these attacks on our farming and forestry industries, that Saskatchewan should host a conference of all Western premiers and opposition leaders to develop a common position to propose to Ottawa on these two major trade issues.

Mr. Speaker, I have made the Premier aware of this initiative prior to question period, and I ask, will he support this initiative?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — On the absence of the Premier, I'd like to respond to the member's question. He did, as he

indicated, give us a copy of the resolution that they were proposing to put before the House, as it relates to his comments, just a couple of minutes before question period.

I indicated to their House leader that we wanted to have the opportunity to have a look at the resolution, that I felt it was a potential strategy that we could use, that we would look at it.

I haven't had time to share the contents of this with my colleagues. I had indicated that we would be willing to look at the potential for such a motion on Monday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a good argument for the case: imagine the power of speaking to Ottawa with the united voice from all four Western provinces, all four governments, all four opposition parties speaking with one voice against the unfair US attacks on our major industries?

Mr. Speaker, our agriculture and forestry industries are both under attack, our province is under attack, and in fact, our entire region is under attack. Ottawa must respond. If these trade actions primarily affected Ontario or Quebec, I'm sure they would respond; but individually they find the Western provinces easier to ignore.

Mr. Speaker, we have notified the government that immediately after question period, I will move an emergency motion calling for this special conference of government and opposition members from all four Western provinces. Will the government please support this action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, these are serious questions for the province and in fact for the country.

And let me just give the member some indications of what's been taking place on the softwood lumber issue. The member, I think, will know that there has been a united front on the part of provinces and territories and the federal government in proceeding with the Americans. There was every effort made to find a solution prior to the recent deadline. That was unsuccessful because the Americans refused to respond in any positive way.

We have legal actions before the WTO (World Trade Organization) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), where we have won before and where we expect to win again, in particular at the WTO, Mr. Speaker.

In the meantime, there are significant challenges for our industry, and that's why many have been calling on the federal government to respond . . . to protect workers and to protect mill owners across the country.

We have significant investments with Aboriginal people in the North. This is a serious problem. We're working on it together with the Minister of Foreign Trade who has been, I might say, a

very strong supporter of the Saskatchewan position.

We have to be united — we will be united. And the member is right that we need to be united on agriculture as well. And my belief, Mr. Speaker, is that we are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Minister of Justice has accurately reported that things have deteriorated over the past day as the softwood lumber ruling came out yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party will provide any assistance that we can in putting together this conference. In fact, we have already started to make calls to ministers and opposition members in the other provinces. We are prepared to work with the government on this effort.

The new US farm subsidies and the softwood lumber tariffs are a major threat, not only to these two industries but to our entire economy.

Is the Premier working with the other Western premiers to develop a united front? Has he spoken to other Western premiers since the US farm Bill issue and the softwood lumber panel ruling came forward?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think as the member knows, the departments of the government — Agriculture, Government Affairs, the Premier — have been in contact with ministers and with the Prime Minister and with other ministers across the country.

This is not a matter, Mr. Speaker, that comes as a huge surprise, and so people have been discussing these questions and responses over the last months. That will continue, Mr. Speaker — an effective strong and united force is being generated as it is in the softwood lumber issue, Mr. Speaker. And I think the member can be assured that every single effort will be made by this government to make sure that the lumber industry and the agricultural sector in this province is being protected.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the minister's answer. But I particularly would like to know, in light of the fact that the panel ruling on softwood lumber came out yesterday, and of course, the US farm Bill went through approval the day before, has the Premier contacted the four Western premiers since the softwood lumber dispute ruling occurred?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been constant and continued discussion about this matter across not only Western Canada but across the country. The member mentioned that if this was a matter for Ontario and Quebec, then it would be a serious matter for the federal government. Mr. Speaker, it is a matter for Ontario and Quebec as well as for

all of us.

And ministers will be meeting on Monday, Mr. Speaker, to discuss the impact on the . . . from the US farm Bill. I think the member should be assured that we are working on this with full diligence. We look forward to the support of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, and we will keep them fully informed and we look forward to a united response in dealing with this question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't quite clear on the minister's answer but it sounds hopeful. Did the Premier not only speak with the four Western premiers, but premiers of Quebec and Ontario since the softwood lumber panel ruling occurred?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, the member will know that there has been communication with the Prime Minister's office and there has been constant communication with other . . . with the other provincial governments at a number of levels, and we'll endeavour to deal with the specific question the member asks after question period.

I'm not exactly sure, but we know there's been continued pressure across the piece from the Minister of Agriculture here, from the Minister of Government Relations, and many other departments too.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the minister's answer. Mr. Speaker, our federal government can't simply sit in Ottawa and take this urgent matter lightly. They need to consider all the options and develop an appropriate response.

Obviously, they must find new money to defend Western agriculture. And they also need to consider some form of trade retaliation against the US. These are options that need to be very carefully considered at this special conference so that all of Western Canada can speak to Ottawa with one strong and one united voice.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to simply . . . it's time to go beyond simply asking the federal government what they're going to do. It's time for the West to come together and decide what we think they should do. Will the Premier take our suggestion and work with the other Western provinces to develop a united position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, Mr. Speaker, to tie this to the softwood lumber issue is an issue in which not only Western premiers and Western economies and Western provinces have got together but all have. I think the member makes a valuable point that if we had a Western position we could be much stronger, not only in Ottawa but also with the Americans.

I might ask the member that . . . if he has any influence at all with his colleagues in Alberta to develop a consistent Western strategy, that would be very helpful, Mr. Speaker, because that

is the one place where we do not get a united Western front, Mr. Speaker. Because the Alberta government treats these things very much differently than we just mentioned — the Wheat Board and a number of other, a number of other issues.

But every effort will be made to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a united front to deal with the Americans and with the federal government. And as I understand, Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture ministers are meeting again on Monday.

I might say, if the member has any ability to pull together his colleagues in the other Western provinces in opposition or those who are more favourable to his point of view, perhaps he could do that. And then we could have a united front.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would assure the minister that we have already begun making calls to our colleagues, both government and opposition in other provinces. And the initial responses are very positive.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government is now challenging the US softwood lumber tariffs, as the minister indicated, through the World Trade Organization. One idea that has been proposed is that the federal government pay the tariffs until the challenge is considered by the WTO, and if the Canadian challenge is successful, the money would be refunded so that the government would not actually lose anything. However there has been no word yet that the federal government is prepared to act on this proposal. And the new softwood lumber tariffs take effect this May 23.

Mr. Speaker, these are the kind of options that need to be considered. And, Mr. Speaker, this could be considered at a special conference of Western premiers and opposition leaders.

Will the Premier join with us in calling for this conference and developing a strong and united response to these unfair US trade attacks?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the House and to the members opposite today that there has been an extensive engagement in what happens with the trade injury and with the issues as they relate to disparity with our united . . . with our American friends.

Mr. Speaker, on a quarterly basis the premiers of Western Canada get together for a discussion about a whole range of issues. So they come together to discuss softwood lumber; they come together to discuss trade; they come together to discuss agriculture. They talk about what the common front should be when they go to Ottawa to negotiate with the federal government around a variety of different fronts. So we have a mechanism today where the premiers are involved in that process, Mr. Speaker.

Along with the motion on the agricultural piece today, Mr. Speaker, which is tragic not only for Saskatchewan but for Canada, our Premier has already communicated a message to the Prime Minister in correspondence, and saying to the Prime

Minister's Office the kind of devastating issues that this creates for Saskatchewan producers.

So there should be no motion today, Mr. Speaker. Intergovernmental affairs offices and departments across the nation come together on a regular basis, led by our member, and they talk about all of the international trade issues that affect us and what strategy Canada and Saskatchewan needs to use to advance our positions.

So there are many mechanisms today in place that our province is engaged in with various different departments and ministries to proceed with that process. And we'll continue, Mr. Speaker, to take those issues on, front and centre, as they affect Saskatchewan and Canadian communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect to the Deputy Premier, I think that the escalation of the American trade actions call for something more than regular quarterly meetings.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the West needs to make a strong stand and underscore the importance of the US farm Bill on our major industry of agriculture and on the panel ruling on softwood lumber.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan whether or not he agrees that a special meeting to deal with these two particular issues as soon as possibly could be convened by not only the four Western premiers, but also the four opposition leaders of the Western provinces to speak strongly to Ottawa and to have repercussions in the United States that we mean business, this is a serious matter, we are not going to take this matter lying down.

Will the Deputy Premier respond?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, we should not assume for a minute that the issue that we're facing today in Canada with . . . as it relates to the grains and oilseeds is somehow immune to the kinds of issues that we're faced with across Canada today as it relates to the WTO.

And what we have on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker, today — and I assure the members opposite, I assure the member opposite today — our Premier, ministers on this side of the House, are engaged every day, Mr. Speaker, with the national government in terms of how we deal with the issues at it relates to the WTO — every day, Mr. Speaker.

And this isn't a Saskatchewan issue alone, or a western Canadian issue, Mr. Speaker. Last year in Canada we almost . . . we had a challenge on the tomato industry out of Ontario. And a challenge on the tomato industry out of British Columbia.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we had a challenge on the softwood lumber.

And last year, Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert . . . or the PEI, Prince Edward Island economy, the potato economy was almost destroyed completely, Mr. Speaker.

This is not a Western Canadian issue, Mr. Speaker, this is a national issue at which provincial premiers, the federal government, and ministers are all engaged in making a difference, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do not doubt for a minute that the Government of Saskatchewan and other provincial governments and even those governments beyond Western Canada have been on an ongoing basis dealing with these issues.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Deputy Premier that it's right now that the country is focused on these issues. It's right now that the national news is discussing what we're going to do about the US farm Bill and how we're going to respond to the softwood trade panel ruling. Mr. Speaker, it's now that we need to respond strongly and to move our case forward.

And so I would call on the Deputy Premier to agree that this conference would add our voice of support for our industries of agriculture and forestry at a crucial time, a critical time, to have it impact on the decisions and the actions that will be taken by our federal government and the possibilities of being more successful.

Will the Deputy Premier agree with this argument?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't disagree with the member opposite on the approach to engage Canadians today in the discussion about the importance of a . . . of mitigating the kinds of issues that we're dealing with at the World Trade table. I'm not discouraging that at all, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the member opposite, on this side of the House, governments across Canada today are fully engaged with the federal government in discussions as they relate to the World Trade negotiations — and for mitigation and trade injury, Mr. Speaker. We're all engaged at that process today.

And we have extensive documentation today from each of the provinces on a variety of different commodities, on a variety of different industries in Canada that are affected by the WTO and by the disparity that we think exists between the Europeans and the Americans and Canada. We have that on the table on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker, and those consultations are going on as we speak here today.

And I say to the member opposite, you need to too engage like we are. We need to engage in Canada today. We need to engage in Canada today, all political leaders, Mr. Speaker. And I say to the members opposite, if in fact you can get your . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Deputy Premier knows, we have asked for federal cabinet ministers to come to this province and to meet with us to discuss these issues. And they're wondering whether or not we're really serious about the matter. They're wondering whether we're united or whether we're just playing politics.

(10:45)

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity, if we bring together the four Western governments and the four leaders of the opposition, to have NDP (New Democratic Party) representatives in place, to have the Saskatchewan Party involved, to have the Liberal government in British Columbia involved, to have the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives, the Leader of the Opposition in Manitoba involved.

Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity to make a very strong statement to the federal government that we're prepared to work co-operatively with them to solve some problems that are of vital importance to the economy of Saskatchewan and to the job creation of this province.

Will the Deputy Premier agree that this should be a first priority, we should have the emergency debate, and we should call on this conference to occur at its earliest possible convenience?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House we did again recognize some unprecedented action in terms of where opposition parties and government come together to recognize the importance and significance of an issue of how it not only impacts Saskatchewan but how it impacts Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we're all acting on this process today. We've now requested that the federal ministers from the four different departments come to our province, have a conversation in our province — and I understand that one of the ministers is in our gallery today, Mr. Speaker — to listen to what this debate is all about, and to say to us in the next little while that they will be here, Mr. Speaker, to listen to the kinds of issues that we're going to present before them and to take back to the national table, so that they can go forward into the international arena to negotiate the kinds of issues, Mr. Speaker, of which we're all concerned about today.

And again, Mr. Speaker, yesterday's motion out of this resolution that we . . . or the day before, Mr. Speaker, was not about only but most importantly for Saskatchewan, but it's about the effect that we have that this particular trade Bill and the injustice that exists today in the trade disparities that we have are Canadian issues, Mr. Speaker — that's what I thought that exercise was about.

And so we'll continue with the members opposite to work together, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our federal government understands the kinds of pressures that we have in Canada and in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're not disagreeing with the comments that are made by the Deputy Premier. What we're trying to underscore is that we need to take more immediate action and stronger action and more unified action to speak with the federal government and to make an impression upon the Americans that what is happening is not acceptable, that we will not take it lying down.

Mr. Speaker, back on March 23 — even before this panel ruling on softwood lumber was finalized — the mayor of Prince Albert, Don Cody, said that this duty would spell disaster not only for Prince Albert and northern Saskatchewan but all of Saskatchewan. A domino effect would take place as more and more people leave the province to find work elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, this is an urgent matter. We know we need to create jobs and strengthen our economy in Saskatchewan. And we know that the softwood lumber ruling will have the opposite effect. And it's going to come into effect on May 23.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've heard from farm leaders the importance of a response to the US farm Bill. Will the Deputy Premier agree that calling a conference of the four Western premiers and the leaders of the four official oppositions at its earliest convenience would be a very positive step to move this argument along?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I think yesterday or the day before in this Assembly, we recognized the importance of collegially working together in bringing about some changes that exist today in our international trade rules. And that when the member opposite talks about urgency, absolutely there's a tremendous amount of urgency as it relates today to the agricultural file.

And on Monday, Mr. Speaker — or Sunday night — we're arriving in Ottawa. We're going to be meeting with all of the Canadian agricultural ministers from each of the provinces; we're going to have Mr. Vanclief at our table. And we're going to be talking front and centre right about this very issue, Mr. Speaker. So the urgency and the immediate action on this issue is happening within two or three days after which time we raised this issue, Mr. Speaker.

And we already have seen, Mr. Speaker, in my view, some movement on the part of the federal government in terms of addressing this issue. Today, Mr. Speaker, I read and hear that Mr. Vanclief is engaging a conversation with the US trade folks to have a conversation exactly about this very issue, Mr. Speaker.

I hear that the federal government is giving recognition, Mr. Speaker, to take a look at trade injury. For the first time now . . . In the past several months I've not heard the federal government say that they're prepared to make any kind of difference on trade injury. Today I'm reading that they're prepared to make some indication, Mr. Speaker, of trade injury.

So just, just by making that kind of intervention over the last

couple of days in this House and the work that we've done collectively as agriculture ministers and ministers of the Crown in various different provinces, we're beginning to see some movement, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to work on that effort, both from the opposition's perspective and ours, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Deputy Premier knows, Canada is a vast and diverse country and the federal government has to deal with competing interests and concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the federal government wants to deal as constructively and as strongly on this issue as they possibly can because an attack on the agriculture sector in Canada and an attack on the lumber and softwood industry in Canada hurts us nationally as well as it hurts us provincially.

Mr. Speaker, we need to give the federal government all the support and all of the reason to act that we possibly can. And so I ask, one more time — our time in this question period is about to expire — I ask the Deputy Premier: will he and will his government agree to work with the official opposition in convening a conference as soon as possible amongst the four Western premiers and the four leaders of the opposition to work on a plan and a strategy to help the federal government to counteract the unfair trade practices by the United States?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to state to the House and to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, and with the official opposition, when you just look back at what's happened here in the past two and a half years, Mr. Speaker, you will see that there's been a tremendous amount of co-operation on various different fronts.

On this very Assembly of the House, Mr. Speaker, not more than two years ago, we had a delegation that we led to Ottawa collectively, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of days ago, we have the resolution, Mr. Speaker, that's passed unanimously by this House — the opposition and the government — to Ottawa requesting that we work collectively to make a difference in Canada on trade, Mr. Speaker.

I recall personally, Mr. Speaker, on two occasions that I've travelled to Ottawa with the previous member from Kindersley, the Agriculture critic, where we talked about the kinds of trade injury that needs to happen.

There should be no doubt here, Mr. Speaker, that this government and this opposition from time to time have worked very, very hard collectively to make a difference. And this isn't going to change today, Mr. Speaker, and collectively we're going to work for Canadians in this province to make a difference in the way in which we need to and be approaching our federal government for the kind of support that we need to make a difference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Prince Albert Northcote on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a guest in our gallery, a guest that I would want to say I'm very pleased to welcome here today. He's a former member of this legislature. He is now the Government House Leader. The Hon. Ralph Goodale has joined us here this morning to hear the discussion.

And so on behalf of all members of the House, I'd like to very much welcome him to the legislature. Welcome back.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Rosetown-Biggan on his feet?

Mr. Hermanson: — As you might guess, Mr. Speaker, also with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would too like to join, on behalf of the official opposition, in welcoming the federal minister from Saskatchewan, Mr. Goodale, to the Assembly. We appreciate his interest in the matters that are under discussion here in the House and that he would take the time to sit in the gallery and watch. I think that's an excellent sign.

I had the opportunity to serve with Mr. Goodale, of course again on opposite sides of the House, but I can assure this Assembly that Mr. Goodale was always concerned about agricultural issues when he served as Agriculture minister in the House of Commons. And I think it's a good sign that he's in the House today and we welcome you here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you. By leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to join with my colleagues in taking this opportunity to welcome Saskatchewan's representative in the federal cabinet.

And this does indeed demonstrate that if we are to make a progress on the very serious issues facing our province and our nation, it will require the best efforts and best will of members

of all political parties. And I think that is being demonstrated in this House today and by Mr. Goodale's presence.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Arm River.

Mr. Brkich: — Permission for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery today there's a group from the town of Davidson — a youth group from the United Church lead by my constituency assistant, Mr. Clark Puckett. Mr. Puckett had set up last fall a youth activities within the church to encourage youth activities, such as to come to here and to view the legislature today, and different activities. They go out through Regina today. They're going to visit some other spots, I believe.

I'd like to introduce them. They're Drew, Mitch, Tara, Derek, Shannon, Jessie, Crystal, Shandra, Matt and Ashley Lockwood, and Ashley McNabb. And also helping Clark today is his wife and his daughter, Tarah.

So to you and through you I'd like to welcome them here today and I hope they enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule no. 46.

Leave not granted.

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Before Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that the Assembly move to item 1 under Private Bills and then revert back to government business.

Leave granted.

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 301 — The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2002

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move Bill No. 301, The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2002 be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave I stand today to respond to written questions no. 146 and 147 on behalf of the government and to table responses.

The Speaker: — Responses to 146 and 147 have been tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave I wish to convert for debates returnable both questions 148 and 149.

The Speaker: — Questions 148 and 149 converted to motions for return debatable.

(11:00)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 30 — The Liquor Consumption Tax Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Liquor Consumption Tax Amendment Tax, 2002. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, will amend The Liquor Consumption Tax Act to raise the liquor consumption tax rate. This was announced during the March 27 budget address and the rate will increase from 7 per cent to 10 per cent effective April 2, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, the liquor consumption tax rate has not been amended since April 1991, at which time it was in fact decreased from 10 per cent to 7 per cent and now it's going back up to 10 per cent. It was decreased in 1991 because the government of that day wished to harmonize Saskatchewan's sales tax with the GST (goods and services tax) and they lowered the tax rate in anticipation of harmonization which was then cancelled by the NDP government which was subsequently elected.

Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, the people of Saskatchewan spoke out and made it clear that they did not want to harmonize their taxes with the federal government's. However when the harmonization initiative was abandoned by the New Democratic Party government in October 1991, the liquor consumption tax rate remained at 7 per cent.

By returning the liquor consumption tax rate to 10 per cent we will generate an additional \$15.6 million annually. This much needed revenue will help us to continue to fund priority areas like health care and education. So, Mr. Speaker, I move that an Act to amend The Liquor Consumption Tax Act be read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's never a good day when governments raise taxes. I don't think there is a taxpayer across the province of Saskatchewan that applauds whenever he hears . . . he or she hears that taxes are going up. So again, Mr. Speaker, this is another one of those days when the governments are raising taxes.

You know, there must be other solutions, Mr. Speaker, to the problems of financing a government other than simply reaching again and again and again into the pockets of taxpayers. Mr. Speaker, those pockets are not bottomless. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the hoteliers and the tavern keepers of this province are concerned that this tax will help their . . . will hurt their industry. Quite a number of them, Mr. Speaker, are struggling as we speak. They do not have limitless resources that the government seems to think they have. Neither do their customers, Mr. Speaker, have limitless resources.

And they believe . . . they feel that this increase in taxation will mean that there will be fewer customers in their establishments and those customers will make fewer purchases that do attend, Mr. Speaker. So in the long run it may very well have a negative impact on the government's finances rather than a positive impact.

Now we do have a concern, Mr. Speaker, when you find a situation where people who consume alcohol drive and we in no way, shape, or form, Mr. Speaker, encourage that activity. If having fewer people consume alcohol means fewer people are drinking and driving then that would be an overall benefit for society. But that's not an argument that's being put forward in this case, Mr. Speaker, by the government.

This is simply another tax grab and, Mr. Speaker, that in itself is another sad day for Saskatchewan. The hoteliers, the tavern keepers, Mr. Speaker, wish to have time to consider the impact this is going to have on their establishments and, Mr. Speaker, have time to talk to the government about that impact.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 31 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise also to move second reading of The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2002. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just said that nobody ever likes tax increases and I think that's true.

But I'd like to point out to the House that when we were talking to people before the budget many reasonable and fair-minded people in the province felt that we needed to put more money into health care and education, and many of those people told us that if we needed to find extra revenue somewhere, that the liquor taxes and the tobacco taxes would be the first places that they would look to. And that's what we have tried to do, Mr. Speaker.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in recent years there has been a growing concern among health professionals over the harmful effects of tobacco and the need to introduce strong measures to reduce tobacco consumption, particularly among our youth. This Assembly has recognized these concerns and we responded last year with an all-party special committee report on tobacco control. This report led to the implementation earlier this year of The Tobacco Control Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this Bill takes another major step to further

reduce tobacco use by implementing the largest tobacco tax increase in the history of Saskatchewan. This measure will be particularly effective in helping to reduce tobacco usage among younger people.

Mr. Speaker, the final report of the Special Committee on Tobacco Control recommended the adoption of a comprehensive tobacco reduction strategy aimed particularly at young people.

The purchase of tobacco is price-sensitive, and we believe, Mr. Speaker, that the tobacco tax increases announced in this Bill will result in about a 20 per cent decrease in tobacco purchases in this fiscal year alone.

That, Mr. Speaker, will contribute greatly to the Tobacco Control Committee's stated goal of decreasing the percentage of tobacco users by 50 per cent over five years and by another 50 per cent in the following five years.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill increases the tax on cigarettes from 8.6 cents per cigarette to 16 cents per cigarette, and the tax on loose tobacco from 7.7 cents per gram to 16 cents per gram. Also, Mr. Speaker, this Bill increases the tax on expensive cigars from a maximum of \$2.50 per cigar to a maximum tax of \$5 per cigar.

The changes contained within the Bill, Mr. Speaker, are expected to yield an additional \$60.5 million in tobacco tax revenue in the upcoming fiscal year which will help fund priority areas like health and education.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Tobacco Tax Act, 1998.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act Bill, 2002, Bill No. 31, is an issue again, that as my colleague talked about, about the liquor consumption tax, is just another . . . is another tax.

I was quite interested to hear the minister's speaking notes towards the Bill. And it was quite interesting that he was . . . it really, to me, it sounded like he was trying to balance two competing issues.

He mentioned the fact that, you know, prior to the budget that they were going to have to bring in more revenue into this province, and one of the ways was to increase not only the liquor consumption tax, but also the tobacco tax because they found themselves in a very tight budget situation. We've already been through that a number of times in this House, how the budget really is, is, is if, at anything, a very slim, balanced budget. But when you look at all the numbers it really isn't. It isn't a balanced budget.

But he's talking about bringing money in on one hand, but he's also then justifying the Bill on the fact that it's going to decrease the amount of people using tobacco products. You know I'd be very interested to know: which one is it? Are they looking at it for a revenue generator, to balance their budget, or are they really looking at it — which I would think would be the proper way of looking at it — as a way of decreasing the

amount of tobacco use in the province?

But that's not how the minister started his speech. He said that because we are looking to increase the revenue in our province, this is one way. He finished off his speech by mentioning that he anticipates it increasing the revenue of our province by \$60.5 million extra taxation brought in from these products.

Mr. Speaker, I would hesitate, if a government is looking at using this as a revenue generator, and at the same time hoping it decreases the use of tobacco — be it in cigarettes or loose tobacco, i.e., Copenhagen — that he could use both of them. Because if he's using it as a way of reducing the usage, he can't also then depend on the revenue that it's going to be bringing in. He's getting himself boxed into a corner here dependent on revenue of something that he's trying to reduce the use of. And it just doesn't fit.

Definitely when you look at health issues and some of the health issues in our province and the health budget, tobacco usage can be a huge problem. And it does create increased expense and increased burden on the health care system.

I really truly believe over the last number of years that people are realizing the problem that tobacco has caused. But it's interesting, you know, 30 years ago when people started smoking, I don't think too many people realized that it could be a burden on their health. Definitely they've got to this point and are having perhaps trouble quitting, and now they're getting it . . . forced to pay more tax to support a government that unfortunately over the last 10 years has created no new growth in the province to help strengthen their budget.

They look at the old measures to try and bring in revenue, i.e., fuel, in liquor consumption, and tobacco tax. But unfortunately, had they looked at it over the long term and said had we been a little more co-operative with growth, had we done a little bit more on creating a business climate in this province, perhaps these so-called sin taxes would not have to be hit so hard, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess in closing, I would certainly agree if they're looking at it to reduce the usages, but I'd really question when they are looking at it to balance a budget.

So right now, Mr. Speaker, I'd move to adjourn debate on Bill 31.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 35 — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today as well to move second reading of The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, 2001 will long be remembered in history as a very traumatic year due to the events of September 11. These events triggered a global downturn in an already slowed economy. This downturn was severely felt at home here in Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan, a stalled global economy was felt even more

when combined with a devastating drought that affected more than 60 per cent of the province, lower oil prices, and the ongoing softwood lumber dispute, not to mention the American farm Bill.

While it appears that the economy is recovering, we've now been hit with an even worse American farm Bill, and it will take a number of years to regain the growth we experienced in the 1990s. This year forecasters are predicting economic growth of 1.6 per cent this year and 3.2 per cent in 2003.

The downturn of 2001 is forcing the government to amend two sections of The Fiscal Stabilization Act. The amendments are quite simple, really. They would allow access to monies saved in previous years and help smooth out recent fiscal fluctuations. These funds are necessary to continue to provide services to the public without imposing excessive tax increases.

Presently, Mr. Speaker, under the legislation as it stands, the government would be required to leave \$298 million in a savings account at the end of this fiscal year even if there were public needs. Mr. Speaker, we do not think that is a reasonable requirement under the circumstances. No other government in Canada has this requirement and it is not appropriate in difficult times.

(11:15)

The choice we have is to draw down our savings or to cut services or to increase taxes. Mr. Speaker, we believe the reasonable thing to do is to draw down our savings. That's what we're going to do. We're not in favour of increasing taxes other than the liquor and tobacco taxes at the present time, and we believe that it would not be appropriate to cut health, education or our plan to fix the highways.

So we'd like to use some of those savings in this time of difficulty. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that most reasonable and fair-minded people will think that that is the appropriate thing to do at this time. So, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Amendment Act, 2002.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's interesting that the minister is standing in the House today to amend an Act concerning the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, a fund which does not exist, never has existed, but the minister seems to want to amend it.

And as the . . . as the Saskatchewan Party has stated for a number of years, and now the media has picked up on the fact that this Fiscal Stabilization Fund does not have any money in it and never has had any money in it and this is just a way for the provincial government to pretend that they have balanced their budget.

And it is true, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan has gone and is going through some rough economic times, but I believe that the Saskatchewan people realize what the government is doing and saying with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and they, quite frankly, understand that there is no money in the savings account.

The government now, two years in a row, has borrowed money, raised the overall debt of the province, and they pretend that they have never ran a deficit budget. And it's just not true, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, in 7 out of the other 10 provinces plus the federal government do not have a fiscal stabilization so-called fund on their books; they report their revenue and their deficits and surplus as they stand. So that everyone not only in the province of the taxpayers but also the banking community, the money markets where governments have to go to get a favourable credit rating, which is very important to the amount of tax that the provincial government would have to pay on debt that is owed to the money market . . . and we have talked to banking institutions and when they looked at the provincial government's budget and the books and how . . . concerning the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, they do not take that into account at all.

They have told us in meetings with the Saskatchewan Party caucus that when they look at the Saskatchewan budget in the last two years, they consider it a deficit budget and look at their credit ratings according to what they feel is actually taking place. And as we know, the government is running a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that the government rearrange its bookkeeping style, let's say, and really make it very clear to everyone concerned — the people of Saskatchewan, the voters of this province, the people that pay the taxes, and as well as the money market — that this bookkeeping type of system that is being done is cleared up and looked after so that everyone is on the same page and understands where the finances of this province are at this time.

And we would like to continue to discuss this issue and bring forward our concerns with the whole concept of a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And I would like to adjourn debate at this moment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 36 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2002.

I'd like to briefly explain how the corporation capital tax is determined. The corporation capital tax is basically a tax on the wealth of the corporation. A corporation determines its tax based on amounts reported on its balance sheet. A corporation is permitted a \$10 million deduction from its tax base, which ensures that the . . . only the largest corporations pay this tax.

Mr. Speaker, the capital tax is an important source of revenue for the province. This year it is estimated to rise . . . raise, I should say, approximately \$340 million.

In my budget address I announced that we would amend The Corporation Capital Tax Act to increase the standard exemption from \$10 million to as high as \$15 million for Saskatchewan-based corporations. Mr. Speaker, this Bill

provides the authority to increase the standard exemption to \$15 million. The formula for determining the increased amount will be provided in the regulations.

The amount of the exemption will be based upon the proportion of total salaries and wages that are paid in Saskatchewan by a taxable corporation and its associated corporations.

And I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, that part of the rationale behind this change is to say that, if you are a large corporation that has a higher percentage of your employees in Saskatchewan as a percentage of your total employees, then you will get a higher tax exemption.

So it's part of an effort to encourage companies to have more employees in Saskatchewan, which I think most people would see as a reasonable thing to do. And that's what we're trying to do.

And I might add that this is actually the second year of a multi-year strategy to improve business taxation in the province. Last year we changed the small-business income tax rate from 8 per cent to 6 per cent; and as of January 1 this year, we changed the limit of income for which small businesses could claim the small-business rate, which is lower, from \$200,000 to \$300,000.

So we're giving some companies that employ more people in Saskatchewan a tax break, we're giving small business a tax break, and we're encouraging small business to employ more people in the province as well.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, while I'm talking about the small-business income tax rate, that that has gone from 10 per cent in 1991, when the New Democratic Party government came in, to 6 per cent today. But now it applies to a higher rate. So in other words, the New Democratic Party, and now the coalition government, has lowered the small-business tax rate by 40 per cent over the last 10 years.

And I think that's significant progress, Mr. Speaker. There are always those who will say that . . . there are always those, Mr. Speaker, who will say that we should do away with business taxation generally to encourage jobs and so on. And we try to decrease business taxes in a reasonable way if we can.

But balanced off with the need to get revenues from business taxation, which will help us pay for the education system, that certainly supports business by providing a skilled workforce; the health care system, which certainly supports business by providing a health care system to employees; and also the highways system, Mr. Speaker, which is necessary to move our goods to market — highways and transportation is very, very important in terms of ensuring that business can do business in Saskatchewan.

And so when we're talking about the corporation capital tax, although business would always like the tax to be lower and we would like to lower it as we can, we never want to lower the taxes so quickly that we'll jeopardize the education, health care, or transportation systems that the public is expected to pay for.

So that is some of the thinking that is behind changing the

corporate capital tax exemption to encourage employment in the province, Mr. Speaker. And also I wanted to reiterate how it's related to what we're trying to do for small businesses as well, again to encourage employment within the province.

Now I might just close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that this Bill will result in Saskatchewan having the highest exemption of the nine provinces with the corporation capital tax. So of the nine, we'll have the best exemption. And about 100 Saskatchewan companies will be removed from the tax roll altogether. But as I said, it will encourage all taxable companies to employ more Saskatchewan workers.

This tax applies to about 1,350 corporations, most with their head offices outside Saskatchewan. The increased standard exemption will result in significant tax savings for Saskatchewan-based corporations, about \$4.5 million per year. And that will go a long way to benefit those corporations and encourage corporations to employ more people in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I now move An Act to Amend the Corporation Capital Tax Act be read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, today the Finance minister has stood in his place and raised . . . presented two Bills that raise taxes; he's presented one Bill that muddies the water on his . . . the way he does his books, Mr. Speaker; and then he brings in a Bill that lowers taxes.

Lowering taxes, Mr. Speaker, is very good. Just as the two taxes, Mr. Speaker, that he'd raised earlier are . . . have a negative impact on taxpayers, this one will have a positive impact, Mr. Speaker, but it's a very miserly impact.

Mr. Speaker, in raising . . . the minister says he's changing the exemption from \$10 million on capital for businesses to 15 . . . to up to 15 million. And, Mr. Speaker, there is the catch — it's up to 15 million. Because, Mr. Speaker, very few corporations are actually going to benefit with this. And it's certainly not going to go very far, Mr. Speaker, in bringing new businesses into this province because it's tied to the percentage of employees employed in Saskatchewan versus the employees in the entire corporation.

So let's say Ford Motor Company or GM (General Motors) or Dodge or Mitsubishi or whoever think about bringing to Saskatchewan some of their businesses. Those 2, 10, 100 employees, whatever they might wish to employ in Saskatchewan, are then measured against their entire corporate interests either in another province or around the world to gain access to this additional 50 . . . additional \$5 million of exemption.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you employ 10 people in Saskatchewan versus 1,000 people someplace else in your corporation, that percentage is miniscule in lowering that tax, Mr. Speaker. There's virtually no benefit there. They're certainly not going to come to Saskatchewan to gain access to that miserly amount. Miserly amount, Mr. Speaker.

Now if the minister wanted to do something beneficial to encourage businesses to establish themselves in Saskatchewan, to move to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, he could have moved it to \$15 million of exemption and that would have had a major impact on local businesses, Mr. Speaker. But no, he has to . . . he wants to take the credit by bragging about it while actually not forgoing very many dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a much greater impact would have been to lower the small-business tax down to zero. He says Saskatchewan, on the small-business tax, is the ninth lowest. Well, Mr. Speaker, our major competitor, our next-door neighbour, is zero.

So it puts us in a very disadvantageous position, Mr. Speaker. How do we compete with zero when ours is so much higher, Mr. Speaker?

So while the minister may want to brag about this tax reduction, it's a very miserly tax reduction. And he talked of the need, Mr. Speaker, to have this tax in place to pay for education while at the very same time, Mr. Speaker, he's downloading the costs of education onto the local school divisions which in turn either cut programs, fire teachers, or increase the mill rate to their local property taxes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the way to grow the province. The minister is raising taxes and even in those areas that should be beneficial, there's such a miserly attempt that . . . to be negligible, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province need more time to absorb the meaning of this very small change. Therefore, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(11:30)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Justice Vote 3

Subvote (JU01)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have the same officials as last time. No matter what I do, they keep coming back.

To my right, John Whyte, deputy minister; to my left, Doug Moen, the executive director of public law and community justice. To John's right, Murray Brown, the acting executive director of public prosecutions. Behind me is Colleen Matthews, who's the executive assistant to the deputy minister; Elizabeth Smith to her right, who's the director of administration.

And there are a number of other officials at the back: John Baker, who's the executive director of law enforcement services; Keith Laxdal is the associate deputy minister of finance and administration; Darryl Bogdasavich, who's the executive director of civil law; Laura Bourassa, policy planning

and evaluation. And I think that's it, Mr. Chair. And if it isn't, then I apologize for whoever I left there.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to the minister and his officials.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to start my questioning in estimates by asking you whether or not, in fact, you are still the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — I am still the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the reason I asked that question is because you are the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, as you have just stated, under whose jurisdiction gaming agreements fall. Yet you are not the minister who actually signs those agreements.

Now why has this been allowed to be set up in this manner and what kind of a message do you think it's sending to First Nations and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Chair, the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming is the minister responsible for the negotiations between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, dealing with gaming. So the proper minister to direct questions on that issue would be the minister of Liquor and Gaming, who is also the minister of government affairs.

Ms. Julé: — Well it's not surprising, I guess, to myself or the general public, Mr. Minister, that you have a sort of confusing arrangement going on over on that side of the House. That there are a number of different questions, for instance, that would come to my attention from the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan regarding these gaming agreements and it sort of falls under Justice also. And so I'm wondering whether or not you're going to be willing to answer questions on gaming and any other Justice matters that come before you.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well I'd be only too pleased to try to answer any questions. In fact, I think I tried to answer some on corrections not very long ago. But the . . . I think the most appropriate time to raise questions dealing with gaming — if I may suggest this — is when the department of government . . . well and then when the government affairs and Aboriginal Affairs, we will be here at the same time. So you can maybe decide which questions are appropriate there for that estimates. And then when the minister of Liquor and Gaming is here, you can talk to him about Liquor and Gaming maybe.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess I have a number of options. Thank you.

Mr. Minister, looking at the estimates for this year, I notice that First Nations gaming agreements are up nearly \$10 million over last year. And I'd like to know what the reason for this is — that would be, I believe, on the expenditures side.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Can I ask the member which department she's talking about?

Ms. Julé: — I guess this proves my point, Mr. Minister, that the way you have arranged your departments is really very confusing to everyone. It's under Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well I think, Mr. Chair, that we are here to discuss Justice estimates, so feel free to ask any questions about Justice. We'll be back dealing with Aboriginal Affairs shortly, whenever in fact you ask us to come back.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister: Mr. Minister, you had just indicated to me that you would be willing to answer any questions that pertain to Aboriginal Affairs. This is definitely Aboriginal Affairs that I'm asking you about.

And I really do think that the backbenchers behind you could trust you to answer these questions. And I think you could relay to them that you really don't need their help.

But nonetheless, Mr. Minister, I would ask you to try to answer those questions if possible, because it is under Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — I don't mean to be difficult, Mr. Chair, but we have . . . we understood that it would be the estimates of the Department of Justice today, so we have Justice officials here. When we're here as a . . . When I'm here as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs along with the minister of government affairs, then I think that would be the most appropriate place to address those specific questions.

But I'd be happy to entertain today any questions dealing with the Department of Justice.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, would you be willing to entertain questions that pertain to the Bill No. 2 that we have before the Assembly and that we discussed in Committee of the Whole yesterday?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — I'd be happy to do that. More particularly, happy to do that in relation to the specific issues which are of importance . . . no, not importance, but relevance to the activities of the Department of Justice.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Those are the kind of questions that I expect to put to you and I hope you will provide some answers for.

Mr. Minister, in Bill No. 2 there is a reference to emergency protective intervention. And I did ask the Minister of Social Services yesterday if he could explain to me will the same principles that apply to victims of domestic violence apply here.

And I guess what I'm asking you, is there a provision for the victims to be able to access this legislation to in fact help protect them against any assaults that they may be fearful of? And specifically, when a peace officer is acting on an individual's fear of assault as is stated in The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, that is permissible and it is encouraged by that Act.

So in the case of children that may be afraid of victimization or assault, could a peace officer act in the same manner regarding

child sexual abuse? Or does the peace officer have to wait until after the abuse has taken place, at which point the Criminal Code of Canada would then apply?

And I guess we need to understand whether or not this Act in fact is there to protect children and give them some privileges in order to defend themselves, or if this Act is basically there to have an application for a protective intervention order against the offenders.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — If I understand the member's main — she may have asked a number of questions — but one I think she asked: is it possible for there to be intervention prior to actual violence committed against the child; in other words, in a preventative way. And the answer to that question is that if there is a potential risk to the child, then police and others can intervene.

Ms. Julé: — Yes, Mr. Minister, could the child victim themselves make an application in order to prevent an assault against them if they are fearful of an impending assault? Can they do that and who would they make the application to?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The procedure which is followed here is that in order for an application to be made, that application can be made by a peace officer, by a child protection officer, or by an outreach worker. So the process would be that that . . . one of those three people would identify, presumably along with the child, that there was a need for an intervention order. And then one of those three categories of people would make that application on behalf of the child to a Justice of the Peace.

I can say that there . . . we don't envisage any challenges as a result . . . any difficulties as a result of this. There would not be situations in which children who are in need of protection orders would not be able to be protected because the peace officers, the child protection officers, and the outreach officers will work to resolve that and then make that application to the Justice of the Peace.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister: Mr. Minister, it is my understanding that Bill No. 2 . . . It's my understanding that Bill No. 2 is predicated on The Victims of Domestic Violence Act and that Act allows for an individual themselves, any individual, to make application to protect themselves based on fear of assault.

So if in fact Bill No. 2 is predicated on The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, it would follow then that a youth under the age of 18 would be able to make that application on their own behalf. If that is not true, if they need to have a child protection officer or someone else to do it, then in fact this Bill is not predicated on The Victims of Domestic Violence Act and it doesn't seem to have any application. So I'm wondering if you would comment on that, please.

(11:45)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well the member's right, Mr. Chair, in indicating that this legislation is modelled on The Victims of Domestic Violence Act. In those cases we are dealing with, in the vast majority of cases, people who have reached the age of majority. But certainly older people.

And in this context dealing with children, I think we might ask ourselves, how would a child know how to make an application to a Justice of the Peace and so on. What process would they follow? How would they know what to do?

So it's a recognition merely of the need to assist children to ensure that they are protected and to ensure that someone with the knowledge of how to proceed assists in that process. So in the process of their work, peace officers or child protection officers or outreach workers would identify that children needed help and needed intervention and would ensure that the appropriate intervention order was obtained.

So it's not an effort to try to stop children from moving forward in their own best interests, but to ensure that . . . to ensure that those who know how to move the issue forward do in fact do so on behalf of the child.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, as you well know, there are a number of people who could be considered victims that are in a marriage. And these individuals may be 17 or 16 years old — in fact under the age of 18 — and they have access to the . . . to assisting themselves through The Victims of Domestic Violence Act.

In respect to that statement, there are also youth on the streets who are 17 years old and sometimes maybe even a common-law marriage and may have their spouse putting them out on the streets. So I'm wondering why it would not be feasible that they could then make an application on their own behalf without having to have a . . . going through a child protection worker or a peace officer.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — In response to the member's question, the normal procedure under The Victims of Domestic Violence Act is also that the application would be brought on behalf of the victim by normally a police officer, but could be by some other, a social worker as well.

The department and others spend a lot of time working with the police, training and so on, to ensure that these applications are successful as much as possible. They are, because of their nature, we do need to make sure that they are as successful as often as possible rather than run the risk of that person being subjected to greater violence.

So when you try to do those things yourself, as a victim of domestic violence or even as a child within the context of the sex trade, there is a much greater likelihood of it not being done properly and in a way which would render success. So what tends to happen in all these cases is that the police, certainly in victims of domestic violence situation, the police would begin the process, take the information, and then would instigate the order at that time, rather than the victim themselves doing it.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, the definition of a child in this Act is someone who is or appears to be under the age of 18, yet the age of consent is 14. One of the recommendations from the Child Sex Trade Committee is that the age of consent be raised from 14 to 16. What actions have you taken to date on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member raises the question of

whether or not . . . or the situation . . . raises the situation of the age of majority and whether or not that age might be raised from 14 to 16.

The member will probably know that there is consultation about this issue with the federal government. The age is in the youth criminal justice Act . . . oh, it's in the Criminal Code. I'm sorry. So the extent to which . . . if that, if that age was to be reduced . . . the discussions about whether that age might be reduced in the province are taking place at the present time.

This is by no means an easy matter because one of the things that it would do, if we raised the age from 14 to 16, is it would generate challenges for perfectly normal sexual relations between people who are in that 14 to 16 age group.

And the . . . so it is not the easiest question. It doesn't just result . . . it doesn't relate to the matter of child sexual abuse as we are considering it here. It would relate to relationships between, between those between 14 and 16 in which no abuse would be taking place. So it's not the easiest of matters.

Discussions continue in this regard, and they will continue.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, it has been stated by a number of people that did presentations or gave presentations to the committee that they would like to see this happening, and they were hoping that the provincial government here could engage in some communication . . . conversation with the federal government to change this.

And I guess they were very commonsensical in their request for this because they were saying that if it was . . . if that age was raised from 14 to 16 and the parents' consent, as such, was involved in it, or the parents had something to say about it, then in fact there could be sort of a qualifying clause in the change to the Criminal Code that would, would give parents actually some authority to speak on behalf of their child and do the best by their child in the case where the child may be inclined to go on the streets and the parent is trying to stop them. The parent would eventually would have some say in all of this.

And so I'm wondering whether or not you intend to or have at this point, as Justice minister of the province, made any kind of move to speak to the federal government about changes to the Criminal Code in this manner.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — One thing I might say is that I have passed on to the Minister of Justice the recommendations of the committee, and so he will be aware that the committee has recommended that the age be increased to 16.

I'm sure the member will agree that while it is — and I think this is . . . underlies her question — while it is important to, I mean, reduce the sexualization of our children as much as possible, when you're dealing with people who are between 14 and 16 who might be having relationships with other people between 14 and 16, that a blanket prohibition is not likely to be terribly effective in controlling their behaviour.

We all have obligations to ensure that our children and those for whom we're responsible lead normal childhood lives. But I think it would be difficult to prohibit that kind of behaviour.

And it may also not very well reflect what is actually taking place in our communities.

So I think while parents have a responsibility, it would be difficult to ensure that children between 14 and 16 did not have sexual relations with each other by a mere passage of legislation.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I think the focus of the debate needs to be on whether or not sexual relations are part of a very dangerous activity that would do harm to a child. I don't think there's any question that in a society that there's anyone that can be monitoring sexual activity between . . . you know, of children that are 14 to 16 years old. That's not the focus.

Mr. Minister, the focus is whether or not a parent has the right to step in and have some authority over that child in fact if the child is endangering their lives, not only by sexual activity in itself, but sexual activity that often includes drugs and includes all kinds of activities, sometimes with gang members — that there are activities going on, Mr. Minister, that, you know, where youth in that age group often don't know how detrimental their actions are to themselves.

And so it's . . . I think it's vitally important to recognize that we have to look at the bigger picture here and look at the danger the child is posing to themselves without . . . or unknowingly doing so.

So that is sort of the premise on what I think discussions surrounding changes to the Criminal Code should be upon. And I think it would be really a very wise thing to do to actually talk to the federal government about this and maybe we need to engage in some conversation that details the kind of dangers that our young children are facing if nothing is done about this.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member raises a point of significant concern to all of us. And the challenge is to, I think, to distinguish between what might be at least a non-exploitive behaviour and exploitive behaviour. And we are exploring the opportunities to amend the code to deal with situations in which there is . . . there are . . . situations in which a person is in risk of . . . at risk of abuse in a number of ways.

Certainly the member's right in suggesting that there might be drugs related to this sexual activity. There may be age-of-partner issues with regards to this sexual activity, certainly exploitation. There may be issues of preparing someone for the sex trade in the future; exploitation by others; the need for . . . or the lack of parent, parental support.

So I think there's a . . . there is a need and we're working on this need to try to address . . . to try to distinguish between those exploitative, at-risk situations, without a blanket . . . a blanket prohibition on what might be seen to be perhaps not desirable activities, but certainly not at-risk activities.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, so following along that vein of conversation, I'm wondering whether or not under the . . . under Bill No. 2 there is an opportunity and a right for parents to put in an application for a prevention . . . or a stay-away order, if in

fact those parents are fully cognizant and aware that their child is at risk and . . . and/or has been exploited. Do parents have the right to make the application?

(12:00)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The short answer to the member's question is yes. And indeed we would encourage parents to bring forward matters to the appropriate authorities should they see their children acting in a way which is plainly not desirable and not acceptable and not responsible on the part of children.

The legislation we're dealing with here, of course, is primarily focused on the sex trade and not on other non-sex trade oriented activities. But we certainly would encourage parents to bring forward any concerns they have to ensure that children are indeed protected.

We know that no matter how much we might want it, parents are not always able to control the behaviour of their children, and yet when concerned, wonder how to proceed. So we would certainly encourage them to take those matters to the appropriate authorities.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, at present there are parents who have tried to get the assistance of authorities in order to help their children. And actually the one instance that comes to mind is of a child that was involved with gangs, and the gangs are putting the girl out on the streets, so there's definitely danger here. Mr. Minister, that parent was told that that child is over the age of 14, and that they can really . . . the authorities could do not too much about it.

So I want to know what other initiatives your government is taking in order to protect that child, especially with the backing of its parents. Will the parent's request, based on the information the parent has, be enough in order for there to be a protective intervention order placed against that specific perpetrator?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The hope of this Bill, Mr. Chair, and to the member, is that we would be able to facilitate some of the things she's talking about. Where in the past parents have said, my child seems to be out of control, can you do something to stop it, in particular in this case — I think the member raised this point, that perhaps the child was under the influence of a gang and the gang is using . . . is encouraging her to be involved in the sex trade and what can a parent do to stop it — well we would anticipate here that that would be the way in which things would happen. The parent would raise the issue with an appropriate authority and an order could be made to ensure that that kind of activity would be stopped — for example, that the child no longer associate with those people influencing her, that those people influencing her would be prohibited from contact with that child in order to protect her.

So while the member raises an issue that has been problematic in the past, it's certainly our hope and our intention that legislation will ensure that those matters are cleared up, and that parents who have concerns about the activity of their children — of the sort she raises, involved in prostitution — that it can be addressed.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister: Mr. Minister, in the event that there was a protective intervention order placed then, in the instance that we have just been talking about, against a gang member or a number of gang members, what consequences will the members of that gang, if there is more than one . . . one or more than one, what consequences would they be subject to if in fact they breach that order?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member asks what would happen if a gang member contravened an order preventing contact with or a certain behaviour with a particular person. That would constitute the commission of an offence under section 127 of the Criminal Code, which would make the person liable to an imprisonment for a term of not exceeding two years.

Ms. Julé: — So in fact then, Mr. Minister — and I certainly address you through the Chair — in fact then you could, if there was a number of gang members that were guilty of this offence, you could put the whole shebang of them behind bars. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well if you could prove they violated the order, yes.

Ms. Julé: — Well it seems to me like a fine way to stop some of the criminal activity on our streets. But the main thing is that we take this serious and make sure that these, these offences are dealt with in a very serious fashion and act upon them.

Mr. Minister, in order for this Bill to be enforced, how will a police officer know — in reference to the stroll areas or high incidence areas — how will a peace officer to know, how will a peace officer know that an individual who may be driving a car or even on the streets, possibly pimping, how are they to know that the individual is not to be in that high incidence area?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Chair, I think the member asked the question how would, would the police know if someone was driving in the stroll area when they saw a car going around.

If there was an order against the owner of the car or the person driving the car, once the car was stopped and they checked with CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre), they would know that that person shouldn't be in that, in that area. And consequently, that person would be in breach of the order.

And when there is no order, of course then it would be a question of identifying whether or not there were . . . there was sufficient evidence to seek . . . to seek orders and to follow the normal kind of criminal procedures.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — I wish everyone a pleasant weekend and the House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:14.