

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 citizens of Saskatchewan still 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed entirely by citizens of Yorkton, coming from the constituency of the Deputy Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of petitions here and I'd like to first of all read the prayer:

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

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

And this is signed by good people from Hague, from Warman, from Saskatoon, from Osler, Martensville, and I would like to thank these people, Mr. Speaker, for putting the pressure on the government to have them reconsider those exorbitant health care fees. Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition on behalf of citizens of the great province of Saskatchewan who were adamant in their address to the government to reconsider the long-term care fee increase. 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 communities of Sheho, Foam Lake, Kelliher, Yorkton, and Melville.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens of the province of Saskatchewan, and this petition is regarding the increase in long-term care fees for residents of long-term care. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of 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 ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are from the communities of Yorkton, Canora, and Springside, Saskatchewan, and I'm sure they are counting on the government to cancel the long-term fee increases.

I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of citizens of the province who continue to petition the government to scrap the proposed long-term care fee increase. 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, signatures on this petition today come from many communities: Tisdale, Melfort, Arborfield, Star City, Rosthern, Gronlid, Naicam, Pleasantdale, Brooksby, Prairie River. Mr. Speaker, people from across the province have expressed their concerns to the government.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens wishing to have fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan rolled back. And the prayer means . . . 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, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the community of Briercrest.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I present several petitions — many pages, in fact — of petitions signed by residents of the community of Maple Creek, almost exclusively. The petition deals with the increase in long-term care fees, and the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand today to present a petition — or several petitions — on behalf of people in my constituency that would like the government to cancel the premium hike on long-term care. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And this is signed by folks in my constituency, namely Lampman, Estevan, and Bienfait.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on long-term care from citizens that all over this province are waiting with bated breath on the announcement today on what's going to be happening on the long-term care situation.

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.

Especially the citizens in the Yorkton area as they are the people that signed this petition.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I pleased to rise today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan who are waiting for the long-term care fees to be rolled back to the original amount. 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 will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions come from the good people of Carievale, Alida, Oxbow, Carnduff, Storthoaks, the southeast corner of the province.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a number of petitions on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who hope that the NDP (New Democratic Party) government would realize the mistake they made and roll back the fees for long-term care, 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 will ever pray.

And the petitions are signed by residents of Saltcoats, Springdale, Willowbrook, and Yorkton, and several more pages from the city of Yorkton.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from citizens that are praying that the government will do the right thing today and cancel the long-term fee increases.

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 citizens from Girvin and Davidson.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition this morning that . . . from citizens who are very concerned about the gouging that the government has proposed against those who are unable to protect themselves from society. 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 reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the people from the constituency of Yorkton, the constituency that belongs to the Deputy Premier, I believe.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present petitions from citizens all over Saskatchewan who are very concerned with the increase in long-term care home fees. Their prayer reads:

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

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

Signed by the good citizens of Saskatoon, Biggar, Yorkton, Melville, and the constituency of Saltcoats. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I have a petition from citizens who are concerned about the increase in long-term home . . . care home fees. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Jansen, Lanigan, Yorkton, and Saltcoats.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a . . . rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned with this government's plan to massively increase 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Wynyard and Jansen.

I so present.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Unity, Battleford, Yorkton, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise with petitions from citizens concerned about long-term care services and the costs thereof. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is from my constituency, signed by the citizens of Shaunavon. But I also would like to turn in another 20 petitions along with this, Mr. Speaker, from all corners of the province.

And I think it would be appropriate to thank the citizens from all over Saskatchewan who took the time to sign this petition hoping to get the government to change its mind on this long-term care fee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 8, 17, 18, 23, 24, and 31.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to you to all . . . through you to all of the members of the legislature, I want to introduce some very special guests who are here in the west gallery. We have with us today the members of the Scottish national boxing team. Maybe ask them to stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Along with their team officials and managers and the Canadian national boxing team. I'd ask them to stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — They are here in Regina to take part in the 9th annual Ken Goff Memorial Boxing Classic which is taking place tonight at the Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts, begins at 8 p.m. The card tonight is important because it helps determine both the teams for the Commonwealth Games to be held in Manchester, England in August. If you miss the fight tonight, I think they're also fighting in Moose Jaw on Monday night.

So I also would like to introduce a Regina boxer who is on the Canadian national team and that's Michael Walchuk. And if we could ask Michael to please stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we wish all of the boxers good luck in their bouts tonight and on Monday night and . . . But we wish you, Michael, a special wish to do very well because we want you to go to Manchester and represent Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think that one of the things that they will see when they're here is that parliament is all about the use of words in bouts as opposed to the use of fists. But they may wonder if we're not getting close to their boxing profession when we get into question period.

So welcome, and we appreciate the good, hard work that all of you are doing.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I also would like to invite our guests here today and hope they have a very good visit to Saskatchewan. And I hope the competition is great.

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that they'll get to witness today is a little bit of the jousting in the legislature. And the difference

between yours and ours is in yours, there's no hitting below the belt and here we do that quite frequently.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:15)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, two important people who help . . . who represent those who keep our homes and our streets safe and secure.

Here we have, Mr. Speaker, the new president of the Saskatchewan police association, Evan Bray, and the executive officer of the police association, Bernie Eiswirth. And I'd ask you all to join me in welcoming them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome those two gentlemen here this morning. We realize the importance that they play in our society and the risks that they put themselves into on a daily basis for the welfare of this province. We appreciate the work they do. And welcome here. Would you join me, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, 40 grade 11 and 12 students from the school of Macklin, in my constituency. They are accompanied by teachers Jim Todd, John Smith, Linda Kohlman, and Carol Moss. I'd like to welcome them here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, a new resident in Saskatchewan, director of communications for the Department of Highways and Transportation.

Sitting in your gallery, Pam Bishop, who has moved here with her husband and daughter. And I would like all members to join me in welcoming here to the . . . her to the legislature today and to the province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, 60 grade 4 and 5 students from the Langham Elementary School that's seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd just like to introduce the teachers that are with them, Mrs. Kasahoff, and Mrs. Yellowlees, and Mrs. Kolash, and Mrs. Buswell. And I look forward to visiting with the class from Langham later on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mother's Day

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this coming Sunday we again take a moment to pause and give thanks to a very special group of people who play an important role in our lives — our mothers.

Mr. Speaker, without our mothers we would not have the privilege of talking about the valuable role they play in our lives, our homes, and our communities as we would not be here to talk about it. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, we can all think back to those days when we may have fallen, scratched our knees, only to have words of sympathy expressed by, who else, our mothers. Or the times we arrived home from school, running through the door to the smell of fresh baking wafting through the house.

Mr. Speaker, many words can be used to describe our mothers — thoughtful, caring, loving, encouraging, and the list goes on. As we celebrate Mother's Day, let it not be the only day of the year when we take the time to think of our mothers and thank them for their hard work and dedication. May it just be a reminder of the importance of saying thank you to those so dear to us every day of the year.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party caucus, to all the mothers of the province of Saskatchewan, we wish you a happy Mother's Day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Trade Organization Finalist for International Award

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to inform the House today regarding some good news in Saskatchewan's export sector.

The Market Intelligence Team of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership was recently nominated as a finalist for an international award in the field of strategic intelligence.

Competia, North America's leading consultancy organization in the field of strategic intelligence, will be presenting the Champion in Strategic Intelligence award on Monday, May 13, 2002 at the Competia Symposium in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, Mr. Speaker. This award recognizes those that have implemented innovative processes that have had a positive impact on the field of strategic planning and recognizes the hard work, dedication, and innovation displayed by those people, Mr. Speaker.

Candace Phelps, manager of Market Intelligence and Information Technology, will represent STEP's (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.) Market Intelligence Team at the awards ceremony on Monday night. Other team members include: Carrie Sirois, Tim Owens, Kyle Mitchell, Pat Chobot, and two term students from Saskatchewan's universities.

Mr. Speaker, this young and innovative team of professionals, born and educated here in Saskatchewan, are setting the trend in strategic planning industry in North America. The nomination

for this award acknowledges this fact, Mr. Speaker. They have proved that we can develop world-class expertise and innovation at home in our province. And most importantly, they have demonstrated that young people can have a successful career right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate STEP's Market Intelligence Team on their nomination for this award and wish them the best of luck at the awards ceremony on Monday night. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Builder of Sport, Culture, and Recreation Award Winner Named

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Brad LeCuyer has been named Nipawin's builder of sport, culture, and recreation for the year 2001. The award is presented annually to an individual who has provided outstanding, extraordinary service to the growth and development of their area of interest.

Brad was nominated by the Nipawin Allied Arts Council with supporting nominations from Mel McCorrison, drama/theatre arts teacher at L.P. Miller High School, and local singer Celia Schreiner, for his outstanding involvement in musical theatre at school and for his musical volunteerism in the community.

He has not only performed, but does . . . directed an orchestra, trained the chorus and soloist, arranged the music, and written a short drama. His greatest achievement was his work on the musical production that was featured during Nipawin's 2000 homecoming entitled *Nipawii*, about the history of Nipawin. He wrote the lyrics, script, and music for the production.

Brad plays several instruments, dances, sings, choreographs dancing, synthesizes, scans music, digitally edits, and assists with community band development. Brad will be featured on the wall at the town hall as the latest person to be honoured with the 2001 Builder of Sport, Culture, and Recreation award.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating Brad on this award. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Registered Psychiatric Nurses Day

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, as members have previously announced, this week is both Nursing Week and Mental Health Week. As an important segment of this week, the Minister of Health has proclaimed today, May 10, as Registered Psychiatric Nurses Day, a day set aside to acknowledge the invaluable work of these nurses who are part of our integrated health care teams.

RPNs (registered psychiatric nurse) work in a variety of settings, including psychiatric in-patient units, long-term care, home care, women's shelters and health clinics, community mental health programs, chemical dependency programs, and with individuals who have an acquired brain injury, as well as in acute care facilities.

They are busy people, Mr. Speaker. In general, RPNs provide service to those who need care in the areas of mental and developmental health. Like their counterparts, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, they adhere to a professional code of ethics and have a self-regulatory nursing body — RPNAS (Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan).

And a little-known fact, Mr. Speaker, in Western Canada RPNs are the largest professional group of psychiatric and mental health care providers. And they do this work with extreme professionalism and compassion.

Next month the RPN Association of Saskatchewan will hold its annual meeting and education day in Swift Current, hosted by the local Swift Current branch. I know all members wish them a successful meeting and we extend our gratitude to Saskatchewan's registered psychiatric nurses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Shaun Vey Drafted to Vancouver Giants

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, Shaun Vey of Wakaw began his skating and hockey career in 1991 at four years of age. His hard work and perseverance has paid off, and on May 2 he was drafted 20th overall in the WHL (Western Hockey League) Bantam Hockey Draft in Calgary.

Shaun was drafted to the Vancouver Giants. Shaun is the son of Curtis and Bridget Vey and is presently in grade 9 at Wakaw School. He started out his hockey as a defenceman but later moved up to his present position as centre. Last season he played AA bantam hockey with Naicam. Next season he will play with the Beardsy's AAA Midget A team.

Since you have to be 16 years of age to play a full season in the WHL, Shaun can only play five games in the next season. And in the fall of 2003 he can play a full season provided he makes the cut.

During an interview, when asked what career he would pursue, Shaun said, all I ever wanted to do was to be a hockey star. It looks as though that dream could well come true, Mr. Speaker, become . . . Lately things have become more real for Shaun when he arrived home from school on May 1 and found the legendary Bobby Orr at his home. Bobby had flown in from Boston to sign as Shaun's player agent.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all members of this Assembly, and I know the people of the Humboldt constituency, sincerely congratulate Shaun and wish him well and continued success in his hockey career. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leap in Saskatoon Housing Starts

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As reported in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, the purveyor of good news, the headline reads, "Saskatoon housing starts leap in April."

Saskatoon's new housing market brought some good

economic news to the city Wednesday, as . . . (CMHC) reported a big jump in housing starts for April.

In Saskatoon . . . (housing) starts leapt to 100 from 50 from the same month (last year) . . . The number included a huge increase in condominium . . . starts, which rose to 41 from only two last year.

So far . . . housing starts are up 63.6 per cent in Saskatoon CMA, with 324 units as compared to last year . . .

"I'm surprised at the strength of the recovery on the multiples side, and apparently there's more coming down the pipe," said CMHC market analyst Paul Caton.

Saskatoon is also largely responsible for the increase in Saskatchewan housing starts, which are up 40 per cent from the first four months of 2001. Provincial starts have improved to 512 from 366 last year.

I'm particularly pleased to report this news as Saskatoon Sutherland, the constituency I'm proud to serve, is one of the fastest growing in all of Saskatchewan.

Mother's Day

Mr. Addley: — Now, Mr. Speaker, a house would not be a home without our mothers. I want to remind all hon. members that Sunday is Mother's Day. And I'm sure all members would join me in wishing our mothers happy Mother's Day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Southeast Regional Science Fair

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend congratulations to Shannon Lozinsky and Megan Howse, grade 12 students at Pangman High School, for receiving top honours at the southeast regional science fair in Fillmore for the second year in a row. This shows the excellence in education that is offered in rural schools.

The students won the science fair with their water testing project entitled H₂OK. The project is comprised of tests of town water and well water and determines which method of purifying water works the best. Their results show that boiled water is by far the better quality — better quality than water tested with chlorine.

And, Mr. Speaker, in light of the facts of the information that's been portrayed in this House in the last few days and the events of the last few months, I think that their project is very timely.

In addition to the overall award, the girls also won awards for the best senior exhibit, first place in life sciences section, the Intel Computer Science Award, and the Saskatchewan Education and Training Employment Award for \$1,000.

I'd also like to congratulate Katie Wolfe of Weyburn Comprehensive School. Katie won the senior category for biotechnology for her project entitled, DNA: How to Extract DNA in Plants and Animals.

Mr. Speaker, Sharon Lozinsky and Megan Howse will now be competing at the nationals in Saskatoon from May 11 to 19.

I'd like all members of the legislature to join with me in congratulating the winners and to wish them very good luck this weekend in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Job Loss Statistics

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the Friday of the month that the NDP government dreads because the new job numbers are out today. And once again, Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada — in the entire country — that's losing jobs.

The NDP government killed 1,100 jobs over the past year while every other province in Canada has been creating jobs, and they've been doing that month after month. The NDP turns in the same dismal job numbers and yet they try to tell us that their economic plan is working.

Mr. Speaker, the facts indicate that the NDP's plan is not working — it's failing. And it's also driving people and jobs and opportunities out of our province.

My question to the Premier is why is the NDP continuing to kill jobs in this province? Why don't they put together a plan to grow Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a Friday morning and it's beautiful outside. It's spring and there is optimism. The farmers are getting ready to plant their spring crops, and the difficult part of that, sir, is there's 7,300 fewer of them this year than there were last year. But the good news to this, Mr. Speaker, is that in the non-agricultural area, there are 6,300 new jobs in this province. And that's what's been happening in this province in the last decade.

Mr. Speaker, since 1987, there have been about 50,000 jobs lost in the agriculture sector in Saskatchewan, and it's been a very difficult transition for us. But that's very much been offset by 52-, 53-thousand jobs in the non-ag sector.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, gets up and he rubs his hands in glee when he sees a negative number — which we have had some of in the year 2001. But he won't recognize the success that this province has had from 1982 . . . 1992 through to 2002 where we've had consecutive, eight years of consecutive growth in this economy. He refuses to recognize the good news, Mr. Speaker, but continues to highlight his negative attitude towards this province and the people in it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the minister continues to blame the agriculture sector for the loss in jobs. Of course other provinces have been able to deal with this problem. And some of the leaders from other provinces are coming into town today, so perhaps the Premier and his government should be asking these leaders what are they doing right in their provinces that we're doing wrong so that they haven't seen the job loss in spite of the agriculture sectors in their province.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba created 8,000 jobs in the past year. Alberta created a whopping 25,000 jobs in the last 12 months. Meanwhile here in Saskatchewan, we lost 1,100 jobs. We're the only province in Canada, agriculture or not, that's losing jobs. Other provinces have agricultural industries as well. They've diversified. This government has done nothing in the last 10 or 11 years to diversify Saskatchewan's economy so we don't perpetually lose jobs.

Mr. Speaker, obviously the economic policies of the NDP in Saskatchewan are not working. Why is the NDP prepared to lose jobs month after month when every other province in Canada is creating jobs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm continually amazed, I'm continually amazed by the nearsightedness of the member, the Leader of the Opposition, who represents a rural riding as most of his caucus does. They should look around in their communities. They should look around their neighbourhoods. They should look at the change in agriculture and they should recognize the fact that there are many . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I ask them to look around their communities. I ask them to recognize that 35,000 jobs in agriculture across this country were lost last year and that we have the largest grain-based agriculture industry and business in the country — and they know that.

But, Mr. Speaker, if they can recognize the difficulty and it's I think . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Members, order, please. I would ask members to interfere less and distinguish between a heckle and a continual barrage.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'll try again and, you know, I would appreciate the consideration of members opposite, that they would be quiet while I'm speaking.

But what I want to say, the fact that the premiers are meeting here in this building today to discuss yet a more severe attack on Canadian agriculture and on Saskatchewan farmers should give some cause for those folks to reflect on what's been happening in that industry.

But on the other side of the equation they should also recognize what businessmen and women in this province have achieved. We've created 50,000 new jobs outside of primary agriculture

and we should all be very proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would say to the minister that the constituents we represent are pretty excited about a plan that the Saskatchewan Party has to grow this province, including rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that minister and that government knew back in 1999 that we had a large agricultural . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The statement I make applies to both sides. Order. Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP knew when they brought forward their 1999 election campaign that agriculture was a large component of our economy, and yet they made the promise to Saskatchewan people that they would create 30,000 jobs in this term of government. Well how are they doing on their province . . . promise?

Well in April 2002 we have 3,000 fewer jobs, not 30,000 more jobs, than we had two years ago. So, Mr. Speaker, this government is killing jobs when Manitoba created 23,000 new jobs. Alberta created a whopping 109,000 jobs in that same period where we lost 3,000 jobs. Mr. Speaker, it's so clear that this government's economic policies are failing; they are killing jobs, driving people from the province. Why are they so satisfied with this record of mediocrity and failure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stood in his place a moment ago . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the Leader of the Opposition stood in his place a moment ago and talked about the excitement that's being generated by the Sask Party plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you about the excitement that's been generated about that plan. You know they've generated so much excitement they got four people out to one of their meetings; they got two people out to one of their meetings; they got zero people out to some of their meetings. That's the level of excitement, Mr. Speaker, about the plan.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that their plan that they've talked about consists of the following: you cut the taxes in an unsustainable way, you decimate public services, and you privatize the Crowns. That's the plan.

Mr. Speaker, what happens they take the plan, they take this plan of theirs, to 40 scheduled meetings, Mr. Speaker, they take it out to 40 scheduled meetings. They get four people out, they get six people out. I know one community they had five people

out but it was really four because one of them was our guys, one of our guys who had to see what goes on here.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a plan for the future of Saskatchewan. A plan for the future of Saskatchewan is based on sustainable, competitive tax cuts, on celebrating our successes, on building on our strengths, and not every day bringing the negative nabob attitude that they bring to this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, how silly can the Premier get? We had huge and positive response. In La Ronge we had about 30 leaders of the community out, and following his budget, his minister had four people out to their budget meeting in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have lost confidence in this government because they continually fail in their economic policies.

Mr. Speaker, once in a while, once in a while we go to Alberta, and when we go to Alberta, we bring money back to Saskatchewan. And the NDP criticize us for fundraising in Alberta.

The Speaker: — Order. I think we've just about used up our quota of heckles for today.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I could tell I just about had them spellbound too.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have criticized us for fundraising in Alberta and bringing money back to Saskatchewan. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when we implement our Grow Saskatchewan, we'll be bringing a lot more than money back from Alberta, we'll be bringing people back from Alberta to our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to break down the barriers that the NDP have put in the way of the Saskatchewan economy. We're going to grow Saskatchewan, and we are excited about it and the people of Saskatchewan are excited about the potential of this province finally breaking out under the yoke of the NDP and growing.

Mr. Speaker, in the meantime they have to answer the question why are they killing jobs and why don't they put a plan together to grow the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — They put this plan of theirs in place in the 1980s, and what did they grow? Well they grew the deficit and they grew the debt. And if you want to talk about numbers of people who left the province, it was at record numbers when their plan was in place in this province.

I'm pleased . . . Mr. Speaker, now the people of Saskatchewan and the people who observed proceedings in the legislature have a choice. They can believe the Leader of the Opposition

and the Saskatchewan Alliance Party or they can believe a Moody's investment house of New York City, the continent's — perhaps the world's — most significant investment credit rating agency in the world who just this week, based on the plan of this government, based on the budget introduced in this legislature, just this week gave the province of Saskatchewan a credit upgrade, only one of three provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And they said, they said, the people of Moody's said:

Over the past several years a series of modest surpluses combined with strong economic growth has resulted in a marked improvement in Saskatchewan . . .

That's Moody's, Mr. Speaker. You can believe the Leader of the Opposition or you can believe Moody's.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Out-Of-Province Travel by Crown Corporation Executives

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not only jobs that we have leaving Saskatchewan. We today received the executive out-of-province travel for the Crown Corporations.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy, the home of air miles king, Ron Clark. Mr. Speaker, this morning CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) is reporting that SaskEnergy President Ron Clark racked up \$100,000 bill for travel outside Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, \$100,000 outside Saskatchewan. That's more than \$8,000 a month. By far the most expensive travel bill of any Crown corporation executive.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain how SaskEnergy's president, Ron Clarke, and his \$100,000 international travel bill helps to keep natural gas prices low for Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just for the record, they would have had that information for almost a week already, so I don't . . . maybe it took that long to read it, I'm not sure, but they've had it for almost a week.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me say that in SaskEnergy, Mr. Speaker, we have a president and a Crown corporation in SaskEnergy that largely are industry leaders, Mr. Speaker. This corporation has provided the lowest gas rates in Canada in four out of the last five years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, here's the process, Mr. Speaker. We appoint the boards, Mr. Speaker; Mr. Speaker, the boards approve the expenditures including travel — the boards approve expenditures including travel of the employees and the executive of their corporation, Mr. Speaker; and then those expenditures are tabled in detail to the . . . through the Clerk of the Assembly to the Crown Corporations Committee. And that member, who I believe sits on Crown Corporations Committee, has an opportunity to ask questions in detail through this very, very transparent process, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister asks why we just brought this up. There's so many issues that the NDP created, it's so easy to have other, other issues to bring up. So we prioritize the issues, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, last year the president of SaskEnergy blew \$100,000 travelling around the world. Mr. Speaker, I was a pilot in the air force for a number of years, and I don't think I spent a year racking up that many miles as the president of SaskEnergy racked up — and I was a pilot.

Mr. Speaker, it's understandable, it's understandable that the president of SaskEnergy needs to travel outside of the province. After all, he has to keep track of SaskEnergy's multi-million dollar businesses in Mexico and in Chile, but \$100,000 in just 12 months is a little more than excessive, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, does the NDP government think it's reasonable for the president of SaskEnergy to rack up \$100,000 in travel expenses while SaskEnergy's international investments rack up millions of dollars in losses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well again, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite don't exactly tell exactly what the facts are, Mr. Speaker, either in the House here or to the people of Saskatchewan.

Just as an example, Mr. Speaker, in the Chile investment alone, SaskEnergy has signed up over 4,500 customers, Mr. Speaker. This year alone, they're cash flow positive. Cash flow positive — unlike what's been reported or what those members care to say, Mr. Speaker, they're cash flow positive. Next year they'll return a profit to the people of Saskatchewan. Is he against that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, Ron Clark didn't have the corner on the travel market and the international travel. SaskTel President Don Ching and Vice-President Garry Simons also racked up huge out-of-province travel bills last year. Those two racked up \$130,000 in out-of-province travel, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, one has to ask: how did SaskTel's international investments fare last year? Every single one of them lost money. Millions of taxpayers' dollars gambled and lost in Nashville, Atlanta, Australia.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP asking taxpayers to pay six-figure travel expenses for Crown corporation executives to travel the world, gambling and losing millions on risky foreign business deals?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again the member in

reference to SaskTel doesn't exactly portray the facts quite accurately either, Mr. Speaker.

Look, the agenda from that party, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely clear. They continue to ask questions and discredit our Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, with one single agenda. That's so that they can so discredit the Crowns so that when and if they ever became government they would sell them. It's very simple, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you can continue to attack senior executives within the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. You can continue to attack the government on its strategy around Crowns and their investment, Mr. Speaker. But I don't know how you can be critical of the fact that they earn revenues outside of Saskatchewan, bring it back to Saskatchewan to pay for many of the services that those members on a daily basis continue to ask us to provide for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously is not familiar with our policy on Crowns. They're trying to use it as a fearmonger, as a fearmonger to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government can miscredit the Crowns themselves. Mr. Speaker, it seems like the theme song of the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) executives is I'm "Leaving on a Jet Plane," from the amount of travel that they're doing.

Mr. Speaker, taxpayers in this province are reasonable people. They understand there's some need to travel, for cabinet ministers and Crown people to travel outside the province from time to time. But most taxpayers will not see it as reasonable that the president of SaskEnergy himself racked up a \$100,000 travel bill in just 12 months. Even from the NDP side of the House, the Premier didn't travel that much.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to the people of Saskatchewan how the president and CEO (chief executive officer) of SaskEnergy, by racking up \$100,000 in travel expenses, will keep the natural gas prices low for the families in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, you know what? He's absolutely right. I am unclear as to what their policy with respect to Crowns is. What is your policy on Crowns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Legislation Regarding Collection Agents

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be nice to read the minister's statement that he's unclear. It'll be in *Hansard*; we know it's true.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. On April 9, on April 9 the NDP introduced The Collection Agents Amendment Act which the government said was going to protect people from

abusive and unscrupulous agents. Since then, many business groups have contacted the minister and ourselves, registering their concerns about that legislation. And it's reported in the April 27 edition of *The StarPhoenix* that the NDP is reportedly reconsidering this Bill.

Mr. Minister, for the minister, would he explain whether the Justice department is actually reconsidering this legislation, and if so, what changes are they considering?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try and do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right that we've had representations from collection agencies and creditors about the importance of this legislation and how it might affect the collection of debts.

We've also, Mr. Speaker, had representations from groups supporting . . . who are concerned about harassment by collection agencies of debtors, Mr. Speaker. Our hope was that this legislation would be an appropriate balance. We're considering how to proceed based upon these representations. And in due course, Mr. Speaker, we will do what is best for the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems the minister isn't quite sure where he's going to go with this issue. It reminds us a whole lot of the long-term care issue that they had. They weren't sure where they were going to go with that one either.

The NDP did not consult with the people who would be affected by the changes in this legislation. The article in that newspaper quotes the minister as saying that that consultation was done very poorly, but they've heard the concerns on both sides. The NDP says now, and the minister admitted it, they're reconsidering some of the things.

My question for the minister is, Mr. Speaker: if the NDP is reconsidering this Bill, why do they keep bringing it forward on the legislative agenda?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, the member will . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, the member will know that this and a number of other pieces of legislation we've introduced into the legislature this term are as a result of national measures of meetings between federal, provincial, and territorial ministers, Mr. Speaker, on which industry representatives are consulted widely.

It does appear to be the case that, that in this consultation process not all of the collection agencies' interests were presented to the Government of Saskatchewan, even though, Mr. Speaker, every single one of them received an indication that this legislation was coming forward, the terms of that

legislation, and they had the opportunity to respond. Some chose not to.

Mr. Speaker, the point of the matter is here, that we are reconsidering this piece of legislation. I said that from day one. Immediately, I was asked to meet with representatives. I met with them. We are reconsidering it. And in due course, once we've taken into account all of the interests of the people of the province — business and consumers — we will make a decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, this is specifically a very ill-thought piece of legislation. As the minister just mentioned, he's received a lot of input from business people, not just the collection agencies themselves but from business community, business associations, who state very specifically that it's totally unfair to businesses to allow a person to purchase something and not pay for it. The end result, Mr. Speaker, is that the business is out just as much as if the article was stolen.

Why will the minister not pull this piece of legislation? It's ill-thought. It's mis-thought. And it should not be brought before this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know it's Friday and this is the last question, but surely the member can do better than that.

I've mentioned it three times, Mr. Speaker. We will be looking at this legislation, be making a decision. And we will be making the decision which is right for both business and consumers in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Long-Term Health Care Fees

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of this spring's budget, a fee increase for residents of long-term care was proposed. The proposal was to have taken effect on October 1 of this year.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people recognize the real financial challenges that we face in providing health care and recognize the new resources that our government has added for health and added for long-term care. However, the specific proposal to alter long-term care fees generated significant public concern, uncertainty, and misunderstanding. That concern and uncertainty was expressed in conversations, in letters, and in petitions to this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, our government places a high value on listening to the people of Saskatchewan. Therefore, having heard the concern and uncertainty, we placed this proposal on hold and under review on Monday of last week. We have used the intervening time to further dialogue with Saskatchewan people. This dialogue included a very significant meeting between our

seniors' advisory council, a large number of representatives of people with disabilities, the Minister of Health, and myself. Mr. Speaker, this was a pivotal meeting.

In the dialogue and through our discussions, several important principles emerged as priorities for Saskatchewan people. We heard agreement that those with a greater ability to pay should be asked to contribute more than those with less ability to pay, as the current system now provides. Many, in fact, Mr. Speaker, suggested that more could be required from those with higher incomes.

But we also heard that, in the case of our seniors, a lifetime of work and contribution to our province must be recognized. And as a community, we have a responsibility to support those in need of this care. We heard that ability to pay must be the principle of our income taxation system and not the first principle of establishing long-term care fees.

We also heard very clearly that those who are in long-term care as a result of an earlier disability in life should not be subjected to fees that inhibit their ability to continue in active work.

And, Mr. Speaker, we heard that in the special circumstance of long-term care where daily needs and housing are combined with medical and nursing care, the medical component should be provided on the basis of need.

The proposal advanced with our budget, Mr. Speaker, did not find the right balance of these principles. It did not pass the test of fairness in the eyes of Saskatchewan people.

In our meeting with the seniors' advisory council and the representatives of people with disabilities, the Minister of Health and I heard very clearly that our existing schedule of fees, for the most part, does achieve the correct balance and fairness. The existing schedule does include the basis of ability to pay; it does offer flexibility for individual circumstances. It does not touch savings or assets. It provides dignity in the situation of involuntary separation, and it has built in modest increases to the fee schedule.

Having listened, Mr. Speaker, we are acting accordingly. The proposal to change the long-term fee structure in long-term care is today cancelled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The current fee structure, Mr. Speaker, will remain in place and unchanged. The routine fee adjustments and personal expense allowances will continue to be based upon adjustments to old age security benefits paid to seniors.

And, Mr. Speaker, given the benefit of the dialogue that we have had with Saskatchewan people, no change for the fee structure is planned. And I further commit that no significant change will be proposed in future without first a public consultation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:00)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this decision has financial consequences. To maintain the existing fee structure will require an additional \$7 million for a total of \$344 million in this budget year. It means that our taxpayers will be asked to provide 77 per cent of the costs associated with caring for the 8,900 of our citizens in long-term care.

Because the demand for these new dollars does not occur until October, we will be monitoring our revenues very carefully over the next several months.

This week's credit upgrade from Moody's, the signs of strength in many areas of our economy, and the trending upwards of oil and gas prices may well provide us the financial room to meet this requirement for extra income. With the first quarterly financial report over the course of the summer we'll have then a much more accurate picture.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the circumstances that our revenues do not improve significantly or sufficiently, we will look to our winter gravel stockpiling project in the Department of Highways to find the resources necessary for long-term care. I am relatively confident today, Mr. Speaker, that we will not be required to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the voices of Saskatchewan people. We have heard the voices of our seniors. We have heard the voices of people with disabilities. We have listened, Mr. Speaker, we have learned, and we have acted. And, Mr. Speaker, this is what good government is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, today the people of Saskatchewan should be very proud of what they have accomplished.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, today is the culmination of an effort not only by the people of Saskatchewan to make this insensitive government listen, but it's a result of an effective, efficient effort on behalf of an official opposition to bring the issue to the public . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier today . . . the Premier today articulates all of the issues that we have articulated in this House over the last four or five weeks.

Mr. Speaker, when we recount the history of this initiative by the government, we must remember that this issue was the only issue that was leaked to the official opposition before the budget was tabled. Mr. Speaker, it was pretty obvious to us at that time that someone within the centre and ranks of government understood that this program and this proposal was wrong and hurtful to vulnerable people.

Mr. Speaker, we raised it as an issue and a concern before the budget was even tabled in the hope that this government, who claims to be listening to people, would understand that this proposal was wrong. But what did they do? They went forward

and put it through at the budget. They steadfastly, day after day when we raised the issue, the Minister of Health stood in his place and said, it's the right thing to do, and that this was the way they were going to proceed.

Day after day the same questions were asked on behalf of Saskatchewan people, and day after day this so-called listening government refused to listen.

And it was only when the pressure mounted to an unbelievable level that finally this government took the wax out of its ears and started to wake up to the fact that what they were doing was wrong despite the fact that the member from Regina Qu'Appelle bellowed from his seat, it was the right thing to do and he was proud of it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that they take this money out of the Minister of Highways' budget because he's the guy that was so sure that he was on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have to understand that when they see a government taking the wrong path, they have the opportunity in a democracy and the obligation and the responsibility to stand up and let them know that they're on the wrong track. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan did that on this long-term care issue.

The people of Saskatchewan were right. They continue to be right, and come the next election, they will also be right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 44 — The Animal Products Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 44, The Animal Products Amendment Act, 2002, to now be introduced to read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 46 — The Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I move that Bill No. 46, The Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 47 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 47, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 48 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 37 — The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Medical Profession Amendment Act.

The Medical Profession Amendment Act responds to a number of issues raised in consultations with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Association of Chiropractors.

First, this Bill will allow the College of Physicians and Surgeons to regulate podiatric surgeons. Podiatric surgeons are trained to provide basic foot care services, similar to chiropractors, but their advanced training also permits them to prescribe drugs, order diagnostic tests, and perform surgery.

Currently, podiatric surgeons are not legally permitted to practise in Saskatchewan. However, under this legislation, Mr. Speaker, podiatric surgeons will be granted title protection and will be registered, licensed, and regulated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Bylaws will set out the specific services they can provide.

Mr. Speaker, other amendments to the Act allow greater flexibility in recognizing the credentials of psychiatrists. The Act will remove the reference to specific countries for training of psychiatrists. As a result, instead of the emphasis being on the country a psychiatrist comes from, the emphasis will be on credentials and quality of the training.

The Medical Profession Amendment Act also includes provisions to clarify important issues related to physician incorporation. Under this Act, the earnings of locums and residents can be included as part of the corporation's earnings.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, The Medical Profession Amendment Act will improve discipline procedures for the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Currently, the college's ability to discipline or assess the competence of physicians is limited to a person registered under The Medical Profession Act.

The amendments introduced by this Act will correct this situation and allow the college to discipline former members for up to two years after they are no longer registered in the province. The amendments will also allow the college to deal

with a physician who is registered in Saskatchewan and in another jurisdiction and who has been disciplined in that other jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, The Medical Profession Amendment Act shows that we are committed to working with our health care partners to ensure our system remains one of the best in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Medical Profession Amendment Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak on No. 37, An Act to amend The Medical Profession Act, 1981.

As the minister outlined many of the changes that they are considering in this Bill, I assume that the College of Physicians and Surgeons has considered these amendments and accepted the changes that are to be made as far as regulating podiatric surgery, psychiatry and so on, Mr. Speaker. It seems that it's just a matter of setting up the bylaws and the professional body to regulate these areas of medicine.

And it's interesting to note that they're considering looking at the accreditation of an individual psychiatrist rather than where the professional is coming from as far as another country.

Also in the Bill I also notice under the explanation of practice, they are also to define what a practice of medicine, surgery or midwifery is. And these are all very interesting subjects and timely subjects that the people of Saskatchewan are very interested in.

And I would like to at this time just let our health critic take this information in this Bill and speak to the stakeholders of the province, and to check and double-check what the provincial . . . with the people in this province whether this Bill is necessary and all the Acts that are . . . and changes in the Bill are necessary in bringing this area of medicine up to current standards.

So at this time I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 39 — The Prescription Drugs
Amendment Act, 2002**

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce amendments to The Prescription Drugs Act.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments are a result of consultations with many groups such as the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan.

For more than 25 years The Prescription Drugs Act has enabled the Saskatchewan drug plan to help Saskatchewan residents with their prescription drug costs.

The current administrative system allows the drug plan to collect information for some but not all of the prescriptions

filled in the province. Information is captured for formulary drugs dispensed to residents who are eligible for coverage under the drug plan.

However, Mr. Speaker, information cannot be collected about prescriptions for First Nations residents, veterans, members of the Armed Forces, and others whose drug costs are paid for by the federal government. In addition we cannot collect information about prescriptions for drugs that are not benefits under the drug plan. As a result we do not have a complete record of prescription drug information for Saskatchewan residents.

(11:15)

The proposed amendments will allow Saskatchewan Health to collect information on all prescriptions in Saskatchewan, regardless of who pays for the prescription.

This information will allow doctors and pharmacists to quickly check whether a patient has obtained prescription drugs from any other physicians or pharmacies. Mr. Speaker, these changes will help prevent situations where harm or drug abuse could occur as a result of getting prescriptions from several different doctors at the same time.

The amended Prescription Drugs Act will enable Saskatchewan Health to proceed with system developments that will provide a much more complete record of all prescriptions in our province. As part of our action plan for Saskatchewan Health, we set a goal of establishing better information systems that health care providers could access, with appropriate patient consent, in order to have more accurate and complete information about patients' medications.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward in this direction we know that privacy is an issue. I want to assure the people of the province that our systems employ a high level of security. Prescription information has been collected and submitted electronically for more than 12 years. The Saskatchewan Drug Plan has a proven track record of confidentiality.

All collection, use, and disclosure of personal health information are strictly controlled in accordance with current legislation and department policy. Additional information collected under these amendments will be subject to the same strict control. When proclaimed, The Health Information Protection Act will provide additional control over access to and disclosure of the information.

The Prescription Drugs Act will serve the people of the province well into the future. Mr. Speaker, with that I move second reading of this Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the collection of data dealing with the use of prescription drugs for the purposes of preventing abuse of those drugs, I think and my colleagues agree, that it's a very worthwhile concept and application of this kind of data.

It's wrong when individuals take prescriptions from perhaps multiple doctors to try and gain a large volume of a particular drug for uses that would abuse those kind of drugs, Mr.

Speaker. And we do know that that happens in our society and that we need to take steps to stop that abuse. And using the knowledge and data available from prescription drug applications and dispensing is one of the ways that can be used, Mr. Speaker, to try and control these problems.

But also, Mr. Speaker, there are other problems, and the minister touched on it a little bit when he said that it would be appropriate to seek patient consent to utilize the information collected in this data, because in the Act, Mr. Speaker, it says that the minister may authorize the use of this information outside of what is in the regulations that are currently in place. It says:

for any other purpose authorized by the regulations.

And the regulations are established, Mr. Speaker, by the minister.

It also says that describing . . .

. . . prescribing additional purposes for which personal health information may be recorded in the database.

So it gives the minister a fair latitude and his department a fair latitude to make a determination on what that data is going to be used for.

I think it is very important that the patients whose data is being used must give their consent. So I guess the question is, Mr. Speaker, how do they give that consent? Is it assumed that consent is given by the fact that they have requested prescription drugs and that they . . . the government will then utilize that data unless the patient becomes active in some manner to say, I do not want my information used?

Or will the government take the other approach where they have to approach the patient and say, can we utilize your data, and seek consent from them in that manner? If they do it that way, what kind of a description will be given to those patients as to what that data will be and how it will be utilized, Mr. Minister, so that the patients can make a coherent decision with full knowledge of what they are giving up and what that data will be utilized for, Mr. Speaker?

Nowhere in this particular Act does it describe how that consent will be sought from the patients. And I think we need to be conscious of the protections of privacy in this kind of a piece of legislation.

We also need to be conscious though that there are those who would abuse the system and we need to control that, to stop that, Mr. Speaker. So we need to strike a balance here, but that balance must include patients having the knowledge to make an informed decision and give an informed consent if they so wish.

That is not yet clear, Mr. Speaker, whether that is in this piece of legislation or not and I'm sure that there are . . . I know that there are people, Mr. Speaker, out there that are concerned about these issues. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Corrections and Public Safety Vote 73

Subvote (CP01)

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today I'm joined by Neil Yeates seated to my left. Neil's the deputy minister of the department. Karen Lautsch is his executive assistant, seated next to him. Behind us is Don Head, directly behind me, the executive director of corrections division. Maureen Lloyd, who is the acting director of youth justice services, is seated behind the deputy minister. And behind the bar we are joined by Tom Young, the executive director of protection and emergency services and Nick Surtees, the executive director of licensing and inspections.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the officials here. I think this wasn't quite what they had planned when they looked at the week at the start. I think it was supposed to be Ag that was here, so I appreciate them making the difference in their plans to be here. Also welcome to the minister. This is the first time that he and I have met since he's been a minister, and congratulations on that. We will try and make this an easy morning for you, as easy as possible. But then again, we may not.

I would like to, first off, ask the minister to sort of give his vision as to the purpose of corrections in Saskatchewan. And also along with that, if he has any visions that are in his mind that haven't existed in the department before and changes that he intends to bring into the department.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the member for the question. Certainly one of the key reasons we have formulated this new Department of Corrections has been to try and deal with the issue of how we deal with adult corrections and young offender issues — youth criminal issues — and try to find a paradigm that works better in terms of bringing the two together into a more consistent approach.

One of the reasons that this is particularly timely are the changes that have been made to the federal legislation which will be brought in in 2003, early 2003 they will take effect. There's an opportunity for us at provincial level to respond to that and this is one of the things that certainly this department will move forward with.

The second set of issues around the creation of this department that we are very interested in moving forward on are the public safety issues, particularly surrounding emergency measures. This department has responsibility for the Sask911 program as well as a variety of other pieces that used to be in Municipal Affairs that have now moved over here so that we can have a better coordinated response at a community level and a province-wide level in terms of emergency measures.

Mr. Heppner: — It seems to me there's two areas of

responsibility that you've assumed. One is to work out the situation between adult offenders and young offenders, and public safety. Does rehabilitation not play a part in your department? And I'd like to hear the minister comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly rehabilitation is a key principle of what we believe in within the corrections system. There are really two sets of issues that, of course, are brought into balance within the Department of Corrections. One is the question of holding criminal offenders responsible for their actions and making sure there's an accountability, that they are called to account for it. The second is working with them to rehabilitate them so that they can be returned into the society.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. So there's two parts to it. And I want to go down both of those. One that you referred to was accountability and one was rehabilitation. Those are both fairly major topics and we need to discuss both of those I think in some substantial detail.

I would like for the minister to explain to the people of Saskatchewan what exactly happens in a prison setting that holds prisoners accountable for the deeds that they've done, and these deeds that they've done against all the rest of society. And I think society takes this very seriously, so I think this answer is fairly critical to what the public's looking for from your department.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly in terms of the approach which is taken in corrections on the accountability side, one of the most significant of these is the general loss of freedom. When a person commits a crime, they are found guilty of that, and they are sentenced to one of our correction facilities. They lose their freedoms. This is just a key principle of the way that we deal with offenders.

Certainly as the offenders are brought into the prison setting there is a regime, a discipline to it. There is an approach that we use in terms of dealing with a stricter set of rules for our prisoners than we would with ordinary citizens. This is part of the corrections setting.

Certainly one of the other pieces that we do is attempt, on an individual basis with prisoners, to identify what kind of programming needs may be there to assist in rehabilitation. I think it's important to recognize that at the provincial level there is a difference between the provincial and federal system in that we have a relatively short time period to work with offenders in.

This is a case where of course in the . . . in our system we're generally dealing with relatively short sentences. In the federal system they deal with the much longer ones and so their approach in terms of their focus can be more . . . longer in breadth than ours is. So these are, these are some of the general areas that we work with them in.

(11:30)

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. Three areas of accountability — loss of freedom, discipline, and programming. It seems to me that essentially only number one even gets close to an accountability

issue.

The disciplining that seems to be referred to, I don't think the public would see that in any way, shape, or form as being holding them accountable for what they've done outside of the prison, before they got there, to society.

And I would like for the minister to go down that road a little bit. Essentially what he has said is that the only way they're held accountable is a loss of freedom. That is the only thing that he's listed in that last dissertation; that is, actually holding someone accountable. Is that all that happens to prisoners — just their loss of freedom? Is that the only accountability that exists?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly it is the courts that determine what is the appropriate response in terms of holding offenders accountable.

What we deal with in this department is, once the courts have sentenced an individual to the correctional centre, we deal with them in terms of the secure custody and through that.

There are a number of other measures within the justice system which are designed to hold individuals accountable, both to their victims and to the community at large. And this is something that may be better pursued, in terms of the discussion, with the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice.

But certainly within the correctional system itself, once they have been turned over to us, this is the approach that we take in terms of holding them accountable. Certainly the biggest piece of this is in terms of the loss of freedom for that time period defined by the courts.

Mr. Heppner: — Are individuals that are put in an institution — and I realize that it's for a shorter period of time than the federal system — are there any situations where they are required to do some public service, do some work? You know, if you want to be negative about it, you may call them chain gangs. I don't think we're looking at having them chained by the ankle and going out and digging ditches.

But on the other hand, you know, so they've lost their freedom. Do they languish there in their loss of freedom? Or are they required to do work that is actually beneficial, both to society and also in their own work experience, and maybe provide some job opportunities when they get out?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly with low-risk offenders we do have the opportunity to have them participate in work gangs. This is often the case in Prince Albert and Saskatoon where we do have work gangs that offenders may be assigned to, to go out and work within the community.

Certainly one of the things we need to do is to make sure that if they are working in the community that they are a very low risk. This is not a case that we want to have high-risk offenders working in the community. Much of our focus within the corrections system is of course on making sure that when they are turned out of the system, that they have had the opportunity to participate in programming to make them . . . to deal with

whatever issues they may have.

I think we've gone through this list before — certainly there's a large number of them — one group of which is the area of life skills and vocational training in order to make sure that when they do find their way back into society that they are able to deal with the issues and that they do have skills to help them from reoffending.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and I think most people in Saskatchewan are somewhat aware of some of the work effort that is done by the low-risk individuals. I know they've done some work in my community.

And I know also in the past when the Seager Wheeler farm situation was in development there were work groups that came out and did some work there. Obviously those were lower risk people because they could have walked off and there were also other civilians there, so if they were particularly dangerous — probably not there.

So what happens to those individuals that are considered of a variety that they can't be allowed on those sorts of work situations? Is there anything productive that they have to do? And I have no problem saying, that they have to do. Because I think society expects that. These people need to be held accountable; they can't just be allowed to languish there.

So I'm hoping there are some significant work programs that they need to be involved with, under probably much higher custody than the programs that we see in many of our communities.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, one of the issues that obviously we need to deal with first with these offenders is, when they come into the system, we need to assess what their level of need is and in many cases, it is a case of we need to start back at the beginning and deal with very serious issues in terms of anger management or in terms of substance abuse before we move on to dealing with the employment skills issues.

Certainly there are shops at our present facilities to help them build skills. There are a number of different program that they can participate in. We have everything from woodworking and welding, spot welding. We have a metal fabrication shop in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, and indeed, at Pine Grove at the women's centre, there is a fabrics operation that these prisoners can participate in.

But certainly with the short amount of time that we have to deal with them, it is most important that we make sure the programming is identified not just in terms of skills building for after-release employment, but that we are able to deal with some of the very real issues that may have been contributing factors to them being sentenced in the first place. And certainly, the largest among these is the area of substance abuse.

Mr. Heppner: — I don't think that the people of Saskatchewan would find that answer very satisfactory. Because what we basically said, that you've got one group that from time to time gets to do some work outside and that, for the most part, is in summertime. And in Saskatchewan that leaves a whole lot of

time where they probably aren't out there.

The people who are of somewhat higher risk, you're saying they're there for a short time so they're being assessed. And then you talk about the programs that are there. Programs that exist in Saskatoon, for example, are a very small welding shop — not significant training possibilities there — and a woodwork situation that isn't that great either. And when you look at the inmate population, it obviously isn't significant.

So I'm still on that. So you have these people then that are of somewhat higher risk and you say you have them for a short time so that's the excuse for them not having to get into any kind of a work program.

Why isn't the department setting up some programs where one of the very first things you do when you get into a prison situation, correctional situation, is you're put on some sort of job and you have work to do? And it may be under some fairly severe custody situations where they're watched very closely. But I find it unconscionable that just because you're a higher risk you're then sort of let off the hook and you languish there.

Why doesn't the department have some work that they need to do? Comes right down to the middle of summer, why aren't they planting gardens and having to do some work hoeing those things? They're there. They need to do some work. That's part of accountability — that's part of accountability.

We have those kinds of things in our communities when individuals have some fairly light sentences given to them, where they are allowed to do some community service. That's accountability, because they have to get out there and do some work for, you know, the crimes they've committed. We've said that some of the light-risk individuals have some of that opportunity as well.

Is the department planning anything for those of more serious nature? And I think society would demand that, would expect that much more than from the other ones, because these are the people that have committed the most serious offences; and we're saying in this discussion this morning, if I hear you correctly Mr. Minister, that in fact those are the ones that get off easiest. And that seems totally contrary to what everyone expects.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that, very much, the response I've given does meet what the Saskatchewan people want us to be doing. What they want to make sure of is that when these people come into the facility — not that we have them breaking rocks or licence plates — what they want to make sure is that we're dealing with the issues that got them sentenced in the first place.

These are often the most serious of the issues that are causing them to cause the crimes — whether it's anger management, whether it's substance abuse. These are the issues that need to be addressed first. Whether or not we make them make licence plates or grow gardens, these are different issues. What we need to make sure is that the high-risk offenders are dealt with in terms of their problems so that when they are released from the community that they can enrol in programming to go and learn the skills to go and work.

What has led them there is very . . . I think it is a mistake for us to say what is leading these people into this situation is the fact that they don't have a skill set. And having them on a chain gang out cleaning a ditch, I don't think is going to address the most significant issues as to why they're creating . . . why they're causing the crime.

So very much, I think, the approach taken by this government is the approach that Saskatchewan people want, which is that we are going to have these individuals held accountable. We're going to ensure that the programming is available, that they can deal with that, and that then we move forward.

I don't think Saskatchewan people want high-risk offenders in their communities. This is the purpose for closed custody facilities. Now where we have lower risk or where we're able to move them forward in terms of teaching them skills and involving the community, we can certainly do that. And we do that through the work gangs.

But I think for us, the first approach that we need to deal with are the very serious issues that have led these individuals into their criminal activity and have caused them to be sentenced.

The second piece that I think we need to identify here is that we are dealing with a provincial corrections system and that the federal corrections system is another area. So the type of criminal behaviour we're dealing with here, we have to assess on an individual basis. We need to understand that the most serious of the criminals are receiving Criminal Code sentences and they're ending up in the federal system.

So let's separate this out. This does not mean that we don't have high-risk offenders within our facilities. We do, and those are dealt with in terms of the appropriate response. But I think having them go forward and do gardening or work on work gangs in the community is not what Saskatchewan people want.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And the minister seems to be trying to misinterpret what we were saying.

Those work programs that were out there with the low-risk offenders works out fine. Obviously we're not expecting people, high-risk offenders, to go and do gardening work in communities. That wasn't said before. They could very well take care of gardens for their own facilities. All sorts of work they can do to maintain their own facilities, and they can do that under high supervision where they're not part of the community. And yet I'm finding from the answers I'm getting this is not happening.

Now the minister is saying, Mr. Chairman, that, you know, we have to deal with these other issues first. Yes, those issues need to be dealt with. Just to put them on a work gang and not deal with anger management, and say you've put in two years less a day or whatever else in work, but no anger management, isn't going to deal with the rehabilitation.

But I think we're getting the sense that this department isn't quite sure where it's going. Because obviously if you're going in with anger management, you're not going to be doing 10, 12 hours a day on that particular course. You're probably going to be lucky if you get one or two or three hours a day with that.

What do you do with the rest of the time? That's where the time comes in to go ahead and do some work. We're talking about accountability. We haven't got down to that yet.

So just to sort of underline where this discussion's going, if someone was taking an anger management course in a week, on an average, how many hours a week would they spend in an anger management course?

(11:45)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly there are a number of different programs and an offender, a prisoner, may well be involved in more than one.

It would not be unusual for us to have somebody involved in a program for anger management that may take up to 20 hours a week. It would not be unusual for an offender to also then need to participate in a substance abuse program, or perhaps life skills, in addition to work that they may be doing in the facility in terms of the kitchens or the laundries or any of these other issues. So this is very much the approach but we have to deal with it on a case-by-case basis.

The question of us having them growing their own gardens in the correctional centres, I guess is something we could look at. But frankly, I'm not sure that this is really what Saskatchewan people want us to be moving over to.

The other thing that I think we need to make sure that we are cautious of is that if there are . . . is that we need to be careful in terms of how we are arguing in terms of the type of work that they're doing so that we do not end up with the kind of competition — which I know is where we would end up — in terms of a debate on this floor as to what the prisoners are doing versus what the private sector should be doing.

So this is a case of us finding a balance. But first and foremost, what we are concentrating on is making sure that these people have the programming put in front of them, that they can participate in it, so that when they are released they can participate in society as a functional human being in the way that we expect. That's our first priority.

Mr. Heppner: — There's a lot of vague answers, Mr. Chairman, coming out of this particular discussion.

I think at the end of this particular time we've just realized that there are some programs that people take part in. They may be one program; they may be involved in two programs; they may be up to 20 hours. So if we start using all the maximums, they might be busy for about three, four, five days of the week. If we take an average of that, they probably have something to do for about two days of the week. And the rest of the time, there needs to be something else that they need to be doing.

And I guess the part that I find most disconcerting is that it's again the ones that are the most dangerous ones, are the ones that are least likely to have to do something which we would say, that's accountable. So far, it's just a loss of freedom. And I think from society's point of view that's more of a safety aspect for them to have them off the streets.

Question we had earlier on, and I think the minister may have mentioned this term. He started off with a loss of freedom one, then he talked about discipline. And I would like for him to discuss to some extent, when you have these individuals that have basically run amuck in society in a prison situation, when those individuals do not abide by the rules and regulations within prisons or the correctional system, what measures are at the disposal of the department or of the people that work there, more specifically, to go ahead and deal with that? What discipline?

And call it punishment if you will and I have no problem using that term. If they're in that particular setting and they're misbehaving and they're wrecking equipment, they're threatening individuals, they're mean mouthing the people that are supposed to provide the supervision, there needs to be some punishment. Nothing else but punishment.

What aspects . . . What is available to the people who work in Corrections to provide some discipline, punishment to those individuals that step way out of line from the behaviour patterns prescribed for the inmates?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well clearly, Mr. Chairman, it will depend on the type of situation that the individual finds himself in.

But there is a long . . . a fairly broad list of things that can be done in terms of disciplining the prisoners if need be. This can range from everything from loss of specific privileges, confinement for up to 10 days; restitution may be ordered, loss of remission on time served, suspension of loss of remission. There's a long list of these items including, if it is a serious offence that we're dealing with within the system, certainly it may lead to more charges. This is the . . . This is the result and the individuals know that these are the potential penalties.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. We've had the list of discipline measures that are there and I think that's one of the questions that I did have is exactly what was available to the people working in Corrections when they have an inmate there that just refuses to be co-operative.

And I think we need to have a lot of respect and thanks to people who work in Corrections because there's always a very real sense of danger that's there for them.

And I guess that sort of leads me, without having planned this, into the next question. Are there any records kept as to the number of people working in Corrections that are actually hurt or injured, you know, by working with their particular clientele?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly these are difficult jobs and the individuals that participate in them are very exceptional individuals. These are hazardous places to work and we know that.

I do not have with me today the exact number that the member asked for. I can certainly return to the House with that in the future.

Mr. Heppner: — The concern I guess people always have is what happens with the individuals who sort of break out. And

I'm wondering if you could give us a rundown of the specific correctional institutions that we have in Saskatchewan and the record of escapes from each one of those in, let's say, the past year.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly I can provide that list to the Assembly. Very simply put, last year there were 16 escapes; and of the 16 escapees, there were 16 apprehensions.

Today, as the members are aware, yesterday, three prisoners escaped from the Saskatoon Correctional Centre, two of whom were caught and appeared in court this morning. On this, one remains at large but of course there is a warrant out for that individual's arrest. And given our record, that person will be apprehended and returned to the system.

If the member wants I can provide him with the list by facility very quickly. Last year Regina saw three escapes; Saskatoon, seven; P.A. (Prince Albert), one; Battlefords, five; and there were no escapes from either Pine Grove or Buffalo Narrows.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I believe in the previous year Saskatoon also led the list. And the numbers I have were nineteen from Saskatoon, five from P.A., and four in Regina in 2000-2001. Whatever the numbers, Saskatoon seems to be substantially higher than the other institutions. What is the reason for that?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is a good question the member asks. It's a difficult one to answer because of course it's hard to predict who is going to escape.

In this particular case it appears that there is some correlation between the likelihood to escape and the relative age of the offender, and in this case Saskatoon has a tendency to have younger offenders — not young offenders but younger offenders — in that facility. And certainly looking at the lists, this appears to be something of an issue.

So that may be one of the correlating factors. In terms of the others, it would be hard to establish any direct correlation.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I want to link that in with gang activities in correctional facilities. When these escapes take place, are they linked to gang activities? For example, the three that escaped recently from Saskatoon, were those members of the same internal prison gang? So is gangs or gang activity linked or a factor in escapes?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, certainly it's difficult at this point — because this most recent escape is under investigation — to comment as to whether there is a relationship to gang activity.

What I do want to comment on though is that when you take into account the fact there are nearly 11,000 admissions into the prison system during the year, then we are talking about 16 escapes. This is an extremely small number, although certainly we would like to see that number at zero.

In terms of the gang relation, there is some gang activity and gang members in our correctional centres. But whether there is

a correlation between that and escapes, at this point, it would appear that there is not.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'm wondering, while we're on that particular topic, if the minister would like to comment, and I'd appreciate if he would, on what actions are taken within correctional facilities to sort of combat the gang activities.

I mentioned . . . I think when your cohort, the other minister of the other section of law and justice basically was up the other day, we discussed that just a little bit, didn't get into it in detail. But it did seem somewhat surprising when you go by a correctional facility and you may see, you know, coloured ribbons tied to various pieces of equipment indicating a certain gang has sort of taken charge.

What tools do corrections officers actually have to combat gang activity or is it one of those things that just happens and they say, we have to live with it?

(12:00)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, the gang activity within the prisons does seem to reflect that same kind of trend within the community. There are gang members — we have about 120 gang members in the correctional centres today.

Certainly we work on a strategy with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and the city police in the appropriate centres to try and identify who are the gang members and how they should be dealt with.

Part of the way of dealing with them is obviously to try and keep them separated. We deal with a number of different issues, including making sure that the gang colours are not permitted within the jails. And really we attempt to deal with this in terms of a gang management strategy that we do work on collectively with the police in the community.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We've spent a fair bit of time dealing, I think, for the most part with adult offenders, and we may get back to that in a minute or two again. But we've spent a fair bit of time relating this to how the community feels, how the public feels, how much security they feel, the sense of injustice that exists there.

And so, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could comment — and this is moving a little bit to the other part of your department, which is the public safety one — a discussion at some length on the use in various communities of citizens on patrol. Different groups in different communities go by different terms. I know from time to time the department probably has some concerns that this gets close to being a vigilante group, but if we could get a report on how active these sorts of groups are across the province, how many communities, what support there is, and I'd like a fairly lengthy discussion I think in the next half hour or so, on that issue.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't know if I have an answer to fill the next half hour. Really this is an issue that we would probably be better dealing with through Justice. In terms of separation of the department, we tend to deal with people after they've been sentenced. The policing aspect is

really dealt with more through the Justice department.

Although I think it is fair to say that the NDP government supports these community activities where neighbours are banding together to make sure that they have community watch programs in place and work with the police on reducing crime in their community. That's certainly something our government supports.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. I guess I'll have to save my half-hour for a different minister and I guess that's going to be the part that will take some while getting used to, exactly who's taking responsibility for which aspect.

Electronic monitoring — it would seem to me that should fit under Corrections. And I'm wondering where the department is at with that, how many individuals are on electronic monitoring, and exactly how this is being used and how effective it's being found to be.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, on any given day there are about 145, 155 people in the province who are under electronic monitoring. The decision as to whether a person receives electronic monitoring is one made by the courts and not by the correctional system itself in terms of a parole issue. This is something that the court will decide and direct.

It is generally felt though that there is some success with this program and, indeed, we are seeing some pressure on us to increase the availability of electronic monitoring units that are available through Corrections.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'd like for the minister to outline what the costs are, let's say on a . . . per individual, to use the electronic monitoring so we have some idea how effective this is as far as a cost-effectiveness issue.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, we do have . . . The cost in fact is I am told \$7.22 a day to have a person under electronic monitoring. This is certainly a relatively inexpensive way but obviously it needs to be a fairly cautiously used tool also in terms of the type of offenders which are under the electronic monitoring.

The relative cost at seven dollars and a quarter is certainly less than what we see spent on the supervision of federal offenders, which is about \$36 a day. So that probably puts it a little bit into perspective.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The minister mentioned that it was an issue as to what type offender would get this and what type wouldn't; and I would like for him to elaborate on that because it would be interesting to know exactly what you have to do to qualify, or what you have to do to make sure you don't qualify to be on that program.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, the type of offenders that are generally found to be using, ordered to be using the electronic monitoring tend to be increasingly ones that are receiving conditional sentences within the community.

So again the courts decide who will be put under the electronic monitoring program. In this case we are finding increasingly

where there are conditional sentences issued that they may order the electronic monitoring to be in place.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. We've spent a moderate amount of time on the accountability issue and we may get back to that. In fact we probably will here in some time.

But I'd like to follow the other route for some time, and that's dealing with rehabilitation and how successful we are. And I'd like for the minister to comment on that and then we can probably go into that issue and deal with it part by part to see what aspects are working and how effective they're being.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, there are about 4,300 people that are involved in the programs that we do have. There's about an 83 per cent completion rate.

What is interesting is a recent study that has been done shows that there is a 17 per cent reduction in recidivism in . . . among individuals who have completed the substance abuse program.

So it does I think show that the programming does have some impact. And certainly again, as we've discussed in the past, it is up to the individuals to make sure they are taking the appropriate choices when they are released.

Mr. Heppner: — If that particular part of the program seems to be so . . . such a significant part of it, and I think we can understand that because a lot of crime is almost like . . . as if initiated by substance abuse where that is the key factor that kicks off a criminal activity, if we don't consider that a criminal activity in itself. And I'm wondering what exactly is the process when someone is put in a correctional centre where they can or cannot, or can choose or can choose not to become involved in that program. I sense from the minister's last answer that that is a choice that's sort of given.

What options are available to someone coming into the system as far as taking those courses are concerned? And what are the results of not taking it?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I want to start with where I left off. When I talk about the recidivism rate, I mean that once the individual is released the choice is theirs as to whether they reoffend. This is what I meant very clearly to say.

Within the correctional system though, again the choice of participating in programming, where it's not court ordered, is up to the individual. One of the pieces that will strengthen our ability to deal with individuals are the changes that we are proposing under The Correctional Services Act, where individuals will need to earn the remission of their sentence, not simply have it imposed.

So participation in programs will be a key part of earning that remission.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. And I would like the minister to discuss that part about the . . . I believe he used the term remission of the program, as far as shortening the time sentence, I believe is what he's referring to.

To expand on that on some extent, I think this is maybe an aspect that would have a lot of . . . or maybe has a lot of public support. How new is that initiative and exactly how does it operate? And I think we need a fair discussion on that aspect.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, under the current system I think members will be aware that when a person is sentenced they are required to serve fully two-thirds of that sentence, after which they may lose additional time. As we've talked about in terms of the penalties that are in place, we've suggested that they would lose a time for discipline problems within the system.

This will change the system. The proposal that we have made under The Correctional Services Amendment Act will require the prisoners, the inmates, to earn the time for remission. Now this will . . . We are still working on what the exact criteria will be and certainly we can have a discussion about this when we get into the discussion of the Bill under committee.

But the view is, is that if prisoners are participating in programs — successfully completing them — that they are participating without incident within the facilities — that they are living in the facilities without incident — they would then earn a remission on their sentence, rather than have the automatic one-third that would have to be taken away from them for bad behaviour.

So this really changes the equation. It flips it so that the onus is on the inmate to earn the remission, rather than have it simply granted out front.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I think that's an initiative that we would probably have to say is one of the bright lights that have come out so far in the discussion when we're dealing with accountability — the concept that you go into the facility with the understanding you are going to do the time that is assigned to you.

I think the public has long been very upset with the concept that someone would get a certain number of months in the facility, and as soon as that was given there, you multiply it by about decimal six and you said, that's when I'm getting out. And you know the thought was you always got out — or almost always got out — with that, you know, decimal six times what you were given.

And the public was very upset with that because they said that the time that was given is part of the accountability factor that's there.

(12:15)

So I think this change of direction is very good because I think most of us in society, whether we're talking about the various jobs that we have or we're talking about a classroom, whatever else, you earn special kinds of considerations. Getting less time than what you were assigned for your criminal activity is something that very definitely should be earned not just automatically given. So there's no doubt that you have my support on that particular aspect.

Now having said that, one of the statements that you'll often

hear out on the street is that correctional facilities are largely open doors because the justice system funnels people into there and because there's a lack of space, they get funnelled back out just to keep the ones coming in the front door with a place to stay.

Now if you follow this through, I would assume that you would have a larger prison population on every . . . on any given day because if we won't have that, then we're making the assumption that every single inmate has . . . will earn off one-third of the time.

Now will this increase the number of inmates in any particular day? And I'm sure that you have records that indicate, based on behaviour — because this will be operated on a behaviour pattern — what that will be and what concerns that creates for the correctional system?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, certainly there are potential facility management issues here in terms of the impact that such a program might have. But I want to be very clear about this. The revolving door policy that was in place in the justice system, the corrections system — or perceived to have been place — in the '80s in terms of that approach really has changed as community standards have changed.

And I think that this is something that we are seeing in terms of the way that the judges are dealing with it, the courts are dealing with, the prosecutors' offices are dealing with it. Certainly we are seeing that there was an increase in the number of inmates who are held in our secure facilities, but they are held there.

This is not a case where we are looking at temporary absence policies in order to manage the spaces.

So we are going to work our way through this. We don't anticipate there is going to be a significant impact in terms of the approach. But if so, I can tell you that it would not be our preferred approach by any means to move to a facility management policy in terms of dealing with these officials . . . or these, sorry, these inmates.

Our approach very much here is one to encourage the inmates to participate in the programs. And we find that, for the most part, they are interested in doing so. Successful completion is certainly something we aim at and I think, as we mention, some 83 per cent of the prisoners do participate and successfully complete the programs that have been identified for them.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, when you said 80 per cent of the people complete the program that has been identified for them, what . . . how would you describe those other 20 per cent?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, these aren't the finest citizens that we are dealing with. Certainly these are folks who have refused to participate in the program. They understand what the consequences are. We think that the changes we're going to make under The Correctional Services Act will show them very clearly that failure to participate is going to have a consequence to them.

Once release date comes, there is . . . this then moves back into the other system and we have to assume that they are not going to reoffend. If they do, then the consequences are there. And certainly they should understand that the result is, is that they may work their way through the system and end up out of the provincial correction system at some point into a federal correction system. And I think that that is something that they just need to understand.

There are, unfortunately, a group of people that just refuse to participate and refuse to look at rehabilitation, and this is . . . this is one of the difficulties we face.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I'm somewhat relieved at some of the directions where you're saying that that open door policy or revolving door policy — the door shouldn't be open — the revolving door policy that the public has in mind is one that you're trying to work . . . move away from.

However, I want to go back to an issue just a question or two back. You did admit, Mr. Minister, that there would be some increase in the daily number of people in there with changing this policy. And I know that your facilities now are stretched to the maximum. At least it's my impression, and having done a brief visit, it seemed that way. So how are you going to accommodate that even if your prison population on any given day goes up by an average of let's say 5 per cent? I don't think you have the room for that.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, this is a good question and certainly a fair question in terms of how we deal with it. The prison population fluctuates, as we know, in terms of on a seasonal basis; it fluctuates on any given day there's a different number of people within the system. There will be some pressure put on the facilities.

I know I've been asked this by people as to how we'll deal with it. We need to really see what the impact of the numbers are going to be. And there is as you know a correlation between the length of sentences, the type of sentences, the number of people who are going through. And this is just one of those things that we believe can be managed within the current facilities.

Certainly we don't want a surplus of space in the jails. It would be nice if we had the crime rate down so that there were fewer there, but we are not prepared to embark on a policy where we are moving people out of the system on a revolving-door policy to manage that.

The facility management issue is certainly significant. I think, at some point, we will have an opportunity to discuss this in terms of Regina and some of the issues there; and we are going to need to continue to look at how this particular piece balances off with some of the facility management issues we have.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And the minister keeps underlining the fact that they are not going to work with this revolving door, and I hope that that's the case. We will definitely keep a very close eye on that because I think the public is very definitely on a different side because their personal security is very much at stake when you run that revolving door type of a situation.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to sort of conclude, I think we have time for two or three more questions, and I have a couple of general questions that I would like to, you know, put today and get into some more specifics on another day.

At the start I basically asked where you were going, and we discussed the fact that you were working on the adult and young offender situation and also public safety. Those were the issues that you mentioned right at the start. The one . . . (inaudible) . . . question that I did ask, and it wasn't included in the answer, is where do you see your department going in the next three to five years should Dame Fate be fortunate enough for you and unfortunate enough for us to have you there that long.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, certainly one of the things that we are interested in doing here and one of the reasons for the creation of a new department is really to find a more integrated approach, a better paradigm for corrections that focuses in particular on how we deal with adult offenders and young offenders.

And over the next year we will be working on a corrections policy that brings us so that next year when we're in this discussion again, certainly that we can talk about how this relates to the new federal Act on young offenders, and how we move forward.

The public safety issues are significant for us as I think the public interest in issues around emergency preparedness has certainly changed over the last six months. And this is one of the areas that we need to spend some time working on. I think we'll have an opportunity in future discussions to have some talk about where we move on that, and perhaps we should save those discussions for another day.

So with that I'd like to thank the member for his questions.

Mr. Heppner: — I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for this time. Hopefully next time they'll have a bit more of an opportunity to prepare themselves than they did for today, but we'll . . . we'll enjoy our time next time, I'm sure. Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, with wishes to all the mothers in the Assembly for a happy Mother's Day and to those who aren't mothers, that they'll celebrate a happy Mother's Day on Sunday, appropriately. I move this House do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:30.