

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 concerned about the state of Highway No. 23, primarily the section west from Junction 9 to the town of Weekes. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 23 in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this petition is signed entirely by the citizens of Weekes.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today to present on behalf of people concerned about the new tobacco bylaws.

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

The people that have signed this petition are all from Wadena.

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

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

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Bredenbury, Saltcoats, and Minton.

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.

This petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Moose Jaw, Spring Valley, and Marquis.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again today I have a petition from constituents in the Cypress Hills area concerned about crop insurance premium hikes and coverage reductions. And 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 to 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.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present but this is regarding the condition of our highways. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency in order to prevent injury and loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area, also to prevent rollovers that do happen on that highway every so often.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by people from Francis, Odessa, Weyburn, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are concerned about the 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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petition is signed by citizens of Stoughton and Weyburn.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here

to halt crop insurance premium hikes and coverage reductions:

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.

Signed by the citizens from Holdfast and Penzance.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition this afternoon is in regards to crop insurance:

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 good people from Duck Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about the crop insurance premium hikes. The prayer reads:

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

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

It is signed by the good citizens of Sonningdale, Battleford, North Battleford, and Vawn, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition of 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 as is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Simpson and Imperial.

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 that are very concerned with the Besnard Lake situation. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Parkside, from Shellbrook, from Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Delisle.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend the 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.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of Spiritwood and Witchekan Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens of southern Saskatchewan that are concerned about the lack of cellular telephone service. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Limerick, Woodrow, and Killdeer.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and hereby read and received.

A petition concerning repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7, 11, 18, 23, 24, and 129.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 50 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: how many complaints were filed by Saskatchewan residents involving the security investigations unit of SGI in each of the past three years?

I also, Mr. Speaker, have written questions with respect to the costs of the SAP consultants and the SAP training and SAP implementation at SaskPower, as well as a number of questions on the cost of various methods of the generation of electricity.

Thank you.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 50 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Environment: what is the maximum allowable coliform content in water being discharged from municipal sewage treatment facilities in Saskatchewan; for each sewage treatment facility in Saskatchewan, how many times has that standard been breached during the last five years; for each incident, on what date did it occur and what was the coliform count; provide the name of each community and/or location where any such incident occurred?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 50 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: regarding staff cuts at the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, how many files are currently pending determination by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission; what is the average time lag between complaint and disposition by the commission; and what is the anticipated impact of the staff cuts of 2.5 positions expected to have on the current backlog?

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 50 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Government Relations: with regard to provincially owned Crown land in the northern administrative district, how many parcels of land are being leased and what is the total area of leased land; how many lessees are there; and what is the total lease revenue per year?

I have the same question, Mr. Speaker, for the land south of the northern administrative district.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to all of my members here in the legislature, I'd like to introduce eight people who are in your gallery. This week is Emergency Medical Services Week and today we have with us a number of paramedics who are here to be part of the second reading of The Paramedics Act.

So I'd like to have them stand as I introduce them. Lyle Karasiuk, who is the Chair of the Saskatchewan Paramedics Association; Daniel Lewis, who is a EMT (emergency medical technician) and he's the director of communications. Jason Williams, a paramedic, who is the director of education. Stacey Mamer, who is a EMT, director of code and conduct. Ken Luciak is a paramedic and he's the manager of operations, Regina Health District EMS (emergency medical services). Colin Hartness, paramedic, operations supervisor for Regina Health District EMS; Darcy MacKay, paramedic; and Christina Backlin, paramedic.

I'd like to have all members welcome them to the legislature this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to join the Minister of Health in welcoming the members here from EMS throughout Saskatchewan. It is certainly a very momentous day for them.

And I again ask all members to please join me in again welcoming the members from EMS throughout Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in the west gallery there's a group of students from Connaught School which is only about six blocks from my house. There's 15 students from grade 8 accompanied by Bruce Brander and Gerald Flett.

And depending on how busy I get after question period, I'll be meeting with the students and we'll be having an orange drink together. And I look forward to meeting with you. Would all the members join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join the member from Regina Centre to welcome the students from Connaught School and also to Gerald Flett who has lived in my home community for many years from Cumberland House

And I might say as well, Mr. Speaker, Connaught holds a special place for me in the sense that my two daughters, Koonu and Danis, attended Connaught School. So I'd like all members to please welcome the students again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleagues in welcoming the students from Connaught School and especially my old classmate — we attended school together — Mr. Jerry Flett, Mr. Speaker. And Jerry, I not only

taught him volleyball and basketball, Mr. Speaker, I . . . he also had the pleasure of sitting next to me in school and copied off me in the finals and we . . .

An Hon. Member: — So did you both fail then?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We both failed, Mr. Speaker. And not only did we fail but we both got cut from the basketball and volleyball teams. So I want to welcome Jerry here, a dear friend of the family. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to draw your attention, and welcome to the Assembly this afternoon, Mr. Joe Bisschop who's in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. He's a constituent of mine from Yorkton, long-time family friends of ours. Our children spent a lot of time together over the years.

Mr. Bisschop has done lots of work in the private sector, but is better known in our area for his entertaining. He is a long-time entertainer, played at many dances and weddings in our area. He is spending some time with Mr. Sklar, probably giving him a lesson or two in terms of how to play the fiddle.

So I want to ask all members of the Assembly to welcome Mr. Bisschop to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cathedral Arts Festival

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, well as all of the students from Connaught here would know, if you look on your calendar May 20 to 25 is the Cathedral Arts Festival.

Banana fritters, face painting, art car cruise, movies under the stars are just a few attractions. This year is bigger and better. The week-long festival enters its 11th year and is expanding by an entire block to make room for all the extra exhibits.

The Saturday street fair is a focal point for the festival. It's the largest craft sale in Saskatchewan and has a rich tapestry of village dwellers.

Mr. Speaker, the Cathedral village houses a mix of cultural and social communities that enrich the festival and the area with their diversity. New this year are Opera Saskatchewan and tonight, Cabaret Oskana, a showcase of Aboriginal poetry, music, dance, film, and video.

The village is also home to a vibrant arts community whose contributions, I think, are well known in the province.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the festival illustrates the ideals of community, because this festival came about as a tool to build community, and I have to say it's been very successful.

So I'm very proud of all the festival's organizers and volunteers, and I hope that everybody takes at least one day to get out and see the festival.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Emergency Medical Services Week

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 19 to 25 is EMS Week in Saskatchewan.

On behalf of all the people of Saskatchewan, all members of the House wish to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the nearly 3,000 emergency medical service providers in the province.

Mr. Speaker, every day our EMS workers demonstrate the true level of their compassion and commitment to their jobs often under very adverse conditions and circumstances. Clearly, a job that requires one to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week also requires one to have a certain amount of dedication and determination.

Mr. Speaker, for anyone who's ever witnessed or been involved in any kind of an accident or unfortunate incident, we all know the familiar sound of an EMS siren. Not only is it the first sound that we hear, Mr. Speaker, it is also a sound that we often welcome because it gives us hope.

We know that the men and the women who may be just moments or even seconds away may mean the difference between life and death.

Mr. Speaker, the theme for this year's EMS Week is Help is a Heartbeat Away. This addresses the importance that EMS provides in the chain of survival.

As well, Mr. Speaker, all members of the House should know that in addition to the extremely vital life-saving work that they do, EMS providers are also a great public resource for injury prevention and health promotion.

Again, to the 3,000 EMS personnel working in communities across Saskatchewan, all members of the House extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for a job well done. Knowing that you are there for us and for our families provides a great deal of measure of comfort to us all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Students Compete in Montreal

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, two students from Miller Comprehensive High School in my constituency are now competing in Montreal. Kristen Francis from Craven and Katie Delorme from Regina, accompanied by counsellor Tyrone Fisher and teacher Sandra Mann, are in Montreal to compete in the E-spirit competition.

The E-spirit competition is an Internet-based national Aboriginal youth business plan competition with on-line

modules, mentoring, and business plan templates for Aboriginal youth in grades 10 to 12. Students are required to complete a business plan including finances and staffing.

Mr. Speaker, this competition is sponsored by the Business Development Bank of Canada and accepts entries from Aboriginal students from across Canada. Only three teams from Saskatchewan were selected.

Results from the competition will not be known until later but Kristen and Katie are optimistic. They submitted a business plan along with a VHS (Video Home System) video of their business and display booth. Their business is called New Horizon Salon and Spa. In their video they capture a beautiful view of prairie life, including Regina, Wascana Park, and the Legislative Building.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Air Cadets Annual Parades

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Thursday I had the pleasure of joining the 802 Pipestone Air Cadets as they celebrated their annual parade and awards night. It was also a pleasure to join my colleague, the member from Cannington, at the Moose Mountain 723 Air Cadet annual parade on Monday, May 13.

Mr. Speaker, this program certainly is a very positive program for our young people. What it does is it teaches our young people the integrity, it teaches responsibility, it teaches respect. And it's certainly an honour to attend a parade and just to observe these cadets as they parade, as they do their march past and the different routines.

Mr. Speaker, as well a special thank you to all of those who work so diligently — to the instructors, to the parents. Without their help, without their support, this program would be impossible.

And in Moosomin's case, a special thank you to the Knights of Columbus, the Legion, and the seniors' drop-in centre, and to those who have donated their trophies.

Mr. Speaker, the cadet program is certainly a worthwhile program and we want to thank each and every person involved for their hard work and dedication.

Get Well Wishes for Mavis Roots

Mr. Toth: — As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a special get well wish to a very special person in our caucus. Mavis Roots acts as receptionist and no doubt she's probably watching us today. And unfortunately, Mavis rather than watching would just as soon be in the office and just giving us words of encouragement. But we want to offer her our encouragement as she recovers from surgery.

Mavis, we're praying for a speedy recovery. We miss you. We're looking forward to having you back in caucus with us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Norwegian Constitution Day

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday was Syttende Mai, May 17, Norwegian Constitution Day. And Norwegians around the world were singing Bjornstjerne Bjornson's song:

Ja, vi elsker dette landet,
som det stiger frem,
furet, vaerbitt over vannet,
med de tusen hjem.

This song is a reminder to Norwegians around the world and especially here in Saskatchewan, where they had celebrations at Saskatoon and Birch Hills and many other communities in the province, that Norway remembers them.

And I have a special greeting from King Harold and Queen Sonia who just completed a tour to Canada and these are their words:

We are very happy indeed through the Norwegian Ambassador in Canada to send Norwegian and Canadian citizens of Norwegian Ancestry our sincere greetings and very best wishes as you celebrate the Norwegian Constitution Day. We have just concluded a highly successful State Visit to Canada and met many fellow countrymen across the country. The warmth and hospitality with which we have been received everywhere has made a deep impression on us. It is our hope that our visit to Canada will serve to further strengthening both the personal and bilateral links across the Atlantic.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the members from Regina Coronation Park, Saskatoon Southeast, Regina Sherwood, Rosetown-Biggart, Saltcoats, Saskatchewan Rivers, Lloydminster, and me from Regina Lakeview, we all wish all Norwegians and all Saskatchewan people happy Constitution Day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kenaston Teacher Honoured

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about a remarkable teacher from the town of Kenaston who was honoured by the community this past Saturday evening. It was my privilege for me to attend this event which paid tribute to Michael Hertz, or Mick as he's known to his many friends and colleagues.

Michael had taught school in Kenaston for 30 years, staying in the same school. He came out of teachers' college in 1972, and has taught nearly every grade of school in Kenaston, beginning with high school English class and then going into elementary system, basically teaching all the subjects.

It's rare to see a teacher with such a commitment to one school and to the many community activities that he's been involved in. Michael was also very involved in the sporting side of school where he has acted as a basketball coach and a volleyball

coach, and also did a lot of help with the Kenaston senior hockey team.

Most recently he has assisted in organizing and coaching Loreburn Aztec football team, consisting of players from both Loreburn and Kenaston schools.

Michael is also the resident computer expert in the school which keeps him very busy as well.

The evening began at 7:30 p.m. There was a PowerPoint slide show where photographs of his 30 years in teaching were shown and former students and staff would speak about Michael on each year, starting with 1972 working up to the year 2002.

There were also tributes as well from the local school board and school division representatives and many others whom Mr. Hertz's life had touched over his many years of school and community involvement.

Michael's wife Patty is also a schoolteacher at the Clear Spring Colony just outside of Kenaston. I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Michael Hertz of Kenaston.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Polonia Dance Ensemble Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to attend, earlier this month on May 11, the 14th Annual Polonia in Concert program which is put on annually by the Polonia Dance Ensemble of Regina at the Performing Arts Centre here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to . . . I should point out that this is . . . the Polonia Dance Ensemble of Regina recently celebrated their 30th anniversary of existence.

And as an alumnus of that group I would just like to say that I was around during the formative years of that organization and it was a pleasure to see how much and how far they've come.

Their guest speaker is . . . or guest dancers — performers with them were the Biale Orzel Group from Winnipeg. The program consisted of 17 dances put on by various levels of dancers — senior, intermediate, and junior. And as I say, it was a great program.

Mr. Speaker, the Polonia Dance Ensemble is a very accomplished group. They were the featured performers for Prince Charles when he was here a year ago, in front of City Hall, and I know they were very proud of that.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you'll permit me to say a couple of words in Polish.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Legislation to Regulate Raves

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an 18-year-old Melville girl is dead after attending a rave in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, for some time now, the Saskatoon city police have been asking the provincial government to introduce legislation licensing and regulating raves.

On April 15 in this House I asked the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Recreation about this issue, and she said the government had no intention of doing anything about raves.

Mr. Speaker, I reiterate: over the weekend, an 18-year-old girl died after attending a rave in Saskatoon. Will the government now get with it and introduce legislation licensing and regulating raves?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first, convey our condolences to the family of Ashley Blixrud and I did actually speak with the . . . with her father yesterday.

And the kinds of tragedies that are exhibited here are of concern to all of us. We are investigating ways in which we can address this concern with the Saskatoon city police. We're corresponding with other provinces who have looked at this question but have chosen not to legislate. And we're also looking at municipalities that have bylaws to address this concern.

Mr. Speaker, I might say that we will leave no stone unturned to address these concerns and to ensure that our young people are safe.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, indeed other provincial jurisdictions have introduced legislation because of the danger of raves. Mr. Speaker, for some time now, I reiterate, the Saskatoon city police have been calling for legislations to license and regulate these raves, and the NDP government has virtually ignored their concerns.

On May 15, the Saskatoon police wrote to the deputy minister of Justice outlining their deep concerns about raves. They said, and I quote:

Raves attract people — no age restrictions — who attend with the intention of dancing to loud music while under the influence of mind-altering drugs. Although no one has died in this province as a result of a rave, our young people are at risk if they attend these events.

Sadly, one statement is no longer true. The police department's warning has come true and an 18-year-old girl has died.

Mr. Speaker, will the government follow the advice of Saskatoon police and bring in legislation to license and regulate raves?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1400)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, let me say that we won't rule anything out. But the most important issue to address here is how to protect children, not how to outlaw or ban something. And one of the concerns about making it impossible to have these kinds of activities is that it merely pushes them underground, which would then make it even more difficult to resolve.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that the Criminal Code, the Controlled Substances Act all provide . . . both provide police with the opportunity to investigate what is taking place at these raves, Mr. Speaker. If minors are consuming alcohol, that gives the police another reason to intervene.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that the police did write to the department. They did make a presentation to the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police. And, Mr. Speaker, we will be exploring every avenue with them and with others in the community to ensure that our children are protected.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — The Saskatoon police specifically asked the government for legislation. The police know exactly what needs to be contained in that legislation, and I believe they have forwarded that information to the minister's department.

The Saskatoon police specifically asked for legislation in their letter, and their letter said that. And I quote:

A presentation regarding this matter was made to the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police. Delegates agreed that raves are a serious problem and legislation should be passed to regulate the activities.

The letter goes on to say:

There must be provincial legislation, as municipal bylaws will simply move the location from one municipality to another.

Mr. Speaker, why has the government had this information and ignored the request? There is an immediate need to address this issue.

So I ask the minister again: will the government introduce legislation this session to license and regulate raves?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me just reiterate what I've said twice already, and that is that we will look at the recommendations presented by the Saskatoon city police. We will talk to the Association of Police Chiefs. It's somewhat less than a week ago that this contact was made to us formally. And we will leave no stone unturned in protecting our children.

Let me assure the member that we are as concerned about these

matters as she is, that we are as concerned about the loss of life that has taken place and the potential damage caused to our children, and that once we have spoken with the appropriate people, we will act and we'll make sure our children are safe. I don't think I can say any more than that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, this government has dragged its feet with many types of legislation that could have improved the lives of our children or guaranteed their safety. And, Mr. Speaker, maybe they have recently received a letter on May 15, but this government knows full well that that legislation has been introduced in other provinces and is necessary.

The Saskatoon police want the legislation that includes a number of specific provisions designed to protect young people who attend raves.

First of all they want raves to be licensed. They want promoters and persons with a history of drug dealing or other offences to be prohibited from obtaining a permit.

Secondly, they want the police to be notified of all raves, and a copy of permits sent to the police at least two weeks prior to the event. And they want police to be able to enter the premises to check for drug use and drug peddling.

Thirdly, they want safety standards with regard to matters like proper ventilation and exits, and the free supply of water provided. They want EMS personnel on premises.

Mr. Speaker, these seem like reasonable requests to protect the safety of young people in Saskatchewan so there is not a repeat of this weekend's tragic events. Will the government listen to the Saskatoon police and introduce legislation immediately?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think this is a matter to make politics of. This is a matter of serious concern for all of our young people. And, Mr. Speaker, the issue is how do you get to the bottom of these questions? How do you stop these things from taking place?

It is not as straightforward as the member indicates. This is not a question, strictly speaking, of raves. It's a question of young people abusing drugs and abusing alcohol. That is not going to end, Mr. Speaker, by pushing something of this sort underground.

But let me say once again, for the fourth time, that we will look to the . . . we will look to find . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I think I am saying something. I'm saying that we will look to find solutions with those who know best about how to handle these situations.

The member should know that while Ontario introduced legislation of this sort, it did not follow through with it. Maybe she should ask herself why that is.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me say once again, we will do what we . . . Mr. Speaker, we will do everything we can in our power to

ensure that our children are safe. The member should know that, and we all know that, Mr. Speaker, in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Disclosure of Personal and Confidential Information

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend media sources interviewed the owner of Robinson Investigations, which as you know was searched by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) in relation to the case investigating police officers and government employees for allegedly releasing confidential information about the citizens of this province.

Mike Robinson told the media, and I quote:

He routinely gets information from police and government sources. He says he doesn't tell anyone where to get the information, nor does he ask where it comes from.

Mr. Speaker, there is great concern among the people of Saskatchewan about security about their personal information. As a result of this news, will the Premier explain how it is that private investigation firms routinely, Mr. Speaker, routinely access personal and confidential information of Saskatchewan people held by this NDP (New Democratic Party) government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the member will know from media reports, the RCMP has entered the offices of Robinson Investigations and has investigated and begun their investigation of those activities.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that organizations of this sort are registered by the . . . are licensed by the province. The registrar can initiate an investigation himself. And should breaches of the law be evidenced, Mr. Speaker, the registrar will take swift action to deal with the situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Swift action should have been taken by this government over the past decade to ensure the security of the information of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday the NDP confirmed that six provincial government employees were being investigated by the RCMP for allegedly releasing confidential information to outside sources.

At the same time, the deputy minister to the Premier said the NDP government would hold their own independent investigation into the security of confidential information. The deputy minister said that the announcement as to who would conduct that investigation would be made in a day or two. But one week has passed, Mr. Speaker, and there is still no indication from the NDP as to the status of their parallel investigation.

Mr. Speaker, when does the Premier intend to announce the

details of this investigation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now as I said last week to the members opposite, we do think this is a very serious concern. And ever since 1992, we have had a series of measures including legislation, policy, security framework across government, security committees that were put in place to deal with a whole range of security issues when you handle large volumes of public information.

Now the fact is that the RCMP investigation is about people who used information in ways that they weren't authorized to use it, not people who used it in ways that they were authorized to use it. And the government responded quickly by sending these folks home, as well as co-operating with the RCMP investigation.

We are very close to engaging a firm. We've been looking at all the national firms that do this kind of work. Interviews and reference checks are taking place as we speak. And very shortly, we will be able to announce the firm and their terms of reference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we're getting a potpourri of answers from a potpourri of ministers but we're still not getting the answer to the question. They were told it would happen in a day or two; we're now moving into a week or two — we still haven't been told.

Mr. Speaker, most of the focus has been on government access to the national CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre) system. While CPIC inquiries are monitored at the national level, provincial Justice officials have said the government itself hasn't monitored this information by its employees for several years. Approximately a decade, Mr. Speaker.

And what about the other information systems kept by this government? Personal health records, educational records, financial records, everything from your birth certificate to the coroner's report. Are there checks and balances in place to ensure that information is protected from abuse or unauthorized release?

Mr. Speaker, what will be the terms of reference for the government investigation into the security of personal information, and will this review be made public?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I cannot in detail outline the provisions, because as they work with these firms, they're also helping flesh out what would be the appropriate matters.

But I will generally outline it for the member.

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — What the investigation will be covering

is issues like the oath of office, the conflict of interest guidelines, the acceptable use policy for information, technology-based information, and how it relates to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. All of those matters would be the subject under investigation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investigation of Harassment Allegations

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have two questions today for the Premier regarding the former Environment minister who resigned last week over allegations of harassment. How much will the investigation into these allegations cost the Saskatchewan taxpayers, and will the results of the investigation be made public?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in a circumstance like this, the appropriate thing to do has been done by the member from Saskatoon. In a circumstance like this, she has done the honourable thing and stepped aside from her responsibilities. We have engaged a woman from Winnipeg who has much experience in the field to meet with the parties and bring to me a report.

I cannot at this moment, Mr. Speaker, but we'll be glad to in future, provide for the total cost of the report. And, Mr. Speaker, this report will be delivered to the deputy to the Premier as the chief civil servant in the province who then will report to me. And therefore it is not likely, as in any matter of personnel in government, that the report would become a public document.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question again is for the Premier. Could he give us an estimate of how much this will cost? Will it be hundreds of dollars? Thousands of dollars? Or you know approximately how . . .

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would like to know an estimate of approximately what this will cost. We did not pass judgment on the minister. We merely want to know, and the taxpayers are asking, the approximate estimate of what this investigation will cost.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Last week I was in a variety of communities in the province, including in Nipawin on Thursday. I've just come from a meeting of 600 people for lunch in downtown Regina. No one asked me about the cost. Taxpayers are not asking the question. Taxpayers are very appreciative, very appreciative of the actions taken by the member in stepping aside from her cabinet portfolios.

It is an interesting thing that's happened in the House this afternoon. We're all very interested apparently in the cost of a report here, but we're calling for further investigations,

further investigations, and further investigations in other matters but they're not asking how much might that cost.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the integrity . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, these people in the House this afternoon want this government to conduct further investigations into . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. I would ask the members to come to order.

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, last week the member of Rosthern called some kind of a press conference, made all sorts of accusations which were simply not true. He sits in the House today, he will not listen to an answer either from the Attorney General or myself.

Mr. Speaker, today they're asking us to conduct further investigations into privacy matters in government. We're not here referring to that tragic circumstance in Saskatoon, not here referring to that — you're calling for further investigations into government — they don't ask the questions about that. But when it comes to politics, oh they'll have a question a minute.

What surprises me, Mr. Speaker, most of all, is that the critic of Agriculture would stand up in this House today wondering about the cost of an important bit of work that's being done in government while dust is blowing, people are dried out, and we've got a farm Bill in Washington that's killing the province and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's really disappointing that the Leader of the NDP government stands today in a self-righteous and sanctimonious attitude when they have more . . .

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

Ms. Harpauer: — SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) through the ministers . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Ms. Harpauer: — From SIGA to ministers to public servants, they've got more investigations going on than Dodd has little liver pills. So they can hardly pass judgment on us.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Commission has a very specific anti-harassment policy and it outlines a number of steps that should be taken to resolve harassment complaints. Clearly the most serious of these steps is a formal investigation. And the policy states that these steps are only taken when it is not possible to resolve the conflict through any other methods.

My question is for the minister responsible for the Public

Service Commission: how many formal harassment investigations usually take place in any given year, and at what cost to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I will have to take notice of that question because it's very specific and detailed. But the Public Service estimates are later today and we could have further discussion then. But obviously that's a very detailed question, so I take notice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

For thousands . . .

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

Mr. Stewart: — For thousands of families it's the same depressing story. Another week without rain. Add to that extremely high winds over the past two weeks and you have a major drought in the making.

Mr. Speaker, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan has estimated the drought is threatening between 50 and 70 per cent of the cattle herd because of shortage of grass, water, and feed. Mr. Speaker, farm families have been warning about the potential for a devastating drought this spring for some time. Now our worst fears have come to pass.

Mr. Speaker, what action is this government taking to assist cattle producers who are facing the sell-off of between 50 and 70 per cent of their cattle herds because of this drought?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that there are a number of things that we've been doing with the federal government, the national government, and with producer organizations in this province to prepare ourselves, Mr. Speaker, for the kinds of situations that we might face again this year. And these are the kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, that we've done.

We've gone to our Ottawa friends and said to them that we need in this province to have an enhanced crop insurance program, Mr. Speaker. And this is what we said to our federal government. And, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — We've said, Mr. Speaker, that we need to take a portion of our crop insurance dollars and we need to restructure them so that they make their way to the grass program and to the pasture program.

So this year in our province we took our individual program and we made it broad based, Mr. Speaker, for all cattle producers in

the province. Of which we should remember, Mr. Speaker, that on that side of the House when I introduced it, they called it a gaming program, Mr. Speaker. That it's not going to work for Saskatchewan people.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, today in this province we've put in place for our livestock producers, on the recommendation of livestock producers in this province, our new grass program, Mr. Speaker, which is now there for our producers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan cattle producers are in trouble. In many places there's no water left in the creeks. Water wells are dry. Dugouts are empty. And, Mr. Speaker, there's no feed for cattle. As a result, APAS (Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan) is estimating as many as 800,000 cattle could be on the auction block if the drought persists and there is no further assistance from this government.

Mr. Speaker, does the government have a plan to assist cattle producers with additional water pumping equipment, new funding for drilling water wells, and assistance in securing adequate feedstocks to get through this devastating drought?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, what we've said to the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) which this member will know — which is the Prairie farm rehabilitation program which is managed by the federal government — we've said to the federal government that they need to put additional dollars in, Mr. Speaker, and it's historical that the prairie . . . that the PFRA has provided funding forever, Mr. Speaker, for water programs.

Last year what we did, Mr. Speaker, is we went to the national government and we said we need additional funding, Mr. Speaker, from the national government. And we were able to get, Mr. Speaker, a million and a half dollars last year — not enough and we know that — and we only got that million and a half dollars after . . . and which we were able to lever it out from the federal government.

I'm on record, Mr. Speaker, today asking the national government to put additional money into the PFRA program, Mr. Speaker, because there is a drought in Saskatchewan of which we know — a serious drought, Mr. Speaker, for livestock producers and for cattle producers in this province.

But we can't do this on our own, Mr. Speaker. And we've said on many occasions that the prairie . . . that the PFRA needs to get some of their dollars in place in order to help the farmers across the province, particularly cattle producers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery this afternoon I'd like to introduce the grade 7 and 8 students from East Central School. And, Mr. Speaker, you may be familiar with the school; it's located about 15 kilometres east of Prince Albert.

Accompanying the students this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is their teacher, also the principal of the school, Valerie Horner. She's accompanied by Eileen Olsen, Marian Byrne, Ervin Nichziol, and Kim Jabusch.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House please join with me in welcoming the students from East Central School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 52 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 52, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 53 — The Department of Economic Development Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 53, The Department of Economic Development Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand on behalf of the government to table responses to written questions 201 and 202.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 201 and 202 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 38 — The Paramedics Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second

reading of The Paramedics Act.

Mr. Speaker, for approximately 20 years, paramedics have been licensed by Saskatchewan Health under The Ambulance Act. As such, the department's emphasis had been on the registration and licensing of paramedics.

Mr. Speaker, The Paramedics Act was developed after consulting with the Saskatchewan Paramedic Association and other stakeholders to enable the profession self-governance and responsibility for regulating approximately 1,800 EMS personnel in our province. Self-regulation will provide the Saskatchewan Paramedic Association with the legal authority to register, license, and discipline emergency medical responders and all levels of emergency medical technicians.

The registration of volunteer first responders will continue to be with Saskatchewan Health.

Public accountability provisions have been incorporated into the new Act. For example, public representatives will now be included on the association's council and discipline committee. Discipline hearings will now be open to the public and the association will file an annual report on its activities with the Minister of Health.

As is the case with other health professions, bylaws which potentially affect the public will require the minister's approval. The new Act clearly outlines the association's responsibilities in effectively responding to public complaints of professional misconduct. While we can be proud of the emergency services delivered by EMS providers, it is important that we work together to make these services even better.

One of the commitments in our government's action plan for Saskatchewan health care is helping emergency health providers improve their skills. Beginning this year, our goal is to train 240 new or existing EMS providers up to the EMT basic level over a three-year period. This will help ensure that over time, on the majority of calls, there will be at least one member of an ambulance crew trained and certified at the EMT basic level.

Skills of EMS providers are critical in an emergency situation. So is a quick response. Given the vastness of our province, ensuring a timely response to patients living in the most remote areas can be a challenge. The medical crews of Saskatchewan Air Ambulance make more than 1,100 flights per year transferring critically ill or injured residents to health facilities. EMS providers are onboard these flights helping to stabilize patients and providing care that can mean the difference between life and death.

Mr. Speaker, these improvements to emergency services in our province reflect the government's broader goal to improve the quality of health services and access to care while ensuring our health system is sustainable into the future. By working with health partners such as the Saskatchewan Paramedic Association, we will continue to provide strong emergency services throughout our province recognizing that these services will continue to evolve to reflect changing service needs.

The Paramedics Act will serve the profession well. The

Saskatchewan Paramedic Association fully supports the new statute and is willing to assume the responsibilities it entails. Mr. Speaker, The Paramedics Act contains all the newer features of professional legislation and is more responsive to our changing health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise and respond to the minister with the second reading of Bill 38, The Paramedics Act, especially when it was introduced this week. Of course, it's the EMS Week, Awareness Week, and the Bill being introduced is very timely. Listening to the minister speak about the Bill, I think for the most part everything in the Bill meets with our approval. Being able to self-regulate their own profession we think is a very good idea.

They do a service in our province that we all have to be very, very thankful for. The minister talked about the vast expanse of our province, and I think that is one area that I know in the constituency that I represent, Indian Head-Milestone, in talking to some of the different people out there is that, you know, there's large areas where if there is an accident or whatever — a farming accident or an automobile accident — there is some time before the people get there.

So the people that arrive on the scene first, the EMS team, have to be trained to the highest standard as possible; because that time is very, very important by the time they get back to a health care facility.

It's not like many, many years ago when there were certainly more health care facilities in the province that the travel time may not have been as great. But certainly now it's taking longer to find, to get back to the health care facility.

So when we look at this Bill it looks like it meets with our approval. We do want to, I guess, question and ask a few more questions on this piece of legislation and consult with a few more groups.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time we would move to adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 41 — The Health Quality Council Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Health Quality Council Act.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is known both nationally and internationally for its leadership in health care. The creation of the Health Quality Council is a first in Canada, with a mandate directed at quality improvement in health care. The council will provide objective, timely, evidence-based information and advice for achieving the best possible health care within our available resources.

To fulfill its role, the Health Quality Council will be expected to remain independent of specific interests and organizational views. Quality Council board members will be chosen for their knowledge and expertise. This will include experts in health services delivery and quality improvement from both within and outside the province.

Mr. Speaker, the formation of a Health Quality Council is an important part of the government's action plan to improve the quality of health services and access to care while ensuring our health system is sustainable into the future.

When our government announced the action plan for Saskatchewan health care in December, we promised to act quickly to create an independent council to guide government, regional health authorities, and health care professionals in providing the highest possible quality care for the people of this province.

The steps we are taking today, Mr. Speaker, fulfill this promise outlined in our health action plan and reflect our government's strong commitment to health excellence in Saskatchewan.

Our consultations with the public and health sector groups following the Fyke Report found strong support for an independent. In drafting the legislation for this Act, we again consulted with our key health partners.

The result of our research and consultations is an organization that will provide an independent, knowledgeable voice that will recommend standards for health care based on solid evidence. As well, it allows us to move forward on innovations in our action plan including the establishment of the Health Quality Council.

Annual funding for the Quality Council is anticipated to be in the amount of \$5 million. The council's overall goal is to ensure the best possible patient outcomes within our available resources. From the council's evaluations we will be able to tell which services are most effective and where we should be putting our resources to achieve the greatest benefit for our citizens.

The development of a Health Quality Council is not an indication that people are getting poor health care right now. Surveys tell us that most people are satisfied with the care they receive. The health providers who work in our health care system are second to none. They are committed to their professions and to the people they serve.

What the council will do is ensure that the system, the standards, and the processes are in place that allow health providers to do their best work and allow the system to function more effectively.

We know that money alone cannot fix the shortcomings in our health care system. It is no longer good enough to simply spend more money on health care, we need to spend more wisely. Health spending must go hand in hand with a broader health plan for quality improvement.

Mr. Speaker, our government's action plan for Saskatchewan health care and its strategy to create a will ensure that

Saskatchewan people are getting the best possible health outcomes.

The will also ensure that the people of our province are made aware of quality improvement initiatives and health issues. Saskatchewan citizens want to know about the quality of health services in our province and our government is committed to providing citizens with this information.

Mr. Speaker, the formation of a Health Quality Council has been well received by the public and the health care sector in our province. The Health Quality Council Act will provide good service to the health care community and the citizens of the province for many years into the future.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak on the second reading of An Act respecting the Health Quality Council. It's interesting, the minister has laid out a number of areas where the Health Quality Council is supposed to improve a number of concerns in the health system, of course monitoring existing standards in health care in the province and evaluating prescription drug practices and drug utilization.

It's very important that we look at how effective our health care system is being used. And we hope that this Quality Council will be a step in the right direction as far as that concern. It also goes on to say they will implement training and education programs and promote research and education, hopefully leading to an improvement in the health care system.

I also would like to state that we, we hope that this Act will also take into account the perception and reality of poor access to health care in rural areas, longer waiting lists in our cities as well where people are on waiting lists that quite . . . it seems quite unnecessarily, and people that are waiting longer and suffering more, waiting for operations and getting their health care concerns looked after.

And so I'd like to just restate that we . . . hopefully that this Quality Council will look into all those areas and speak on behalf of all of Saskatchewan residents, both in urban and rural. A big concern is with the hospital closures in the past, that it's just directed more patients to the city hospitals where the waiting lists have developed and grown larger and longer. And unfortunately health care hasn't improved in the past. It's actually deteriorated.

So at this time I'd like speak to the stakeholders concerning this Act and I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 42 — The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2002

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

Mr. Speaker, there are three issues that are addressed in this Act.

The first amendment expands the definition of optometrists, chiropractors, and dentists to include them as professional corporations under The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act. This expanded definition puts these three health professions on an equal footing with physicians.

In the year 2000, amendments were made to The Medical Profession Act to allow physicians to form professional corporations.

In 2001 The Professional Corporations Act extended the same right to optometrists, chiropractors, and dentists. And this Act will facilitate the billing through the medical services plan for insured services.

The second amendment I will put before the House today, Mr. Speaker, amends the section in The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act, which allows that monies owed to the medical services plan due to a billing error or a reassessment may be collected from the practitioners or the professional corporations by the Saskatchewan Health.

The third amendment, Mr. Speaker, is to repeal an obsolete section dealing with refunds of certain taxes paid to municipalities or health boards. This section is no longer necessary with the implementation of The Health Services Act, effective January 1, 1997.

Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to an accessible, quality care health system. We will provide leadership to making the changes needed to strengthen and sustain this system for the future. And it's for these reasons that we bring forward these amendments to this Act today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Amendment Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill 42, The Medical Care Insurance Act talks about a couple of different things, listening to the minister. Also he talks about expanding some of the professions to be able to incorporate, which we think is a great idea. You know, they moved it last year so that doctors could incorporate.

But any time that you can make the tax system a little bit easier for some of these professionals to navigate, and incorporation is one way of doing that, allowing a number of the professionals to deal with the tax situation we have in the province perhaps a little bit easier. There are a number of other benefits for these professions to be able to incorporate.

But we think that's a good idea because, Mr. Speaker, it seems like over and over and over again we look at the papers and I know there's many anecdotal, many anecdotal evidence that people are leaving our province. And a lot of these professionals are leaving our province. And we need to be able to keep as many of these people in our province as possible — whether it's a dentist, whether it's optometrists, doctors,

whatever. And this is one method we think that would help keep some of those professionals here.

One of the other areas, the last piece that the minister spoke about was the refunds to municipalities and, etc., is going to be taken out of the Act. And I think that's a good idea. If it's not needed, it shouldn't be there.

Over and over again when I've been out in different functions in my constituency or different meetings that we've had around the province, one of the things that people say very, very often is the number of loopholes and the number of regulations that really don't need to be there. And I guess this is one that they're just cleaning up the Act a little bit and removing.

So we would think that would be a pretty good idea. But until we have the opportunity to consult with a number of the parties that are going to be affected by this, I think it's only fair that we would move to adjourn debate on this Bill until the consultation has been done.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to introduce the amendments contained in Bill No. 48, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002. The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act provides the statutory basis upon which the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority regulates gaming and the distribution and consumption of alcohol in the province.

This Bill will enhance the Authority's accountability as a regulator, improve business and administrative practices related to liquor permits, enhance the authority's legislative basis for action in its role as distributor and regulator of the liquor and gaming industries in the province, and support the Authority's role in promoting the socially responsible use of liquor and gaming products.

I will begin, Mr. Speaker, with the amendments to the Act that will enhance the Authority's accountability as a regulator.

During the last session a number of issues arose in this House with respect to some inconsistencies between The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act and established policies at the Liquor and Gaming Authority, particularly the absolute prohibition in the Act against any government employees accepting gifts from liquor suppliers and distributors.

(14:45)

Mr. Justice Thomas Wakeling was engaged to investigate the situation. Among other findings the Wakeling report clearly indicated that, while the Authority's conflict of interest guidelines were quite reasonable, they conflicted with section 133 of The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act.

In his report, Justice Wakeling indicates, and I quote:

I see section 133 as much too restrictive. It cannot

reasonably be adhered to in . . . light of existing industry and community practices . . . this section should be amended to permit a more reasonable and practical approach to the problem it is intended to address.

To the extent the guidelines are in conflict with section 133, they are not valid and cannot support a justification for actions prohibited by section 133. They are nonetheless quite reasonable, hence an appropriate amendment to The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act should be made at the earliest possible date.

Amendments included in this Bill reflect Justice Wakeling's recommendation and are similar to those found in The Public Service Act. The Bill also provides regulation-making authority to establish a code of conduct and ethical behaviour for Authority employees.

The regulations and code of conduct will follow guidance provided by Justice Wakeling, allowing for the reasonable exchange of gifts and courtesies such as a business lunch. Notably the present prohibition against solicitation of gifts will be maintained in the regulations and the code of conduct. Once the legislation has been amended through this Bill, the regulatory changes will be enacted and a code of conduct adopted to fully implement Justice Wakeling's recommendations.

A number of legislative amendments will be made to strengthen and improve accountability provisions. These include the process for registering the boards of directors for Saskatchewan's casinos and restructuring the system of registering suppliers of gaming supplies and services and non-gaming supplies and services.

In the past, registration was limited primarily to companies that supplied equipment and services directly related to gaming. The proposed amendments require all suppliers that are significantly involved in the gaming industry to be registered regardless of whether they supply gaming supplies and services or non-gaming supplies and services. Mr. Speaker, this is similar to the registration requirements currently in existence in Manitoba. A regulatory exception will exclude minor contractors so as not to unreasonably increase the red tape burden on small-business owners.

The legislative changes introduced today will improve the administration and business practices of the Authority. Some of these changes are being made in response to concerns expressed by our stakeholders with respect to transfers of liquor permits and with respect to liquor permit eligibility provisions.

One amendment will reduce red tape for a small group of businesses with the creation of a permit transfer process. In cases where a business changes its legal form of ownership without changing the people involved, a shortened process for transferring the liquor permit will be available. For example, the process would be available when a sole proprietor incorporates and the sole proprietor remains the sole director and shareholder of a new corporation.

An additional amendment will clarify liquor permit eligibility provisions. The Act lists categories of entities that are eligible

for commercial liquor permits. However the current Act does not recognize some forms of businesses such as personal partnerships and co-operatives. In order to meet the current eligibility requirements, some applicants must change their structure to come within one of the categories of applicants permitted under the Act. This places an unnecessary administrative burden on those particular applicants. This Bill will add new categories of entities that may be eligible for commercial liquor permits, including personal partnerships and co-operatives.

As noted, Mr. Speaker, these amendments are consistent with the government's aim to reform regulations and cut through the red tape for businesses in all sectors of the province's economy. I am certain, Mr. Speaker, that these are the kind of changes that will be welcomed in the hospitality industry.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this government is concerned with the socially responsible use of both liquor and gaming products. The Authority participates in and sponsors programs that promote the responsible consumption and use of alcohol and gaming products. These include problem gambling awareness initiatives, server education programs, the provincial designated driver program, and initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

This Bill will enhance the Authority's ability to promote these activities. It will specifically include a provision within the legislation for the Authority to support these activities which have increasingly become a significant part of its role as a socially responsible regulator of these products.

Mr. Speaker, there are also a number of housekeeping amendments included in this legislation and I would be pleased to discuss them or provide any answers to any questions about them later in the debate on this very important Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that Bill No. 48, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002 be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act brings up a number of concerns and questions and the minister has touched on some of them. I guess the question is, has the amendments really looked after the concerns that the citizens have concerning many areas as far as alcohol and gaming?

The first point the minister spoke about is the conflict of interest and the gifts that were allowed . . . the employees of Liquor and Gaming were allowed to accept in the past. And it was through the Saskatchewan . . . with the official opposition that this concern and problem was highlighted. And we certainly have many concerns in that area. And as we noted in last year's sitting that there is many problems with how the government was handling this. And so it's through the opposition party's work and concerns that this was finally brought forward.

The minister's concerns about being socially responsible are very valid, and I think we all agree that government of the day has a responsibility to look after that area and try to prevent as many fetal alcohol . . . prevent as many concerns around the fetal alcohol syndrome as possible and make people aware of

the serious health problems around that whole issue as well as just the abuse of alcohol in general. And it is a responsibility of society and the government to look after many of those concerns.

The minister spoke about the liquor permits and that's a huge concern in many areas. Any group or individual wanting to get a liquor licence now, it seems there are many restrictions and regulations there now. And I hope this streamlines the process.

I know in my constituency and other areas that people normally, well, basically, would like to buy the liquor permit within their trading area where they normally purchase other items and they are being forced to go to other communities where they don't normally travel or don't normally shop to buy their liquor licence. And of course, they're forced to buy their liquor there rather than the community that they're holding the event in or their local community where they would prefer to buy their liquor and their liquor licence.

So hopefully in the debates to follow, that many of these concerns will be looked after because that's certainly a big item in the minds of the people of Saskatchewan around this whole area.

So at this time I would like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 37

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 37 — The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to take part in the debate about The Medical Profession Act. When we had an opportunity to look at this Bill we could see that there was many different issues that were brought forward within this Act and it's touching many different aspects in many of the professions within the medical area. We are dealing with podiatry, with physicians' incorporation, and discipline by the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Mr. Speaker, this Act makes it legal now for podiatric surgeons to practise in Saskatchewan. This is an issue that has been brought forward a number of times and is something that is of growing importance in the province. When we look at the treatment of saving limbs in Saskatchewan, when we know the prevalence of diabetes in Saskatchewan, this issue is becoming even more important and our caucus supports moves to allow greater access of podiatry services in our province.

The Act also puts surgeons . . . podiatric surgeons under the regulations of the College of Surgeons and Physicians and this . . . the ones that have no impact on non-surgical podiatry.

This Act also gives podiatry surgeons title protection; they'll be regulated by the college which shall set out their scope and

practice through bylaws.

In the terms of psychiatry, the Act is being changed to put more emphasis on the qualifications of a psychiatrist when it comes to deciding whether to license him in Saskatchewan. We know that the current Act sets out that a psychiatrist that is trained in certain areas can be licensed here. The amendment deletes references to specific countries, and refers to the training and qualifications that the psychiatrist has.

Physician incorporation is also being tweaked in this Act. The incorporating provisions are being expanded so that earnings made by locums and other residents can be included under the corporation.

And the disciplinary powers of the college is being expanded to include doctors who have stopped practising in Saskatchewan for up to two years.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the whole area of podiatry and surgery, we know that there is need for some movement in this area. A year or two ago, we remember there was a case of a Saskatchewan resident who had been trained in this area in the US (United States) and wanted to return to Saskatchewan to practise. Under current regulations it was impossible for him to do that.

And we know that this Act does not deal with the overall practice of podiatry. It has been traditionally . . . and the way it has been traditionally performed. It deals with the issue of foot surgeons and for the first time puts in place regulations that allow podiatric surgery in Saskatchewan. In a place where there's a real shortage of doctors, any movement that allows more doctors in our province seems to be positive, and there is a lot of need for this type of treatment.

However, we do recognize that on this issue there is no agreement on how it should be undertaken. We understand that the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association are fundamentally in disagreement on how the whole topic of allowing podiatric surgeons to practise in our province.

Both the college and the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) are highly respected bodies, and when it comes to commenting on issues regarding our health care systems . . . and so it doesn't make our job as legislators easy when these two very respected bodies don't agree. But we have to recognize that this disagreement does exist, so I want to outline some of the SMA's concerns for the record.

To summarize, Mr. Speaker, the SMA disagrees with the parts of the legislation that will put podiatric surgeons under the regulatory authority of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The SMA believes that by putting this new type of practice under the authority of the college it weakens the concept of self-regulations as a fundamental precept for professional practice in Saskatchewan and Canada.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago we heard the minister introduce a Bill on EMS and he talked about self-regulation and

the importance of it, so this seems to be going against what the minister had spoke about just a few minutes ago.

The SMA believes that a decision to expand the college's scope of regulation to podiatry is a fundamental and significant decision that should only be undertaken after a lot of broad consultations. The SMA also suggests that there are other roads that could have been travelled in dealing with this issue. One suggestion was that podiatry could have been included under another Act. They also state that if this is not possible, podiatrists could be licensed and regulated by representatives from another province.

In bringing these issues up, our caucus is not suggesting that one method is the correct one, only that there are options that have been put forward and rejected by the government. When we discuss this Bill in committee we will certainly be asking the minister to explain why he chose one option above the other one.

On the other side of the coin, the College of Physicians and Surgeons also supplied the opposition with a letter of support for the Bill and the changes it makes in terms of podiatry. While the college was initially reluctant to undertake this regulatory authority, they have agreed, after consultation with the minister, that it would be in the best public interest. Again, Mr. Speaker, we're wondering what type of advice the minister gave to the college to assure them that now this is the best road to travel.

Given the changes in terms of podiatry in the recent years, changes that have seen much more invasive procedures, particularly by those trained in the US, this form of treatment and surgery does belong under their auspices. The traditional podiatry practice which really does not include surgery cannot regulate this because their practices are very different.

According to the college, the work of podiatric surgeons is much more akin to that of orthopedic surgeons and plastic surgeons, who are regulated by the college. Mr. Speaker, it should also be noted that their college also regulates podiatric surgery in Alberta.

So clearly we have a very large difference of opinion on these and how surgeons should be regulated. The one thing everyone can agree on though is the valuable service the podiatrists offer and how our province needs access to their service.

Mr. Speaker, I should also mention that the SMA has come forward with concerns about the provision of this Bill that deals with greater powers of discipline for the college when it comes to doctors no longer registered to practise here in the province. They have no problem with the concept, but they feel that more work has to be done in the areas of notification of former Saskatchewan doctors who are under the threat of such disciplinary measures.

The SMA has stated support for the provision that allows the college to apply sanctions in Saskatchewan imposed in other provinces, but they have raised concerns with the fact that they don't have identical sanctions.

So these are the areas that we as the opposition want to explore more closely, and clearly we can't make everyone happy. But at

the same time we want to hear from the minister as to why he has made the decisions in the way he has.

The Bill also deals with the provisions dealing with psychiatry and doctors' incorporation. That does seem to have strong support but we're going to need clarification on some of these matters as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we do overall support the Bill, we are waiting for more information from other jurisdictions. So at this time I'd like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 39

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 39 — The Prescription Drugs Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 39 dealing with The Prescription Drugs Amendment Act is something that we have been waiting for for awhile. It's interesting that a certain part of the issues dealing with prescription drugs is singled out when we know that overall The Health Information Protection Act hasn't even been proclaimed.

So while the umbrella isn't there, the government is bringing forward another Act that's dealing specifically with prescription drugs.

The main objective of course of this Act is to avoid the practise of over-prescribing and over-dispensing of drugs, and this came about because of the inquest a year or so ago and it's something that we recognize the importance of.

There were a number of other recommendations that were brought forward through that inquest and I think it's something that the government should be looking at at this time as well.

One of the most important areas that we haven't heard the government talk about is an area dealing with people that actually have problems with drugs and the home that they would need so that they can get the help they need to get off of their addiction. We recognize that there's a lot more that could be done. The proper detox facility is just one of the other issues that we're waiting for government to deal with.

We are encouraged that the NDP is actually committed to consult with stakeholders in this area. That shows that they have done a thorough consultation. That's something that we don't always see and we're pleased with their work in this area.

But one of the big concerns that we have about this Bill is the whole issue of privacy. Privacy and confidentiality has become a very serious issue and we'd hate to see the wrong kind of information fall in the wrong hands. We note that the NDP has gone to great lengths to ensure that privacy will not be an issue regarding these amendments. But following the last week's turn of events, we're always a little bit concerned.

Again we know that The Health Information Protection Act

hasn't been proclaimed but, like so many Acts the government has brought in and so far has not proclaimed, we're wondering if this one is ever going to see the light of day.

We're wondering why pharmacists and clinics and doctors and hospitals . . . if they're going to be able to legally apply this legislation. It's interesting to note that another one of the recommendations that we really do need to see come forward is the whole idea of the detox centre and helping people out that have actually gone down the road of overusing some of these drugs and the serious effects that they have in the province.

Today we heard about the effect of drugs on young people in this province and we know that the government has a big issue to deal with. And I think that this Act is one of the small ways that we could be talking about it.

The entire application of the legislation speaks to a . . . effectiveness of SHIN, the Saskatchewan Health Information Network. We understand that the government has spent about \$50 million on this area of government and we have not seen — but we need to be seeing — is this a good use of our taxpayers' dollars? Or are we really just going to be setting up another SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company)?

We're wondering about the reliability of SHIN and the increased pressure to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Overall we can appreciate the intent and purpose of this Bill, and we . . . but we believe there's further consultation required. So at this time we'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Chair: — Order. Before the committee begins, there's a special guest that the Chair would like to introduce. Is leave granted to introduce the guest?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much. In the Speaker's gallery is someone members of the all-party committee on tobacco control will recognize as a presenter in Saskatoon a number of years ago. He's also known as my son, David, and he's just at the back there and he's in town for a band concert. So I'd ask all hon. members to welcome David.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Water Corporation Vote 50

Subvote (SW01)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and also welcome to David in the Assembly.

Right to my immediate right is our president, Stuart Kramer,

and directly behind Stuart is Tom Gehlen and Tom Gehlen is the vice-president of utility and engineering Operations. And directly behind me is Wayne Dybvig, and Wayne is the vice-president of water resource and infrastructure management. And to the extreme right of President Kramer is Terry Hymers, who is the corporate comptroller.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good afternoon to the minister and his officials in attendance here today.

We recall with some surprise an announcement made earlier this spring by the minister responsible for Sask Water at the time about the termination of the Meridian dam project in terms of the idea, the study that had been initiated. And I must say that the announcement came with some suddenness and some surprise, frankly.

And what I would like to ask the minister this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, is whether the minister would be prepared to tell us the total cost of the study. I know there were some estimates made public earlier on about what the cost would be. But can the minister today tell us the total cost of the Meridian dam study that was undertaken last year?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just to point out that the study cost was 100,000. Twenty-five thousand of that was paid by Saskatchewan and Alberta paid 75,000.

(15:15)

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, if I recall correctly when the topic of a study of this type was introduced, the mandate for the engineering firm that undertook the study was pretty clear. It was outlined as finding out what questions needed to be asked in order to complete a larger study. So what we were going to get for \$100,000 was an attempt by this engineering firm to visit various communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and appeal to the people of those communities and just find out what types of issues the individuals in those communities felt needed further investigation.

A hundred thousand dollars seemed like a small amount for a study of any significance but that was a very clear mandate. Could you tell us whether you got your money's worth? Did you get \$100,000 worth of questions raised by those public meetings in the communities visited by the engineer or the consultant in Alberta and Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to point out that of the \$100,000 cost of the study, of course Saskatchewan only paid \$25,000, and we sincerely can't speak on behalf of the province of Alberta in terms of the value for their money.

But I would point out that the mandate, the joint terms of reference if you will that was entered into on this agreement between Saskatchewan and Alberta — what we wanted to do and we agreed to do — was do an accurate cost analysis as well as to look at how much land could be irrigated.

So we looked at the analysis of the feasibility in terms of the

cost-benefit, and the conclusion was — and it was joint — that the cost was three times the benefit. And that's one of the reasons why the Meridian dam was not something that had further study attached to it.

So clearly it was a lot more than asking the area folks what questions or what concerns they had. There was a thorough cost-benefit analysis that was done.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. Mr. Minister, that's a clearly different understanding, a significantly different understanding than was presented to the people who attended those public hearings.

I was at some of those public hearings and the gentleman that was leading that series of hearings indicated that the purpose of the hearings was to determine the questions that people wanted answered as a result of a larger feasibility study. At no time did they give us any indication that the purpose of this \$100,000 study was to come up with a clear economic benefit analysis for the proposed project.

And I guess out of the \$100,000 that you said the study cost, can you tell us specifically what the cost of the hearings were? What proportion of that \$100,000 spent on the consultants' fees were directly related to the public hearings that were held in roughly a half a dozen communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Our early guesstimate on what the public hearing component of the overall cost would be, would be roughly a quarter of the cost. And don't hold me to that figure because we'll get the very specific information for you.

And the reason why we can't give you specific information is we don't know what the Alberta side consultation costs were that was associated with the study. So that's one of the reasons why we can't be specific. This is basically a ballpark figure of roughly a quarter of the cost.

And again, what the costs were on the Alberta side, we don't have that information but we'll get as best we can a ballpark estimate of what the public hearings costs were associated with this overall study.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I think just from a general information point of view we're all reasonably familiar with the cost of these types of megaprojects and the amount of money that is committed to studying the viability of such projects. I guess what I . . . where I'm going with this line of questioning, Mr. Minister, is that we have \$100,000 study, \$25,000 of which were committed to the public hearings roughly — and I'll accept that as a fair representation of the cost. So \$75,000 was used to determine that we had a potential \$5 billion dam project, a cost associated with this megaproject, and quite possibly a return of only about half of that amount of money.

It seems to me, given what I'm familiar with in other major dam projects, that \$75,000 is not a significant enough of an amount to come up with a conclusion. We've got a very small amount of money arriving at a very big dollar amount conclusion. And I'm wondering how thorough a study you could have for

\$75,000 on a five . . . potentially \$5 billion project?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What I'd point out to the member opposite is that what we mustn't forget is that this was a joint effort between Alberta and Saskatchewan. So it was a conclusion made by both parties.

So this is not as if Saskatchewan come along and said we want to devalue this whole process. We did have a partner and when asked . . . (inaudible) . . . the partner put more money in. And if you want to call it a pre-feasibility study to do a very rough analysis of what is necessary, then certainly two parties would have to agree to this.

So I would point out that both agreed — Alberta and Saskatchewan agreed — that the project was not viable. And certainly \$100,000 in terms of the significance of the overall project may not seem to be a huge amount, but what I would point out is that there is ongoing work that Sask Water does through the Prairie provinces water management board, in consultation with other provinces, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the federal government on various water agreements. So there's been a lot of relationship and a lot of studies over the years that talk about a number of issues.

So we in Saskatchewan, certainly we value that relationship and we participate through that committee and a number of subcommittees. So there's a lot of work that goes on in the background to ensure that Saskatchewan's interests are maintained and that this 1969 water agreement, all the particulars are understood.

So this is not really . . . This is a pre-feasibility on one project for one specific area, while we . . . I can assure the member that we have a number of other areas that we have constant meetings on; and clearly Alberta and Saskatchewan, both provinces agree that this is not a very viable project and therefore we did not go any further than spending the 100,000.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, to you through the Chair, the last major dam project in Alberta, I believe, was the Oldman River dam, and it was nowhere near as costly as the \$5 billion estimate we've got for the Meridian dam project, but I'm sure that they spent considerably larger sums than \$75,000 to determine the viability of that project.

And I think that from your own perspective, the familiarity you have with the North, you would know from your own experience that no major project of any kind is undertaken in northern Saskatchewan with a feasibility study so vastly underfunded. It usually takes significantly more resources to come up with the viability of a project, the economic feasibility of a project of a major proportion.

So I guess where I'm going with this now is that we have heard the Minister of the Environment from Alberta, Lorne Taylor, talk about Alberta's urgent need to retain more water; looking at a variety of ways of holding back the 50 per cent water that they are guaranteed from the sources that run through both Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Given his recent pronouncements on that subject, some of which have come just recently and much after the Meridian dam idea

was scuttled, it would seem to me that something just doesn't add up.

So I guess what I'm asking, Mr. Minister, is: is the cost, is the potential cost of this project realistic in the first instance? And secondly, is there maybe something else at play here? Is the cost of the Meridian dam project the real reason why the Alberta government beat an unseemly retreat on this particular subject, in view of their well-stated desire to hold back more water?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. And certainly I would point out that this was a pre-feasibility study initiated by Alberta and their efforts to try and retain as much water, as much water as they possibly can.

And I go back to my earlier comments that Sask Water is involved and the province of Saskatchewan is involved with this Prairie provinces water management board. And we take that role very seriously because we do want to protect our water source, and we certainly want to protect that access to that water.

And if the costs and the benefits had been closer, it may warrant further expenditures on feasibility. But the conclusions were about for every \$3 of costs, we had \$1 of benefits. And both parties, Saskatchewan and Alberta, agreed that this pre-feasibility cost clearly showed that the project was not feasible.

Now I'll make my earlier comments about how important it is that we protect the water source. Alberta initiated the project. We participated to make sure that we are fully aware of what is going on. And that's very important for people to understand.

And I'm glad you're asking these questions because many people will say, well, why would you put money into studying a proposal being forwarded by a neighbouring province? Well because we have this water agreement that we have to pay attention to, and we also have to make sure that we commit to processes to determine what kind of projects are being proposed on the Alberta side to make sure it does not affect our Master Agreement of 1969.

Now we view that role as something that's very clear, and we know that major projects are what Alberta is trying to do to recover or to hold back some of their water. Because right now they haven't got the capacity to hold back as much water as they would like. We are staying very firm that we have 50 per cent of the water flows from Alberta, and it's right across the Alberta/Saskatchewan border to ensure that we have our 50 per cent. It's a 1969 Master Agreement.

And the relationship has been very good between Alberta and Saskatchewan in terms of keeping us well informed.

And as I mentioned before, time and time again, if you have any evidence or any theories that you would like to share with us, that'll certainly give us some insight. But I can assure you that it is well within our practice and our effort in Sask Water to make sure that we protect Saskatchewan's interests and we take that role very, very seriously.

(15:30)

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister, there's no question about whether or not you're taking your role seriously. The question is what is Alberta looking at doing that might impact us? At least with the Meridian dam project being so close to the border, Saskatchewan did have an opportunity to share in those benefits in a very immediate way. The border was the boundary, virtually, for that dam and we would have immediate access.

Now given the fact that Alberta has said they're running seriously short of water and if they don't retain more of the available water for their own purposes, their growth in that . . . what is now becoming an industrial corridor between Edmonton and Calgary is going to become completely stymied. They don't want that.

So obviously if the Meridian dam project isn't going to work, they're going to be looking at alternatives. And if your relationship with the Government of Alberta is as good as you say it is, maybe you'd be able to enunciate for us today what some of the other alternatives might be that the province of Alberta is looking at.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — One of the things I think is very important to point out . . . And we sincerely appreciate your comments of the Meridian dam being close to the Saskatchewan/Alberta borders to make sure we're able to monitor what goes on back and forth. I think that certainly has merit in the sense that we're able to physically see what is being planned on the Alberta side on a day-to-day basis, whereas if they have a proposed dam or other reservoirs and so on and so forth further in the interior of Alberta, that perhaps may have some impact.

But I'd point out earlier that the relationship that we have with Alberta has, to date, has been good. But it's much like a chess match, if you will, as we watch very carefully the moves that they make. And we are heavily involved. And what we have to ensure that there isn't a checkmate on this game of chess — and the relationship is good; it's one of respect and certainly committee work and so on and so forth — is that they do not try and checkmate the 1969 Master Agreement on water rights. And that's what we hold very close to our chest as something that we feel is very important in this game of chess, if you will.

Now what I don't want to do is to show this as an adversarial relationship, is that it's always important to neutralize and to defend. And that's part of the role of the game of chess as you may know, and we want to make sure that we continue holding the 1969 agreement as part of our arsenal, if you will, to ensure that there is good protection of the waters needed for Saskatchewan.

And I also point out that Alberta themselves . . . Albertans themselves are acutely aware of some of the challenges environmentally when you have a whole pile of transfers of water from one watershed to another. And I know that they are aware that some of these plans are being undertaken, and they do also have some very good leadership on the environmental front and certainly on the political front as well.

So we are very aware of what is happening on their side but we don't speak for Alberta. We certainly speak for Saskatchewan and we are certainly going to stand up for Saskatchewan's rights. And the 1969 Master Agreement gives us a huge bat which we will certainly use to protect our interests.

That being said, we don't want to heighten the . . . you know, our relationship between the provinces. We want to continue working because so far it's worked out well.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I guess I'm not as concerned about what Alberta might do to shortchange us. What I am concerned about is getting the full benefit of anything we might do for Saskatchewan residents.

So if there's an opportunity in the future to look at a joint project of some sort . . . I don't know if there are other rivers or other waterways that are nearly as beneficial to this type of project as the South Saskatchewan and the Meridian dam. But if there were, would the province of Saskatchewan be prepared to look at investing in something of that nature for the benefit of Saskatchewan people?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What I would point out that would add a bit of optimism to the whole scenario is the rains. As you may know, it's been threatening rain here for the last few hours and I can tell you the great news: it's just raining really well out there. So that's always important to point out that — the moisture levels — and the drought conditions has absolutely everybody worried about water quality and certainly the supply of water.

But I'll point out to the question, absolutely, yes. One of the examples that we would use of course is the Meridian dam. It would go through the same processes where we'd look at the pre-feasibility processes. Perhaps a grander feasibility process to see what benefits this could have for both provinces.

But I'll point out that while some work was done in Coal Lake a number of years ago, Alberta was prepared to invest into this feasibility process to see the impacts downstream, at the Saskatchewan border. And certainly, we participated in that process as well. But clearly at that point, with Coal Lake, we decided was not a good project. The feasibility was not there again.

So I'd point out, you know, to the member and the question that, absolutely, we'd look at any kind of agreements with Alberta provided — and I underline, provided, by about 10 times here — that Saskatchewan's interests are maintained. And the 1969 water agreement that we have, we're holding that very close to our chest.

And again, I would point out right now that drought conditions in southwestern Saskatchewan, and certainly in Alberta as well has everybody clearly concerned. And we have to pay extra attention and be very diligent in some of these agreements and some of our work. And this is what is being undertaken now by Sask Water.

And as always, if there's more things that we could learn and more processes that could benefit both parties, of course we're prepared to look at that.

But again, as I pointed out, it's raining really hard out there. It's wonderful, and we hope it lasts for another week or so at the very least and warms up for a week and rains again for another week. So that's what we're hoping happens but, of course, we don't control that. We just wish that to happen. Thank you very much.

Mr. Brkich: — Well I'm glad it's raining in Alberta hard. And I just hope that it starts raining here really hard for very long . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I just phoned back home and it's not raining there yet.

Just to follow up on the question of my colleague there, I understand that you and Alberta probably don't have any joint . . . other than the Meridian dam looking at some projects. But is Alberta considering some projects right now which might impact on Saskatchewan waterways that you know of, that Alberta's possibly looking at some or doing some studies on some projects that may impact Saskatchewan waterways right now?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would just point out that, as you're probably aware, right now Alberta is holding public consultations to see what Alberta people want. And what I don't believe is what they're doing is to look at the stage of proposing projects yet.

But what I'll point out is very important, in this game of chess, is that we stand up in Saskatchewan and we say we want to protect our water interests. And we work very closely with the Alberta government in this game of mutual chess to make sure things are happening and happening fairly. The 1969 agreement, as I mentioned before, is something we hold very close to our hearts as something that we're going to go to the bank with.

But I also point out is in this game that we want to make sure — I don't want to call it a game because it is a partnership agreement — but that we also let the people of Saskatchewan know that we are aware as a province — and we wish to share that with them — that Alberta right now, they have a legislation, the Alberta government does, that prevents transfers of water from one watershed to another, you know, and that legislation is there. And if there's any kind of diversions of rivers or lakes or streams, then they'd have to obviously repeal that Act. And that'll be a first hint that something is coming down the road.

But the other thing that's very important, and I want to commend the environmental movement on this, is that Alberta does have a very strong environmental movement. And they are acutely aware of some of the challenges that are happening in the province and they really stay well informed. So that's also another strong aspect that the Saskatchewan people can rely on.

As well, there's a resistance from other areas of Alberta, in particular northern Alberta, where they feel that while the drought is something that people don't want to minimize in southwestern Alberta, there is some concerns of a radically changing ecosystems or diverting rivers and lakes and having this huge infrastructure put in place to hold back water at a cost of probably billions of dollars and so on and so forth. That they are also saying well, we don't want to minimize the drought but

be careful here, don't radically change ecosystems on us because that's not what this is about. The drought may be just a process of nature. It may take us some time to get over the drought but be very careful, the environment is quite important.

So if you factor in what Alberta themselves and the hoops and the hurdles that they have to go as well . . . will have to go through as well, and factor in the fact that we would be acutely aware of what's going on on that side, factor in the fact that we have this 1969 Master Agreement, factor in the fact that if there's any kind of proposal we're going to be intimately involved, factor in the fact that the people of Saskatchewan, the public of Saskatchewan, will be acutely aware of what's happening, factor in the cost, and factor in all the historical projects like Coal Lake, the Meridian dam, then one can see that there is a lot of work ahead of anybody trying to do something radical to change the water flow rights to the province.

And again, you look at the drought situation now, it just certainly heightens the awareness. And there's nothing wrong with awareness and making sure that Saskatchewan protects her interests when it comes to water rights that flow from Alberta through the Saskatchewan and on to Manitoba.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Following with that agreement, I would take it then we have the same agreement with Manitoba. Would . . . How much flow do we have to pass on to Manitoba? And are we passing on our full allotment or are we holding . . . or are we letting more pass into Manitoba? Could you kind of enlighten me a bit on that agreement how it works with Manitoba?

(15:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — The agreement, as I mentioned before, Alberta is obligated to transfer 50 per cent over to us, and in turn we have to transfer 50 per cent over to Manitoba, and that's kind of the basis of the agreement that we've had in place since 1969.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Going off in a little different direction, I will go back to Last Mountain Lake. You . . . the city of Regina I believe applies to you for a permit to put water into the water system. Have they discharged more water in the last year or two years than they normally put in?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Just to point out, just for your information, more good news in terms of the rain. It is now pelting down and that is something that is always very important. And yes, absolutely, we wish we could get rain all over the place. But now it's pelting down nicely so that certainly gives us some cause, you know, to be happy.

What I would point out is that the volumes that the city here would be letting loose into the system is quite similar over the years. There is no increase. The volumes have remained consistent.

Regina treats their effluent at a tertiary level which is one of the highest levels. They have one of the best manners in which they treat their effluent. This effluent is tested and it meets all the requirement for treating, you know, all the effluent in the province at that level.

I would point out that one of the most important things that we have to be very careful of here is that, as I mentioned earlier in question period a couple of weeks ago, is that every town and village and city on some of the river systems in the province often releases treated effluent into the rivers. So one town lives downstream from one city and one city lives downstream from another city. For example, Saskatoon would live . . . Or sorry, North Battleford would live downtown from Edmonton . . . or downstream, sorry.

So it's important that as we look at the manners in which we allow some of the effluent enter some of our rivers and streams, it has to be treated, it has to be tested, and it has to meet all the requirements, which in this case Regina does.

Now I would also point out that if you operate your water treatment system to its optimal level as well as operate your waste water treatment system to its optimal level, then you wouldn't have any problems. So that's one of the points that we want to make, is that it's very important that we follow the rules and regulations.

And Regina has not increased their discharge. They have treated their effluent. It's clearly treated. It meets all the requirements and they test it on a regular basis. And I think over the process of a number of years it has been consistent volumes that have been let go. And clearly, as we mentioned before, optimize your operation of your waste water plant and your water treatment plant and certainly some of our water challenges in the province will certainly be lessened.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Have you . . . I take it you're putting more water into Last Mountain Lake this year than last year, would be one question I would ask you?

Another one is talking about, since irrigation is still under Sask Water, a town in my constituency, Davidson, also irrigates with sewage. And I was looking up some statistics here — Moose Jaw I think does 2,400 acres. Did Sask Water ever work with the city of Regina to see about irrigating out of there instead of putting that into the river systems?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for that question. That's a very good question. And as far as we know, Regina has not explored irrigation. And Sask Water is acutely aware of the . . . some of the benefits of effluent irrigation. And in fact Sask Water has 31 effluent irrigation projects in Saskatchewan. So we do support irrigation in the Sask Water Corporation.

But I think when the city looks at that possibility, it would require a very large land area and expenses will certainly enter into the . . . into the costs. So these are some of the things I think we have to look at.

And I would point out Regina has certainly done a tremendous amount of work. They should be commended for the manner in which they have not only managed their water supply but they certainly also have set some very good standards and practices in their waste water treatment. And of course we in SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) and certainly we in Sask Water continue to work with them to make sure that testing is there and all the regulations are followed. I think that that goes without saying nowadays.

But the other thing that they have done as well is they have brought the awareness level up of the average city resident, where they've also asked them to conserve water. And I'm going to get the stats here in a few minutes but this will certainly explain and explain to a lot of people out there exactly what is happening when we talk about Regina not adding to the problem but in fact solving some of the challenges that are out there.

And I would point out from an article of today, Wednesday, May 22, and it's a viewpoint and the article headline reads, "Good to the last drop." And what they're making reference to there of course is the quality of the city's water.

But more important is the report here says, quote:

. . . consumption in Regina declined by 33.2 litres per person per day over the five-year period.

However, the more-than 380 litres of water used per person per day by (the) Reginans is still way above the Canadian average of 335 litres a day.

So there's good progress being made and greater progress will be made in the future. So we would point out that, you know, the city has certainly done their part — the water quality is there, the effluent is being regularly treated and meets all the requirements. They're looking at conservation of water. So there is somewhat of a success story to be told.

And certainly as technology moves forward and as better practices are understood, and perhaps if more inexpensive options are available, that we always must be diligent of trying to make sure that we treat our effluent as best we can. And as these practices become more cost affordable or more available, then we would be diligent and continue working to try and put those measures in place.

So these are things that we still have to work on. And certainly as I pointed out, Sask Water Corporation is keenly aware of some of the options that may be developing, but cost is always a factor and many communities are doing a lot of good work. And Regina is one of them that has co-operated fully. And certainly as time goes on, that co-operation will be counted on, and hopefully better practices, technology, and better means to treat water and make it cleaner water is always encouraged. Thank you.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Talking about water quality, will Sask Water be going to the public meeting in Regina Beach on Monday evening? Will you be there or will some representatives of your department be there?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well certainly at the public meeting we will have officials from Sask Water there, so I can assure them that the Sask Water officials will be there.

And the Regina Beach people can rest assured that if the minister could be there and not stuck in the Assembly here making sure we keep you folks accountable and certainly make sure we have the numbers in this Assembly . . . You know, if I can take five of you with me, I certainly will go. But, you know, sometimes you guys hide in the bush on nights so I want to

make sure that I'm here. And that's one of the reasons why we would be unable to make it.

But I can assure the residents that we will have Sask Water officials there.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you. And I was going to . . . I will extend an invitation that you can ride out with me so that we're side by side, so you don't have to worry about the numbers changing in the House if you would like to come out. Because I believe I'll be coming out there.

Just getting back to one quick question on the irrigation. Are there currently any studies ongoing or completed that identify sewage water as a dryland option? And what would the average cost of sewage water irrigation be opposed to traditional methods of disposal and treatment?

(16:00)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well I think that's not a very good question, and I would point out that the cost of using treated effluent for irrigation as opposed to other methods . . . what I would point out it's actually a two-way street.

First of all it may be less costly to irrigate in certain types of land. And what we have to be careful of here is that when you look at this option of using treated effluent to irrigate land, you have to look at what type of land that you're going to be irrigating, how close is this land to the plant, how big of a system that you need — like often you have to build a reservoir to hold treated effluent over the winter time.

So a lot of these projects that you're talking about are site specific. You know it's difficult to put a cost to this. We have 31 projects in Saskatchewan so we do have some history, but what we can't give you is a very specific number. We need a lot more data, as I mentioned, about the size of the land and what type of soil and how far it is from the plant and so on and so forth. So we need a whole heck of a lot more information and we can't generalize a cost of using treated effluent as a . . . in irrigation versus disposing it in other means.

And what I think I would point out as well is that perhaps disposal of . . . you have to treat your effluent anyway. So there is a cost attached for treating the effluent and perhaps it'll be better to irrigate with just water out of the river system because the effluent, you're going to use it, you have to treat it anyway. So there could be cost factors in there as well.

So we had to be very careful how you analyze the benefits of irrigation with treated effluent versus the irrigation with basic water. There are some cost factors associated. There's site-specific challenges that we have. But clearly, it's certainly something that we're not totally unaware of.

There has been 31 projects in the province and we continue assessing some of these options as we go down this path.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's good that you are working with irrigation because I think it's a worthwhile venture into using . . . a way to use effluent water.

With that, I see in an interview you did, I think it was on May 8, you had said that there would be new legislation with new rules and regulations for drinking water that will come into effect in June. Can you give me a little update on that's coming?

And also with these new rules, will that also affect cities and towns that do put effluent water into the river systems, that drinking water is drawn further down the stream? Will this legislation possibly affect that?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes. What I'll point out in terms of the . . . I believe the details you're talking about is on April 5 in terms of the announcement on our provincial water strategy. And while normally we would defer the questions of the Watershed Authority and certainly The Environmental Management and Protection Act, EMPA, to the Environment ministry, I'm able to share some of the details today, on a temporary basis I might add, as to what is being planned.

But the answer to your question, absolutely, the waste water plants, I will have the same rules and regulations to protect water at source. Certainly the water regulations for people that consume water will certainly be strengthened and that the people would be advised of that. And I would point out that we're going to pass them, hopefully, by June.

There's going to be three Acts that we'll be introducing in the Assembly. And one of them has to do with Sask Water Corporation providing services to the communities out there that may need our services. Utility services is basically what we'll be offering. And that Act will come under Sask Water.

The Watershed Authority, which talks about protecting water at source, that'll be certainly being proposed by the Minister of the Environment. And also the rules and regulations of which you made reference to, that Act will be introduced by Environment and that'll be under The Environmental Management and Protection Act.

So there's three components to our water strategy. One is providing service — engineered technical advice to communities to assist them in putting in good systems. And two, other components talk about protection of water at source. And the third one, of course, is improving the rules and regulations.

And those three Acts will be introduced this session, and they'll be passed in June, and they'll be proclaimed by September, this fall. And that's a rough time frame. And upon proclamation, those rules and regulations will come into effect.

But we're working very closely with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and a number of other media, organizations, and the general public to try and explain to them what the strategy is.

And there's been a lot of good meetings so people are becoming more and more aware of meeting . . . of some of the challenges we have with water. And that awareness is probably our biggest weapon in trying to alleviate the challenges that we all faced and we'll be all facing in the future. So a lot of work has been done; a lot more needs to be done.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess, looking, our time is up. I want to thank you for your co-operation in answering my questions and I look forward to when you come back again. I have many more questions to ask you.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, given that it's raining outside of the legislature and has been raining almost all the time that Sask Water estimates have been up, it's tempting to leave Sask Water go on and on and on. But we can call them back again and hope for more rain.

And I will now move that the committee report progress on Sask Water and move to estimates on Public Service Commission.

**General Revenue Fund
Public Service Commission
Vote 33**

Subvote (PS01)

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. With me today is Wynne Young, the Chair of the Public Service Commission; behind her, Rick McKillop, executive director of employee relations; beside Rick, Clare Isman, executive director of human resource development; and sitting next to Wynne is Lynn Jacobson, director of corporate services.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the minister and her officials.

I would like to . . . of course, it's obviously become quite a concern about the safeguards to protect people's personal information is sort of the hot item now in the news. And different articles have been written in the newspaper. So can you tell us what official mechanisms and safeguards the government has in place to date to protect people's personal information from being released accidentally or on purpose to unauthorized persons from outside of the Public Service Commission — from within to without?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, thank you very much for that question. I appreciate the opportunity to go through, I guess what at this point I'll call the nine-point program, because there seems to be about nine or ten points here.

The first was in 1992 we proclaimed two pieces of legislation: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which together go farther and have broader coverage than any similar legislation in Canada because they also include the municipal level of government. And there's a whole range of authorities embedded in those Acts.

Now in 1999 we also implemented the IT acceptable use policy for — of course IT meaning information technology — and that provides policies and guidelines that govern the use of all information systems of government. In 1999, as well, the information technology office developed a process that committed all government departments to develop and update internal security procedures.

And as well, I don't have the exact date here, but The Health Information Protection Act was proclaimed as well which was specifically regarding the protection of health information and is considered to be a leading-edge Act in Canada.

In 2000, a cross-government security group was set up of over 70 public servants who were brought together several times in the last two years to be educated about security and provided with the tools to write and revise their security policies. And as well we've had municipal officials participating in these events.

And all of these activities that they're talking about of course are governed by The Freedom of Information and Privacy Act.

In 2000, as well, a comprehensive security policy template was created and it provides an outline of all the questions the department would need to answer and all the circumstances it would have to cover in order to have an appropriate security policy. So each department is responsible for ensuring their own security policy based on the template.

(16:15)

Now in 2001 the information technology office created a Web site of security news alert for all of government. And this Web site is updated daily and is password protected. And additional information is also posted as a result of a weekly national conference call.

In 2002, the Information Technology office developed a government-wide security policy for department Web sites. And the government also continues to participate in a national group that has produced a national data classification system which is the cornerstone of security management and it's now being incorporated into all ongoing security policies.

And likely the most recent thing has been, as the government migrates to a single data network under the CommunityNet, it'll enhance security by forcing all Internet traffic through a single connection at SaskTel.

And this connection is actively being monitored for attempts at intrusion by external threats such as hackers. So speaking to your question about external, so there's actually been a number of things done on the policy, procedure, and technical side.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm just going to clarify something you said. Each department has — I believe you said — each department has it's own personnel that would be security checkers or someone that would police that security is doing fine, and that would be under the jurisdiction of each department separately?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Every department would have somebody who's responsible for developing policy and procedures in those areas, subject to the template.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Do the Crowns also have the same policies, the same mechanisms in place? And again, would each Crown have its own security personnel that would be checking this on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's a little more difficult for me to

answer detailed questions about the Crowns, because the PSC (Public Service Commission) largely is responsible for executive government. But we certainly do co-operate with them and share practices and information. But they would likewise have people responsible and would have an overarching policy that they worked with.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Obviously something in this mechanism hasn't worked. There has been leaks or there's leaks being under investigation at any rate.

Will your department be considering making changes to your safeguard mechanisms in the future to tighten it up?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — You know, I'm going to put this answer in the context of the armed forces. And there's security to, I guess, a reasonable degree subject to human fallibility, and then there's security at all costs. And this is no doubt the question that's been going on in airport security systems when it comes to military issues.

And at the moment I would say that without a fairly substantial investment that we probably are doing most of the things that we affordably can do within existing systems, although certainly the investigations will tell us whether there's places where we could tighten up or do things within existing resources.

But I think as we move further down the IT road, one of the things people are going to have to come to grips with is that these things do require some investment to set up the fail-safe type of systems that do internal tracking, etc. And it certainly would be our goal as we, like we say, as we move towards a single data network with CommunityNet, to be able to have more and more of those safeguards.

For example, under CommunityNet one of the things we're able to do is help protect schoolchildren from accessing inappropriate data because they're sharing a network. And rather than each school having to do it, we're able to do it network-wide. So as more departments move into the network it'll make it a little easier to do those things than it is right now with a lot of separate systems.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just to further . . . Okay, the investigation, if I'm understanding it correctly, would be finding out or identifying where the problem was if there was a problem, who was sort of at the bottom of the problem, and if the problem's bigger than what was first discovered. So that is sort of a discovery mechanism as to whether or not the law was broken or the Acts were not adhered to.

Do we also have sort of an evaluation process? Now once the investigation's done obviously something hasn't worked. Will there be an evaluation done as to whether what we have in place is good enough or if we should be looking at improvements? Because I don't think the investigation will recommend improvements. It's going to just find the problem and identify it. But is it going to give recommendations as to what we can do differently to . . . so this doesn't happen in the future?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well we certainly share your concern

that this should not happen. And as we get the information back from the RCMP investigation we will, in a complementary way, have the work that will be going on with the independent review that'll be taking place.

And the independent review will cover everything right from employee oath of office, any checks and balances to ensure systems are working, whether employees are appropriately oriented to their responsibilities. It'll cover the whole gambit of policy and procedure in place around security.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Has there been in the past — obviously not one as public as this one — but has there been problems in the past, perhaps a little more minor, of information, personal information that has gone places that it perhaps shouldn't have, and you've had to look at having investigations done in any of the departments?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I just wanted to mention that in 1989 was the last time there was a security — funny you should ask — in 1989 there was a . . . Shan't I say that? 1989 there was a security investigation and although we've done, you know as I listed in sort of the nine points earlier, we've done a lot in that area since then, it wasn't as a direct result of that investigation.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What policy do you have in place that determines what information can be accessed from what employees? There seems to be quite a number of employees that can access quite personal and in-depth information. So what policy's in place to give those employees the authority that they need?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll give you the short form and if you want more detail we can go into that. But in any duty in government, first of all the risks are assessed and the level of necessary security is determined appropriate to both the sensitivity and the confidentiality of the information under consideration.

The next thing is the access to data is determined based on individual employee job functions, a sort of who needs to know approach. Passwords are implemented to provide for authorized access, and some systems require up to the three passwords before you can access them. And firewalls are used to protect data from outside unauthorized access by hackers or unauthorized users.

Those are the main features of access. Now I don't know if you wanted to know something a little different.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In particular . . . Okay obviously what's at question in this latest issue is the CPIC system and who has access to it. And there seems to be a number of government employees that do have access to CPIC.

So if I was working in SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) for example, what would be the reason why I would need to access CPIC and what would be the criteria that would give me that authorization? Would I have to be management? Would I have to be a CEO (chief executive officer) of the department? Where would I . . . Or who would be given that authorization?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It would have to do more with your specific job rather than your level within the organization and what your specific duties are. I'll give you a for example. If you were perhaps wanting to — I don't know if this is the best example but — sell insurance in the province, there would have to be checks done to make sure that it was a legitimate activity with legitimate representatives who had not been involved in any criminal activity. It ties into licensing in quite a few areas as to who can be licensed for securities for a range of financial activities people are involved in.

But it's very job specific and it's not . . . Although I think a person who is accessing information would not tend to be a very junior employee, it is related to their job duties more than to their level in the organization.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Will there be a comprehensive review done at all of the different government departments and the Crowns as well to see if perhaps we don't need quite as many employees that can access that information? Will that be tightened up or lessened to some degree?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think it's fair to say that would be a matter for our review to determine whether in fact there would be any problems tracked to the kind of issues you're raising, the level or the particular reason for access. And if in fact it's necessary to narrow access, then obviously that's something we would look at.

But I just want to mention is one of the issues raised in a news media report on this was that we also have to be careful in narrowing that we don't create such a backlog of people waiting to be approved. For example if you are registered and licensed as a broker to operate in Saskatchewan, they do thorough criminal background checks of individuals who are entrusted with people's money.

And so I guess you have to balance off the ability to provide timely service in important areas of public service with security measures and hopefully the review will determine whether we've achieved that balance or not.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Would you have any idea as far as number of people or percentage of people that work in the Public Service Commission that have access to CPIC? The percentage of people that have access would be . . . In compared to other provinces in the country, are we in line or are we looking at more employees that have this access or less or where is that at?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This may be a question that could more appropriately be asked specifically of the Justice minister. But I'll just mention that CPIC is used for police services, correction officials, conservation officers, and regulatory agencies who have a role in keeping communities safe.

So I think I did mention that the people that have access is SGI, SERM, Corrections, and there's another one with "s" — SERM, SGI . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, that's Corrections. At any rate, there is four areas of government in total that have involvement with CPIC.

But in terms of the rules governing CPIC, I think the Justice

minister has the largest involvement with people who have CPIC access.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Does the real estate board have access to CPIC?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We wouldn't grant third party access. So if anybody had access, it would be something they had arranged directly themselves.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. We're going to go to a totally different area right now, and I know we talked about it last year, on what was happening to the implementation of pay equity throughout the Public Service Commission. Can you give us an update on your goal to achieve pay equity across the Public Service Commission and where we're at with that?

(16:30)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We're about 85 per cent completed right now and CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees), CUPE's not completely done and the out-of-scope people are not completely done.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Approximately how many people does this involve then? Eighty-five per cent are now implemented into pay equity scales. So if you're looking at 15 per cent, approximately how many people would that involve?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, it would be about 8,500 people. And I'll just emphasize, because our plan was gender neutral in the sense that it also became part of a reclassification of positions that hadn't been classified for years and government had changed and people's duties had changed, so it was part of sort of a big overall classification process. So it actually affected a large number of employees.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Can you give me an estimate to date what additional funding this has cost the government to bring employees into an equitable position? Like how are they being paid out — is it a retroactive payment? And if so, then what kind of money are we looking at to go back and implement?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The part that is completed so far would be a total cost of 16.12 million.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Going specifically to one of your programs, which was the first interns from the Aboriginal public service internship program should be . . . were to begin their terms in September of 2001. Did this occur? And how many interns do you have? And what departments have they been assigned to?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The parts of that question that I can quite quickly answer are that we have hired all of the interns that were approved in the budget, and that they are now entering their second round of placements. And we're now recruiting for the next intake.

And although I can't give you every department, departments like Learning, Health, Public Service Commission, Corrections,

Agriculture and Food, Environment and Resource Management, Economic Development, Highways and Transportation, Justice, Health, Municipal Affairs — it ranges across all the departments.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And that budget has been maintained the same as last year, and moving on to hopefully the same next year?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We have slightly increased in that we kept the 10 from last year and have added 5 more. We felt the program was important enough to strengthen it a bit.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So what is the percentage in the Public Service Commission which are made up of Aboriginal people? And as compared to last year, have we increased that as well, overall percentage of Aboriginal people?

And if you take a moment probably to look through the statistics, how are we doing on increasing the employment of disabled people and women as a percentage of the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now I wasn't clear if you were asking about the whole public service, so I'll give you the numbers for the whole public service. And I've only got comparison from '92 to 2001.

But in '92 we had 3.1 per cent participation by employees of Aboriginal ancestry; now we have 9.8 per cent. Persons with disability in '92 was at 2.4 per cent; that's at 2.9 per cent now. Women in management has gone from 26.8 per cent to 33.3 per cent, and women in non-traditional occupations from 19.8 per cent to 21.8 per cent.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. An issue that was brought to my attention from the visible minorities was the fact that there is no mechanism in place in the Public Service Commission to equate their level of education in whatever country they have come from to what that would be equivalent in Canadian education.

Is this something that your department's looked . . . you know considered or looked into, that there was perhaps we should look at some way of doing an equation on what the equivalent education would be in Canadian education standards, so that they would be able to more easily know what jobs would be available for them, what they're qualified for?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's a couple of different ways that happens. One of the ways is through the prior learning assessment, that actually you can go through a process of having your degrees from another country compared to what the same degree would be in this country.

The other thing that happens is the PSC uses competency-based hiring which means that the . . . tend to look at competencies as opposed to rigidly looking at qualifications.

But I think there's . . . the one other place is where professional associations have designated that you must have a certain kind of degree. And that happens in the medical area where doctors from Commonwealth countries, their qualifications are

transferable, but if they're not from a Commonwealth country they then have to go through a pretty intense regime of testing and work placement in order to qualify to practise here.

But more and more efforts are being made to remove those barriers. And we have made a commitment to work with the Visible Minority Employee's Association to keep working on bringing down those barriers, and being as fair as one can possibly be in the hiring process.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. If I heard you correctly in the beginning of your question, you said there is some mechanism to do an education equivalency comparison. Is that provincially or is that something that's available federally?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The place that tends to do it for the region is Edmonton. But there is also . . . if people are taking classes within provincial educational institutions, they also have the ability to do some in-house assessment as well. But the official place that does it is in Edmonton, and we refer people through them.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Are you finding — this is a very general question but — are you finding basically globally we've all become more transient and so are you finding a lot or an increase in people from out of Canada applying for jobs within the Public Service Commission? Is that increasing at all or are we not seeing that here in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well that's an interesting question because since our application process has become more Web based, you will get people job hunting from around the world who might not have ever found you before — might have been a little harder to find a career bulletin if you were in another country before — so the access is more direct.

But we still find that we have to — if I would put it this way — beat the bushes sometimes to get sufficient inventory of applications in order to be able to provide hiring managers with a range of applications to choose from. So it's kind of a yes and no.

But certainly the Internet has changed everything as far as the number of hits you get on your site and whatnot. Even the youth jobs, when we posted the jobs on the Internet, what had been a fairly small intake just mushroomed up to 7,000 applicants. And so it gives you more to choose from, but it also then becomes a bit of a volume issue in terms of handling the stuff.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I don't have any further questions today.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll just thank the member very much for her thoughtful questions and look forward to further discussion, and thank the officials for assisting us today with the replies.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:45.