

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand today to present a petition on behalf of the people in the Humboldt constituency and area who would like to ensure that the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing remains in Humboldt. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the proposed closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority, and to renew their commitment to rural Saskatchewan and maintain a full, functioning territory operations office in Humboldt.

And the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Humboldt, the communities of Bruno and St. Gregor.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions from people who are concerned about the closure of the Sask Housing Authority office in Humboldt.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the proposed closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for the Saskatchewan Housing Authority, and to renew their commitment to rural Saskatchewan and maintain a full, functioning territory operations office in Humboldt.

The people who've signed this petition are from Muenster and Humboldt.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition. 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, Churchbridge, Saltcoats, Pierceland, and Yorkton.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial

government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Bracken, Orkney, and Climax.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of Weyburn and other areas, and the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support this treatment centre for the abuse of alcohol and provide funding for the same.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn; Calgary, Alberta; Kisbey, Midale, and Red Deer.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here from the citizens of Elbow:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

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

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

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

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and Shellbrook.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the citizens concerned about the closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for the Saskatchewan Housing Authority. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the proposed closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for the Saskatchewan Housing Authority and to renew their commitment to rural Saskatchewan and maintain a full, functioning territory operations office in Humboldt.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Humboldt and St. Gregor.

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 my constituency that are concerned about the tobacco legislation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from my constituency of Spiritwood, Shell Lake, and Mildred.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of Climax and Orkney.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition from citizens concerned about the high costs of prescription drugs. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed the good folks of Bracken, Frontier, and Orkney.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 11, 18, 24, 59, 117, 129, 132, and sessional paper no. 157.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills, I now present the sixth report of said committee which is as follows:

Your committee has considered the following Bills and has agreed to report the same without amendment:

- Bill No. 301 - The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2002
- Bill No. 302 - The Sunnyside Nursing Home Amendment Act, 2002
- Bill No. 303 - The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Amendment Act, 2002

And further that the fees respecting Bills 301 and 302 be remitted to the petitioners less the cost of printing.

Your committee also wishes to report that it has adopted a standard transitional provision as a model for private members' Bills that seek to make changes to the incorporating provisions of a private Act.

Respectfully submitted.

I do now move:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in and that the said Bills be accordingly referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Moved by myself and seconded by the member from Arm River.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Communication

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to present the Standing Committee on Communications third report to the legislature.

Mr. Speaker as Chair of the Standing Committee on Communications presented the second report of the said committee, which read as follows:

Your committee has considered the recommendations of the Public Documents Committee under The Archives Act contained in retention and disposal schedules comprising sessional paper no. 124, including schedule no. 346, Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation; schedule no. 347, Saskatchewan Environment, policy and legislation unit; no.

348, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, Office of French-language Co-ordination; no. 349, Saskatchewan Justice, victim services branch; no. 350, Saskatchewan Environment, fish and wildlife branch; and no. 351, Saskatchewan Learning, post-secondary division, this third session of the 24th legislature and referred to the committee by the Assembly on May 7, 2002.

Your committee recommends to the Assembly that the recommendations of the Public Documents Committee on schedules no. 346, 348, 349, and 351 and that the recommendations of the Public Documents Committee on schedules 347 and 350 as amended by the Standing Committee on Communication be accepted.

Your committee reviewed the report for the Legislative Library for the period ended March 31, 2001 and the committee also considered issues related to the broadcast of the legislative proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Cannington, that the third report of the Standing Committee on Communications be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of youth and culture: with regard to the new sound stage in Regina, how many productions are currently being produced there; how many booking contracts have been signed for future productions and what is the value of each of those contracts; what was the original budget for the development of the new sound stage in Regina; what is the current projection of the anticipated total cost?

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: how many employees were laid off at SOCO when that organization was eliminated and rolled into CIC; how many of those employees have been rehired by CIC?

And further to that, Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Executive Council: what are the names of all the people employed by Executive Council; and for each person, what is their title and their current salary?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Environment: how much revenue was generated in 2001-2002 from the various environmental

charges and/or taxes placed on consumer products, and how much of this revenue is used for environmental programs; what was the breakdown in revenue for the various environmental charges and taxes?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this year Cornwall Alternative School in Regina is celebrating 30 years of leadership in the area of education. And I say leadership because of the work that they do with young people who do not easily benefit from a regular school setting. Theirs is a very difficult task and they've done it well over 30 years.

Here this year on their 30th anniversary visit to the legislature, or a celebration of 30 years, is a group of grade 9 students from Cornwall Alternative School. They're accompanied by their principal, Eunice Cameron, and by instructors Joe Eklund and Alicia Witte.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the legislature to join with me in welcoming these students and staff to our Assembly and to congratulate them on their dedication to education in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of guests to introduce to the Assembly and to you, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon. The first, it is our honour to welcome to the Assembly this afternoon the Hon. Sharon Carstairs, Government Leader in the Senate of Canada who has joined us on the floor of the Assembly this afternoon.

Ms. Carstairs informs me that at one time she was the sole Liberal member of the Manitoba Assembly. I'm just giving the information, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if I may also introduce to you two good friends of mine also seated on the floor of the Assembly, Burt Dougan and Glenn Dougan. They're both very interested and active in politics, although I have to say that over the years I've found Burt's political judgments to be a lot sounder than those of Glenn.

In the Speaker's gallery is Michelle McDonald, who is accompanying Senator Carstairs today. And in the east gallery is David Karwacki, Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party.

This evening Grant Karwacki will be contesting our nominating meeting in Saskatoon Nutana, which I know has the member there very scared because I understand in preparation for his political run, Grant has been taking elocution lessons for the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

I'd ask all members to welcome these guests to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you to all the members of the Assembly a group of very fine public servants who are with us touring the legislature and seated in your gallery today.

Now these are participants from the departments of Learning; Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization; Health; Industry and Resources; Social Services; Justice; Environment; the Legislative Assembly systems branch; and the Legislative Assembly Legislative Library.

And I do look forward to meeting with this group after question period and ask all the members to join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition I would like to join the government member in welcoming the government workers from the various departments. We hope that you enjoy the proceedings and our House Leader will be looking forward to meeting with you a little later on. So welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join the member from North Battleford in welcoming Senator Carstairs to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

I want to also recognize, Mr. Speaker, the accomplishments of Senator Carstairs in her time in politics. In 1990, as we know, Senator Carstairs was first . . . was the first woman in Canada to be elected as the leader of the official opposition.

Then she was later appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1994. And then in 1997 she was appointed as the deputy leader of the government of the Senate, the first woman, Mr. Speaker, in Canada to hold that position. And then she was appointed as leader of the government in the Senate on January 19 of the year 2001.

On March 14, 2001 Prime Minister Chrétien gave Senator Carstairs special responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, for palliative care. This new appointment is a major, first major step forward in the federal government's commitment to quality end-of-life care in Canada. And tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, Senator Carstairs will be speaking at the Saskatchewan Palliative Care Association annual general meeting here in Regina.

And I invite all members to join with me in extending a healthy, a healthy Saskatchewan welcome to our province and to say that we observed her as the sole opposition member in . . . as Liberal member in Manitoba and we recognize what an outstanding work that she has done there. We're yet to see it in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with other members in welcoming Senator Sharon Carstairs to the Saskatchewan legislature. She has a long tradition in Canadian politics, and certainly we're pleased to see her here.

She's a bit of a rare commodity — a Liberal coming to Saskatchewan. But we are indeed happy to see her here and we welcome her here sincerely.

I also would like to introduce a group of women and men in the Speaker's gallery who are very important to Saskatchewan Party MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) because they are the constituency assistants who do such wonderful work for our MLAs back in our ridings. They make us look good and we very much appreciate them.

They are here this afternoon to watch some of the activities in the House and also to meet with some of our staff and some of the Assembly officials as well. Also on their agenda, I think, is to attend one of the fine restaurants in Regina, perhaps see some of Mosaic, and as well tour Government House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce them by name. And as I mention their names if they would please stand up.

I'm happy to introduce Charlene Orr from Wood River; Gwen Beitel from Thunder Creek; Jean Ball from Cannington; Cindy Bell from Weyburn-Big Muddy; Tammy Danychuk from the wonderful riding of Rosetown-Biggar; Shelley Dufault from Kelvington-Wadena; Susan Dunne from Watrous; Tina Durbin from Moosomin; June Epp from Saskatchewan Rivers; Leanne Fox from Estevan; Annie Frechette from Lloydminster; Whitney Friesen from Rosthern; Everett Hindley from Swift Current; Beth Humphrey from Cypress Hills; Amanda Loehndorf from Shellbrook-Spiritwood; Shelley McCrea from Carrot River Valley; Audrey McEwen from Moosomin; Carol Mellnick from Last Mountain-Touchwood; Margaret Payne from Saskatchewan Rivers; Clark Puckett from Arm River; Shelly Schroeder from Estevan; Marcie Swedburg from Weyburn-Big Muddy; Mary Anne Telfer from Humboldt; Sherry Webster from Cypress Hills; Vonnie Widdis from Indian Head-Milestone; and last but not least, Ed Young from Redberry Lake.

Would all members of the legislature please welcome these hard-working people here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well first I would like to join with my colleague from Regina Victoria in welcoming the students and staff of Cornwall Alternative School. They're accompanied by one of my favourite principals in the whole world, my cousin, Eunice Cameron. So I'd like to have all members of the Assembly join with me in giving them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Also in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, I have 58 grade 8 students from White City School. Mr. Speaker, they're going to have a tour shortly after they observe some of question period. They're going to meet on the steps for a photo and have some drinks and a time to be able to ask questions of me. So I hope members will accommodate and be reasonably respectful during question period.

Today, Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied by their teachers,

Joyce Dudley and Chris Beingsner, and by chaperone Liz Gurr.

I would ask all members to join in welcoming the 58 grade 8 students from White City School in my constituency.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to add my words of welcome to the member for North Battleford in welcoming Glenn Dougan and Bert Dougan to the Assembly. They've both been friends of mine for many years, Mr. Speaker, and Bert is very active in politics in North Battleford. And Glenn has been very, very active in terms of community and neighbourhood work in the Caswell neighbourhood in Saskatoon and has contributed enormously there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of government members, we want to add our warm welcome to Glenn and Bert. Welcome to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of legislature, 41 students from the community of Dalmeny. It's good to have them here today. It's just a real beautiful little community and all of those MLAs from Saskatoon probably know of it quite well.

Those are 41, as I said, grade 6 students. And they're accompanied by their teachers, Darlene Thiessen and Roxanne Bitner. And I'll probably have an opportunity after question period to meet with these students.

I believe I'm also having something to do with their community on Saturday when they have their parade. I hate to admit this, but I hope it's rained out. But I do look forward to seeing them and hope they enjoy their time here at the legislature and in Regina.

Would you join me in welcoming them, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming one very special person here today, and that is Charlene Orr, the constituency assistant for the member from Wood River.

Charlene, of course, is my first cousin and proof of the dynamism of political thought that occurs in families. And also proof that regardless of whether we hold a Saskatchewan Party membership or a New Democratic Party membership or, indeed, a Liberal Party membership, we all care very passionately about this great province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I briefly want to join the member for Rosthern in welcoming the students and teachers from Prairie View in Dalmeny. I was able to visit their class. It's a

very well-run class and very well-behaved kids, and I learned a lot.

So welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Party Nomination Contest in Saskatoon Southeast

Mr. Hermanson: — Last night the Saskatchewan Party had a nomination contest in the riding of Saskatoon Southeast. Unlike other party nominations where it's tag you're it, two high-profile candidates brought over 500 people to vote for the next MLA for Saskatoon Southeast. Mr. Speaker, I say the next Saskatoon Southeast MLA because the Saskatchewan Party is confident that Mr. Don Morgan, the successful candidate, is going to win this seat in the next election.

Both Don Morgan and Kevin Waugh ran excellent campaigns — a sign of many more quality Saskatchewan Party candidates in nominations to come.

This nomination contest validates the growing support for the Saskatchewan Party in the cities. It's becoming more and more evident that people of Saskatchewan are ready for a change in government and are willing to take steps to ensure that change.

Don Morgan is a well-known Saskatoon lawyer, public school board trustee, and community volunteer. The members from this side of the House congratulate Don and look forward to the day when he joins us in this Legislative Assembly as part of the next government to grow Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mosaic 2002

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is Tourism Awareness Week and as everyone in this city well knows, the other word for awareness is Mosaic. That's right, Mr. Speaker, starting this evening and running throughout the weekend, Regina's annual, and Saskatchewan's first, multicultural festival gets underway.

Mosaic is listed as one of the top 100 festivals in North America and for good reason. During these three days, for the incredibly reasonable price of \$20, you can travel to 4 continents and 37 countries. Your Mosaic passport will take you where you want to go, and in Regina, Mr. Speaker, you don't get hassled at the border.

How do we celebrate our multicultural heritage? In some very enjoyable ways, Mr. Speaker. We taste the wonderful and authentic regional cuisines that are served at every pavilion. And we may even have a beverage.

We are entertained by some of the most capable and enthusiastic dancers you can find anywhere. Air Canada can do no better and can't even approach the cost.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this is Saskatchewan. And what that means, of course, is that Mosaic is planned, operated, staffed, and presented by a huge number of volunteers. Volunteers who very much deserve our admiration and our thanks.

So go with the member from Lakeview to the Scandinavian pavilion, with the member from Cumberland to the First Nations grand entrance, with the member from Wascana Plains to hang out with the Scots, or with the member from Sherwood to the Polish pavilion — then you only have 30 or so more choices remaining.

Have a good time in Mosaic, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Earns Earth School Designation

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Earl Grey School celebrated its achievement of attaining the prestigious environmental designation of Earth School awarded to it by SEEDS (Society Environment & Development Studies) Canada Foundation.

SEEDS Canada Foundation, the society for environment and energy development studies is a national program that encourages students to undertake projects which enhance the environment.

Students and staff receive recognition as they proceed in the program, becoming a Green school at 100 projects, a Jade school at 250 projects, and an Emerald school at 500 projects.

Mr. Speaker, the Earl Grey School, a school of only 105 students, had to complete 1,000 environmental action plans in order to receive Earth School status. This is truly an amazing achievement when one considers the fact that of the 5,400 schools across Canada that are registered with the SEEDS Canada Foundation, less than half complete 100 projects. Only 200 schools across Canada have reached Earth School status, the Earl Grey School being one of them.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the students and staff of Earl Grey School for their impressive efforts and achievements in completing 1,000 environmental projects, thereby earning the right to be called an Earth School.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Decoration Day Services

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is the 58th anniversary of D-Day — 58 years ago, Allied soldiers including troops from Canada landed on the beaches at Normandy to begin the final push towards the liberation of Europe and the end of World War II.

As the title of the Hollywood movie suggests, it was the longest day. And it was a costly day for many of our young soldiers from across the Allied troops.

(14:00)

With the passing of each year there are fewer veterans of the war to be acknowledged and thanked for their services and for their sacrifices. And that is why this evening I'll be taking part in a Decoration Day service at the Royal Canadian Legion in Yorkton.

Decoration Day, Mr. Speaker, is not a declared national holiday as is Remembrance Day, but is a day observed by Legion posts across the country to honour all veterans, in particular those who served in World War II, which is why the day of June 6 was chosen.

In some places this day is observed on the Sunday closest to D-Day, and the observances involve the visits of local gravesites of veterans, with an appropriate service on site, which will happen tonight in the community of Yorkton.

Mr. Speaker, although the focus of this day is on soldiers of wars past, it will give us an opportunity as well to take a moment and say a prayer for the safety and speedy return home of our men and women currently serving in Afghanistan and in the many peacekeeping places and areas across the troubled world.

And I know that all members will share in this prayer and day of remembrance today.

And I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan 55 plus Games

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the great community of Humboldt is currently hosting the Saskatchewan age 55 plus Games.

I had the opportunity to be in Humboldt last Monday for the opening of the games and to meet and speak with seniors as they prepared for their athletic challenges over the next week.

The zone 5 seniors have been involved in many activities this week. Activities such as bowling, bridge, cribbage, golf, track and field, cycling, darts, shuffleboard, and so on. And I am confident that they have been shown a very great time by the people of Humboldt.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan seniors deserve to be commended for their determination to live healthy and vibrant lifestyles through sport and participation in a myriad of community activities. And these games are an opportunity for seniors to gather to celebrate their wonderful vitality.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the seniors in Humboldt who hosted the age 55 plus Games as well as all the participants and the award winners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Student Cultural Conference in Meadow Lake

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Lynda Haverstock and I had the pleasure of attending a truly unique conference at the Carpenter High School in Meadow Lake.

The Flying Dust First Nation and the Meadow Lake School Division are hosting a one-day conference called Cultures Working Together to Overcome Challenges.

The conference will focus on working together, building trust, celebrating cultures, and overcoming challenges, which will lead to the building of bridges between cultures and in turn will foster and promote healthy relationships and partnerships. Students will participate in team building and cultural awareness sessions.

The conference has received funding from the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation as well as the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Mr. Speaker.

Students from Meadow Lake and surrounding area have been working together to organize this conference. This is an excellent example to others of how hard work and co-operation can make a difference.

The conference features Inuit recording artist Susan Aglukark and motivational speaker Alvin Law, who will discuss the difference one person can make in the world, and the power people have in overcoming disabilities.

In closing, let us congratulate the staff and students of Carpenter High School, the First Nations, and local communities for a job very well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

First Annual Youth Business Excellence Awards Held in Outlook

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about an event of which I attended in Outlook a few days ago, the First Annual Youth Business Excellence Awards.

The evening was set up to recognize the group business planning achievements of students from both the Beechy High School at the town of Beechy, and the Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute in Outlook. The program was developed this past year by the Mid Sask Community Futures Development Corporation as a way to encourage students to develop a business plan.

The first year of the program had 18 students from the 2 schools taking part in the group business plan category. They submitted eight different business plans and on the awards night three of the eight plans were selected for top awards — first prize being \$200, second prize 100, and \$50 for third.

Nicole Lay from the LCBI (Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute) and Ron Hromec from Beechy were the mentors for the students.

First place was awarded to grade 11 students Dani Ringrose, Melayna Covey, and Stacey Jansen of Beechy. Second place was awarded to Grade 10 students Claire Peacock, Leslie Patkau of LCBI in Outlook. Third place honours went to Grade 11 students Sonja Gell and Derek Mitchell of Outlook.

I believe that the remarkable efforts to develop and succeed in business was evident in the awards which were presented on Saturday evening. We must work hard to encourage our young students to develop new business initiatives and to keep those initiatives right here in Saskatchewan.

I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating the remarkable student achievements from the students at Beechy and Outlook.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University of Saskatchewan Construction Plans

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the head of this member's statement says University of Saskatchewan construction plans approaching half a billion dollars.

Mr. Speaker, with Saskatchewan's centenary in sight, University of Saskatchewan is being upgraded, retrofitted, and expanded. Colin Tennent, director of architecture and engineering services in the facilities management division says, "It's an unprecedented volume of construction and renovation."

The Canadian Light Source Synchrotron has stimulated a rash of upgrades and new projects. These projects will also attract highly qualified new faculty which will make it easier to recruit new students.

The addition of the Engineering Building to accommodate the Chemical Engineering department represents \$12 million of the original expenditures. Healthier, safer lab facilities will be constructed in keeping with the vision of a research-intensive university.

The Geology Building is getting a modernized natural sciences library valued at \$1.2 million and a brand new Kinesiology facility is under construction to replace the old phys-ed building.

Some of the other improvements include a MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) device and a new oncology facility. The College of Nursing, Medicine, School of Physical Therapy will be getting to the tune of \$200 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is further example of the achievements which are helping the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) become a leading centre of research and innovation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investigation of Claims by Government Agencies

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the minister of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) over there.

On May 27, May 27 I asked the minister in the House if SGI had hired Robinson Investigations to run surveillance or otherwise investigate Saskatchewan residents who make no-fault insurance claims. He said he had to take the question under advisement, Mr. Speaker.

It is now June 6 and again I pose the question to the NDP. Has the NDP government, through SGI, hired Robinson or in fact any other private investigation firm to run surveillance or investigate Saskatchewan residents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the question. I've been advised that in fact they do not.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board. On May 27, I asked the minister whether or not WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) hires private investigators to run surveillance or otherwise investigate WCB claimants. The minister said and I quote:

. . . I will take it under advisement and I will take notice of the question.

Well, Mr. Speaker, several days have passed and I hope the minister has the answer.

Once again, to the minister: does the Workers' Compensation Board hire private investigators to run surveillance or investigate WCB claimants?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is for the Minister of Social Services.

Does the Department of Social Services hire private investigation companies to run surveillance or investigate Saskatchewan residents who receive social assistance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, the Department of Social Services has its own unit which does reviews.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1996, Virginia Cook of Griffin, Saskatchewan was injured in an automobile accident and has been dealing with SGI ever since.

Earlier this year, she requested her personal injury claim file from SGI. In her file, she was shocked to see expense bills of a private investigator including expenses for a video. She asked her SGI rep what these bills were for and it was confirmed that SGI had hired a private investigator to run surveillance and to videotape her.

Mr. Speaker, this contradicts everything the minister just said about what type of investigations they run and their use of private investigators. Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell the people of Saskatchewan what criteria is used by SGI to determine the use of surveillance and to determine whether they videotape?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm not familiar with that specific case and I don't want to comment about it here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

But I would say, Mr. Speaker . . . I would ask that the public questions many things that these opposition members raise. I said, and I'll say clearly again, I've been advised that SGI does not use any private investigating firm, nor have they used Robinson's or any surveillance of any sort, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the bill submitted by the private investigator to SGI, there was an expense listed for the video. Virginia Cook asked SGI if she had been videotaped and, in a letter dated March 5, the SGI rep said, and I quote:

Our special investigative unit did do an activity check on you. To my knowledge, there was no videotaping done.

Yet in this same . . . this is the same SGI rep who personally talked with the investigator and who authorized the payments to him. And in the PI's (private investigator) transcript, it names the SGI rep as having regular contact with him.

Mr. Speaker, we have the video. If, as the minister just stated, video surveillance . . . Is video surveillance an accepted practice of SGI and why did SGI lie to Ms. Cook and deny that they were doing video surveillance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again all I can say, I can't comment on the specific case but I have been advised by my corporation that they do not hire or employ any private investigating agencies, Mr. Speaker, for the business of surveilling individuals or individual cases, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister for SGI told the media that there are about 6,500 auto injury claims each year in Saskatchewan and only between 8 and 10 of those claims are investigated in depth.

Virginia Cook was injured in 1996 and had been working through the SGI injury program. SGI was only paying Ms. Cook to go to treatment. She was not on income replacement. Yet in the year 2000, SGI suddenly determined they needed to do an activity report on her.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of the transcript of the surveillance and the video is about people other than Ms. Cook. It's about her family, it's about her landlord, and other people.

Mr. Speaker, how does the minister justify this harassment and invasion of privacy?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well again I'll repeat, I will not comment on the specific case. But, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to this issue before and so have officials of SGI out in the rotunda in front of the media, Mr. Speaker.

The member is correct when she says there are some 6,500 cases that are . . . that come before as a part of . . . come before SGI as a part of injury claims, Mr. Speaker. As a result of that, I'm advised that between 8 and 10 are investigated in depth but that's done internally, Mr. Speaker, and it's not done by any . . . it's not done, I'm advised, Mr. Speaker, by any private investigating agencies, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, we clearly seem to be getting mixed messages here. On May 27 the NDP (New Democratic Party) admitted that SGI does investigations but the NDP insisted these investigations were only done if there was suspicion of fraud. And the minister responsible for SGI told this Assembly and I quote:

. . . these checks are not routine . . . These checks would be done in situations where it is believed that there has been insurance fraud . . . where stolen property or stolen vehicles would be involved . . .

Then the Minister of Justice said, and I quote:

. . . There is no wholesale, willy-nilly investigation of people in this province.

If fraud is suspected . . . if crimes are suspected, then surely it's proper that this government take every step (in order, step that) it can . . .

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to Virginia Cook and her family what fraudulent activity, what crime she was suspected of committing to warrant SGI carrying out a video surveillance on her?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me point out that the NDP are located at 1122 Saskatchewan Drive. They're not involved in this okay, Mr. Speaker? So it's not the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the corporation again . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. Again I say that look, if there are situations, Mr. Speaker, that require investigation, it's done internally, I'm advised, by SGI themselves — the investigation unit, Mr. Speaker. Injury claims, some 6,500 annually, Mr. Speaker, I'm advised that between 8 and 10, Mr. Speaker, are investigated in depth, but it's done internally, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have the bills from the private investigator under contract. It is not paid by the . . . working for SGI. It is not internal, it is contract.

Mr. Speaker, Virginia Cook feels like SGI through her . . . through their invasive actions has taken her life away from her. She feels angry; she feels violated; she is shocked that her privacy was invaded for no valid reason.

The last sentence in the private investigator's transcript of surveillance is that the SGI rep is satisfied for now and the file is closed. But Virginia Cook is wondering if she is now under investigation again. Has the file been reopened?

Her life has changed, Mr. Speaker. She's afraid to go out alone. She keeps her curtains drawn in her home, and she sits with her back to the wall and she constantly looks over her shoulder.

Mr. Speaker, how much more money is SGI going to spend on surveillance and harassment of Virginia Cook before they leave her alone and give her her life back?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say categorically that SGI does not go around harassing and surveilling any members of the public, Mr. Speaker. They absolutely do not do that, Mr. Speaker, and they will not do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in cases where there are injury claims — I've said, some 6,500 across the province annually, roughly — SGI, the corporation, Mr. Speaker, will investigate in depth, Mr. Speaker, some 8 or 10 annually I'm advised, Mr. Speaker. But they do not . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, to reassure the public of Saskatchewan, SGI and our corporation, Mr. Speaker, here in this province, will not go around harassing and surveilling any members of the public, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this is clearly not internal. Mr. Speaker, this is a private investigator. Who is advising the minister? Is the minister in charge of this department? Or who really is running the show and who is responsible for SGI? Will the minister either admit his incompetence or fire the incompetent people that he has working for him?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well first of all let me say, Mr. Speaker, if she's suggesting that the minister should be the person that's involved in approving investigations, Mr. Speaker, maybe that's the way they used to run it, Mr. Speaker, but that's not how it's going to be run on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

And I say again, I'll . . . Mr. Speaker, I will advise the member that in a majority of the cases, Mr. Speaker, some 6,500, there are only 8 or 10, Mr. Speaker, that are investigated, and that's done internally. I will commit to that member, Mr. Speaker, that I will look into this case to find out what's going on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after question period on May 27, SGI officials and the minister responsible for SGI told the media very specifically that Robinson Investigations had done work for SGI but it was limited only to the delivery of warrants. That's what he said, Mr. Speaker. When the media asked if any other private investigation firms were used, SGI officials said no.

But clearly SGI hired Stan Montgomery, a PI from Moose Jaw, to follow Virginia Cook and her husband over a 13-day period at a cost of over \$3,500. Mr. Speaker, why did the minister and SGI lie about their . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. According to the rules of this Assembly, the member knows full well that there are certain words that are not to be used. I would ask him at this time to stand and withdraw the words . . . the phrases including the word lie, and apologize to the House.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regards to what you said, I withdraw the word lie and other words such as prevaricate and we'll let the people of Saskatchewan decide . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. Order, please. Order. Once again I would just ask the member . . . Order. I would just ask the member unequivocally to withdraw the statement and apologize to the House for use of the word.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that word and apologize to the House for using that word.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. There's not much more that I can say. I'll look into that specific case, Mr. Speaker.

But I do say again, Mr. Speaker, that SGI has advised me, Mr. Speaker, that they do not hire or employ any private investigating firm for the issue of surveillance, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 28, this same minister, on the John Gormley show . . . the minister was asked, do you use a PI company in those seven or eight cases where you do an in-depth investigation. The minister said, and I quote: "No, we do not."

Mr. Gormley then asked: so there's no role for PIs to get background data on people? And the minister said, and I quote:

I don't believe that would be the case, John. I mean I'm quite sure in saying there's not a role for them.

Mr. Speaker, why did the minister mislead the people of Saskatchewan in that instance when it's obvious that SGI does hire private investigators to investigate the people who put claims in to them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, Mr. Speaker, there's not much more that I can add to what I've already said, Mr. Speaker. Let me say again to the people of Saskatchewan, the corporation, SGI, does not go around harassing and surveilling people, Mr. Speaker.

I have been advised by the corporation — I don't know if I can be any clearer than this, Mr. Speaker — I've been advised by the corporation they do not employ private investigating firms, Mr. Speaker, for surveilling any of the public, Mr. Speaker. If there is an issue — I've described in some 6,500 cases, 8 or 10 of them require further and in-depth investigation — that's done in-house, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some time ago, Mr. Speaker, *Leader-Post*, Regina, Wednesday, October 1, 1997, Lingenfelter apologizes. Why did he apologize, Mr. Speaker? Because SGI was investigating at that time and Mr. Lingenfelter said it wasn't happening.

I think it's time that minister gets up and apologizes to this province for the shoddy way in which he's running his department, for the shoddy way in which he answers questions about the surveillance that his department is doing on the people of this province.

Will he get up in his place and do that now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well often you have to question the information that is provided. But I will say to the members of this House, Mr. Speaker — if they'll listen, Mr. Speaker — I will say that if I am incorrect in this, I will apologize, Mr. Speaker. I will absolutely apologize.

But I'm advised by the corporation, Mr. Speaker, that there is no private investigating firms, Mr. Speaker, who are employed in the business of surveillance . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Next question.

Cost of Fighting Forest Fires

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the unusually high number of forest fires that we saw in this province this spring, people are concerned that the government has adequate resources in order to be able to make sure that they protect the resource, to make sure that their communities are protected.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is very simple. What has the cost of firefighting operations to date been in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I want to report to that member and to the House that the cost of fighting forest fires up until June 1 was approximately \$17 million. We don't keep track of costs on a day-to-day basis, but I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. There are 1,420 employees, permanent and part-time, who are fighting fires in this province and it's a very serious situation. And, Mr. Speaker, they are doing a good job, they are protecting lives, they are protecting property, they are fighting fires.

And this government, Mr. Speaker, is interested in fighting the fires; we're not interested in playing politics about forest fires like that member and that party opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well that is the first indication from this government as to what the cost to date has been.

And I do want to agree with the minister, Mr. Speaker. The people that are out there that are fighting the fires are doing an absolutely fantastic job and they should be congratulated for doing that job, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — But, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there is added pressure. The minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) has admitted that the department is stretched to the limit.

Mr. Speaker, are they going to depend on their non-existent Forest Fire Contingency Fund to cover any excess costs that may be met as a result of the high number of fires this year?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to say to that member and that party over there, Mr. Speaker, that we have had years in this province in the last 10 years where the cost of fighting forest fires has been close to \$100 million. And we have paid for that, Mr. Speaker, under difficult circumstances. And we are going to devote the resources, financial, personnel, and otherwise, that need to be devoted to fight the fires.

We'll be doing that, Mr. Speaker. They'll be playing politics. And while they're playing politics they can talk about non-existent funds all they want, Mr. Speaker. But what I have to say to that member is he should listen to what Bruce Johnstone says, in the *Leader-Post*, who says, "the concept of a fiscal shock absorber (referring to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that that party says doesn't exist) makes good sense." Michael Rushton, of the University of Regina, says, "There is nothing hidden here . . ."

And that Finance critic, by the way, who's yelling from his chair, Mr. Speaker, what did he say about these funds? In *Hansard* May 15, page 464 . . . 1464, he said when I challenged him on this kind of nonsense . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has elapsed, I'm afraid.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Use of Wildlife Habitat Lands for Grazing

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last couple of weeks I've had numerous communications with the Minister of Environment asking that our wildlife habitat lands be opened to grazing.

As you know, Ducks Unlimited has already made a similar announcement about their lands. We now have APAS (Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan) saying that we could have as many as 800,000 of our cattle sold off this year — a massive sell-off.

And one small thing our government can do immediately is open wildlife habitat lands to grazing. Is the minister ready to make that announcement?

(14:30)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite and to the House that we have, in the last several months, had discussions with a number of people about opening up some additional lands again.

Last year, as the member opposite will remember that we talked with the Ducks Unlimited corporation in this province and asked them to open up some additional lands. Last year in this province, SERM opened up around 10,000 acres to livestock producers and ranchers in this province.

And we can announce today, which will be announced later this day or tomorrow morning, that we'll be opening up again, for ranchers and producers in this province, 10,000 acres in order that they might be able to use for grazing lands in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the government is finally moving.

What is the percentage of lands they are not opening up? And also, will there be any charge to ranchers? And what about the

need to have electric fences on these lands? And why has it taken a whole month in the current drought situation for the minister to get around to making this announcement?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that these conversations and these discussions have not only taken place this year. These conversations and discussions took part . . . took place last year.

And we're going to use and implement the same practice that we did last year in allowing and ensuring that producers have access to lands in Saskatchewan.

But I wanted to say to the member opposite, he tells us on a regular basis that both he and the Leader of the Liberal Party have direct access to the federal government about getting money for Saskatchewan producers and farmers, Mr. Speaker. And I read this in the newspapers and I see it on the television set.

And I want to say to the member opposite, being the Liberal . . . lone Liberal representative for Saskatchewan, show me what you've done in the last six or eight months . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Would the member just direct his questions or his comments through the Chair, please.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want the member from North Battleford to rise in his chair or to go out and tell the media what he's done for producers in Saskatchewan as the Liberal member from Saskatchewan. Because I can tell you what the member from North Battleford has done, Mr. Speaker, for farmers in this province — absolutely nothing . . . or the Leader of the Opposition have done absolutely nothing for farmers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Who's been leading the campaign for producers in Saskatchewan today? This Premier here, Mr. Speaker, and this government on this side of the House. That's who's been leading the campaign for farmers in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 71 — The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 71, The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002 be 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. 72 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 72, The Workers' Compensation 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. 73 — The Status of the Artists Act/ Loi sur le statut de l'artiste

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 73, The Status of the Artists Act now be introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 74 — The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 74, The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today on behalf of the government to stand and convert for debates returnable questions 262 through 265 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Questions 262 to 265 converted to orders for return (debatable).

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses for questions 266 through 271 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses for 266 to 271 inclusive have been tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand and convert for debates returnable.

The Speaker: — 272 converted to debates returnable . . . motions for debates returnable.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to table a written response for question no. 273 on behalf of the government.

The Speaker: — Response to 273 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — . . . that we convert for debates returnable 274, 275, 276, and 277. Pardon me, all the way through to 281.

The Speaker: — Questions 274 through to 281 converted to motions for return (debatable).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After my comments, I'll be moving second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, it has been over a century since the plough met Saskatchewan's prairie. At first, the transition from prairie to farm land was slow. But after World War II, farmers cultivated more land and grew more crops. And often, Mr. Speaker, marginal land was cleared, ploughed, and used to grow grains and oilseeds.

Southern Saskatchewan now has one of the most modified landscapes in the world. Over the past century, we have seen more than 75 per cent of our natural area in the agricultural region being used for farms and other developments such as roads, towns, and cities. And over the years the farm land has given us bountiful crops. It has also become home to wildlife populations which weren't previously found in the province, such as whitetail deer, raccoon, red fox, and many small birds.

This habitat provides food, water, and shelter to more than 400 species of wildlife. Much of the remaining wildlife habitat is on Crown land. These natural areas are very important for maintaining existing wildlife populations.

The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act protects 3.4 million acres of natural upland and natural wetland in the agriculture area. In fact The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act recognizes and supports some agricultural uses, and oil and gas activities.

Much of the land under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is leased to cattle producers who use it for grazing or haying. I want to emphasize that The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act designation has no effect on the lessee's right to continue leasing the land.

Over the years producers who lease The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act land have proven to be good stewards, and wildlife is benefiting. We recognize that it has been the lessees' good stewardship of the land that has maintained these very important natural areas.

The philosophy of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is to conserve wildlife habitat while allowing traditional uses. For example, oil and gas companies may explore and drill but must ensure that they do very little damage to the surface.

The amendment to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is a matter of taking a bit of land out of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act and adding a bit back in. The amendment to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act will allow the removal of 743 acres.

Some parcels of land included in the original Wildlife Habitat Protection Act were already developed so much they had marginal value to wildlife but were of huge value to producers. Agreements with some of the producers involved will see us swapping some of this marginal wildlife land for high quality

wildlife habitat. We will exchange 743 acres of marginal wildlife land for 320 acres of high quality wildlife habitat.

This is a good move that will continue to meet the needs of the producers involved and to preserve important habitat. We are continuing to work to preserve habitat for our birds, fish, and animals.

We've also used the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund to buy 6,741 acres of prime wildlife habitat. The Representative Areas Network, or RAN, is also part of the province's efforts to conserve habitat.

Today, Mr. Speaker, 12.4 million acres of prime wildlife habitats are included in RAN. When we have completed the RAN process, there will be 15 million acres of protected wildlife habitat. That is 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker, 10 per cent of the province's land.

Actions the province has undertaken under RAN: the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act have put Saskatchewan at the forefront of national and international habitat in ecosystem conservation.

Wise, multiple uses of public land can curb habitat loss while accommodating the interests of agriculture, wildlife, and the public.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2002.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Act changes the boundaries of a number of habitat areas. I'm not sure whether those changes though, Mr. Speaker, are increasing or decreasing the habitat area.

The habitat, Mr. Speaker, is very important to the wildlife of all this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it's important to people both in rural areas, so that they may enjoy the wildlife and the benefits thereof, and it's important, Mr. Speaker, to the people of urban Saskatchewan, so that they can enjoy the communing with nature, Mr. Speaker — seeing the mammals, the birds, the fauna that's out there, and the flora that we all enjoy in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And something that a good many of the tourists in Saskatchewan that travel both No. 1 and the Yellowhead Highway seem to miss. They whiz through the province, Mr. Speaker, from side to side saying, gee, isn't it flat here, and they miss, Mr. Speaker, our most beautiful areas because they simply don't stop and look.

And, Mr. Speaker, we do have wonderful flora and fauna in this province and we need to learn to appreciate it.

But in doing so, Mr. Speaker, in increasing the amount of habitat that is available, particularly to wildlife, to large mammals to waterfowl, Mr. Speaker, we also create a problem — a problem for our agriculture producers.

(14:45)

They suffer the depredations of that increased either herd or flock, Mr. Speaker. And yet this government is cutting the compensation that is paid for that depredation. And fact is, if you look, Mr. Speaker, under the Agriculture department budgets this year, they have eliminated both the Big Game Compensation Fund and the waterfowl compensation fund, Mr. Speaker.

So while on one hand it's good to increase the number of wildlife we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, it should not . . . the cost of that should not be borne totally by the agriculture producers of this province. That cost should be borne by all of those that enjoy our wildlife, our flora, and our fauna. And that's both rural residents and urban residents, Mr. Speaker. So therefore that compensation should come from the General Revenue Fund, not from the hip pocket of the farmers who own the land on which the big game animals and the waterfowl are feeding. And that is exactly what is happening today under this government.

The minister talked about marginal lands being put to the plough and that was indeed the case. But there was a reason for that, Mr. Speaker. The reason for that was that under the Canadian Wheat Board, to be able to sell your crops, an agricultural producer had to maximize the number of acres he could claim to have under cultivation. It was the Canadian Wheat Board's fault, Mr. Speaker, that a good many of the farmers ploughed up that marginal land so that they could increase the number of acres they had and thereby sell the commodities they had for sale. It was the failure, Mr. Speaker, of the supporters of the Canadian Wheat Board that caused those marginal lands, Mr. Speaker, to be cultivated.

Because there are a number of lands, Mr. Speaker, in question here, there needs to be a determination on how that is going to affect the neighbouring properties when these change. How much depredation will take place upon the neighbouring lands by the increased wildlife? And, Mr. Speaker, the minister has not made any comments in that direction, has not given any indication that the government is prepared to pay compensation. That needs to be considered further, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore at this time I would move we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 54 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move the second reading of The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, this Act is being amended to accomplish the goals of reducing provincial government involvement in local decision making, enabling the introduction of new property assessment methods, and increasing the reporting and transparency requirements for municipal, water, and sewer operations.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments to broaden the scope of municipal authority respond to municipal sector requests for more municipal autonomy in matters that are truly local in

nature and do not involve an overriding provincial interest. Many of these amendments address specific issues raised by municipal stakeholders.

The amendments proposed in this Bill will provide municipalities with greater flexibility to deal with local issues, streamline administrative processes, and enhance the decision-making capacity of municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, the business and commercial sector has lobbied for improvements to commercial property valuation for many years, including the use of the income approach. Enabling the use of new assessment methods should enhance equity within commercial property classes and will place Saskatchewan's assessment system on a par with those in other jurisdictions; such as Alberta, BC (British Columbia), Manitoba, and Ontario.

The amendments proposed in this Bill dealing with property valuation will remove the current legislative prohibition on income based methods and enable the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and the other assessing authorities to work towards the implementation of the income approach.

Mr. Speaker, SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) and the municipal sector, as the drivers of the assessment system, are now in a position to manage the process, not the province. Current provisions will be expanded regarding the collection of assessment information and there will be increased consequences of non-compliance in providing the necessary information. Additional measures will be provided to safeguard and keep confidential, potentially sensitive information. As well, councils will be allowed to open the assessment roll year-round and refund fees for . . . refund fees for deficit appeal notices.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments for enhancing local decision making and introducing new property assessment methods have been reviewed by SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and the other municipal stakeholders. The government has undertaken extensive discussions on the legislative issues regarding the implementation of the income approach with the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and the four major cities.

Both SAMA and the city mayors support in principle implementation of the income approach by 2009. How quickly implementation takes place is up to the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and the cities. Our recent budget, Mr. Speaker, had funds to assist SAMA in this process.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to these amendments, an amendment that increases reporting and transparency requirements for municipal water and sewer operations is proposed as part of government's long-term, safe drinking water strategy. Municipalities will be required to publicly disclose their utility rate policies and strategy; the complete, final operations of the utility including transfers to general revenue; and the creation of a long-term financial plan that includes strategies for the replacement of aging infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, although, as a result of these amendments, municipalities will have to provide more information to the

public, an essential element of the government's strategy is for the public to know how their water systems are being managed to ensure public safety. This is consistent with the principle of municipal accountability to the public as opposed to the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, passage of this Bill will increase municipal autonomy and authority while reducing provincial oversight. Passage of this Bill will continue the process of providing municipalities with greater political independence to manage their own affairs and will broaden the scope of local authority and decision-making capacity balanced by increased public accountability.

Mr. Speaker, passage of this Bill will enable the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and the assessing authorities to work towards implementation of assessment methods at their own pace and to determine when and how the methods are introduced through the assessment manual.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly my pleasure today to move second reading of Bill No. 54, The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2002.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak on Act No. 54 to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984.

The minister has raised a number of questions and concerns in this Act. And the number one concern that has to be highlighted is the history of what the senior governments have been doing as far as off-loading services and underfunding municipalities.

The federal government has done that and in turn the provincial government has underfunded the municipalities in such a way that it leaves the municipalities in a situation where they have control, they have the laws to do things, but they have no funding to actually carry out their duties.

And it's of great concern that the funding aspect is as important or more important as changing rules and regulations to give municipalities more funding. And off-loading onto the municipalities has been a serious concern for quite some time and it increases the taxes at the local level while the provincial government continues to off-load their responsibilities onto the municipality.

The minister spoke about the assessment method in SAMA. And as we know, SAMA's been basically in upheaval for quite some time and hopefully they have got their house in order and have the urban municipalities onside as far as the operation of SAMA is concerned.

When we speak of the method of assessing, the minister speaks of the income on the property — there's a number of questions concerning that. What is the income going to be based on — actually what the land generates or is it based on a lease rate or the activities that is on the land?

So there's a number of questions concerning that particular item as well. And it's a matter of the owner leasing the land to

someone who has a factory or has a business on it, and what is that income really based on?

Another area which I have a bit more personal involvement with, is the area around the . . . concerning the resort area around Turtle Lake. Having requested that the lake itself be considered a common boundary within the meaning of the section, and so on and so forth, I have a number of people that have talked to me that live at Turtle Lake or have cabins at Turtle Lake, and they do not want to belong to a larger municipality. There are certain people in that area that is forcing, forcing the issue and these citizens are quite happy with the structure that they have right now.

And it's of great concern to me and to those individuals living at Turtle Lake that they be consulted and have a voice in any decision that is made concerning amalgamation. And whenever we talk about amalgamation we always consider what the government tried to do as far as forced amalgamation with the rural municipalities in the past.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of questions, concerns here, and we will have our critic for municipal governments take a very close look at this. And we, as legislators on this side of the House, will consult with the stakeholders and the citizens and . . . before we proceed with this Bill any further.

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

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 55 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move the second reading of The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, similar to The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2002, read just a little earlier, this Act is also being amended to reduce provincial government involvement in local decision making, to enable the introduction of new property assessment methods, and to increase the reporting and transparency requirements for municipal water and sewer operations.

Similarly, the amendments proposed in this Bill will provide municipalities with greater flexibility to deal with local issues, streamline their administrative processes, and enhance the decision-making capacity of municipalities.

As well, the amendments proposed in this Bill dealing with property valuation will remove the current legislative prohibition on income-based methods and enable the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, or SAMA, and the other assessing authorities to work towards the implementation of the income approach.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments for enhancing local decision making and introducing new property assessment methods have been reviewed by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and therefore we . . . the consultation has been undertaken with that association.

The government shared drafting instructions with the municipal associations and other stakeholders so that they had the opportunity to analyze the proposed amendments in greater detail. The direct consultations again prove to be a good basis for achieving a consensus on virtually all of these amendments.

(15:00)

Similar to The Urban Municipal Amendment Act, 2002 introduced earlier, the government has undertaken extensive discussions on the legislative issues regarding the implementation of the income approach with the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency.

Various umbrella groups within the business and commercial sector, the municipal associations, and assessing authorities were as well sent drafting instructions to both refine the wording of the provisions and ensure support for the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, some of the specific changes to this legislation are worth highlighting. And I'd like to do that.

First of all, the property tax exemption has been extended regarding agricultural improvements to include leased storage space at producer-owned inland grain terminals. Secondly, rural municipalities will have the authority to hold joint elections with school divisions or urban municipalities when election days are only days apart to prevent voter confusion.

Next, councils will have the option of applying any outstanding custom work charges to property taxes as opposed to requiring councils to do so. This is consistent with the provisions in the urban and northern Acts.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, amendments will simplify and enhance the authority to provide grants to persons as well as corporations and businesses, consistent once again with similar provisions in The Urban Municipality Act.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, with The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, passage of this Bill will increase municipal autonomy and authority while reducing provincial oversight. Passage of this Bill will continue the process of providing municipalities with greater political independence to manage their own affairs and will broaden the scope of local authority and decision-making capacity.

Mr. Speaker, passage of this Bill will enable the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and the assessing authorities to work towards implementation of assessment methods at their own pace and to determine when and how the methods are introduced through the assessment manual.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 55, The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Redberry pointed out in The Urban Municipality Act that was up earlier — the amendments to it — this is very much the same. Problems that a large part of the municipalities are facing deal with the downloading by this government onto the municipalities, onto the property taxpayers

of those municipalities.

So while you may make adjustments, Mr. Speaker, in how the assessments are being done, it still means, Mr. Speaker, that the same people are paying the bill. That it has no relationship, Mr. Speaker, is what's happening — no relationship to the ability to pay, Mr. Speaker.

The minister has talked about making changes allowing it to go to income based assessment, Mr. Speaker. But again, what kind of assessment is he talking about? Is he talking about whatever that piece of property might generate as far as rents are concerned?

Well, Mr. Speaker, right now across rural Saskatchewan you can rent a lot of agricultural property for paying the taxes. So does that now become the value of the property — that its tax rate is 5, 10, \$20 an acre, and that is now the value of the property for tax assessment?

Or, Mr. Speaker, is it based on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the minister hollers across, productivity. That's what the old assessment was based on, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't based on the income; it was based on a formula including the productivity of the land. It dealt with what kind of land it was, how much alkali there was, how many . . . how much rocks there were, how many trees and bushes and sloughs there were. On farm land, Mr. Speaker, it dealt with the productivity of the land, and that was the assessment base.

But now when you switch to an income base, it's . . . where is that income measured? Is it measured on the productivity of the land, of the items that were grown on that land? So the changes when one year you grow 20 bushels to the acre wheat and the price is \$5 an acre, so now your income is \$100 an acre, and next year — with this government in power and the Liberals in Ottawa ignoring the trade subsidies — the price of wheat is \$2, so now the income is \$40 for that same 20 bushels, that's now the value of the land, Mr. Speaker.

How often does it change? How often are these reassessments going to be done, Mr. Speaker? Are they going to be done on an annual basis? Are they going to be done on a five-year basis? Are they going to be done on a 10-year basis, Mr. Speaker? If you're unlucky enough to happen to hit a high productive year with a high price, for the next 10 years of drought you're now faced with paying these high taxes. How is this going to work, Mr. Speaker?

Those are some of the questions that the minister needs to be able to provide in an answer and he hasn't done so, Mr. Speaker, in his initial address on explaining how this Bill is going to work.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also talks about restructuring. They've dropped the word amalgamation. They got burned a little bit in pushing amalgamation around the province, Mr. Speaker, so now they've changed the word to restructuring.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it talks about two municipalities restructuring to become one municipality, you know. And what I find kind of ironic in here, Mr. Speaker, is the minister is encouraging people, municipalities, to do restructuring and then

it says that the municipality shall apply to the minister to issue an order incorporating new municipalities or municipal districts.

Mr. Speaker, what it should say is the municipalities shall inform the minister to issue an order incorporating new municipalities. The choice isn't the minister's to make, and that's what it says when you apply to the minister, asking him please, Mr. Minister, will you allow us to incorporate. If two municipalities want to incorporate and form one, they should inform the minister they're doing so and he should make the proper things happen to allow it to happen.

That's not what the Bill implies, Mr. Speaker. It implies that you have to go to senior government, to the minister, and ask permission. Can we please, mother? Well, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities should have the jurisdictional power to make that decision for themselves, and it's simply the minister's duty then to make sure it happens.

Mr. Speaker, in another section of the Bill — and this one I'm not quite exactly sure why you would do this — but it says not more than once a day and at the end of the last working day of each month, deposit into any bank or credit union designated by the council, all collections received by the administrator.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what's wrong with making your deposits more than once a day? Why does it say not more than once a day? Is it too far to walk down to the corner of the street to make your deposit at noon . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I think the people who should be embarrassed by this, Mr. Speaker, is the minister and the government.

Why would you impede somebody if they've had 20 people come into the office to make their taxes payment, which could easily be 50 to \$100,000, why wouldn't you want to put that money in the bank as soon as possible? Why are you forced to only do it once a day? Why are you forced to keep it in your office overnight, Mr. Speaker? Why? What sense does it possibly make to say you can't make your deposits more than once a day? It's just inane, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government is making a number of changes in this Act and the last example is one, is just one of those, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things in this Bill that need to be seriously looked at and questioned — need more explanation from this minister, Mr. Speaker, because he provided none; he provided fluff in his speech, Mr. Speaker — that at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 56 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again, this time to move the second reading of The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, similar to the urban and rural municipal amendment Acts read earlier, this Act is also being amended to

reduce provincial government involvement in local decision making, to enable the introduction of new property assessment methods, and to increase the reporting and transparency requirements for municipal water and sewer operations.

Similarly, the amendments proposed in this Bill will provide municipalities with greater flexibility to deal with local issues as well as streamline administrative processes and enhance the decision-making capacity of municipalities.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill dealing with property valuation will remove the current legislative prohibition on income-based methods and enable the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and other assessing authorities to work towards the implementation of the income approach.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments for enhancing local decision making and introducing new property assessment methods have been reviewed with the Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities.

As I noted in both the urban and rural Acts read earlier, the government has undertaken extensive discussion of the legislative issues regarding the implementation of the income approach with the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency. As well, various umbrella groups within the business and commercial sector, the municipal associations and assessing authorities, as well, were sent drafting instructions to both refine the wording of the provisions and to ensure support for these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, once again I'd like to just underline some specific changes to this legislation. An amendment will make The Northern Municipalities Act fully applicable to the town of Creighton.

The town has requested to be governed for legislative purposes by the northern Act rather than the urban Act in order to provide wider municipal authority and enhance guarantees with respect to issues of inter-municipal co-operation agreements and to remove any ambiguity about Creighton's eligibility for funding from the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account.

The requirements for bylaws of a northern hamlet to be subject to prior approval of the minister will be removed. And as well, towns will be able to increase or decrease the size of council according to local desire. Councils will not be able to reduce the size of council below two aldermen — alderpersons — ensuring town councils will consist of at least three elected members.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is consistent with the urban and rural Acts read earlier. Passage of it will increase municipal autonomy and authority while reducing provincial oversight. Passage of it will continue the process of providing municipalities with greater political independence to manage their own affairs and will broaden the scope of local authority and decision-making capacity.

And, Mr. Speaker, passage of this Bill will enable the Assessment Management Agency and the assessing authorities to work towards the implementation of assessment methods at their own pace and to determine when and how the methods are

introduced through the assessment manual.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 56, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2002.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:15)

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to speak to Bill No. 56, An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has again discussed off-loading more powers and responsibilities to the northern municipalities. And again we have to make the point that the government has a tendency to underfund the municipalities, and it leaves the municipalities in a terrible situation where they have the power and they have the authority, but they don't have any funding to carry out their duties.

And, Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke of water concerns, infrastructure. As we know, there's been a huge problem in this province concerning infrastructure and water, and it's no different in the northern communities. Again, the communities do not have the financial resources to look after their water concerns and like other municipalities in the province, they have a great deal of concern about that.

One area, Mr. Speaker, that kind of jumps out at me. It's kind of an area that some members of this House may take very seriously, especially the member from Rosthern. In no. 8 existing provision it says, concerning junked material, it says:

... In this section, '**junked material**' means any equipment, electrical appliance or other manufactured item or any automobile, tractor, truck, (or) trailer . . .

... has no (currently) valid licence plates attached to it
...

And it goes on and on concerning the description of junk material.

And I'd just like to make the point that the member of Rosthern has a great love for — well let's put it, some people's junk is other people's treasure — and the member from Rosthern has a great love of restoring vehicles. And I'm sure when he reads this Act, he'll be gravely distressed to hear that this pieces of equipment are considered junk. It goes on to say:

... is in a rusted, wrecked, partly wrecked, dismantled, partly dismantled, inoperative or abandoned condition . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Rosthern, this is like Christmas. I mean, he just can't wait to find these vehicles. I was wondering if the government would like to have a list of these so-called junk material, put it on the Internet, Mr. Speaker, put it on the Internet so people like the member from Rosthern can go and find and buy this so-called junk pieces of equipment and restore them into their beautiful condition they once were.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think this is probably one of the more interesting parts of this. And it goes on to say only two out of the three amendments or the . . . need to be considered in order to call a piece of equipment junk vehicle.

And so I'd like the minister to reconsider this and maybe speak with the member from Rosthern behind the bar after, or the member from Rosthern can ask some questions to the minister concerning this so-called junk equipment. And I know there's many other people in the province who would take great exception to calling some of these treasures junk equipment.

Mr. Speaker, as we know there was a number of other provisions in the Act, and I would just like again to speak about the assessment manual that is being proposed. The manual . . . possibly we can have the listing of this junk equipment put in the assessment manual so everyone can see what is out there, and we can work at restoring some of these beautiful pieces of equipment.

And, Mr. Speaker, the minister has stated that SAMA has . . . the assessment manual has been established by SAMA and . . . but we would have to take a close look at what SAMA has considered and included in that manual as far as if it takes into account all the existing concerns and problems of the northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would also again like to point out concerning the no income-based appraisal portion of the Act, and exactly where the minister is going in that area and to really confirm or explain that provision so that the general public knows exactly where they are.

And again, I would like to speak on the provision of really democratic principles of the smaller communities having some say and rights in the changes that this amendment to the Act is taking place.

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

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.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise and speak about the provisions in The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2002.

As you undoubtedly know, The Medical Profession Act is an Act that governs the legislation for the College of Physicians and Surgeons in our province.

And the provisions in this Act depart from the norm to some extent in that it is intended that these provisions and these amendments are designed to accommodate podiatric surgeons

in the province. And this is a category of surgeon in the province that has not been properly covered under the existing legislation and there was some discussion and dilemma as to how it should be done.

The Department of Health, I understand, talked to the College of Physicians and Surgeons to see if they would be willing to consider having amendments made to their legislation in order to accommodate the regulation and scope of practice guidelines and things of that nature for this special category of surgeons. And after some discussion, the College of Physicians and Surgeons recognized that this was a rather small group of surgical practitioners and that it would make some sense for them to consider accepting the responsibility of professional oversight.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some concerns raised by the Saskatchewan Medical Association because this is somewhat of a departure from the standard practice that has existed in the past, and some of these concerns have been raised and I think that they're valid ones.

Mr. Speaker, while there is sort of two opinions on this issue, I believe that the overwhelming benefit that would occur because of the need for this special category of surgery in the province to be properly governed and have oversight on, overrides the concerns that have been raised and I'm sure that as time evolves this can be accommodated.

Mr. Speaker, podiatric surgery is an advancing category of specialty and it's particularly important in light of the fact that our province and many jurisdictions are seeing a rather dramatic increase in the onset of diabetes in not only Aboriginal populations but non-Aboriginal populations as well. And one of the outcomes of diabetes is very often some very severe sores of the lower extremities and these are the exact conditions that podiatric surgeons are very capable of dealing with appropriately.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think in reviewing this legislation, on the principle of it, I am certainly, and we in the official opposition, are convinced of the compelling argument that this is important and necessary. We have confidence that the details of how the regulations within the scope of practice and the oversight body of the College of Physicians and Surgeons will be able to accommodate this very important category.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have some questions when we look at the detailed clauses of the Bill to see exactly how the government and the department is going to handle some of the issues that have been raised, but at this time I certainly would be pleased to, in principle, extend our support to this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the amendments to this Bill are largely as a result of discussions that occurred between the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and I believe it's a direct response to a recommendation arising out of a coroner's inquest into the death of Saskatoon resident Darcy Ironchild.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that were identified out of that inquest is that the current system that we have for identifying the patterns of prescription drug utilization, if you like, did not properly accommodate and was not possible in order to track multiple prescriptions. And so an individual might be able to go to a number of different physicians and get similar prescriptions and then use them in an appropriate way that could actually result in very significant side effects and overdose situations occurring.

And so I think the coroner's inquest strongly recommended that the enabling legislation be changed so that these kinds of conditions would be minimized or eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a very important consideration. There have been those that have raised issues of privacy and things of that nature, but again I think in a very practical, pragmatic way this legislation certainly provides an overwhelming public good. And as such, the official opposition will be pleased to lend its support to this legislation.

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

Bill No. 38

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 38 — The Paramedics Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak about the issues surrounding the proposed Paramedics Act.

Mr. Speaker, the paramedics in our province provide a very vital and essential service in our province. And I believe that they are one of the very last health professional groups in the province that do not have their own independent professional governing legislation.

And this legislation would give them the framework for self-regulation as a professional health body in the province. And as such, we think that this is an important bit of legislation and a very important concept.

Mr. Speaker, we've consulted with a number of people on this issue. And we think that by and large the information that we have back is that they are supportive of the general direction and thrust of this legislation.

Certainly we've heard from the Paramedic Association and they themselves were very interested that this legislation be passed in a timely fashion. We've heard from the Saskatchewan SEMSA (Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association) organization, the EMS (emergency medical

services) owners and operators, and they're very much supportive of it.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to report that there are at least one group of people who are feeling that they had something very valuable to offer in the discussion of the Bill and the Department of Health has not seen fit to consult them, and that is the fire chiefs of the province. And as you realize in some cities in this province, the actual fire department is very much at the lead in terms of providing the EMT (emergency medical technician) response in many of our cities. And so I think that it's important that they be recognized and that their comments and their concerns be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, I don't hear them saying that they're opposed to this legislation, but they're feeling as if the Department of Health and the government could have done a more complete and thorough job of consulting with the stakeholders that have some insight and will be impacted by this legislation by being consulted.

(15:30)

And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to serve notice that I think it was a very serious oversight on the behalf of the minister and the Department of Health not to give due consideration and consultation to the fire chiefs of the province and to get their input as to this legislation. There are some specific issues that they would like to raise, Mr. Speaker, and I think that in principle we can certainly raise those issues on their behalf when this Bill is discussed in committee.

In balance, Mr. Speaker, we very much are supportive of our paramedics in this province. We're very supportive and very appreciative of the very excellent work that they do. And we think that they have developed the expertise and the track record to be considered a professional body in the health care field who have very much the capability and the commitment to self-regulate. And on that basis and principle we support the legislation.

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

Bill No. 41

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 41 — The Health Quality Council Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this bit of legislation is a very significant bit of information and bit of legislation that I think it's important to spend a little bit of time talking about.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of a Quality Council is an important philosophical concept and actually, in terms of health care change and health care renewal in Canada, is one of the issues that have been talked about really across this country. But I believe that this is perhaps the first legislative body that's being constructed in our country and as such it deserves particular attention.

In principle I think that no one can disagree with the concept that health care has to talk much more about quality and perhaps much less about quantity. Very often in our discussions and in our debates about the issues surrounding health care, we forget that what we have to focus on is the client — the citizen of the province who requires quality health care. And we say it without really thinking what that means in a very defined way.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the past, we very often got bogged down into almost a bean-counting exercise of quantity and thought that we could deliver better health care if we somehow dealt with the quantity issues. And I think, Mr. Speaker, over the last while that that has been shown to not really work very effectively or efficiently at all.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of a Quality Council that would try to set standards of quality practice and quality delivery of health care is a very noble and honourable exercise and endeavour to be aspired to. But, Mr. Speaker, I also think that there are certain issues that have to be discussed and we have to try to understand what is the best way in order to achieve that very noble result.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation, as I understand it, is really an appointment of the minister, and is answerable to the minister and can deal with issues that are presented to it and referred to it by the minister as well as other issues. And I think that there has been and continues to be a very distinct and noticeable consolidation of authority and responsibility of the health care service delivery in our province in this legislative session — and other legislation that's before the House confirms that as well, but that's a discussion for another day — is a very distinct and deliberate consolidation of authority and responsibility in the hands of the Department of Health and the minister.

And I think that that is potentially a double-edged sword. On one hand there is the possibility or the need to have some general direction and some consensus as to what are the provincial issues that have to be addressed. But on the other hand there has to be some ability for agencies who are looking at things to have an arm's length and a level of independence from the Department of Health and the minister.

If we're going to ask a body to be a Quality Council that are independently evaluating how we do things, there has to be a level of independence from the department so that this Quality Council can truly exercise its work and make its opinions based on quantitative, independent analysis. And I think that there are some concerns that have been raised on a number of fronts that certainly raise concerns about the closeness of the Department of Health and the minister's office to the appointment of the board and the rules that the minister will set down.

Mr. Speaker, the draft legislation or the legislation also basically says that this is an advisory body which, by definition, implies that the Department of Health or the minister are not obligated to accept the advice in any sort of a way. And again, I think that there has to be a methodology for putting more of an onus of a responsibility and independence on this Quality Council, and more of an onus and responsibility on the government and the minister to justify why they have not accepted the advice that this Quality Council gives.

I think that health agencies and health professionals in this province have, by and large, expressed their support for the idea in concept of a Quality Council. But I've heard from a number of these professional associations and they have expressed the concerns that I have outlined.

And I guess that until we actually see in practice how this is going to work and we can make some suggestions about particular clauses of the legislation and get on the *Hansard* record exactly what the government's intentions are as to how these issues will be considered, I think that in principle we, as the official opposition, join with health professionals across this province in our support of the concept of a Quality Council.

The issues that I have raised in terms of concerns are issues that are shared pretty universally and it'll be interesting to see how this happens in practice.

And so, Mr. Speaker, again the official opposition would like to go on record as being supportive of the concept of a Quality Council and to point out that there are some issues that we think it is not only important but critical to discuss as to the details of how this legislation is going to be operated and how the minister is interpreting some of the issues that are rather vague in the legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to discussing those in committee.

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

Bill No. 42

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 42 — The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this legislation is largely a housekeeping bit of legislation that provides for methodologies of billing as a result of the changes that were done, I believe, last session that allowed for professional medical incorporation. And so that legislation and the changes to it to allow for medical professionals to incorporate in the province created some issues about the methodology of billing for different purposes.

So this legislation is brought forward as a way of dealing with those issues. Very much nothing in here that we can see of a philosophical or conceptual basis but strictly an interpretive one and a housekeeping Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we had spoken in favour and voted in favour of the concept of professional medical incorporation. We want to make sure that all the subsequent and consequential issues are dealt with. We understand that this legislation does that. We may have a few questions about specifics but we'll deal with those in committee.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Culture, Youth and Recreation Vote 27

Subvote (CR01)

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Hi, Mr. Chair. Today we have with us Angie Gélinas, deputy minister of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. Seated behind her, Jill McKeen; and behind Jill, Bruce Medhurst, senior policy analyst. Oh I forgot to give Jill's title — executive director of policy and planning. Behind myself, Melinda Gorrill, director of corporate services; behind Melinda, Peggy Brunson, manager of provincial heritage resources; and seated to Angie's left, David Debono, president and CEO (chief executive officer) of the Saskatchewan Communications Network.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well hi, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the officials once again.

Madam Minister, last time we met was very brief, but the time before we got talking about the Community Initiatives Fund. And I had, I had asked some questions from the Associated Entities Fund which is now the CIF (Communities Initiatives Fund), and you were kind enough to give me the 2000-2001 annual report. I appreciate that.

But in the report, I believe I saw the balance in the neighbourhood of \$12 million in the CIF. Could you confirm that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The 12 million is the year-end balance on the fund before any expenditures out of this year.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you. What is the target of the amount of money in the fund? Or is there such a thing as a target? I mean, \$12 million, when we look at what the Community Initiative Fund is for, it's to help communities, et al. I mean, you're very familiar with that.

And we've got \$12 million sitting in this fund and yet on the communities that ask for assistance, there is literally dozens of communities that did not receive any funding.

And I'm curious to what this \$12 million is sitting there for if we've got communities that are asking for money for cultural enhancement within their communities and if there's a target that we're going to hit a magical figure for some huge project. Or is there some reason that this has built up to the extent that it is at \$12 million?

(15:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess I would say two things. The original expenditure levels for the fund were set based on estimates of casino profits. And what's happened really is that the profits have exceeded expectations.

Now the question is when you're spending a small amount of . . . or a smaller amount of money, you perhaps sometimes have less policy that drives the decisions around spending. But as that amount increases, you then have to reconsider, do you need to make any changes to the policy that's driving that spending.

And for example, there's two issues really. One of them is some of the unmet needs in the community that would fall well within the purposes of the fund. But the second thing is to . . . It's a little distracting with the other conversations going on. You guys . . . Pardon me, Mr. Chair, but they are in the same room. Couldn't they sit closer together to have conversation?

The Chair: — Order. Order. One of the rules that the Chair follows is that if the Chair can hear the question and the answer and it's not bothering the questioner or the answerer, then it's permitted to carry on. But if it's distracting to either the person asking the questions or the person answering the questions, then we ask the committee to come to order.

So I would request hon. members to do just that. And I would recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The second thing is that as casinos came on stream, they did affect the share of gaming revenues that other participants in the community were dependent on, whether that was break-open tickets or lottery funds or bingo funds.

So in actual fact, all the departments that have beneficiaries that depend on these funds meet usually a couple of times a year to talk about whether we need to rebalance the relationships in who gets what portions of the fund so that people can continue to do the things that they depend on those funds for.

I think it was probably about, oh gosh, it would be getting close to 15 years ago now that a decision was made to take a lot of the things that government did and move them out of government under the lottery's fund. And when that decision was made, it made community organizations that were doing important things like the zone sport activities and some of our cultural facilities — art galleries, etc. — it made them dependent on lottery dollars. And then when the casinos came into the mix, it started to shift the revenue generating capacity of the lotteries, the bingos, and the break-opens. And of course the hospitals had the same issue with the break-open funds that supported hospital expenditures.

So there's two things that we'll need to do in looking at this \$12 million. It's again to revisit whether there's been a change in the relationship in the beneficiaries of the various types of gaming funds to see whether we need to redistribute some to people who have been losing their market share of the funds.

And the second thing is to look at, if there's a substantial amount of revenue sitting there, I think two things: one, should we prioritize some of it to meet strategic objectives that the communities have brought to us about things that they're wanting to do that require larger amounts of money rather than small grants? And the second thing is we've had some people complain in both northern and rural Saskatchewan that the conditions required to get the CIF money has limited some communities from being able to participate in facilities,

programs, and what not.

So I think what will happen as we look at the unexpended fund balance is we'll be talking to the communities that haven't been happy about the policy driving the fund and see if we would be able to improve the policy in such a way that smaller communities have a bit more access, particularly on the capital side of the fund.

The Chair: — Order, order. I haven't read from Beauchesne's recently. On page 100, it says:

Although difficult to enforce on occasion, Speakers have also consistently attempted to discourage loud private conversations in the Chamber, and have urged those wishing to carry on such exchanges to do so outside the House.

So I would encourage members to either quiet down their conversations or move behind the bar. So thank you very much for your indulgence.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — At any rate, I could give the member opposite a few more of my thoughts on this, but I'm just giving you the big picture of how priorities are set within the fund. And there is a board of trustees.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. It didn't really hit to the quick of the question that I asked.

This \$12 million didn't just come from this past year. It has been obviously growing for a period of time. So it's not like it's a brand new revelation this year — all of a sudden we have \$12 million in the fund and now we better change the rules and regulations to do something with it. It's obviously been building up over a period of, who knows how many years. And that's what precipitated my question about: is there a goal? Is there something that the organization wants to . . . wants to do a large project?

Like why all of a sudden now we're looking at it and saying well we wish to change this, because I don't have the figures of what was in the fund at the end of last year, but it's obviously not just from this past year, this \$12 million.

So therefore, if it's crept up, even at a million a year, that's 12 years that this fund has been growing. All the time that we have communities that have been asking for support and are being rejected in their requests.

And again I would ask, what the goal . . . the amount of money that was looked at for this fund to reach a magical pinnacle, or is it been just straight somebody sitting and throwing darts or something to say no you can't get a grant this year, even though we have \$12 million or \$11 million in the fund depending on what year it was in.

And that's my question now. It's kind of a concern when I know communities that have asked for money and not received any and, at the same time, we now find that there's \$12 million in the fund. So there's got to be some explanation for that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll just mention two things. One —

and I was reminded of this, I knew this, I just . . . it slipped my mind — that one of the things that has impacted on decisions around this fund has been the movement of casinos on-reserve, because some of the money that we would have shared in when they were off-reserve, once they move on-reserve, the share changes.

So we were being somewhat cautious in expending funds until we knew exactly what the impact would be of the movement of the casinos onto reserve, which would then reduce the money going into the General Revenue Fund. Because there's a flip clause that when the casino is off-reserve — I'm trying to remember — when it's off-reserve 75 per cent, I think, of that fund went into the CIF, but when it's on-reserve, 75 per cent goes into the FNF (First Nations Fund). So it completely changes the amount of money that's available.

And not knowing the timing of some of the casinos moving on-reserve, there was a bit of a caution to make commitments that couldn't be sustained, and to have the fund drawn down below a sustainable level.

We have a better idea now of how much is there, and there's considerable pent-up demand. Not just from communities but from Aboriginal organizations who historically have not been big beneficiaries of the lotteries monies or of the casino monies off-reserve, and yet live in our urban centres.

There's a lot of pent up demand in the physical fitness and sports area.

So these things are actually under active consideration right now, along with some changes in policy from communities that have not been happy about the cost-sharing roles in terms of accessing the funds. But no decisions have been finally made yet on that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well we're getting around it, but we're not there yet. The \$12 million, I guess, you're giving an explanation, Madam Minister, about the why with casinos moving back and forth, but what's the magical number that you want to attain?

You said something about now you know where the stable level is. What is the stable level? To me, if it's a Community Initiatives Fund — unless there's a huge project — the stable level should be very, very minimal because the fund is developed to help communities.

So when I look and I see \$12 million sitting in this fund, and now we can debate it whichever way and say, well now we've found a stable, is the stable fund . . . stable amount 20 million, is it 12 million, is it . . . or is it 1 million?

And those are the questions I'm trying to get to, is here we sit with \$12 million and I would like to see an explanation why that \$12 million is sitting there and not being used, or if there's some magical reason why we want this \$12 million sitting? Or if there is a stable level that you wish to retain the fund at and if there is, then why?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Two things. One is that we try hard not to run out and spend all the money there is any time. But I'll

just mention that we do have, on an ongoing basis, an obligation to exhibition associations, to hospitals, to cultural facilities in the province. We do have an ongoing commitment that's fixed at around \$4 million. And that is stuff that would be seriously jeopardized if we drew that funding away from there.

So that is a commitment that we have to maintain because otherwise we'd be taking money out of the hospitals' funding; we would be taking money out of the commitments to exhibition associations. And those are ongoing commitments. Those aren't one-time grants. Those are fixed ongoing commitments in those areas.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — So, Madam Minister, does that mean that your stable level is \$4 million?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm going to go back a little bit historically with the member, because it's true that that was the level. At the time when that . . . when we moved to that \$4 million level, that was the level of money in the fund.

In 1996-97 there was only a balance of 10,000 unexpended in the fund. The next year, in 1997-98, that moved to two million, eight hundred and seventy-four. The following year the fund actually had a deficit of one million, two hundred and thirty-three, less than expected in that year. And so it actually was lower in that year. And then in '99-2000 it had a surplus of three million, seven hundred and ninety-six and in 2000 to 2001 the surplus went up to four million, three hundred and ninety-five. And then in '01-'02 it was two million, one hundred and sixty-four. So there have been bits each year but one year, '98-'99, like I say, there was an actual loss where it went less than the amount required.

So people were . . . that was the year, I think, that triggered the nervousness about the fact that as the casinos moved on-reserve, unless the profitability levels stayed up, there might not be the money there to guarantee the 4 million required to keep all the rest of the stuff going.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, with the amount of dollars that we're talking about and using a \$4 million roughly as a base, did the Community Initiatives Fund transfer any funds to general revenue this year, this past year?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No, not in this past year. But I will say that there are important community ongoing projects like museums, the Science Centre, and other things that we certainly intend to consider having them be participants in the fund because they, in the current funding environment, are somewhat at risk for survival. And we think that these are important anchor facilities for people in our communities.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, in a written question I would like to read to you what the question was and what the answer. The question, quote:

Which of these funds had some or a portion of their surpluses taken away through government action and how much money was affected in each case?

(Answer) CIF, 7.4 million is budgeted to be returned to the

General Revenue Fund to address general government priorities in the area of non-profit culture, community facilities, and organizations.

Madam Minister, I just heard you say that no money was being transferred. Could you explain?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — You may have heard differently than what I was saying. But I just said that there was important community facilities such as museums, the Science Centre, Wanuskewin who would be participants in the revenues of the fund this year because otherwise they would have been at risk for funding reductions. And so those would be the 7.5 you're speaking of.

(16:00)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Madam Minister, we'll check *Hansard* tomorrow but what I'm sure I heard you say when I asked the question, was any money transferred to the General Revenue Fund? And your answer was no.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Let me put it this way because we're . . . I think we're talking about a technicality here. It has not been transferred. It has not. But the intent is to protect things like Wanuskewin, the Science Centre, the museums, etc., by transferring that 7.5 some time over this year.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Madam Minister, it would seem to me that the Community Initiatives Fund, looking after the cultural issues and cultural programs within the province, I guess I would have to ask a fundamental question as to why it would be transferred to the General Revenue Fund.

It would appear to me at this point that if it's transferred to the General Revenue Fund, it's for other than the community initiatives, because it was for the community initiatives that the money is there. And if the money is there for community initiatives when it's transferred into the General Revenue Fund, it gets lost and it can be used to balance the books for an example.

So I guess my question is: did you sit and agree that this money should be transferred or will be transferred from the Community Initiatives Fund to the General Revenue Fund?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The agreement that was made is that the money will be expended only in keeping with the purposes of the fund and the fact that the fund itself is not responsible technically for the WDM (Western Development Museum). The department works with the community on things like the WDM and on Wanuskewin and the Science Centre, etc.

So not transferred in the sense you're saying, where a bunch of money's going off and nobody knows where it's going and somebody's going to pluck it. We know exactly where it's going. It's going to go to support those important community, educational, cultural, and heritage facilities that are used as educational tools for young people in the community and that are used for activity for young people in the community.

So I mean again I think we're talking about a technicality. Was the money expended in keeping with the spirit of the purpose of

the money? And I believe it was, because to have spent that money in a different way and had things like the Science Centre, the Western Development Museum, Wanuskewin not be able to afford to operate would have been, I think, the wrong decision to make. And the board of trustees agreed and so nothing was done without the full discussion and agreement of the board of trustees.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm still quite some puzzled by this because, if the projects that you talk about come under the CIF, then why would it be transferred to the General Revenue Fund? Why would it not be handled directly out of the CIF?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They're not administered out of the CIF, so it's really an accounting issue. They don't . . . They're paid out of the department's budget. So the support came from the CIF.

The same way that I don't pay the budget for the Family Place in Weyburn, but the CIF money goes to their budget. That's the same way.

It's no different than when money from the fund goes to any project. The money is going from the fund to a project even though the fund isn't administering the project.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Madam Minister, I have a hard time following that logic. Is this the first time that money has been transferred from the CIF to the General Revenue Fund in this manner?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In the other instances of recipients of the fund, the money goes directly from the fund. And I think the reason why we didn't do it this way in this particular instance is we hoped that we will not need to have any continuing dependence on the fund to assist those facilities. And so they're being . . . the money just went in a lump to the General Revenue Fund and then is being paid out to them. So it's really that we just didn't . . . we didn't send the money directly to them. It's going through the General Revenue Fund to them.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Could you confirm that those agencies do come under the CIF?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They would fall under the broad purposes of the CIF. But they are not administered by the CIF, nor does the money go directly from the CIF to them. It flows through the GRF (General Revenue Fund) to them.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — So no money has ever been given from the CIF to these organizations before?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That's right. We've never done that before.

However I would say that under the lottery system, over time, we have added new partners into the lottery fund. I'm trying to think of an example . . . MacKenzie Art Gallery would be an example of a facility that was paid for out of the General Revenue Fund but then was transferred into the lottery system, but with the lottery system then being enabled to keep a larger amount of money in order to be able to support it.

So this has happened with different things in the past to bring all of these things under one umbrella, but this is the first time that these particular agencies have been paid through the Community Initiatives Fund.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Madam Minister, can we get a breakdown of this 7.4 million and what it's going to be used for?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well certainly the purpose of estimates would be to have the answers to financial questions, so we'll undertake to get that for you.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And can I have a timeframe on that because last year . . . I'm still waiting for an answer from you, I believe. And I think I'll get to that in a couple minutes, but could you give me a timeframe for an answer for this question?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We will commit to having that to you by the end of next week.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's all I have for right at the moment. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague right now because it's on the same topic. And I'll be back with a couple more later.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And good afternoon, Madam Minister, and welcome to your officials.

Madam Minister, I thought I heard you indicate that there are some ongoing commitments that are funded through the surplus of the Community Initiatives Fund. Then subsequent to that you also indicated that now there are some of those surplus monies that have been transferred over to the General Revenue Fund that are going to be, as I understood it, funding projects that would formerly have been funded directly through the Community Initiatives Fund.

Okay. I guess if you could clarify for us, firstly, what are the ongoing commitments that the surplus funds, and then what are the commitments formerly addressed by the fund now being addressed by the transfer that took place to the General Revenue Fund.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The ongoing commitments . . . And the ongoing commitments aren't out of the surplus, they're out of what revenues there are. And in . . . Just a second, I want to check on one figure that I don't see on this column. Well the answer is fairly simple, it just . . . I wanted to make sure I got it right so that we didn't build up any misunderstanding here.

Now I'll just reiterate that these are ongoing commitments on an annual basis that tend to be either the same or increase slightly year after year.

But the one I was checking on was the money that goes to the Métis for their Economic Development Fund. And the reason I was wondering was because it shows up in '01 — 2000 to 2001 — but not to 2001 to 2002. And that's because instead of taking it off the CIF, it is taken off before the CIF now because the Métis wanted to have a more similar arrangement that the First Nations have. So it was really done for, I guess, reasons of how

they felt about being recipients of the fund. And so now that money is still the same amount of money but it comes off before the fund balance, not after.

The exhibition associations get 485,000 on an annual basis; administration is 108,000; and the small grants that go for projects for vulnerable children, that's 2 million; cultural facilities program, 1 million; hospitals, 300,000, the hospitals foundation; and the gambling treatment initiatives, 500,000. Now this is not the only place that money comes for those things. It's just the money that comes out of this fund. And those have been ongoing for some years now, these particular commitments under the fund.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, perhaps I could use a bit of an analogy here and I think about the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund for example. One of the issues that really concerned the steering committee members when they found out that the surplus had been drained from that fund was that the operating budget of the fund is used to purchase land, for example. Then what they had done is they had accumulated a surplus over a period of time that they used to meet other ongoing commitments, such as paying the taxes on that land.

And I guess the question, Madam Minister, is are there any types of . . . similar types of arrangements with the Community Initiatives Fund where perhaps a project was supported out of the operating budget of the fund but then other ongoing commitments related to that were perhaps supported out of the surplus of the fund?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Rather than calling it a surplus, it should be called really an unallocated balance because the intention is to allocate it.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Okay. Then just one more attempt, Madam Minister. Are there any commitments by the department with respect to ongoing expenditures that you may decide at some point or previously have utilized to fund any type of ongoing commitments?

(16:15)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The best way to answer that is that the ones I listed are the ones where there's an ongoing commitment. And some of those commitments have sunset clauses, you know, five years of commitments; the exhibition, some of those have 30-year commitment time frames. So there are times when you could then make a decision when it sunsets whether to renew it or whether to then move on to some other priority.

But the question you ask of, are there any others that are dependent on an ongoing basis — not technically. But take for example, again, I was in Weyburn at The Family Place. Although their grant is only for this year, it could be that they apply every year for different types of projects. So they may rely on getting resources to do different things they're doing, but we don't have an obligation in the sense that you're talking about. It's on a year by year, grant by grant basis.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister,

perhaps briefly we could discuss the role of the board of trustees of the Canadian initiatives fund. Could you describe the level of authority, if you will, that they are able to exercise in terms of determining the projects that are approved, determining levels of expenditure, and in developing and establishing program criteria?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They have at this point, really, total authority. And we work collaboratively so they may . . . If we say, you know, we've had a complaint from a community that we need to change our guidelines or something, we would then collaborate on a decision. But the board of trustees has the final authority on the distribution of funds. I don't even see the applications that come in.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, what role did the board of trustees play in the decision with respect to transferring the \$7.4 million to the General Revenue Fund?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Our officials met with them. And I subsequently met with them after that meeting just on a general conversation about where they thought the fund should be headed in the future.

But what the conversation was about was, there's some areas that are going to go without resources this year and we would like to have a discussion with you about whether you think these are important enough to provide some assistance from the CIF. So at the end of the day there was a complete and open discussion with them about whether or not they agreed that these fit within the purposes, and they felt that they did.

And we will also be working with them every step of the way on the unallocated surplus. And once those decisions are arrived at, they will be responsible for all the decisions around how the unallocated surplus is spent.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, so you can assure us then that unlike the situation that existed with the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund where the steering committee didn't feel that they had been adequately consulted with, that, in this case, if one was to speak with the members of the board of trustees, that they would all concur with the decision that was made and they would be . . . they would all be pleased with the decision to transfer \$7.4 million to the General Revenue Fund?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I believe that they agreed that circumstances were such that very important services and facilities that are in the community that aren't owned by government — we don't own the Science Centre — were at risk if there was not some assistance provided to them in this current year and they would be part of any decision on the unallocated surplus. And I believe, both in their discussions with the deputy and with myself, that they would feel 100 per cent involved in the decision.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, back on April 15, I had asked you some questions dealing with the operation of SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) and you were . . . provided me with a letter and some information as to the funding to SCN and the breakdown of its

various categories, I guess. And I noticed with interest that there's \$2.74 million allocated to Saskatchewan regional film and video industry and 1.74 million for SCN's e-learning network.

I'm wondering if that ratio has changed this year or is that about the same ratio of funds allocated to both areas of activity in the past?

I realize that the SCN budget is somewhat smaller this year, but have those ratios . . . are they . . . have they remained the same or has there been a shift in those areas?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I have to say, to my regret, because I think there's need for growth in many of these areas, those have stayed pretty much the same for several years now.

Mr. Hart: — Madam Minister, is the 1.74 million, is that meeting the needs for e-learning, the e-learning component of SCN's activities? One would think that with the advance of distance education, those sorts of things, that there may be a greater demand for the SCN services in those areas. And I'm just wondering if the funds are approaching and meeting the demands that are out there, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I'm told by Mr. Debono that he would be very happy to have a considerable infusion of funds into his budget because it is very tight. But of course we are only one of the players in distant learning. Post-secondary has portions in their budget and other places do as well, so this particular money is for satellite delivery of services.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I looked through the annual report dated March 31, 2001, and I noticed that there are a number of government agencies and departments that utilize the services of SCN for . . . Sask Health uses SCN to, I believe in August 2000, to deliver a professional development program. Other departments and agencies of government use SCN in a similar fashion.

I'm wondering . . . and then there's . . . I notice also a number of private organizations not related to government also use the services of SCN. What matter of costing as far as if a group other than . . . I guess it's a two-part question. Government departments, when they use it, I would imagine that they are charged by SCN for those services. And how do those charges relate when an organization that isn't part of government uses the services of SCN?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's standard rates that are charged whether you're a government department or an outside user. And I would presume that outside users would want rates that compare favourably to other ways they might accomplish their goals.

Mr. Hart: — Madam Minister, I wonder, could you provide for me an example or a costing of an outside user using the services of SCN. Would it be an hourly charge? A flat rate charge? What type of a costing structure does SCN have?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The cost is 750 to \$1,000 an hour.

Mr. Hart: — Madam Minister, I notice under the highlights of

this annual report that under April 2000 one of the highlights is the NDP Party of Saskatchewan uses SCN training network to consult with over 300 members in 29 communities throughout the province.

Madam Minister, the question I have is, what did SCN . . . or what did the NDP Party pay SCN for the use of SCN services on this occasion?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm happy to report that we paid the same as everyone else, and we're very satisfied with the service.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Has the NDP Party used the services of SCN since April of 2000?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No. The services were very specific to the policy renewal process, and it was a way of getting people who live in rural and northern Saskatchewan together. And so it was for a very specific project and that project came to an end, and we haven't done that since, no.

Mr. Hart: — Madam Minister, would you be prepared to table the documents of payment, the invoicing and payment that . . . between the NDP Party and SCN for the use of their services?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We don't see a problem with that, no.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm pleased that you're able to provide those documents.

Getting back to the breakdown of funding to SCN, there was \$2.74 million for regional film and video industry. I wonder if you could briefly explain how those funds will be used and give examples of how they'll be used.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's a few different things that come out of this 2.74 million. I don't know if you're very familiar with the structure of film funding in Canada, but Telefilm, the national funding body, requires that there be a first-in broadcaster in order for films to receive funding from the federal fund.

And so one of the reasons that it's important for us to maintain SCN is that otherwise our filmmakers, our documentary makers, etc., would have to go to Toronto or some other place to see if a broadcaster would be willing to give them first-in funding.

And when you're working on commercial product, that's not much of a problem. But if you're perhaps working on a documentary about farming in Saskatchewan or you're doing some other kind of documentary material, the fact of the matter is, is that out-of-province producers are not very interested in province-specific material that may have to do with the history or activities or stories of Saskatchewan.

Now 1.6 million of that money is used for production, a portion of that money is used for the master control system, and some of it is used to purchase satellite time. And I'm informed that for every dollar we spend there, we lever \$10 in other people's investments to match the dollars that are spent out of that 2.74 million.

Mr. Hart: — Madam Minister, you indicated that 1.6 million of the . . . portion of funds allocated to SCN in that area is spent on production. Now are these programs that SCN is producing themselves or is that paid to other companies in the industry?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Nothing is actually produced in-house by SCN; all of it is outsourced with local producers.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Minister. SCN holds a broadcast licence, I understand, and I guess my final question to you would be, is what is the cost to SCN for that broadcast licence?

(16:30)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It doesn't cost anything. It's a designation as the educational broadcaster for the province and with that designation the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) provides the licence.

And actually we would hope to be able to work more broadly across the Prairies providing educational broadcast services, because we have enough capacity to do that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, just one final question on this, on the Community Initiative Fund, the CIF. We talked about the 7.4 million going into GRF. When will that 7.4 million be transferred?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I presume that would be done when we're completed the estimates process and the authority is there to do that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like now to switch to the sound stage and I'm wondering if you could give a quick update on the status of the sound stage and exactly where we're at.

And I'd also like, if you could at the same time, as maybe part of your response, indicate the costing and the costing to Saskatchewan taxpayers for the construction of the sound stage.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The province's share of the 11.5 million is 3 million. The other portions are coming from the Western Economic Diversification and from the supports through tax abatements, etc., from the city of Regina.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and can you give us an update on the status of the sound stage?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Although it's not officially open yet there is one small production underway at the moment in one of the smaller studios — *Prairie Berry Pie* — a 13-part series for preschoolers. And negotiations are in process on three offshore productions that are feature films.

And everything is complete except some of the lighting grids. So we are expecting an opening sort of imminently when this last remaining work is done. But we'd like some of the partners who are signing in to be able to share in the festivities. So that will be a little bit in the future yet.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thanks, Madam Minister. Thank you.

And can you, can you advise us whether the sound stage is coming in under budget, on budget, or is it over budget?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — My understanding is that it's on budget. Because this particular portion of money is through the Property Management Corporation, you could ask that question again in those estimates. But that's my understanding.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Now one of the issues that we have with the sound stage is a feasibility study. And when I said I did not receive an answer back from you previously, on or about October 16 last year I wrote a letter to you and in the letter I had requested in . . . if due diligence had been done on the sound stage, and I had asked for a copy of any feasibility study done on the project. And I never received an answer of any description on that.

Could you advise us today about the due diligence done on the sound stage and the status of the feasibility study, and if that's available for us.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm going to answer this in two parts. And I do, despite the fact that I don't remember everything, I think I do remember at the time saying that we didn't do the feasibility study. The Regina Economic Development Authority did it and was very instrumental in assembling the financing arrangements for it. I actually had zero to do with this. It was the Regina REDA (regional economic development authority) that was very instrumental.

And the part that we would have been involved in would have been the feasibility of the particular sound stage that was being built in terms of the cost of using the stage compared to the cost of building it. But the actual feasibility study done on the film industry, including the sound stage, was done by the Regina Economic Development Authority. And I don't have the authority to give you their study. You would have to go directly to them for that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Did you or your officials see the feasibility study and have a view of it?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again because this department wasn't instrumentally involved in that part of it — it was Sask Property Management in conjunction with the REDA (regional economic development authority) — so I think that if you want a really good answer to that, you'll have to have that discussion with the Minister Responsible for Sask Property Management because we weren't in any way involved in that part of it. That was a discussion between the city, SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), and the REDA.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:41.