

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about certain inadequacies in the province's tobacco legislation. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this petition is signed by citizens of Carrot River, Martensville, and Whitecourt, Alberta.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today to present on behalf of the snowmobile tourism industry:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to recognize the financial savings that could be made by contracting the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association to groom trails and obtain funding for this through the sale of provincially owned grooming equipment, mandatory trail permits on Crown land, provincial parks, and the attachment of trail permits to snowmobile registrations.

The people that have signed this petition are all from the town of Weekes.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Signatures on this petition today, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Melfort, Tisdale, and Gronlid.

I so present on their behalf.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present to do with the overfishing of Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

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

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Churchbridge, Esterhazy, and Stockholm.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with this government's tobacco legislation. And the prayer reads:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Milestone, Moose Jaw, and Keeler.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition concerning crop insurance premium hikes and coverage reductions. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by producers in the communities of Portreeve, Sceptre, Abbey, and especially the community of Hazlet.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens that are concerned about the deductible for the prescription drug plan. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And this is signed by folks from my constituency in Estevan and also the Lampman area.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the tobacco legislation. And the prayer reads:

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

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

And it's signed by residents of Weyburn and Regina.

I so present.

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the citizens from Craik, Aylesbury, Moose Jaw, and Unity.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition this afternoon reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the people from Paddockwood and Meath Park.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present a petition from citizens concerned about the tobacco legislation. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

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

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

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

I so submit.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it will be no surprise that I stand today with a petition from citizens concerned about Highway No. 15. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And again the signatures, Mr. Speaker, show how well travelled this highway is because they are from Simpson, Watrous, Raymore, Davidson, Young, Saskatoon, and Morris, Manitoba.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with Besnard Lake. And the petition reads as follows:

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from Leask, from Blaine Lake, and Duck Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens of the province concerned about the hike in crop insurance. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of Denzil and of Luseland, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens who are concerned about the lack of cellular phone coverage in southern Saskatchewan. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service to all communities throughout the Wood River constituency.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Glentworth and McCord.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 7, 18, 22, 23, 31, and 32.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, it is my privilege to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet after having presented that report on behalf of the committee, I would like to move, seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the member for Regina Northeast:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be now concurred in.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 48 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: (1) what is the detailed breakdown of all out-of-province travel undertaken by SaskEnergy President Ron Clark in 2001; (2) were any of the president of SaskEnergy's out-of-province travel expenses in 2001 covered by subsidiaries of SaskEnergy and, if so, what are the details of those expenses; and (3) who accompanied Mr. Clark on these trips?

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give

notice that I shall on day no. 48 ask the government the following question:

To the Provincial Secretary: (1) with regard to the booklets produced by the province of Saskatchewan to commemorate Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee, how many booklets were produced; (2) what was the cost to the provincial government for the production of these booklets; and (3) how many posters commemorating the Golden Jubilee were printed and at what cost?

Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 48 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: can the minister please provide which cities, towns, villages, and hamlets currently have permits to dump sewage effluent and/or raw sewage into provincial lakes, streams, rivers, ponds, waterways, and all other bodies of water?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the members of the House know, yesterday I had the privilege of introducing a number of grade 8 students from Rosetown. Well today we have the second half of the grade 8 class from Rosetown Central High in the east gallery — 33 students.

And they are accompanied by their teachers, Richard Berezowski and Jana Clark, as well as chaperones, Greg Moffat, Lyle Stang, and Jeanette Bell.

We just had a wonderful visit with the first half of the grade 8 class yesterday following question period and I'm looking forward to an opportunity of meeting with this class following question period. And we hope that you enjoy the proceedings of the legislature, including question period. I look forward to meeting with you afterwards.

And would all members of the House join me in welcoming grade 8 students from Rosetown.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House, a gentleman sitting up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Avrum Fenson.

Mr. Fenson is from Toronto, Ontario and he's here as the researcher for the Standing Committee on Agriculture. And Mr. Fenson, although from Toronto, he's a prairie boy at heart, having been born and raised in Manitoba.

And Mr. Fenson has a long degree of . . . a long time of experience in legislative assemblies across Canada and has done a marvellous job in the Ontario legislature as a researcher there. And his credentials are quite long, so I won't go into them. But I do know that he's serving the committee very well.

So I ask all the members to offer him a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this House, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce 10 students from the grade 6 and 7 class of the school in Hazlet, Saskatchewan in the heart of the Cypress Hills constituency.

Now this group of students are most welcome here, Mr. Speaker, because they gave me a good part of their time last fall. I had such an enjoyable time with them that I was afraid this return visit might not happen, but I'm glad to see they're here today. I'm sure that you will be happy to welcome them here.

(13:45)

I'd like to introduce Mr. Chris Siemens, the teacher that's accompanying them. Actually his face is quite familiar. He's spent a lot of time around this legislature recently as an attendee at the Social Science Teachers' Institute and is part of the organizing committee this year.

And with Mr. Siemens are the chaperones, Faye Keenleyside, Shari Robertson, and Shannon Shrum, and bus driver, Evelyn Anderson. You can't get here without a bus driver. And I really appreciate the effort that she put in today.

Would you please welcome this group here to the House, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all colleagues in the Assembly, 21 grade 7 students seated in the west gallery. Mr. Speaker, they're from Pilot Butte School, and you will remember the enjoyable morning that we had and we spent with them during their model legislature.

I've met with the students and tried to describe the proceedings of question period here today. And it probably won't be nearly as much decorum as our Assembly, hoping that members will help me out on that one.

Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Ceulemans, and chaperones Mrs. Effa and Mrs. Shaeffer. They had good questions for me. I know they're looking forward to watching the proceedings and the tour that they've just completed. So I ask all members to please give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Assembly I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine sitting in the east gallery, Valerie Rousseau. Valerie is the co-owner of C R Plumbing and gas fitting in Coronach and she is up today to watch the proceedings and witness question period.

So would all members please join me in welcoming Valerie to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Joining us in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker, are members of the executive of the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association. And they're here today to watch the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, but also here to hear second reading of a very important piece of legislation to them, The Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002. And I will be meeting with this group later this afternoon in my office.

And I would ask members to welcome Ann McGilp of Saskatoon, president; Terrilyn Klassen of Regina, executive member; Bev Tillman of Regina, vice-president; Laura Ruschinsky of Regina, newsletter editor, and Penny Joynt of Saskatoon, who is the registrar/secretary/treasurer. And they are accompanied by Kim Mock and Diane Gingras from the department.

And I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I'd like to join with the Minister of Learning in welcoming the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association. I'm looking forward to the speeches and the information that we'll learn today.

And through the . . . I know your group has been working hard on this Bill and I'm looking forward to its passing.

And on behalf of the leader of our opposition, Mr. Hermanson, we'd like to thank you for your work in helping him be a music teacher . . . music student.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like everyone to please welcome two guests and visitors from the federal government who are up in your gallery. One is Angela Bishop, and also with Angela Bishop is Kevin Nixon.

Angela Bishop is of course the daughter of the late Rod Bishop, who was well known in the building of the Métis Nation, as well as her mother, Rose Bishop, who was involved in education as a board member of Northern Lights School Division. But now she's doing a lot of development work and Angela is following in the footsteps and doing a lot of development work, particularly in self-government at the federal level.

And we also have . . . of course, Kevin is doing policy advice as well.

I'd like all welcomes to say . . . give him a Cree welcome, Ta wow.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I notice in your gallery we have with us today the Child Advocate, Deborah Parker-Loewen. As well, sitting beside her, we have the Provincial Ombudsman with us, Barbara Tomkins.

And I'd just like to ask all members of the Assembly to issue a warm welcome to these guests today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Opportunities Week

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Saskatchewan Opportunities Week. This is the week that gives us the chance to showcase all of the successes people from all walks of life are experiencing in our province.

I would encourage everyone to pick up a copy of last Saturday's *Leader-Post* and read the special section on Saskatchewan Opportunities Week that highlights all that is happening in this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight a specific opportunity for young people in our province that has led to successes at the international level. Last week my colleague from Regina Dewdney told this Assembly about a group of young people with the Market Intelligence Team of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership utilizing their skills at an international competition.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that this team from Saskatchewan won the Champion in Strategic Intelligence Award two days ago at the Competia Symposium in Cape Cod, beating out, Mr. Speaker, an American team.

Such an achievement by a group of young people who were born, raised, and educated in our province just shows that our province is home to a number of young people who've developed world-class expertise in innovation.

These individuals have also demonstrated that young people can indeed have successful careers right here in our province. Let them, Mr. Speaker, stand as a role model to other young people in our province and let their achievements act as a reminder of the positive opportunities available in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite all members of the House to extend their congratulations to the STEP's (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership) Market Intelligence Team.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence Award Ceremonies

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to congratulate the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan for recognizing business excellence at the 2002 SABEX (Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence) Awards in Saskatoon last evening.

Under the theme Celebrate Success, special awards were presented to V. Lynne Pearson as this year's ATHENA Award winner, and to Dr. Jeremy Lee and Dr. Palok Aich receiving the Award of Innovation. Another special SABEX award went to Howard Stensrud as the 2002 inductee into the SABEX Hall of Fame.

Other SABEX awards, Mr. Speaker, went to Norampac — Saskatoon Division; Ghost Transport Services; Saskatoon Credit Union; Inroad Solutions; Yanke Group in co-operation with Children's Health Foundation; and there was even a tie between Nu-Fab Building Products and Superior Millwork in the Export Award.

The major winner of the evening for the 2002 SABEX was Philom Bios Inc. which took three awards including the Marketing Award, the Growth and Expansion Award, and, most importantly, Business of the Year.

Congratulations to all of the finalists in all of the categories; and to the winners, well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During Opportunities Week in Saskatchewan I'm happy to report to the Assembly that last night in Saskatoon the annual Chamber of Commerce Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence, or SABEX awards, ceremony took place.

The awards go to those who have taken advantage of the opportunities available in our city, and to those who provide opportunities for others. There were many worthy nominees.

The winners were Philom Bios Inc., one of our many high-tech agribusinesses, was given a hat trick of awards: for Business of the Year, Marketing, and for Growth and Expansion. This year's Celebrate Success program gave two Innovation Awards, sponsored by Innovation Place and University of Saskatchewan Technologies. The recipients were two U of S scientists, Jeremy Lee and Palok Aich.

The award of Innovation was not to be confused with the previous ones — went to Inroad Solutions. A tie in the export category went to Nu-Fab Building Products and Superior Millwork.

My Saskatoon Credit Union was presented with the Community Involvement Award. Best new business venture was Norampac — Saskatoon Division. The Children's Health Foundation and Yanke Group of Companies tied in the Strategic Alliance category.

Lynne Pearson was announced as a winner of the ATHENA Award. And finally, Howard Stensrud, president of Miner's Construction, was inducted into the SABEX Hall of Fame.

I'm sure all hon. members will join me in thanking these individuals and businesses who keep making our province and our cities humming, and our rural Saskatchewan humming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cadet Graduation Parades

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this time of year is graduation time and parade time for cadets across Saskatchewan.

In the past week I have had the opportunity to attend two such parades. The 675 Bow Valley squadron at Oxbow held their awards on Friday night, making excellent presentations, Mr. Speaker. Also the Oxbow squadron won first in marching demonstration for southeast Saskatchewan.

Many of the cadets won awards, Mr. Speaker, ranging from first year camps in Ponoka, Alberta, to both powered and gliding flying scholarships, Mr. Speaker.

The guest speaker at the Oxbow banquet was James Richardson, on active service with the Royal Canadian Navy, having served as a Petty Officer First Class now for 32 years. James graduated from the 675 Bow Valley squadron in 1969 and went immediately to the Royal Canadian Navy.

The guest speaker, Mr. Speaker, at the Carlyle ceremonies on Monday was Lieutenant Governor Lynda Haverstock. Her Honour reviewed the cadets and complimented the cadets on their marching demonstration, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to congratulate all cadet organizations across the province for the excellent work and service they provide; congratulate the cadets for the hard work and dedication that they put forward; to the officers who do this voluntarily to support the children that are involved in air cadets; and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the parents who support their children in the cadet movement. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Women Entrepreneurs Award

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is another chapter in the life of Saskatchewan, our land of opportunity. I would like to call the Assembly's attention to some of the recent achievements of the business community, but specifically women in business.

I was happy to accompany the Minister of Labour to the Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan banquet last Friday evening. Our very own Olympic gold medal winner curler, Joan McCusker, was the keynote speaker which added a dash of excitement but she also had words of encouragement to all who were present.

Including in the evening was the presentation of three energetic entrepreneurs with Member of the Year awards. The recipients were Misty Cey from Saskatoon who won the emerging business award for her role in establishing Nutrition Made Simple business; Linda Langelier of Regina for her role with Employment Network organization which specializes in human resources and consulting and related activities. A special recognition award was also presented to Monica Coney, a

business consultant from Gravelbourg who is playing a major role in economic revitalization of that community using a feminist model.

Congratulations to all women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan, and particularly to those who were honoured that evening by their peers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wadena Ukrainian Dancers

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Melissa Hayden said: Learning to walk sets you free; learning to dance gives you the greatest freedom of all, to express your whole self, the person you are.

Wadena has a proud Ukrainian heritage which is being kept alive in traditional dance. The characteristics of these dances are agility, courage, and joy of life. Anyone who has had the opportunity to watch Ukrainian dancers will readily agree that they display a high level of agility.

The Wadena Ukrainian Dancers' commitment to excellence saw them in the top three spots of every category entered during the competitions in Regina. The club not only displayed talents, they also won the congeniality award. This club has been in existence since 1981.

Junior trio Sidney Melnick, Kahla Hryhoriw, and Nathan Wdowach won a silver medal, while junior quartet dancers Kendra Godhe, Stacy Stelmach, Denise McClymont and Travis Wdowach won a bronze medal. As a group . . . and as a group they won the silver medal.

The intermediate level dancers Kendra Godhe, Stacy Stelmach, Kahla Hryhoriw, Sydney Melnick, Denise McClymont, Nathan and Travis Wdowach, won bronze medals.

The senior group of Cherise Nelson, Sheena Berezuik, Marilee Hordos, Joanna Kerluke, Melanie Stasiuk, Stacy and Jill Kulyk, and Marian Grandin, and Annamarie Nataraj won bronze.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask this Assembly to join with me in congratulating this group on preserving their Ukrainian dance heritage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Only in Saskatchewan Contest Winners

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, today I, and you as well, attended the Only in Saskatchewan event. May I say, Mr. Speaker, I was delighted and energized to see the enthusiasm that this event revealed within our province's young people. The contest was a province-wide campaign that asked young people to explain, one, their Saskatchewan career dream and their personal Saskatchewan success story or the success story of someone they know.

To encourage creativity, submissions could be expressed in any

medium. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say this was a colossal success.

I'd like to acknowledge the innovation and hard work of the staff from the Department of Industry and Resources for enabling youth to speak out and making this event so successful — well over 500 entries from over 40 communities, ranging from Web sites, essays, photos, sculptures, electronic presentations depicting a wide range of current activities and career aspirations that foreshadowed a vibrant future in Saskatchewan.

Nineteen-year-old Courtney Keith of Regina said:

We cannot let ourselves sink into the idea that Saskatchewan is inferior. It isn't. It is possible for us to succeed in life because of the valuable skills and opportunities that are found only in Saskatchewan.

Or the eloquent words of Dakota McFadzean, an Aboriginal youth:

True there aren't many hills here, yet snowballs of prosperity roll and grow at a rapid rate in Saskatchewan

Mr. Speaker, this confirms and reinforces what this government already knows. Saskatchewan has many exciting, innovative, entrepreneurial, and captivating young people. I say young people are our most valuable resource and their optimism our most important industry. Only in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Employment Standards for the Hog Industry

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. On Monday night the minister stood in this Assembly during estimates for his department and said that there is a consultation process underway in the province to discuss the employment standards for the hog industry. He said and I quote:

... you can rest assured that there will be more meetings because it's that consultation process that we had asked Mr. Halpenny to undertake with the industry and labour.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday Sask Pork, the industry organization representing the pork producers of our province, issued a press release saying that there is no consultation process taking place. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is the NDP (New Democratic Party) government consulting with the hog producers of our province or not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's consultation process on this issue has been very comprehensive and inclusive. For over a year, numerous discussions, both informal and formal, have taken place with industry representatives. And our main objective during this process — and it continues to be our objective — is to ensure

that those who will be impacted by these regulations and changes have an opportunity to provide input into how the process will proceed.

This government hired a consultant that began formal consultations in January of this year for the purpose of engaging the parties that are involved. And during that period, Mr. Halpenny either met or interviewed over 80 people, Mr. Speaker.

Following general consultations, there was a selected group of industry and employee representatives brought together. And this process has gone on beyond that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from that member's answer we have to wonder, inclusive of who? Because we're hearing from the Sask Pork that it's certainly not inclusive of the hog producers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, Sask Pork's press release is quite clear. Joan Steckhan of Sask Pork says, and I quote:

Unfortunately on May 1, after only one meeting, the minister's consultant cancelled the consultation process mentioned by Minister Serby. He told our representatives that there would be no further meetings. From the point of view of the producers, there is no consultation process taking place.

Obviously, Sask Pork is under the impression the minister has cancelled the planned consultations and the industry has now been shut out of any involvement in the department . . . in the development of employment standards for their very own industry.

Mr. Speaker, why has the minister cancelled consultations with the industry? And why did he stand in this House Monday night and say that the meetings were still taking place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, after the initial round of general consultations, a more intense round . . .

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, after the first general round of consultations, a more intensive consultation progress . . . or process was initiated that involved a meeting with industry and employee representatives on April 25. And at that time, representatives from Sask Pork requested that staff be involved from the Department of Labour to answer more specific questions dealing with labour standards and how they would apply to their industry. And at that time, after an extensive meeting, it was requested that both parties and each side of the discussions, employee representatives and representatives from Sask Pork, would supply a written submission on the meetings, which they have, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the minister is calling one meeting a general round of consultations.

Mr. Speaker, Joan Steckhan of Sask Pork says, and I quote:

Our industry has repeatedly asked the Minister of Agriculture for meaningful consultation on this issue. If the Minister of Agriculture could get a real consultation process started, producers would be very happy.

Mr. Speaker, there is definitely a problem if the NDP government is going ahead with the development of employment standards for hog producers without the industry's input. Sask Pork is obviously upset with the minister's statements that there are meetings underway between the industry, labour, and government when, in fact, there has only been one meeting and the industry has been told that there will be no more.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP going ahead with the development of the industry employment standards without the input of the pork producers of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — . . . Mr. Speaker, we'll begin at the beginning. Since January of this year, a general round of consultations was done where over 80 people were interviewed and met with over this process. Since then, there was a more specific consultation process and meetings that were held April 21 and May 1, and at that time written submissions and the comments of the interested parties was asked to be submitted to the Department of Labour, which has happened.

And, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't include the meetings with the Minister of Agriculture and myself that we attended with Sask Pork, which happened on three different occasions, and discussions that were held with ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskEnergy Natural Gas Network

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of SaskEnergy. In 1998, SaskEnergy began a pilot project called the SaskEnergy Network, which contractors joined by paying a \$1,000 membership fee to SaskEnergy. But many licensed gas contractors and plumbers in the heating trade believe this program is discriminatory.

Claude and Valerie Rousseau own C R Plumbing in Coronach. They say, and I quote:

Why are licensed gas fitters suddenly forced to compete with the government to do the very work that this same government has lawfully required us to be licensed to do?

We pay gas bonds and gas license renewals each year to be qualified. But now, we're not even recognized. Only certain contractors who pay the SaskEnergy network fee

are recognized as qualified.

Mr. Speaker, why is SaskEnergy carrying out a program that discriminates against legally licensed gas contractors in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. It's a question we get asked every once in a while about SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, there's no private sector company that's forced to join this association at all. It's an association that was formed in co-operation, Mr. Speaker, with SaskEnergy and with mechanical contractors. There is, I believe, in excess of 120 private sector businesses who have now partnered with SaskEnergy to access programs such as the low interest rate loan program, Mr. Speaker, that has . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of benefits such as a low interest rate loan program that I know many of the partnership dealers, the associate dealers, find very beneficial. It also affords them the opportunity to raise the profile of their business, not only in their own community but right across the province, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that if there are concerns, I know the association itself, many of the private sector dealers would be happy to address the concerns of other private sector dealers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, this is just another slap in the face to small businesses in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Rousseau's say they have lost work because they have not joined the network because SaskEnergy will not tell people they are qualified to do the work. People in their community have told them that when they call into SaskEnergy for information, they were given the name and number of the closest network member. But SaskEnergy didn't even mention that there was a local licensed gas fitter in their community.

Mrs. Rousseau says, and I quote:

We found ourselves explaining to customers why we weren't on SaskEnergy's list and that we . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Would the member repeat the question again so we could all hear it. I ask for order so that we can actually hear the question.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I'll go to Mrs. Rousseau's quote:

We found ourselves explaining to customers why we weren't on SaskEnergy's list and that we were qualified to

do service work and installations on natural gas appliances.

Mr. Speaker, gas fitters in the province say SaskEnergy, as a publicly owned utility operated by taxes and utility rates paid by Saskatchewan utilities, should work for all people of the province.

Why is SaskEnergy not promoting the businesses of all licensed gas fitters in the province and only promoting those who pay this exorbitant fee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well first of all let me be clear — this is not an association that was forced on anybody. This was in consultation with private sector, Mr. Speaker.

The mechanical contractors, Mr. Speaker, the Mechanical Contractors Association of Saskatchewan, the Natural Gas Appliance and Equipment Dealers Association partnered together with SaskEnergy, Mr. Speaker, to form this association. They came along and talked to SaskEnergy to form this association so they could profile their businesses, Mr. Speaker.

And I quote here. It says:

“The Network provides us with a number of business growth opportunities such as joint advertising, business leads, up-to-date information and more,” said Arnie Shaw of Centennial Plumbing & Heating in Saskatoon.

And listen carefully. I quote again:

“Independent businesses like mine are excited about working with SaskEnergy and the rest of the industry to better serve our customers (Mr. Speaker).”

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, this is just clearly another example of the NDP government wanting to pick winners and losers.

Mr. Speaker, several contractors have contacted our offices with concerns about the SaskEnergy Network. Academy Plumbing & Heating in Regina says, and I quote:

It is unfair and unethical for our government utility to discriminate against contractors who are legally performing in SaskEnergy’s gas trade.

Skip’s Plumbing & Heating in Watrous also contacted us and says there’s no SaskEnergy Network in Watson, but all of his customers are being sent by SaskEnergy to Yorkton, Humboldt, or Lanigan because that’s where the qualified SaskEnergy Network members are.

He says, he says:

It’s another situation where the NDP government is hurting small businesses and hurting rural Saskatchewan

businesses.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP and SaskEnergy insist on picking winners and losers? Why doesn’t SaskEnergy allow all licensed contractors in the province to access the services it only promotes through the network?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the member may not understand the process but I do not understand why he would be opposed to the private sector wanting to form an association, Mr. Speaker. The private sector wants to form an association. The reason . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. I’d ask the member for Saltcoats to come to order please.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the private sector has formed an association with SaskEnergy. They came to SaskEnergy looking for tools to better market their business, Mr. Speaker, and create new business opportunities. I don’t see why they would have any opposition to that, Mr. Speaker.

It’s not a closed shop, Mr. Speaker. If any member of the private sector wants to join that network they are free to do that, Mr. Speaker, and I would encourage them to do that.

Many of the people who have joined this association have found many benefits, Mr. Speaker. They’ve been able to raise the profile of their industry and of their business, Mr. Speaker, and take advantage of new opportunities. It’s a new marketing tool, Mr. Speaker, that affords their businesses many, many new opportunities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Environmental Concerns at Last Mountain Lake

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, the people who live around Last Mountain Lake now have a new problem. Last week they found out the NDP was allowing Regina sewage water to be pumped into their lake. This week they’re noticing an unusually high number of dead jackfish washing up on the shore.

Area residents are saying that they never seen so many dead fish in the spring, and it’s particularly unusual to see so many large fish washing up dead.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the government taking to determine why so many fish are dying, and is there any connection between the dead fish and the discharge of sewage water into Last Mountain Lake last winter?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again I’ve asked that member time and time again to not play politics with the whole challenge of safe water quality in this province of Saskatchewan.

They have been very effective, Mr. Speaker, in spreading doom and gloom throughout all Saskatchewan cities and towns and villages telling people, oh the sky is falling, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — A little order, please. A little order.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, early results of some of the pike that were found in this lake indicate that there's a lack of oxygen — that's the direct result of this death. We are now sending those fish out to get — preliminary findings suggest lack of oxygen — we're now sending those fish out for more comprehensive tests to find out, Mr. Speaker, exactly what happened, to be sure.

But I'll say one more thing, Mr. Speaker. There's another species over there that is suffering from lack of oxygen, Mr. Speaker, and I would say it's that opposition and their silly political games when it comes to safe water for the people of Saskatchewan and the challenges associated with it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about the safe water in this province and that's why we're asking these questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, Environment officials are admitting that there may be some sort of disease in the northern pike population, but they say they won't know for sure for at least a couple of months. This is a big problem for the people who like to fish on Last Mountain Lake. What are they supposed to do in the meantime? If the fish in the lake have some sort of disease, are they safe to eat?

How soon will the Environment department know what is killing the fish, and should the people be eating the fish caught in Last Mountain Lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the preliminary tests show that we are clearly looking at this as a lack of oxygen. This is one particular species of fish, Mr. Speaker, and it's a larger part of the fish population, Mr. Speaker. And I would point out that, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would point out that anybody out there to use prudence when you look at fish. If you feel that a fish is diseased, then obviously you don't eat it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously some of the charges when we talk about making sure that the test results are there, to making sure that safe water is there, Mr. Speaker, and to make sure that we test all the systems throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, preliminary tests show that this is clearly a lack of oxygen in some of these fish. We're

extending those test results out, and prudence will dictate to anybody that if a fish appears diseased, then please don't eat it. But in the meantime let us not speculate, let us not fearmonger, Mr. Speaker. Let us deal with facts — what that member should do from day one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, the last minister assured the people that the fish were safe to eat in that lake.

The biggest concern here, Mr. Speaker, is the government may not be telling the people of Last Mountain Lake anything until these concerns wind up on the news. The NDP didn't tell anyone they were discharging sewage water into Last Mountain Lake until it was on the news, the NDP didn't tell anyone about the high bacteria count of some water samples until it was on the news, and now the NDP didn't tell anyone they were testing dead fish for disease until it got on the news.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP withholding so much information from the people around Last Mountain Lake? And don't these people have the right to know what's going on in their lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I'll say, shame on that member, Mr. Speaker. Every town and every village and every city on the South Saskatchewan River, on the North Saskatchewan River, I want that member to walk down that riverbed and tell everybody, oh don't drink the water, don't eat the fish because this is bad; we're getting pollutants from further upstream.

I want that member to do that, Mr. Speaker. And if that member is not prepared to do that, then that member should sit down and stop playing politics with the water quality issue that's very important to the people of Saskatchewan and to this government, Mr. Speaker.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if you find a fish that's floating in the water, I would suggest that you don't eat it. I would suggest that perhaps you'd catch the fish and if the fish seems healthy to you, then you can eat that fish, Mr. Speaker. But in the meantime . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. During his remarks, the minister of Sask Water forgot that the decorum in this Assembly insists that he should make all his remarks through the Chair.

Ethanol Industry

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it looks like the NDP government, through CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), is very close to signing a deal with Broe industries of Denver, Colorado with respect to the ethanol industry in the province. And if they do that, it also looks very apparent that they're prepared to give exclusive production rights to Broe in terms of this industry.

The NDP is also apparently prepared, at least negotiating, to pump millions of taxpayers' dollars into the Broe proposal. Mr. Speaker, this is a little bit strange given the fact that Broe industries has never produced a litre of ethanol anywhere in the world, notwithstanding their other activities that they might be very proficient at.

Mr. Speaker, there are many companies with a solid track record in ethanol production, yet the NDP appears to be hitching its wagon and millions of taxpayers' dollars to a company with no track record in ethanol production. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why would the NDP want to sign an exclusive deal with a company that has no history in the ethanol industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Perhaps what the member opposite should understand is that what we are looking for is a way to match up investors, proponents, communities, and those who know how to build an ethanol industry together.

Broe, through OmniTRAX is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Broe Companies are potentially good investors in this. They're interested in bringing their investments to Saskatchewan.

Now what I'm interested in is in the party opposite and their Grow Saskatchewan platform says they are welcoming investment. Is there attached to their platform a list of people who need not apply? And I would appreciate knowing that.

If people want to come and invest in Saskatchewan communities, we're going to welcome that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this particular company may not have any direct experience in ethanol but they have one thing going for them, Mr. Speaker. They are hooked up apparently with Garry Aldridge and Reg Gross of Points West Consulting, Mr. Speaker.

You remember Points West, Mr. Speaker? That's the firm that the NDP . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — That's the firm that the NDP used when the NDP government decided to use its NDP friends to survey NDP ministers about NDP Crown corporation policy, Mr. Speaker. Now instead of paying that particular firm for that sort of service, now apparently Points West is getting paid to consult with the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, what involvement do Reg Gross and Garry Aldridge have in brokering this deal between Broe and CIC? And how much money do they stand to make if they can convince CIC to give Broe industry millions of taxpayers'

dollars?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we have learned on this side is that we always need to go back to check the facts on what these members are talking about.

Let's be very clear about this. If Broe is interested in hiring a Saskatchewan consultant, they should do so. Let's understand also who exactly Points West is. Well it turns out that as we look at this letterhead from that company, lo and behold, who is listed as one of the principals of it? Verna Thompson.

Now in case the members opposite have forgotten who Ms. Thomson is, I understand that this is the same individual that ran and lost for the Sask Party nomination in Kindersley.

Now I can imagine, and I want to tell the members of this House that this New Democratic Party welcomes everybody on to our side. And if Ms. Thomson has had such a terrible time in the Sask Party, she is welcome not only to join Points West, she can join the NDP directly right here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member . . . Order. Order. Why is the member for Canora-Pelly on his feet?

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, with leave on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee to request time to propose a motion regarding the appointment of the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Appointment of Provincial Auditor

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee has been very busy over the last number of months going through a process to secure a Provincial Auditor for the province of Saskatchewan.

And I would like to share with the members of the Legislative Assembly and the many guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, the process that was followed so that people in the province of Saskatchewan, as well, would understand this new approach taken by the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the report that was tabled earlier on this afternoon highlighted four sections that deal with the process that was followed over the last number of months and I would like to share a bit of that report.

First of all, we must recognize that a number of people assisted in . . . assisted the committee in carrying out this responsibility. The responsibility of carrying out a competition to fill the position of Provincial Auditor was a novel one for your committee. In approaching this task, your committee sought the assistance of two individuals with recognized expertise.

Your committee wishes to extend its appreciation to Clare

Isman, executive director, human resource development, Public Service Commission; and to G.N. Arnie Arnott, vice-president, finance administration, Saskatchewan Blue Cross for their valuable insight and effort while serving on the selection committee.

(14:30)

The committee expresses its appreciation to the Office of the Clerk for administrative support and procedural advice, to the *Hansard* branch for preparing the verbatim record, and to the other branches of the Assembly that contributed their own expertise that enabled the proceedings to operate smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, under terms of reference, I would like to share the following. The position of Provincial Auditor has been vacant since March, 2000 when the incumbent, Wayne Strelloff, accepted the position of Auditor General of British Columbia.

During the 2001 spring legislative session, amendments were adopted to The Provincial Auditor Act that enhanced the independence of the Provincial Auditor by providing for an independent selection and appointment process. Under the new provisions, the task of developing a process for the selection of a new Provincial Auditor and overseeing the competition was delegated to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Act specifies that it is the Standing Committee on Public Accounts who is charged with unanimously recommending an individual to the Legislative Assembly which then makes the appointment by resolution.

In approaching this task last fall, your committee sought input from the Office of the Provincial Auditor and the Office of the Provincial Comptroller. In addition, the guidelines previously agreed to by the committee in its first report of May, 2001 were reviewed. It was decided that the selection process outlined in this report would be followed.

That selection process took place as follows. The first step undertaken by your committee in developing a fair and open competition was to seek the assistance of individuals experienced in the selection of senior public sector executives and in the accounting field. It was agreed that a three-person selection committee would be appointed and consist of a person designated by the Office of the Clerk, a senior staffing officer from the Public Service Commission, and an independent individual who is a member in good standing with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan, who holds a senior position within the private sector, the academic field, or the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan, and who is not engaged in public practice.

Names for each of these positions were solicited from the Office of the Clerk, the Public Service Commission, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan respectively. After deliberating on the nominations, Clerk Assistant Margaret Woods, Clare Isman, executive director of human resource development with the Public Service Commission, and Arnie Arnott, vice-president of finance administration with Saskatchewan Blue Cross were chosen to fill these positions.

The selection committee was immediately tasked with drafting

a recruitment process for the committee's consideration. They were also charged with the responsibility to draft an advertisement, position profile, and selection criteria.

In considering the most effective approach in reaching the intended audience, the committee chose to place the advertisement in the two provincial dailies and in one national newspaper. In addition, the advertisement was distributed electronically and through professional mail-outs to the provincial chartered accountant Web site.

A total of 17 resumes were received. Three Saskatchewan residents applied, ten from elsewhere in Canada, and there were four international applicants. The selection committee approved a preliminary short list of three candidates. A standard set of questions touching upon each of the competencies enumerated in the position profile was asked of each candidate to ensure consistency and fairness.

These candidates were interviewed on April 12, 2002. Based upon the responses received, the short list was reduced to two candidates. The selection committee unanimously agreed to forward those two names for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

A second interview was scheduled with the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on April 30, 2002. A second set of questions was developed for this interview. By prior agreement the members of the selection committee were designated to pose the questions while the members of the Public Accounts Committee observed and sought clarification from the candidates.

A final meeting took place on May 1, 2002, to deliberate on the committee's recommendation. A unanimous decision was reached. Mr. Speaker, after carefully reviewing the qualifications of each candidate and the results of the interviews, our committee unanimously makes the following recommendation.

I move, seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the member of Regina Northwest, that:

Pursuant to s.3.1(1) of The Provincial Auditor Act, this Assembly appoints G. Fred Wendel, of the city of Regina, in the Province of Saskatchewan, to the position of Provincial Auditor for Saskatchewan.

I so move.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion, and like all members, certainly welcome the appointment of Fred Wendel to be the Provincial Auditor. He's a person that I personally have worked with in many capacities over the years and I think the committee has made a very good choice.

I also want to thank the committee members for their very considerable work that they have done outside of the normal work that the committee undertakes for their activity in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to take a few moments to comment on the fact that this is such a very, very different selection process from the last time a Provincial Auditor was appointed in 1990, and when I served as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and when Mr. Grant Devine was the Premier of Saskatchewan.

The legislation respecting the appointment of the Provincial Auditor then, in 1990, said:

After (after) consultation with the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Public Accounts, the Lieutenant Governor in Council (that is the cabinet, the government) shall appoint a person as a Provincial Auditor for Saskatchewan.

The dictionary, Mr. Speaker, defines consultation as meaning to confer. Consultation in 1990 meant I received a letter from the minister of Finance, Mr. Hepworth, saying that a process was in place, about which the Public Accounts Committee members nor myself were consulted, to carry out the selection of a Provincial Auditor.

This process in 1990 involved the appointment of a search committee about which the Public Accounts Committee members nor myself were consulted.

That committee in 1990 made a recommendation to the government, and then the government said to me as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, we want you to support, we want you to support this recommendation before we recommend our choice to the Legislative Assembly. So consultation in 1990, in fact, meant to inform after the fact, Mr. Speaker.

Now of course the Public Accounts Committee, the MLAs, and not the government sets out the process. The Public Accounts Committee, the MLAs, and not the government appoint a selection committee to assist them.

Finally the recommendation to the Legislative Assembly to appoint a Provincial Auditor requires the unanimous support of the members of the Public Accounts Committee and not just a majority who are government members or the government for that matter, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it is my opinion these changes provide for greater integrity in the appointment of a public official whose job it is to hold the government accountable. These changes will serve the public well. I applaud these changes and I applaud the government for having the courage to make these changes and to promote accountability, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Is the . . . once again I ask the question. Order, please. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Motion agreed to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — As members . . . Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. As members have expressed already by their applause . . . Order, please members.

As members have already expressed by their applause, I would, at this time on behalf of all of the members of the Assembly, like to extend our congratulations to Mr. Fred Wendel on being appointed Provincial Auditor.

I wish him patience, perseverance, and best wishes as he undertakes a very difficult and important role he has committed to on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I would like to advise the members that Mr. Fred Wendel is here with his family and I would ask that at this time he rise and be recognized.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to you and through you to introduce a couple of guests in your gallery.

From the Weyerhaeuser company we have Mr. Steve Smith who I believe is the manager. And next to Mr. Smith is Mr. Roznowski, I believe, if I said the name correct. And on behalf of the government I welcome these two very important guests to our gallery today and hope they stay and watch the banter going back and forth. It's a very informative opportunity and I'd like to again welcome them here to the Assembly today. Thanks.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Carrot River Valley on his feet?

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — . . . leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member in welcoming Wayne Roznowski and Steve Smith to the Assembly.

I would advise all members however though don't be fooled by the addition of the facial hair. It really is Steve Smith under that beard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask leave to comment on the guests that were here and facial hair.

The Speaker: — No.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — . . . Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The Speaker can only entertain one leave at a time but I'll ask for your latter, that is does the member have leave to introduce guests?

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome the people from Weyerhaeuser here today. The reason that they're here in Regina today is something that we should all celebrate. Weyerhaeuser gave \$500,000 to the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College this morning and we all want to thank them for their contribution to the future of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions 193 through 200 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 193 to 200 have been tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to outline for all members of the Assembly the substance and purpose of this new Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association has a long and proud history in our province. The association was first incorporated under a provincial statute in 1938. Next year the association will be celebrating the 65th anniversary of its status as a self-regulating professional association with its own specific legislation.

The Act as it currently exists has not been changed since 1979 and includes many provisions that go back much earlier than that, Mr. Speaker. Needless to say, over the years there has been many changes in the profession and in their association as well as the broader concepts and principles for the regulation of professional groups.

The time has come, Mr. Speaker, then, for a thorough revision and updating of this statute to reflect the evolution of the music teaching profession in our province and to incorporate the

appropriate contemporary provisions for professional legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there are two essential components or aspects of a professional statute. The first is those elements that deal with the public interest — what we might call consumer protection. These provisions are needed so that members of the public can have confidence in the qualifications, competence, and professional standards of the individuals from whom they are acquiring services.

The second element of a professional statute, Mr. Speaker, deals with the internal affairs of the professional association. These are matters that enable the members of the profession to advance their personal and collective interests and to manage their own affairs effectively.

Mr. Speaker, the new Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002 incorporates major revisions that address both of these components and I will highlight the key provisions.

Where possible, administrative detail that is included in the existing Act is being removed from the statute and now will be included in bylaws passed by their association. By way of example, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the current Act specifies that the executive of the association must be composed of seven members. There is no reason why the association should not be able to determine for itself, by bylaw, the size and composition of its own executive.

The new Act divides the association's bylaw-making authority into two parts and defines the specific matters that fall under each part, Mr. Speaker. Administrative bylaws; those that deal only with the profession's internal affairs can be made by the association without any prior approval. Now policy or regulatory bylaws, on the other hand, must be approved by the Minister of Learning before they can take effect.

This approach to bylaws is consistent with the approach now being used in all of our professions legislation and reflects the dual elements of public interests and professional interests that I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker.

Now a third major challenge is the addition of a public representative to serve as a member of the association's executive and also of its disciplinary committee. Again, the appointment of such public representatives is now standard policy for our professions legislation.

Now I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the public representative is appointed to bring an informed layperson's perspective to the consideration of professional issues. The individual is not a representative of the government or the minister and does not report directly to the minister on association business.

The current Act, Mr. Speaker, gives the senate of the University of Saskatchewan a substantial role in the registration process for music teachers. The university has agreed that it is no longer necessary or appropriate to play this role and that the association should handle this matter as an independent regulatory body for the profession.

Mr. Speaker, one area in which the new Act is substantially longer and more detailed than the current statute is the structures and procedures for dealing with discipline of members. At the start of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I said that one of the main objectives of a professional statute is to enable the public to have confidence in the competence and professional standards of the individuals providing these professional services.

Mr. Speaker, in order for a statute to serve this purpose effectively it is essential that the professional association have the capacity to deal with its members in terms of professional competence and professional conduct. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the rights of individual members be protected through procedures that are fair, consistent, and transparent. In other words, Mr. Speaker, there must be due process.

Over the years the concept of due process has steadily evolved, Mr. Speaker, and the required elements have changed as a result of decisions by the courts, by arbiters, and others. The provisions that are incorporated into this new Registered Music Teachers Act reflect the elements that are considered necessary by the Department of Justice, and that are being incorporated in all new and amended professional legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that many members of this Assembly will remember a music teacher from their own earlier years, or perhaps a music teacher with whom their children have been associated. We know the valuable contribution that a musical education can play in enriching our personal lives and in enhancing the cultural richness of our society as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

For many decades now the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association has promoted improvements in the teaching of music, has fostered public interest in music, and has supported the recognition of music as an integral component of our province's education system.

In order for the association to continue playing these many important roles effectively, it requires legislation that reflects the needs and interests of its members, as well as the interests of the public who wish to benefit from their services.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill we are discussing today has been developed in close consultation with the association and has its full support.

I am therefore pleased to move that Bill No. 46, The Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002 be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to address The Registered Music Teachers Act that was discussed by the Minister of Learning.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that music is a language that crosses all boundaries of culture and even political philosophies. I've spoken to some of the members of the Registered Music Teachers' Association who are excited about this new Act, and

I understand that there is a lot of work involved in putting together this legislation.

I have also spoken to registered music teachers in my constituency who feel confident that their association is working well for their members.

The importance of music to our lives should never be underestimated. At the happiest times of our lives, the moments are usually underscored by music. And often at the other end of the scale, music helps us through some of the dark moments.

The work and dedication of the registered music teachers is probably not often thought of by parents and students as they go through the hours of practice. But I do know that the Act itself today is looking at a lot of different aspects involved in the actual working of the profession. There is a long history involved and I was very pleased to understand that it's self-regulating.

The concept of public interest and internal affairs, I am pleased that there's a . . . independent consultant doesn't have to report back to the government, and that the professional status is understated . . . is underscored, and the importance of being able to do the work themselves. The disciplinary process is something that all of the members must have worked through and I'm pleased that there's been a lot of thought in the process. The process involved in passing this piece of legislation is the same that is used in ensuring all legislation in this province receives due diligence.

The Bill will go into adjourned debates today to ensure that the voice of any person or organization will have adequate time to have their ideas or concerns brought forward. And, Mr. Speaker, at this time, we have no reason to believe there will be any objections or concerns with the Bill and any questions can be discussed in Committee of the Whole.

But I congratulate the members of the Registered Music Teachers' Association for their work and diligence in ensuring this new Act will ensure that not only the association but all music teachers and all music students in the province will have the best opportunities to do what they do best and to do what they love, involve themselves and surround themselves with music.

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

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'm pleased to have with me Glenda Yeates who is the deputy minister of Health, right to my

left. And then to her left, I have Dan Florizone who is the assistant deputy minister. Behind Glenda is Lawrence Krahn, assistant deputy minister. And right behind me is Barb Shea who is the executive director of the drug plan and extended benefits. And to my right I have Duncan Fisher, assistant deputy minister. And behind him I have Rod Wiley, who is the executive director of finance and management services. Thank you.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and good afternoon to the officials. Unfortunately we cannot join in this next hour of the tea honouring the Provincial Auditor, but life goes on and work goes on, so we're going to have to do it.

I also want to say to Duncan that I appreciated his comments in Nipawin yesterday. But when I left I thought you'd leave the fire alone, and unfortunately they had some real difficulties.

It was interesting when you're in the community and it was the emergency medical association's convention. And driving into the community there was smoke everywhere at the loss of the feed facility there. And I know the whole community was very, very concerned about it. But it was sort of reassuring to come to a parking lot where there were 10 or 12 ambulances and lots of the EMT (emergency medical technician) and technicians across the province with their convention. So it'd give you at least a secure feeling.

Minister, today we begin further detailed examination of the Health budget. And I want to focus our attention today on the subsection on drug plan and extended benefits for the next hour or so and deal with those issues.

And so, Minister, to start this again, as has been our practice in the past, we're not only enlightening ourselves and each other and the members of the Assembly. This is also, I think, a very important process for people in the wider public domain who have an opportunity to watch what's going on either through the live transmission of the broadcast but also in *Hansard*. And I think we have an obligation to inform the public in general as well.

And so, Minister, to start off I'd like to ask you to give an overview of this department and this subsection and outline the objectives of this department.

(15:00)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. Yes, I'd be very pleased to provide some information about the drug plan and the extended benefits portion of the Health budget.

This particular area of money — and this year the amount will be just over \$120 million . . . well I guess actually it'll be \$167 million . . . \$120 million, which is the prescription drug plan — provides subsidies for approved prescription drugs where costs exceed certain levels.

There's also a special support for low-income people and people with special needs. There's supplementary health benefits for low-income residents. And as well there are funding for independent living aids including oxygen, prosthetic services, and other devices. Included in here also are

some of the assistance that we provide for people who are infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) through the Canadian blood system.

And so it includes therefore Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living, coverage for palliative care, the supplementary health plan, the support . . . special support for residents, as well as the family health benefits program, and that includes adults under that plan plus seniors who get some assistance.

So it has all of those aspects and so I think we can be happy to entertain questions into these various areas.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I have in my hand the annual report for 2000-2001 that you can download off the Web site on the drug plan and extended benefits branch. And I'll try to give you an idea where I am in that. Perhaps you have a copy at your disposal as well.

Looking at page 21 of that report, it talks about the standing offer contract for generic drugs specifically or generally under the . . . from generic drug manufacturers. And it outlines in a chart from '96 up to 2001 the estimated cost saving by tendering this standing offer process to save prescription drug costs.

The way I understand the process works, generic drug companies are asked, or sent a request for bidding, if you like, on a number of generic drugs. That if they submit the lowest bid price for that generic drug, then that drug is the one recognized and supported in the *Formulary* for dispensing across the province. And because this bidding process has resulted in savings that are outlined on page 21, there has been some significant savings to the drug plan and in turn savings to people who actually have these drugs prescribed and use them.

Minister, is that the general way the program works and is the savings . . . I would like . . . I guess where I'm going is I'd like an update about the current process. I understand that the current standing offer contract proposal closed on March 31 and I'm wondering where we stand currently.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The same process is being used again this year and they're in that process right now, doing the, I guess, discussion and consultation around how it's going to work out. But the process is the same this year.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Minister, can you outline . . . have there been a similar number of generic drug companies bidding for the standing offer or has there been a noticeable decrease in the number of generic drug companies that proposed bids for this year ending March 31?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The indications are that we will be receiving a similar number of bids to what we've had last year.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Have there been some indication or noticeable price pressures on the generic pool, if you like, of drugs? I understand that there had been some noticeable price increases January 1 of this year. And does it look like that's also being reflected in the standing offer?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think you have it right, that there have

been some increases January 1 and that puts pressure on the whole process. But I think outside of our particular process which we are using this year, there's a national situation that is developing because Saskatchewan has pioneered this type of way of dealing with drug costs and some other jurisdictions have been interested in using it as well. Once that happens it has changed the position of Saskatchewan. And so we're a bit worried that the process may not even be there in the years to come to allow us to get some of the kinds of savings that we have now.

But right now, and in this year, the process seems to be working the way it did last year. But whether we can be assured that that will happen next year is something that it's hard to know right now.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. And I guess that's exactly the concern that I had been hearing and having expressed to me is that it looks like this program with a standing offer has significant savings in the whole drug plan.

And I'm wondering if, in your discussions with other Health ministers across the country — and I recognize that Saskatchewan has been rather unique in requesting that standing offer — is there . . . has there been discussions about looking forward from this point; that if indeed there is a diminished likelihood of the generic drug companies wanting to participate on this nature if it happens right across the country, have the Health ministers looked at alternatives — you know, maybe Prairie-wide purchasing or Canada-wide purchasing or any alternatives that may result in significant savings on the drugs to the *Formulary* and the drug plan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This is one of the topics that was a discussion in Newfoundland in September by all the Health ministers — and then again by the premiers in January in Vancouver — about how do we do things around drug purchasing on a national basis. And the direction from the premiers to all of the Health ministers was to come forward with some of the ideas that deal exactly with the question you raised for fall meetings or — of both premiers and Health ministers — to see what are some of the national, co-operative things that we can do that will provide benefits for the drug plans across the country.

Now the position we're taking from Saskatchewan is that no province should be any worse off going into this than they are now. And one of . . . because one of the challenges we have is that nobody else has been able to develop a program quite like this one with the savings for Saskatchewan people.

So we want to basically say, well whatever we do, we need to have some plan that maybe gives benefits to other places but it doesn't provide a detriment to those of us in Saskatchewan. And it includes things . . . you know, the discussions are around things like you talked about, group purchasing or some of the other methods of dealing with that.

Mr. Gantefer: — Has there been a discussion about a national standing offer contract type of a system so that if drug companies are going to be asked to make proposals on a nationwide, you'd think that would be a pretty attractive option for them to look at . . . or submitting a pretty aggressive tender,

if you like, right across the country. Rather than worrying about us losing a standing offer system, has there been some discussion that it might be extended right across the country?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer is clearly yes, there have been a lot of discussions around this. And there are challenges and one of the big challenges is whether the drug companies will actually participate in that kind of a system. And they've given strong hints that they won't.

At least their . . . And so one of the reasons that Saskatchewan may be disadvantaged is that because we're only a million people and we have a very defined market. They're willing to do . . . use this process here. But if it expanded prairie wide or nationwide, then all of a sudden they are not that interested in coming forward with this. Now we can't say that for sure. And it may be that tendering on a national basis might make a difference.

We also know that similar kinds of discussions are taking place in the United States so that I know a number of the states in New England, for example, are trying to figure out how for their state-paid-for patients, whether they could do something together. And they've looked at some of the models of some of the things that we're doing in Canada.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, I appreciate your comments. And perhaps a national vision is unworkable because of the magnitude of it for the reasons you listed.

Has there been some increased discussion between at least our neighbouring provinces, perhaps the four Western provinces, to look at if there could be on that limited basis maybe some leverage exerted in terms of making sure that we get the best bid prices as possible?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to that question is yes. And one of the advantages is for the drug plans in the west — BC (British Columbia), Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba — there are a lot of similarities in how they're organized so that the possibilities for co-operation are greater than if we do it nationally. And so this has been an item of discussion.

Mr. Gantefer: — The other component of an attempt to hold the costs as reasonable is the maximum allowance cost program where I believe not necessarily generic drug companies but brand drug companies as well are asked to submit a tender that would have a maximum cost for the period of the time that the drug is offered.

Again, is the closure for those kinds of proposals March 31 and has there been a similar pattern of tendering exhibited this year as in the past?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As it relates to this particular issue of maximum allowable cost, maybe I can give a little bit of an example to show how it works which then explains my answer.

Basically my answer is that there isn't any specific deadline or time. It's just an ongoing process. And what happens is, for example, there might be five drugs by five different companies that have the same effect and their effect, you know, practically interchangeable. Our system will basically pick the one that's

the lowest cost and then all of those ones will, if they wish to sell their drugs at that cost, they will provide them.

And so you don't know, for example, from month to month, whether a particular company wants to have its particular drug included in that plan or not. But practically, most of them are included.

(15:15)

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I would like to turn now briefly to the *Formulary* process. And as I understand it, there's essentially two standing type of committees that are advisory to the department in terms of how the *Formulary* process works.

The first committee is the Drug Quality Assessment Committee. And I, again, Minister, for the record, would like you to outline the job of the Drug Quality Assessment Committee.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The Drug Quality Assessment Committee is the committee of experts. So it's pharmacologists, clinical pharmacologists, physicians, and people like that who work on this particular committee. And they evaluate the submissions from the drug manufacturers around what kinds of drugs might be considered to be included into the *Formulary*.

And so they go over the clinical reports, the scientific reports, all of the published literature, and they evaluate and make a recommendation about whether the particular drug is interchangeable with another one that may be already on the *Formulary*. That's probably one of the more common applications. Or if it's a new drug or a special drug that is dealing with a particular problem and should now be included.

But this Drug Quality Assessment Committee is the very technical committee and is comprised of experts in analysis of the effectiveness of drugs.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Would it be fair to say that this committee would be the first committee that a drug company, for example, that has a new product that's been approved by Health Canada for use in Canada . . . this is the committee where a drug company then would make their submission for consideration of a product on the Saskatchewan *Formulary*?

And if it is, what's the timeline in terms of this process? What is . . . Has there been any statistics on the approval process? How timely are new drugs introduced to this committee? Whose responsibility is it to introduce them to the committee? And then what's the timeline for consideration and approval?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This process is exactly as you've described — the place where the manufacturers come forward, they submit their information to the drug plan, which then sends it immediately to the Drug Quality Assessment Committee.

I think in 1997 there was a review of the processes that were used across the country, and the Saskatchewan process came out quite well as it related to the brand name drugs across the country. They got in there, got reviewed, and were assessed you know pretty quickly. And maybe not at the top of the list, but

close to the top of the list as far as speed.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, you indicated that there was an evaluation of this committee as compared to committees in other jurisdictions. And it would strike me from your remarks and from my knowledge of how this process works, that there's a lot of similarity between jurisdictions, provincially anyway, in terms of this type of committee.

Has there again been discussions with our neighbours provincially, Western Canada, and even nationally, to have one process for the country that would go through this? Because it strikes me is that to do this repetitively 10 or 12 times across the country may be a bit of a waste of time and energy.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This was also clearly a point of discussion at the ministers' meeting in Newfoundland and at the premiers' meeting, in fact. And then the process has started around setting up a national system for assessment of drugs. And the criteria that would have to be agreed upon nationally are I think close to being firmed up.

What one of the visions would be is that all of the provinces have experts, and some of them maybe have a little more expertise in one area than another. And so initially the plan might be that when a new drug is brought forward, it might go to one province because they know a lot about some of the drugs that relate to arthritis, for example; another province it would go to some other area, because they have some of the experts in some other particular disease — and that we then would acknowledge or use the results right across the country.

And that's where we are right now. It looks like things are moving along very well to have effectively a national assessment process that would eliminate any kind of duplication or challenge. And so that's clearly the goal of, I think, all of the governments of Canada.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, would this . . . these committees that would then potentially have some recognized expertise, but then we still potentially would have 10 committees across the country. Has there been any thought of establishing a single national committee with a range of expertise that would make it competent to make these decisions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The goal is exactly what you've suggested — one place, a national system. But as we move towards that goal, what I described is sort of an interim step. Ultimately, you may have a national place and even then send it out to particular experts who might be located at various universities or other places across the country. But the goal is clearly to have one national system at the assessment level where all jurisdictions would buy into that.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. I understand that there's a little over 3,000 drugs in the *Formulary* plan and another 4,500 under the exceptional drug plan sort of thing in the *Formulary*. The second committee, the *Formulary* Committee is charged with making sure that those *Formulary* status stays up to date, as I understand it.

Are they a different group of experts or how does that committee function in relationship to the quality . . . drug

quality assessment committee?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The Formulary Committee is made up not of experts on drugs and their effectiveness or the quality, but more of the clinical people. So it's doctors and nurses and pharmacists and others who are using the particular drugs on a day-to-day basis or working with that.

And their job is to examine carefully the clinical effectiveness and the overall cost within the whole structure as well. So their job is to make sure that the most effective drugs are the ones that are included on the list.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, does this committee do its own research on the efficacy of drugs? Or do they rely on, I guess, what's still currently HSURC (Health Services Utilization and Research Commission) or CIHI (Canadian Institute of Health Information) information or other research papers in terms of looking at the effect of this, of individual therapies? Or do they do their own research or are they empowered to do their research. Or how do they . . . What methodology do they use to determine the actual efficacy of the drugs that are in the *Formulary*?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The Formulary Committee relies very heavily on the Drug Quality Assessment Committee for that kind of information about its actual use. But what they go and then look at are studies from other places. They probably would get information from HSURC or CIHI depending on what the issue was.

Sometimes if they have a particular concern, they contract with an organization which is a joint Canadian body called the Canadian Coordinating Office of Health Technology Assessment, or CCOHTA for short. And this particular agency is one that is a co-operative agency across the country.

So the same questions you were asking before about could we do these things together with provinces, I think the answer is yes. But once again, it's a next level and I know that Health ministers and premiers have talked about this. But it then gets into, well, what are the kind of resources that you have in your particular province about what kinds of things you actually include on your *Formulary* and pay for them.

And so, the Formulary Committee is trying to address the cost issues but also the drug quality issues.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I want to turn to the changes that have been implemented in the drug plan in terms of the, I guess, the special report or support program currently, or proposed to be in place.

Would you outline the way the current program works? And then later, we'll go over how the proposed program, as proposed in the budget, will work.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. And I'll try to lay it out in a way that is understandable.

The present program up . . . which is in existence right now will continue with the semi-annual deductible of \$850. In other words, there . . . for a total year, if you were . . . you would end

up with \$1,700 as a deductible. And this is generally based on the fact that the . . . with the people or families with income of \$50,000 or less, it covers about 3.4 per cent of their income.

There's going to be some change in that area. What's going to happen is that those people with incomes greater than \$50,000, instead of having a deductible of 1,700 — 850 times 2 — they will end up having a deductible based at 3.4 per cent of their income. So that if you earn \$100,000, then the figure would be 3.4 per cent of \$100,000 which is \$3,400. So it will be an increase for those people who earn more than \$50,000.

The items that will stay the same, there will be no change — and the change that I just talked about will take place on July 1, 2002 — the ones that there will be no change, the coverage for Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living; there's no change there.

There's no change for any palliative care clients. There's no change for supplementary health plan clients. There's no change for those residents that have a special support required for drug costs.

And also there'll be no change around the semi-annual deductibles for adults with the family health benefits program or for seniors receiving the guaranteed income supplement or the Saskatchewan Income Plan assistance.

So effectively the change relates to those people with incomes above \$50,000.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. As the plan works now, once you reach your \$850 deductible, are the drugs that you incur the costs of over and above that completely covered? Or do you then move to a copayment program and how does that work?

(15:30)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What happens is that the government pays 65 per cent and the individual pays 35 per cent.

Mr. Gantefoer: — So the 850 deductible just is where then near the copayment plan comes into effect. You use the example of a \$50,000 income family or whatever. And I recognize that there's a special form that's available through pharmacists that take in allowance, your gross income, or the family income, and then there's deductions for dependants and things of that nature to arrive at the actual family income that's used for calculation for these purposes.

You indicated that at a \$50,000 family at 3.4 per cent that would be \$1,700 a year. The current deductible program is essentially that over the year, but it's in two six-month periods.

How does the program work then? Do you go . . . say you had a \$300 a month, if you like, drug bill, once you reach that \$1,700 do you automatically kick into the copayment program for the rest of the year, or these are in six-month blocks?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Under the current plan it's two six-month blocks.

Mr. Gantefoer: — And under the new plan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The way the new system will work is that people can apply, because often they are on a chronic drug, say at \$300 a month. They can say, okay, well this is what I anticipate my drug costs for the year will be and they can then get the copayment to start right on the first of the month.

They don't have to wait until the first \$1,700 is paid or whatever amount that is, 3.4 per cent of the income. So there is a process that allows for the copayment to kick in immediately.

Mr. Gantefoer: — So then how will it be, if that circumstance is there where a family would have a \$50,000 income and theoretically a \$300-a-month recognized drug cost, they could apply under this plan to be into a copayment position day one? Then what happened to the \$1,700 deductible?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Effectively what would happen under your example, if for example the drug costs were \$300 a month, then you would basically take the \$1,700 deductible, divide it by 12, and get some figure just . . . between 140 and \$150, and the copayment would kick in for that other \$160 starting in the first part of the month.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Okay. So what I understand then, the family would be able to amortize the deductible over the 12 months and then divide that onto a monthly basis so they'd be into copayment only for the amount . . . one-twelfth of which that their annual amount.

Now the annual amount is an annual amount, and the relationship to the six-month system that's in place now no longer . . . or will no longer apply after July 1. Is that clear, for the record?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's correct. So starting July 1, 2002, it will be a one-year period that you will look at for your 3.4 per cent of your income for the calculation of the deductible.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, in terms of applying for this program, you use your previous year's income — line 150 or whatever from your Income Tax Act, I believe there is something of that nature.

Have you got statistics on how many people will be affected based on prior experience? Because people with the \$850 copayment structure every six months that exists now, would not necessarily make themselves known or identify themselves under this 3.4 per cent. So are there statistics that you've established in terms of your estimation about how many people would be affected by this change?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — For this year, for July 1, 2002, the information that would be used would be the information that was filed on the 2001 income tax return, which should have been filed a couple of weeks ago. So that's the answer to that.

Now as far as how many people will be affected, we think that about 11,000 people based . . . 11,000 families. So 11,000 calculated income. About 5,000 of these will be higher-income senior families and about 6,000 will be higher-income non-senior families.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, how much extra money is going to be expected from these individuals that they'll have to contribute to their drug costs? What's estimated in this budget for extra contributions from these groups?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's anticipated that there will be about \$3 million more per year contribution from higher-income families that are not seniors, and the higher-income seniors will pay about 2 million more.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Has there been or is there going to be prepared some information to make this very clear?

Certainly looking at the Web site and some of these informational sources that would be there — in the senior's case they may not be that conversant with the Internet — but the whole way the program is described is a little bit obtuse in terms of really understanding how this is going to work.

And I would encourage the department to review the way they are explaining this program because there is some confusion from people on the annual amount. And if it's a semi-annual, it's calculated annually but applied semi-annually, for example. There are those confusions because of the difference between the current plan and this proposed plan and the way it's applied.

So I would encourage the department to review the way they explain this on their various sources, because I know from some of the calls that I've had that it is not completely clear to people exactly how this works.

Mr. Minister, I would like to go into some of the other areas as time allows today and look at the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living program, and ask the minister to outline the general direction of that program.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. You've given me an opportunity to give you a bit of a history about the SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living) program, and I think the public would be interested in this as well.

The SAIL program, Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living, began April 1, 1975, providing eligible residents with prosthetic and orthotic devices. August 1 of that same year the benefits were expanded to providing equipment loans and equipment repairs for all residents of the province.

In April 1 of 1976 SAIL took over the responsibility for the paraplegia program, which covers the cost of appliances recommended by attending physicians, the cystic fibrosis program which provides drugs and special appliances for certain beneficiaries, and the chronic end stage renal disease program which provides assistance with the cost of necessary medications for certain beneficiaries.

In 1979 the ostomy and hemophilia programs were added. In '84 the coverage was expanded to include aids and services required by blind residents of the province. And in 1987 the responsibility for the acquisition, distribution, and repair of special needs equipment — that's wheelchairs and patient lifts — was transferred to SAIL from the Saskatchewan Abilities Council. Or no, it was transferred from SAIL to the

Saskatchewan Abilities Council but SAIL continued to fully fund the program there.

In August of '87, SAIL took over the home oxygen program from the drug plan, and basically in '87 also they transferred all of the responsibility for equipment required by the blind to CNIB, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, but SAIL continues to pay CNIB for these services.

And then in 1996 there were some changes to the home oxygen program which basically set out medical criteria for benefits under the plan.

So basically the program is set up to provide aids and services to physically disabled residents of Saskatchewan, and the types of programs or the components of the budget include things like orthopedic services, special needs equipment, home oxygen, respiratory equipment, paraplegia supplies, cystic fibrosis supplies, renal disease, ostomy, and aids to the blind.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, these programs . . . there has been a little over a million-dollar increase in the money allocated for this general program area, and I'm wondering how these services are delivered specifically and what are the lead times, the lag times in terms of people requesting some of these orthopedic devices and actually being treated and receiving these devices.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The services as I described are provided sometimes through other means. So sometimes some of them are delivered through the districts, some go through CNIB, some are dealt with by the Saskatchewan Abilities Council.

So I can try to answer some of your, you know, more specific questions around what you might be interested in. But it's . . . Basically this is where the budget is, and then things are dealt with through particular service organizations, and some of it includes the districts.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, in some of that service provision, are there . . . is there room for private practitioners or is it done pretty much through, you know, the institutions that we now have, like Wascana Rehab, for example?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Some of the services — for example, oxygen — are provided by four or five different private companies; some other things are done on a contract basis. For example, I think orthotics is done on a contract basis with Wascana hospital and with the Saskatchewan Abilities Council.

So I'm not sure if that's what you're asking about but it's . . . but there are different ways of doing it.

Mr. Gantefer: — The cost of medical oxygen is certainly an issue for a lot of people. Can you explain how that program works and is there some contracting to try to determine from these individual providers of the service to make sure that there is a cost-competitiveness and cost-effectiveness?

(15:45)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically you've asked: how does this program work? So how much does an ordinary person pay for

oxygen. Well the basic package, an oxygen concentrator and 10 cylinders a month, is free. Okay basically that's paid for by the program.

The client pays on top of that for some disposable supplies of about \$10 per month, and it's estimated that the additional electric bill for the pump each month is about \$25.

If a client chooses to upgrade, primarily related to mobility so you could get a smaller oxygen cylinder and some method of carrying it, then the typical charge seems to be about \$65 a month to do an upgrade that a person might be. The exact extra costs that are there aren't . . . we don't know that exactly because different companies do have competitive prices around that kind of an upgrade. So I think that's maybe what you're asking.

Mr. Gantefer: — So the department doesn't negotiate for the best prices on behalf of clients that have to pay some, or in the case of the primary example where up to 10 cylinders are provided, how are those prices arrived at? Is there a tendering process for companies — again, similar to the *Formulary*, submit prices so that there is the most cost-competitive? Or is it just out in the market?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There is a contracting process around the basic package, the one that SAIL covers fully. And that is a process where a maximum price is set, and if a company doesn't think they can operate at that price well then obviously they wouldn't supply the basic package.

But as far as the increased amounts over that, there is no negotiations centrally. And that's done on a total market basis.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, as well there are, like, supplementary health benefits and things of that nature that are available under the general category of the drug plan and extended benefits. Can you describe the qualifications for people to qualify for the supplementary health benefits plan.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — For the supplementary health program, these people are those who are nominated by Social Services, so they're people on social assistance or they may be wards of the province. So it's just those two categories that are included there.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. And the family health benefit as well is an income tested type of program. Can you indicate how that program . . . the criteria for that program?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, and in my last answer I forgot one other group that's included under the supplementary health beneficiaries and that's all inmates of provincial correctional institutions.

But as far as the family health benefits are concerned, these benefits go to families receiving benefits under the Family Income Plan, children covered under the child benefit program, and families approved under the family health benefit program.

And so I guess what it is, there's a dividing line of July or August 1998 and so there were some that were sort of brought in under the program, and then I think as the program changed

with the child benefit program, the criteria changed slightly. But practically, the family health benefits relate to people who are on the Family Income Plan or they're covered by the child benefit program.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In the time we have left, I'm not sure exactly where it relates, but on all of these plans, certainly one of the . . . there's a number of underlying or overriding issues in terms of prescription drugs and the drug plan.

There has been a lot of discussion in medical circles surrounding the whole issue of do people . . . First of all, are they prescribed the appropriate drugs that are appropriate to their condition, but that is a medical professionals' issue and there is a great deal of interaction between the drug representatives and company representatives with the family physicians, etc.

But then there's also a very hard to control issue about are people taking them appropriately and are making sure that this is being followed up. Has the department . . . and I'm not sure which of these plans or this whole issue surround it and that's why I've left it for the end. Is the department doing any work or is there any work being done across Canada to make sure that really the drugs are being used appropriately, that clients who are prescribed drugs make sure that they follow the entire regimen?

I know there's a great deal of concern with antibiotics, that people only take some of the antibiotics and you've got issues of immunity building up and all of these sorts of circumstances or the condition gets worse and then you come back and you need even more powerful, more expensive drugs.

Has there been any work done on how that we work with the system to make sure that people are indeed using the drugs that are prescribed to them appropriately?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There are a number of different areas where we are doing some things to try to address that problem around people continuing to use drugs appropriately. One of them is academic detailing, it's called. It's basically providing independent advice to physicians and pharmacists around the most appropriate use of drugs.

So that's on the side of making sure that prescriptions are the most effective, and it's being done not by a drug rep but by an independent person. And we're working together, actually, with some of the drug companies around that particular program.

Another area where this shows up is in our plan for the primary health care team which then includes this ability to continue monitoring this. There's quite an interesting example that I can give you which is taking place in Moose Jaw right now as sort of an initial project, which I think will explain how working together as a team — doctors and pharmacists and patients — can make sure that drugs are being used most effectively.

And what it relates to in Moose Jaw is the use of warfarin which is a blood thinner. And effectively what they're doing is the doctors are giving a prescription for warfarin, and it's a kind of drug where it needs to be monitored weekly to be most

effective.

And so what happens is the patients get their prescription from their druggist but they go into the hospital in Moose Jaw on a weekly basis, quickly have a blood test. The pharmacist at the hospital will take a look at the blood tests and adjust the dosage for the warfarin for that week based on what they see in the test. That information is sent to the pharmacy, to the druggist who's provided the drugs and to the family physician, and the patient basically is willing to be part of this program because instead of waiting at their doctor's office, then at the drug store, and probably at a lab in that whole situation, all they do is they go into the lab on a regular basis for a very quick test and everything else is done in behind them. They get the most effective level of Warfarin. And all of the professionals have a very good record of, in fact this patient is using the appropriate drug in the appropriate way. So that's an example of something that is done as well.

But this whole area is one that is also of concern by ministers of Health across the country. And we are looking at, well what are best practices? So that if somebody is doing something well in one part of the country we're going to make sure that we get that information across the country. So this Moose Jaw plan around the use of Warfarin will be one that we share with our colleagues across the country.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Minister. It certainly seems that, you know, we make modest progress on individual little fronts and yet while this is happening — and I'm not criticizing the fact that indeed progress is being made — the issue is sort of expanding exponentially and while we're making these baby steps, I mean, there's sort of a big boulder rolling down the hill at us and I'm afraid we're not going to get out of the way fast enough at the present pace of change.

Minister, I know, anecdotally, I'm sure you've had the experience as well where you talk to either pharmacists or you visit with seniors . . . And I remember in a very personal case with my mother at one time when I opened her medicine cabinet — she was there — and it looked like a pharmacy shelf.

And I wondered sometimes why that happens, and it seems to be sort of one of those gradual things that one thing leads to the next, and before you know it there could be very inappropriate prescriptions that are occurring, all occurring very innocently.

And I sometimes wonder if the pharmacists could speak to the doctors directly and there would be a better interdisciplinary communication process that this may eliminate some of these things that sort of creep into an individual's prescription regime.

When we look at primary health care teams and moving forward, is there work being done between the College of Medicine and the college of, or the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the college of pharmacists to look at protocols for, you know, looking at how the appropriateness of prescriptions can be flagged and make sure that these kinds of things don't sort of inadvertently creep into an individual situation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — You've identified a concern that's there

for many people. What I would point out is that one of the goals behind the primary care team model is to have pharmacists and doctors and nurses and others at the table to address exactly that kind of an issue.

The other thing is that the legislation that we brought forward this session around keeping track of the prescription drugs, one of the reasons that the pharmacists and the doctors are so keen on supporting this particular legislation is that we'll . . . it will give them the kind of information you're talking about in the actual record so that they can then end up having the conversations around, well, you know, how can we add that into the mix?

Because at the present time there are some situations where certain kinds of prescriptions aren't entered onto the total system. So I think that practically it's an area of concern. It's one that we all have to work at together, but by setting up a team management process we think that that will provide the opportunity even in . . . in an even better way than exists now to address this particular problem.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I move that the committee report progress on Health and move to estimates on the Department of Finance.

(16:00)

**General Revenue Fund
Finance
Vote 18**

Subvote (F101)

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me this afternoon to my immediate left is Mr. Ron Styles, the deputy minister of Finance. And to his left is Mr. Terry Paton who is the Provincial Comptroller. And to my right is Mr. Doug Lambert who is the director of Revenue Programs in the Revenue division. Seated behind Mr. Paton is Joanne Brockman who's the executive director of Economic and Fiscal Policy. Seated behind Mr. Styles is Mr. Bill Van Sickle who's the executive director of the Corporate Services division.

Seated behind me is Mr. Glen Veikle, who is the assistant deputy minister of the Treasury Board Branch, and behind Mr. Lambert is Mr. Kirk McGregor who is the assistant deputy minister of Taxation and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. And good afternoon, Mr. Minister, and your all . . . to your officials as well.

We have a bit of a shorter hour, so we'll try to get through a number of things.

Mr. Minister, first, for the first time I believe last year, you introduced a third quarter report along with the normal mid-term report. Do you have plans to introduce quarterly reports; that is, the first quarter, the mid-term, and the third

quarter, for this fiscal year that we're in?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The answer to that, Mr. Chair, is yes. We plan to publish the financial results of the Government of Saskatchewan on a quarterly basis.

I might add that this is part of a long-term plan of the New Democratic Party, and now the NDP-Liberal coalition, to improve accountability of finances.

When we took office at the beginning of the '90s, we actually had a situation where the Public Accounts Committee did not function very effectively. The Treasury Board did not meet. And in one year, there was not even a budget.

And what we did to try to repair that, and prevent our province from getting into the financial circumstances we had in the 1980s under the previous government, was to first of all make sure that the Public Accounts Committee met on a timely basis so that the members of the legislature would have the opportunity to meet with the Provincial Auditor and go over the Provincial Auditor's recommendations pertaining to the province's books.

We of course have introduced annual budgets, which every government should do. We intend to continue with that. But we also decided, Mr. Chair, to introduce mid-year financial statements, so that we would go halfway through the year and say, this is what we said we would do in the budget, this is how we're doing so far this year. We were the first government to do that.

But we're committed to getting better information out to the people of the province. So I have stated that we're going to publish the results, as best we know them, on a quarterly basis. That is, every three months we'll report to the people of the province how we are doing. And as I say, that is part of our continuing efforts to improve public accountability.

We also saw in the legislature just this afternoon, as part of that accountability exercise, the appointment of a new Provincial Auditor. And what we did, Mr. Chair, was to involve all of the political parties in the legislature. We said that we want . . . We passed a law last year to say we want all of the political parties represented on the Public Accounts Committee to have to unanimously recommend the appointment of a Provincial Auditor.

And we obtained the agreement of the opposition. In fact it was the member asking the question who made the motion to appoint the Provincial Auditor. Because we're trying to make sure that we have proper accountability, quarterly financial statements are part of that and we're going to move forward with them.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Chair, thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, besides the people that you already mentioned as being supportive of that, I think you can include the official opposition as supporting what you have decided to put forward as far as improving the accountability.

And yes, I do want to say that I wish to congratulate you on putting forward the changes to the auditor's Act. And I think

that there is a need to address some of the other offices as well of the Legislative Assembly and we look forward to developing a more accountable, more . . . a much more accountable system to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, you talk about a quarterly report. I'm wondering . . . I'm sure reports come to the department of Treasury much more often than quarterly, I believe probably monthly. Do you have . . . as the Minister of Finance, does Treasury have an idea already — in light of the fact that we're a month and a half into our new fiscal year — do you have the report on any of your projections on revenue from the month of April?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, in fact revenue forecasts are made available to the Department of Finance on a quarterly basis. Which isn't much of a surprise if you think about it in the sense that for the first month of the fiscal year being April, we will have vendors who are collecting the sales tax, but they may not remit their sales tax that they collect in April until, you know, sometime in May. And it really . . . you really can't get much of a read on what your revenue is doing until after the first quarter. And indeed that is when we expect projections to come to the Department of Finance.

So no, we don't have anything we can say after one month. It's too short a period of time and most of the taxes are not yet filed with the Department of Finance.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And yes, I do recognize that many businesses don't submit until the 11th or the 15th of the following month. So I was just curious whether or not Treasury indicates to you what their estimate might be after a month and a half.

Mr. Minister, you projected revenues for the two taxes that were increased this fiscal year in the budget, that being the liquor consumption tax and the tobacco tax. In light of discussions around the province, Mr. Minister, that I think it was reported that a number of drugstores, in fact, could not supply the patch and any other product that would assist the individual to quit smoking indicates that there must have been a tremendous demand out there immediately after the tobacco tax increase.

And while we're already at the exact, the 15th day of May, is there any concern from Treasury Board or officials in Finance that your projection for revenue that would be obtained from the increase in the tobacco tax indeed is going to be met?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, we're not concerned about our forecast being met, Mr. Chair, because when we estimated our tobacco tax revenue for this upcoming year, we built in a 20 per cent reduction in tobacco consumption. In other words, we feel 20 per cent of the people will quit smoking or some will smoke less than they did before. And that's quite a considerable drop in consumption, so we think we'll get the revenue we projected.

But I want to add, so there's no misunderstanding, if everyone in this province stopped smoking, if everyone stopped smoking and we got no tobacco tax, we would be happy. Because in the long run we would have a healthier population, and we would cope with that drop in revenue because in the future our health costs would go down. Because the fact is whether — not the

opposition but some will debate this — the fact is that tobacco consumption causes horrendous health problems. And there are many who deny that but it's a fact. And we have people in our acute care facilities, hospitals, nursing homes who are suffering because they used tobacco.

And so I'm just saying we think we'll get the tobacco tax that we estimated, but if we did not get it, to me it would not be a concern. It would be a good thing if that meant that people were stopping smoking.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, I'm not in any way suggesting that we want the tobacco tax to increase. I'm just wondering whether or not your projections for revenue are accurate.

And, Mr. Minister, in light of occurrences that have taken place since the budget was presented, there have been a number of things regarding the . . . for instance the interest rates have started to change, the dollar has started to change, the value of a barrel of oil has started to change. One of the other changes though that occurred right here in this Assembly was that the government through the Premier, decided to eliminate the increase in the long-term care fees. And as a result there will be a loss of revenue.

Will the budget have to be reassessed? And will you be making that reassessment at your first opportunity, which I understand will be the first quarter report that will take place?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, we will be required to submit a new estimate for the Department of Health to add the seven-point-some million dollar increased expenditure that we would now estimate for Health because we estimate they'll spend more money.

And so we will have a new estimate for the Department of Health I believe, and also some kind of motion pertaining to the Department of Highways, because in the event that we don't recover that money from somewhere else, we may defer some winter work and recover the money that way.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, it's interesting that . . . I believe your projection for your budget document indicated that a barrel of oil was to be priced around the \$20 mark and I think today we're at somewhere in that 27 to \$28 per barrel.

If these numbers continue through the year and the fiscal year that we're in is much more stable than last year, which is of course I'm referring to September 11, will you be looking at balancing your budget or intending to provide for that \$7 million deficiency by using revenues rather than cutting a specific department?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, if we obtain more revenue, from oil and gas for example, then we might — I think we would — take the \$7 million out of that increased revenue and use that to pay for the change with respect to long-term care fees rather than deferring some winter highways work.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in your projections also — and you've made some comments about this — and I'm referring to page 25 of your budget

document that you put together, you indicate that the change for retail trade in Saskatchewan, the percentage change for 2001 was 2.9; and for next year, 2003, it's going to be 3.3; and this year only 1.6.

Could you indicate to the people of Saskatchewan why your government feels that we will have such a tremendous drop for retail sales in Saskatchewan for this fiscal year and then return to more, I guess, normal numbers for next year?

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the first observation I would make, Mr. Chair, is that when the member refers to a decline in retail trade, that's not quite correct because the 1.6 per cent figure is a projection that says retail trade will increase by 1.6 per cent this year over last year, and last year retail trade increased by 2.9 per cent. So it would be an increase on top of an increase, if you follow my reasoning, thereby over two years being an increase of some 4.5 per cent. And I just point that out to say nobody's talking about any decrease in retail trade.

I think what the member means to say is that the budget projects smaller growth than occurred last year. But I think the reason that would be projected . . . and hopefully by the way, the growth will be higher than that; that's what we all hope.

And I've noticed that most of the private sector forecasters like the Bank of Montreal and others feel that the rate of economic growth for Saskatchewan will be somewhat higher than we projected in the budget. But we're being cautious which I think is a good thing because we saw what happened last year.

But to answer the question specifically, what may affect the growth of retail trade this year in Saskatchewan will be that farm income in 2002 will relate to the 2001 crop year. And we all know that the 2001 crop year was a very bad year unfortunately, because of a very, very severe drought.

Income to farmers will be down, thereby meaning that purchases by farmers will be down — less than last year because last year they're going on the 2000 crop for their income. And I think that will be a bit of a drag on retail trade and that's why we project growth, albeit at a slower rate of growth than the previous year or in 2003 when we think we will continue along the road to recovery.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair, for clarifying that indeed we're talking about a smaller growth — not necessarily a decline but significantly down from the previous increase.

Mr. Minister, I want to clarify one sale that was made in the previous year of a Crown asset, and how it affects debt for this current fiscal year. Because your documents indicate that our debt has risen, or will rise from 11.1 billion to 11.4.

I refer to an article from the *Leader-Post* and *The StarPhoenix* last fall that dealt with the sale of Cameco shares. And I understand — and you could clarify — that indeed this was the remaining portion of the Cameco shares. In other words, the government no longer owns any Cameco shares.

Could you indicate for clarification if you would, how this affected the General Revenue Fund debt and how it affected the CIC debt that, you know, was related to the entire sale of Cameco shares.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to provide that information as I have before. As I said, when the remaining Cameco shares were sold — and yes we did sell all of our remaining Cameco shares — we would apply as much as we could toward debt. It was applied to General Revenue Fund debt.

During the last fiscal year we took \$120 million and applied that toward General Revenue Fund debt. And during this current fiscal year, in April I believe, we applied another \$61 million of those proceeds for a total of \$181 million which was the net proceeds from the sale of those shares toward a paydown of the General Revenue Fund debt.

And I'm very happy to say that because as usual, Mr. Chair, when we sold the Cameco shares, there were some in the media and some in the opposition that sort of ran around the province saying, oh, they're going to spend the money on operations that should go to debt. Well I said, it will go to debt, and as we said it would, it has gone to debt. And I know that the opposition will be very happy that we made that sale at a reasonable price and applied that toward debt as part of our continuing effort to reduce the debt of our province which certainly we are doing.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One other question regarding the Cameco shares. As I indicated, I believe this was the second sale, significant sale, of Cameco shares and I think the article indicates that the share price at the time of the sale was around \$42.

Could you indicate what . . . if we compare that \$42 per share price of last fall versus what was the share price at the initial sale of the largest amount of Cameco shares.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I believe that actually this was the third sale of Cameco shares — third and final since we don't have any more. And the second sale, I believe the share price was \$73 approximately when we sold those in 1996 or 1997.

And up until that time we had 15 million shares. We sold 10 million shares at about \$73 and then we held on to 5 million shares. The share price went down to 20-some dollars in the interim. Then it came up to 40-some and we sold at 42 or 43 of those 5 million shares.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you indicated that you have applied about \$180 million in total — the sum of 120 and 60. I believe the paper reports that the net profits would have been in excess of 200 million. Was the remaining portion allocated against CIC debt?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the remainder would, as we have done with other asset sales, be left with CIC as representing their costs of those assets, you know, in the beginning.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And you know, I don't know what that balance was but if you would look at page 17 of the schedule of debt in the budget document, there's an

estimation there that the CIC debt will drop from 175 million to 40 million — a drop of about 135 million.

And as I understood you in questioning of your department back, I think, at during the interim supply, you'd indicated that it was going to be applied to CIC for this fiscal year, and that it wasn't applied prior to March 31. Yet the difference between 220 million — if that number is correct — of the net profit of Cameco versus the 180 that you're applying to the General Revenue Fund is only about 40 million. Is that 40 million what has been applied to the 175 million debt? And then what is the balance . . . why will the debt of CIC drop from 175 million to 40 million?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I think the member is really talking about apples and oranges. I mean the money is left in CIC. They will make their own decisions as to where money will come from to pay debt. They have sinking funds so they will access some of their sinking funds to pay off some of their debt. The reduction in their debt will not necessarily be directly related to the sale of the Cameco shares, nor would the reduction of the debt necessarily be the same amount.

Mr. Krawetz: — Could you clarify, Mr. Minister, through the Chair, whether or not all of the balance of profit in excess of the 180 million was applied to debt?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, it is cash retained by the Crown Investments Corporation for Crown Investments Corporation purposes. It may be used to pay down debt. It may be used for reinvestment. It may be used for any number of purposes.

They will also have a debt reduction plan, as they do an investment plan. They will make their decisions as to what to do with cash that is in CIC.

We at the Department of Finance do not say to them, give us our money that we will apply to our debt, and by the way, when you recoup your money, this is what you shall do with it. That is a decision that they will make on a global basis, looking at the funds that are available to them.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, if I am to look at the schedule of debt that you have within your budget document, you've indicated that the debt of the province of Saskatchewan — both General Revenue Fund debt and Crown Corporation debt — at the end of this fiscal year will be at \$11.4 billion from last year's fiscal year end of 11 . . . just about 11.2, 11.188.

Mr. Minister, you've indicated that Cameco shares have been applied to the debt and that the profit that was generated from the sale of those shares, probably in excess of \$200 million, has been applied either through retained earnings or directly through debt. In other words, it is still a value that is considered as an asset within that framework.

If Cameco . . . My question, Mr. Minister, is this: if Cameco shares were not sold for the amount of \$220 million profit, more or less, would the debt of the province of Saskatchewan at the conclusion of this fiscal year, would it be as high as \$11.6 billion?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, as we look at the growing debt of the province, we also recognize that from not only the mid-year report but the third quarter report of last year, that whenever monies are . . . whenever, I guess, a debit to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund occurs that the debt of the province of Saskatchewan goes up.

Is that a fair assessment of that Fiscal Stabilization Fund?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes.

Mr. Krawetz: — We're moving right along, Mr. Minister. Thank you. Mr. Minister, if the debt of the province increases every time the line of credit or so-called Fiscal Stabilization Fund is accessed, does that mean then that there is no money on deposit anywhere in a bank in the province of Saskatchewan or outside of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No.

Mr. Krawetz: — Could you explain then, Mr. Minister, where the initial Fiscal Stabilization Fund credit of \$775 million, could you indicate where that fund was on deposit for the people of the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Chair, this is where we're not going to continue to move along quite as quickly as the member opposite said we were; because I want to point out to the people of the province that what this opposition is trying to do is to say that somehow the current Government of Saskatchewan is, you know, building up all this debt and mismanaging the finances of the province.

And I want to say, Mr. Chair, how ridiculous that statement is in the face of the evidence. And what do I mean by that?

Well, I mean this: notwithstanding the nonsense that is peddled by the members opposite about there being no money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which is a cash management tool that every business and government uses, Mr. Chair, notwithstanding that kind of nonsense that is peddled all over the province by the opposition, Moody's Investment Services, which is one of the world's most respected financial analyst houses in the world based in New York, examined the budget of the province after the budget was delivered, the budget that that member likes to get up and say is some kind of fudge-it budget — you can't fool Moody's financial services, Mr. Chair — and what did they say after examining the budget and examining the level of the debt of the province, Mr. Chair?

They said we're raising the credit rating of the province from A3 . . . No, from A1 to Aa3. We went from A into the double A's.

So if we're doing such a bad job managing debt and if the budget was such a fudge-it budget, well I guess what the members opposite want to say to the people of the province is somehow we fooled Moody's financial services but we didn't fool them, Mr. Chair.

And it's ridiculous. It's absolutely ridiculous that the opposition

stands in this legislature and says we're doing something wrong on the debt side when the credit rating agencies are raising the credit rating of the province looking at our debt.

(16:30)

But not only that, not only that, Mr. Chair, we have the fact that the debt of the province — and I want to make this point very clearly — the debt of the province, the tax-supported debt, has gone from close to 50 per cent about five or six years ago to 25 per cent today, Mr. Chair. Now the member over there yells, it's gone to 90, which is an indication of the lengths that the people over there will go to mislead the people of the province.

The other day on CJME-Radio in Regina, Paul Martin, who is a well-known business commentator in Saskatchewan, had this to say. He said Investment Dealers Association — these are the investment dealers, Mr. Chair, not the NDP, not the Federation of Labour, the investment dealers — they say they're "happy with the province's budget" and there's a "good sign (they're) paying down the debt."

And this is what Paul Martin concludes his comments with. He says:

Today the debt's been cut to 25% (25 per cent of GDP, not 50 per cent) and that's one of the best performances of any province in the entire country.

So now we have . . . as that member gets up and tries to spread the misinformation that somehow we are building up some unsustainable debt, we have the credit rating agencies saying they're wrong. We have the investment dealers from all across the country saying they're wrong.

And you know, speaking of the use of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, here we have Mr. Ian Russell who's the vice-president of the Investment Dealers Association of Canada — I believe he's an economist — and he's on CJME yesterday. And it says . . . This is the report, Mr. Chair. It says:

The provincial government has been criticized for its accounting practices in this year's budget (criticized by them, Mr. Chair) but a national securities organization has high praise for Saskatchewan's fiscal plan. Finance Minister Eric Cline established a special crown corporation to fund upgrades to educational facilities, the opposition thought this violated the balanced budget act.

And then it says, Mr. Chair:

The Investment Dealers Association of Canada doesn't agree (with the opposition). Ian Russell argues public sector financing is complicated (something the opposition tries to take advantage of by trying to confuse the people, but the people are not as dumb as they think) . . .

And it goes on to say:

. . . leading to some confusion about just what the government's doing.

But then it says, quote:

"You can look at these fiscal funds as really a cushion. It isn't always cash that's put into the fund, which you then draw on when you (make) a deficit. It may be borrowings that you would otherwise actually make that you don't make."

And that of course is what we do.

"So, you account for as a cushion and credit rating agencies look at it and they see it as being responsible (Mr. Chair)."

So what we have is this member — and he'll get up and ask another question trying to mislead the public — but what we have, Mr. Chair, is the credit rating agencies saying no, the Government of Saskatchewan is doing a good job managing the finances and handling the debt.

We have the investment dealers saying no, the Government of Saskatchewan is doing the right thing, it's acting responsibly. But we will have that member and the opposition, notwithstanding the fact that when they were in government they led the province to the verge of bankruptcy, and everybody knows, Mr. Chair, everyone in the province knows that we have been paying down their debt.

And for that member in the face of what the credit rating agencies have said about the budget and in the face of what the investment dealers say, to get up and to continually attack the government as if we're doing something wrong, Mr. Chair, is just a phony as a \$3 bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Well, Mr. Minister, I guess you're right, things are going to slow down a little bit. Because number one, at no time would I consider the public of Saskatchewan to be dumb as you have indicated that you consider them to be. And I would suggest that maybe you should apologize to the people of Saskatchewan for suggesting that the opposition considers them to be dumb.

Secondly, Mr. Minister, I have not been in government, but I do look forward to being in government and an opportunity to replace you and your government opposite.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair, the reason why I am asking the questions about the so-called Fiscal Stabilization Fund is for clarification. And I listen to your short answer when I asked you whether or not there was money on deposit and your answer was no.

And we understand that because you have talked about the fact and, in fact, members of the Finance department and treasury in Public Accounts have indicated that the credit or the retained earnings from SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) that were, you know, included in the government's entire financial picture were applied against debt a number of years ago.

And we applaud that, Mr. Minister, in fact, that you have taken the credit for applying that. And we had a member in our Public Accounts Committee, I believe it was one of your members, who asked the question about how much money that in fact

would save in reduced interest rate. Okay. So we understand that. And I'm not suggesting that you're trying to mislead the people of Saskatchewan or that I'm trying to mislead the people of Saskatchewan by suggesting that there is a fund because we know that there is no fund.

The question, Mr. Minister, though . . . And you referred to a bond rating company in this province and I want to refer to also an article from the bond rating company Dominion Bond Rating Service, DBRS. The article is February 19. And we need clarification of this, Mr. Minister, because it's in direct contrast what you just said. And the article says this:

The DBRS assistant vice-president, Genevieve Lavallee, said there is no way to categorize Saskatchewan's budgetary situation this year other than a deficit.

And by this year of course she's referring to the last fiscal year. She says, and I quote:

That (meaning the rate stabilization fund) is not a consideration with us. What we are looking at is revenue and expenditures. Those are just a buffer.

Mr. Minister, we have a bond rating company who is saying there is no money on deposit. It's not like the Heritage Fund in Alberta where there is X millions of dollars, or billions in fact, sitting in a fund that draws interest that the government uses the interest to lower the costs of actual government expenditures, or for that matter to increase government expenditures in health and education and the like.

This bond rating company is saying there is no fund, there is no asset. We look at revenue and expenditures, and the province of Saskatchewan operated last year in a deficit situation and they are going to operate this year in a deficit situation because, as you indicated just a short while ago, every time that you indicate that the Fiscal Stabilization Fund line of credit is going to be tapped into, the debt of this province goes up.

Is that not accurate, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I want to say to the member, as I've said several times in this House and outside of this House, the member doesn't have to go to a statement in February by the Dominion Bond Rating Service that says we were in deficit for last year because the Dominion Bond Rating Service made that statement last summer. They made that statement I believe in August of 2001. I've told the member that before.

The media and the members opposite acted like there was some kind of new information that came out in February but I'll tell the member something else. Not only did the Dominion Bond Rating Service — and I don't have any argument with them — say that we were in deficit last year on a summary financial basis, they said we were in deficit, I think, I don't have the years in front of me but I believe it's '95-96 and '97-98. Those two years, where on a General Revenue Fund basis we had a surplus but they said we were in deficit another two years in the late '90s. Opposition has never raised that. I'm not sure if they actually read what the bond rating agencies say when they come out, but this is not new information.

And in answer to the member's question, I will say what I said in fact in the budget speech — if the member was listening, and I think he was — I said this, I said: on a cash basis, or a summary financial statement basis, there is no question that for the last fiscal year, 2000-2001, the province of Saskatchewan was in a deficit situation.

You know, the member can get up and ask me if I'll admit that. Well I don't need to admit it; I've stated it myself several times. And the *Public Accounts*, when they are published this summer, will show that the province of Saskatchewan, on a summary financial basis, will be in a deficit, which will probably be a fairly substantial deficit.

But that is nothing new for this last fiscal year. That is something that has occurred repeatedly in the same way that on a summary financial basis, the year prior, where we posted a very small surplus on the General Revenue Fund, I think we would have had a surplus of some hundreds of millions of dollars looking at it on a cash basis.

There is no hidden agenda here; there is no exposé that the opposition has; there is no story. These are numbers that are well-known to anybody that takes the time to look at the finances of the province.

And in answer to the member's question, how do the bond rating . . . credit rating agencies look at these things? That's my very point, is what the member is saying. They look at everything, Mr. Chair. There is nothing that the credit rating agencies don't know about the finances of the province of Saskatchewan.

We have, according to the Provincial Auditor, one of the finest sets of books, in terms of the summary financial statements, in the country, Mr. Chair. That's on record from the Provincial Auditor — if the members opposite want to take the trouble to read the reports from the Provincial Auditor, and not just the negative parts, but the positive parts as well.

And my point is this, Mr. Chair: that you cannot have, if you are going to be a credible opposition, you cannot continually tell the people of Saskatchewan that we are all going to hell in a handbasket because we're mishandling the finances, on the one hand, and have 10 credit rating upgrades by the people that look at it and verification by the investment dealers that we're handling the finances properly, on the other hand, and be credible.

Because eventually, Mr. Chair, the people are . . . and when I . . . I did not say that the people were dumb, I said that the people are too smart to be tricked by the opposition in this way. Because eventually the people will say to themselves this; they'll say well, the Minister of Finance says that there're properly using the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and they've got proper cash management. The investment dealers say that the government is handling the funds properly. The credit rating agencies say that the government is handling the funds properly.

But the Finance critic from the Saskatchewan Party — the illegitimate offspring of the Progressive Conservatives of Grant Devine — that Finance critic says no, no, they're not handling

the finances properly. And I simply say, Mr. Chair, that the member can get up — the member can get up and he can continue to malign the handling of the finances.

But I say this, when the people are asked who do you believe, the credit rating agencies, the investment dealers all across the country, or do you believe the Finance critic from the Saskatchewan Party? I will put my money — betting — that the people are going to believe the experts and not this endless line of misinformation that suggests that somehow this government is mishandling the finances. Because it's not true, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I am not suggesting that you are mishandling the finances of this province. I'm asking you, I'm asking you to come clean with the people of Saskatchewan to tell them the real picture.

And, Mr. Minister, you make reference to the report of the Provincial Auditor and that we should read it. I have a copy in my hands and I make reference to that often when I ask you the questions because I am relying on the report produced by the auditor. I'm also relying on the report produced by bond rating companies. These are not my numbers, Mr. Minister.

And when I look at last fall's report, dated 2001 of the Provincial Auditor, and I want to make reference to just the 4 years — not the 15 years that . . . or the 10 years that the auditor has in this document. — when I look at the complete financial picture . . . And we're going to get away from what you referred to as the cash, okay, because you have a difference of opinion, I have a difference of opinion, and maybe even the auditor and bond rating companies have differences of opinion on what the cash position is of this province.

But let's look at something that has been referred to often by the Provincial Auditor, by others, and that is called summary financial statements. And you, Mr. Minister, have referred to them often.

(16:45)

In 1998, on the full summary financial statement, the profit for the province of Saskatchewan was \$368 million. That's including all Crowns, as you would understand. And for the benefit of people watching, that's the entire financial involvement of the Government of Saskatchewan.

In 1999 the profit was 128 million, in 2000 it was 418 million, and in 2001 it was 506 million. Mr. Minister, as I read this document — and I've looked through it — nowhere did I find on deposit or some reference to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund other than that it is a bookkeeping entry.

So, Mr. Minister, I completely agree with you that to provide the people of Saskatchewan with an accurate picture — because, Mr. Speaker, yes they are smart and they are seeing through the mirage of numbers that you're putting forth — they need to see that entire financial picture.

They need to see what Crown corporations are planning for this fiscal year. Because, Mr. Minister, your budget is predicated on the fact that there indeed will be \$300 million transfer of dividend money from CIC this year and you've made, in your

budget estimates, you've made that same projection for next year — a booming year for CIC.

We don't know whether or not that actual profit will be attained, and in fact in the last month we've seen some reports from the various Crown corporations that profits may not be as high as initially projected a year ago. So there is some concern.

Mr. Minister, when we look at the full picture of the province, the recommendation of the auditor that there would be, there would be absolutely no discussion about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund if in fact we were following summary financial statements here in this Legislative Assembly as seven other provinces currently do . . . if that was followed by this provincial government, we would not be having this discussion about whether a Fiscal Stabilization Fund exists on paper, whether it exists in a bank account, because we would have all of the fiscal position of the province and all of the finances of the province before us.

Now what we would also have is we would have the plans of Crown corporations before us — we would, as legislators. As the public of Saskatchewan, they would be able to put forward their idea on what the revenue would be and what the expenditure would be. And I know that, Mr. Minister, a number of people have raised concerns of course about Crown corporations and whether or not they should put forward their business plans.

The auditor is suggesting no, that's not required. What we're looking at is the bottom line of revenue and the bottom line of expenditures. So that then, Mr. Minister, we would have an idea whether or not we would attain those numbers.

Mr. Minister, when we look at what this current fiscal year that just ended on March 31 . . . the auditor's office is busy preparing the summary financial statements. Do you have any idea, based on information that has been provided to you by your departments — by . . . of treasury, by the Crown corporations — what the financial summaries . . . the summary financial statements will say when the auditor puts them together? Do you have a rough idea of what the total profit of the province of Saskatchewan will be for the year just ended — the fiscal year just ended, March 31, 2002?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Chair, the numbers in the summary financial statement will become available when those statements are published and when they are audited by the Provincial Auditor. That's when the numbers will become available.

But I want to say to the people of the province and to the member that the reason . . . the member has raised a lot of subjects in his question, but the reason we have summary financial statements — which the member says he endorses strongly and I accept that — is because they were introduced by this government. They were introduced by this government in approximately 1992. Up until that time, we didn't even have summary financial statements.

And as I said in my first response to the member, Mr. Chair, it should be well understood that what this government has done, contrary to other governments and other parties, is to ensure

that we have annual budgets; to ensure that we have summary financial statements audited by the Provincial Auditor and published each year on a timely basis, which was not done before; to ensure that we have a Public Accounts Committee which includes members from the opposition — in fact it's chaired by the member from the opposition — that meets . . . that we put all the information in front of the Public Accounts Committee.

Not only that, we introduced mid-year financial statements so that six months into the year we inform the people in the province, including the opposition, what the state of the finances is. And now we're going to quarterly financial statements so that we put out more information about the finances of the province than any previous government in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Chair. That's our record. And that's what we're going to continue to do.

And I want to say to the member that, you know, the member likes to get up and suggest otherwise that somehow we're . . . I'm glad, by the way, to hear the member has admitted in the House this afternoon, he said, look, I'm not saying that you're trying to mislead the people about the numbers. I'm glad that we got that admission from the member, Mr. Chair. I think he's starting to acknowledge that in fact this government has done a pretty good job about being open and accountable.

But what I wanted to say is, embedded in the question are so many inaccuracies that, you know, one could go on all day trying to answer some of them.

But I want to answer this one. As I've said to the member before, the member gets up and he says, well how are we going to get a \$300 million dividend out of the Crown Investments Corporation; maybe their profits won't be so high this year. And I've tried to say to the member, not just this year but going back about a year and a half, that we left money in the Crown Investments Corporation two years ago.

We were supposed to take \$150 million out as a dividend for the year 2000, I believe, and we didn't take that dividend. We said, we're going to leave that there for a time when we need that money. Now we need that money, so we're taking it out. We're doing exactly what we said we would do.

And I want to just point out, because it gives the people an idea of really how unreliable a lot of what the opposition says is, that when we left the money in there, Mr. Chair, what did they do? They stood up in the legislature and they criticized us for saving that money, for leaving that money in there. They said, you should be taking that money out.

I said, well no, we should save it for when we need it. That's what we did. Now we're drawing \$100 million out in addition to the regular dividend. So now we're using the money when the people of the province need it, and they're criticizing us for that too.

And the same is true of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Mr. Chair. When we set up that fund, that member and his colleagues were saying we should be spending all of that money now. I have the press releases where the member opposite, the one that asked the question, said we should have a special session of the

legislature. I believe it was in December of 2000.

A special session of the legislature to do what? To spend this huge surplus that they said existed. But we didn't. We said no, we're going to use it at another time.

Now at that time they said, there's too much money sitting there. Now they say, there's no money sitting there. Well, Mr. Chair, both of those statements can't be correct, because they're diametrically opposed to one another.

And my point is simply, when you have the credit rating agencies saying we're doing the right thing in terms of our cash management, when you have the investment dealers association saying we're doing the right thing, why don't we try to be more positive, less political? And instead of arguing about problems that don't exist, why don't we talk about how we can build the province, instead of trying to drag everybody down by making some kind of suggestion that somehow the finances aren't being properly handled?

Mr. Chair, they are being properly handled, and that's been verified by the third parties that have looked at it. And I don't know why the member endlessly wants to continue on this ridiculous line of questioning.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.