

The Assembly met at 13:30

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition from constituents of mine who would like to see their ambulance service stay in the community. 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 not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report, and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Cudworth.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people who are concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs:

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 the prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens concerned about the shortcomings of the tobacco legislation. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Saskatoon. I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure

that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Bredenbury, Saltcoats, Churchbridge, Pierceland, and the city of Yorkton.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable condition of Highway 58. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 58 in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Chaplin.

I so present.

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

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

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn and Oungre.

I so present.

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

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

Signed by the good citizens from Kenaston and Hanley.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning repairs to Highway No. 58; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions of this session being sessional paper no. 7, 18, 23, 24, 32, 59, 157, and 164.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 66 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: how much was the final cost of the report conducted for the government into allegations of harassment against the current Minister of Environment?

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 66 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: will the minister please provide which communities that have water and sewer plants that the provincial government runs and operates?

And also while I'm on my feet I have another question:

To the Minister of Environment: what are the rates the government charges to the communities that have water and sewer treatment plants that the government runs and operates?

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 66 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: in 1999-2000 how much did the government pay out under the farm land education tax rebate program; how many applications were received under this program in that year; and how many were approved; and how many were rejected because they were submitted after the deadline?

And I repeat, Mr. Speaker:

How many were rejected because they were submitted after the deadline?

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 66 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: how many companies in Saskatchewan paid corporate capital tax during the year for which the most recent statistics are available?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in your gallery I have 17 students from the school of — in the east gallery as the member from Kelvington pointed out; I'm sorry about that — 17 students from the town of Kenaston, grade 7 students, who have come to view the proceedings here today and I think they will find it very interesting.

With them is their teacher, Melanie Kerpan, and with her is her husband, Allan Kerpan, who is a former MP (Member of Parliament) for Saskatoon-Blackstrap. So I think he could probably answer some of the questions that the kids will be asking as the proceedings are going on. And also with them as chaperones is Toni Tweet and Phil Johnson.

I will be meeting with them after question period to answer any questions they may have here. And with that I would like to welcome them here and ask the members to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted and honoured to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House, the Saskatoon Children's Choir sitting in your gallery. There is 43 young people in this choir and I'll introduce their artistic director, Phoebe Voigts; Bonnie Nicholson, the accompanist; and seven chaperones; and Connie Snider, their manager.

Many of us heard their beautiful singing during the lunch break and it was truly harmonious. I'm not sure whether we'll be quite striking the same notes inside here.

But I do want to draw attention to this very special group and what their project is — Youth Against War. And they've been collecting signatures on a petition to ban land mines internationally. And in the summer they're going to be touring France and Spain again on this project. And this particular weekend they're off to the International Peace Gardens in North Dakota, bringing a message of peace.

And so I ask all of us to welcome them enthusiastically and send them off from our province with the best of wishes. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld in welcoming the Saskatoon Children's Choir here to the Assembly today. And I had the opportunity also to listen to some of your music. It was just outstanding. It was just great.

And if I might continue, Mr. Speaker, your project of youth against war, I totally support that. And being a person that spent many years in the military, I also did not want to see war. And that's why I'm a very strong . . . strongly committed to a strong deterrent such as a strong defence. Because I also am against war.

So I also would like to join in welcoming the group to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Kowalsky: — Members, I just want to take a moment to welcome the father of the choir director, father of Bonnie Nicholson, who is a constituent of mine and a former colleague of mine, a teaching colleague from Prince Albert, a man who was a principal for many years in Prince Albert, is

now retired, and is able to partake in events like this — visits to the legislature. And the person I'm talking about is sitting beside Bonnie and that's Boris Koshlay. Would you please welcome him to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to welcome students from the grade 5 class from St. Olivier School in Radville. And, Mr. Speaker, the students are: Christian, Sara, Stephanie, Kenton, Tayla, Dallas, Kale, Eric, Christopher, Justin, Dierdre, Leena, Jennifer, Jessa, Taylor, and Jessie. And last but certainly not least we have Brenna Bourassa. And Brenna, if you'd give a wave. Brenna is the granddaughter of Sherry Webster, who is the CA (constituency assistant) for Wayne Elhard from Cypress Hills.

So we'd like to welcome you all.

We'd like to also welcome your teacher Kathy Magnien, your chaperones Bev Koszma, Denis Bert, Lorne Nimegeers and Bruce Pitrie. And I look forward to meeting with you after question period and I hope you enjoy your stay here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Leads Investment Pack

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Paul Martin — Saskatchewan's Paul Martin, the one worth listening to — said the following:

If we are going to find new investment capital, it means we are probably going to have to develop those sources right here at home.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Martin goes on to say — and I'm happy to relay this to the Assembly — that, indeed, Saskatchewan is developing those investment sources, and furthermore, that Saskatchewan has turned out to be the "Western Canadian Star" in the minds of venture capital investors in the first quarter of this year.

New figures released by the firm of Macdonald & Associates Limited reveal that venture capital firms pumped \$8 million into local enterprises, which is roughly eight times higher than last year, and that the number of firms receiving equity capital went from two to twelve. This rise in venture capital development coincides with the arrival of a couple of new Saskatchewan-based, privately managed funds.

Among these new players is Crown Capital Partners, a Regina-based privately managed fund, and Prairie Ventures, a labour sponsored pool with investors from credit unions and private investors.

And, Mr. Speaker, our good news does not depend on the poor fortune of others, but I must point out to the opposition that during this same period when Saskatchewan investments increased by sixfold, the promised land of Alberta saw its investment drop by half, and those only went to four

companies.

As we're fond of saying, Mr. Speaker — more good news for Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, leave to revert back to introductions, please.

The Speaker: — Members, I would ask leave on behalf of the member to revert to introductions. I think I missed him during the introduction period. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention to the east gallery and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, someone I think that most of us know very, very well, Margo Boyko. Margo has been employed as a security guard here in the building for over two years. Today she has with her, her son, Brett.

Brett on March 16 of this year was diagnosed with acute lymphatic leukemia. After many months of chemo treatments, Brett today received some wonderful news, Mr. Speaker. As of today he is considered to be in solid remission.

Margo would like to thank all people who give blood transfusions and give blood because Brett's recovery would not have been possible without the many blood transfusions that he required.

So I would ask everyone to welcome Margo and her courageous son Brett to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

4-H Annual Achievement Days

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend was a busy weekend for a number of 4-H clubs in the Moosomin constituency. Clubs in Whitewood, Kennedy, Fairmede, Kipling, Wawota, and Gerald held their annual achievement days. And then on Saturday, June 8, they gathered in Whitewood for the Whitewood regional 4-H show and sale.

Mr. Speaker, we all know what 4-H does for young people in this province. And I'm sure maybe many members had the privilege at one time rather of being a 4-H member. Certainly I did, and truly enjoyed that experience. It certainly is a learning experience, an experience that anyone that's involved in the 4-H movement over the years has learned to really appreciate and enjoy.

The motto of the 4-H movement is Learn to do by Doing. And

I'm sure that each and every one of the 4-H members this weekend as they had their achievement days and as they participated in the regional show and sale were very proud as they displayed their livestock and the calves that they have worked on over the winter.

Mr. Speaker, 4-H, what it does is it creates character and responsibility for our young people, helping them to become honest, hard-working citizens in their future lives.

So at this time, I would like to congratulate the 4-H movement and specifically the clubs of Whitewood, Kennedy, Fairmede, Kipling, Wawota, and Gerald for their hard work, and wish the 4-H members well in their future endeavours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wheelchair Rugby Team Wins World Championship

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, even though I'm not exactly sure how you do a rugby scrum in a wheelchair, I'm proud to report that last week in Gothenburg, Sweden, the Canadian Wheelchair Rugby team beat the defending world and Paralympic Olympian champion USA (United States of America) team to become the world champions in wheelchair rugby.

Here's something else worth mentioning, Mr. Speaker. On a team of 12 players, three are from Saskatchewan. That means that we, with 3 per cent of the Canadian population, provided 25 per cent of a world-class organization. And that's about par for the course.

The Saskatchewan team members are Mike Bacon and Allan Semeniuk of Saskatoon and Daryl Stubel of Regina. And during National Public Service Week, I am proud to announce that Daryl is the executive co-ordinator of the office of disability issues in our Social Services department — an obvious case of leading by example.

The world championships are held every four years in tandem with the Paralympic Games, so top level competition occurs every two years. Canada entered this contest seeded fourth. This was the first time ever that the US team had lost an international game — maybe because it was played on a level playing field.

Mr. Speaker, Canada and Saskatchewan's athletes made an excellent showing at the Winter Olympics in Sydney. The Canadian National Wheelchair Rugby team showed our colours very well on the other side of the world. And I know all members will join me in congratulating them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Hurricanes Win Gold

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Humboldt Hurricanes are the gold medallists in the under 16 boys soccer.

The Humboldt Hurricanes showed their stuff and were

unbeatable at the Festival of Soccer held recently in Saskatoon. The team, coached by Terry Schatz of Humboldt, defeated the One Arrow First Nation, SUSC (Saskatoon United Soccer Club) Saskatoon, and Lakewood Saskatoon, to take first place in their pool.

The Hurricanes went on to meet the One Arrow First Nation for the second time in the final game. In a roughly contested match the Humboldt Hurricanes came out victorious, defeating One Arrow First Nation 2-0 to win the gold medal.

Congratulations to coach Terry Schatz and the Humboldt Hurricanes on a great victory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Keith Martell Honoured by the *Report on Business Magazine*

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Meadow Lake constituency may be a bit removed from the population centre of our province.

It's even further removed from the corner of Bay and King Street in Toronto. But that's okay, Mr. Speaker, because Meadow Lake people make an impression on our nation that more than compensates for our locale.

Another case in point is Keith Martell, formerly of Meadow Lake, currently in Saskatoon, and for the past five years, president of the First Nations Bank of Canada, headquartered in Saskatoon.

This financial institution opened with the mission of providing a unified economic body strong enough to support aboriginal nation building. Its ownership is spread among 74 Saskatchewan First Nations bands, the TD (Toronto Dominion) Bank, and several other native organizations.

And just recently, Mr. Speaker, Keith Martell was named by the *Report on Business* magazine as one of the, quote: "Top Forty Under Forty" achievers in Canada, one of the best and brightest. This seventh annual selection shows, the magazine says, "that talent and effort stand out, whatever the circumstances."

The honourees were selected by a panel of 23 business and community leaders assembled by the Caldwell Partners International, and were selected, Mr. Speaker, from a preliminary list of 1,200 candidates.

They were rated for vision and leadership, innovation and achievement, community involvement, and impact.

I would say that Keith Martell is a . . . is in, I should say, pretty good company or rather, Mr. Speaker, that the other 39 should be honoured to share this honour with one of Meadow Lake's many excellent citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Skating Coach Recognized

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to rise to recognize an individual who has spent the past 13 years promoting a healthy lifestyle through skating.

Recently Maureen Kohl of Spalding was the only coach within Saskatchewan recognized by Skate Canada - Saskatchewan as the coach of a skater who competed at the national competition. Maureen coached Saskatchewan juvenile male champion Brandon Prete of Kinistino, who competed in St. John's, Newfoundland's competition.

Maureen began her skating career within the Star City Figure Skating Club and moved to Melfort. She's been actively involved in coaching since her high school graduation in 1988, obtaining a level 3 coaching certificate.

Besides coaching in Naicam, Maureen is also a Skate Canada/Skate Saskatchewan coach, and she coaches power skating in Naicam, St. Brieux, and Melfort.

She's a clinic conductor of power skating for the province and sits on three provincial skating boards. She is also a representative of the coaches in the Melfort district to the provincial board.

Maureen's goal is to pass on some of what she was given by her coaches during her own development. She sees the chance to coach a sport as a chance to pass on life's lessons to a young person.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask this Assembly to join me in congratulating Maureen on her success as a coach, and thank her for her dedication to skaters within this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Housing Starts Boom in Regina and Saskatoon

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that when members opposite predict a drought, we get rain. When they predict poor job growth, 11,000 people swell the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the members opposite should check to see if the batteries in their crystal ball are working because good news is on the loose in Saskatchewan.

Housing starts, a true unbiased indicator of economic growth, are booming. In Regina there was an upsurge of housing starts by 80 per cent due to increased single-family home construction. The key words there, Mr. Speaker, are the verb increased and the nouns family and home.

For the year to date, 226 units were started, and of those 60 were multiple-unit starts. Not to be outdone, Saskatoon had another strong month with 124 starts in May. Paul Caton, senior market analyst for the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, said the recovery is mainly due to employment gains.

Mr. Speaker, it comes full circle and right back to those 11,000

jobs created recently. And that makes sense since employees and families need a place to live.

The headline says: Housing starts soar. That's the opposite direction to the opposition's fortunes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Financial Support for Agriculture

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome the Premier back from his visit to Ottawa to visit the Prime Minister in an attempt to convince the federal government that a \$1.3 billion trade injury support package, fully funded by the Chrétien government, was needed for farm families.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we all know how that meeting turned out. The national media is reporting that the Prime Minister considers this whole matter a bit of a joke, suggesting that his . . . to his caucus that Lyle Vanclief will flip a coin to determine the amount of the aid package.

The national media are also reporting that this package may only amount to \$600 million this year — far, far short of the \$1.3 billion that was requested.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has once again come home empty-handed with the Prime Minister mocking the farm aid issue behind his back. My question: does the Premier have any idea how much the pending farm aid package will be worth and when it will be announced? Did the Premier receive any answers at all from the Prime Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I did hear from the Prime Minister that the matter of a funding program for Canadian farmers is at the cabinet table, federal cabinet table.

It was the appropriate time, if I may say, to be there bringing the message from this legislature, from Saskatchewan people, and from Western Canadians. It was the right time to be there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let me just make this observation. In January of this year the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Vanclief, at that time was saying, in response to questions being asked by the Minister of Agriculture from Saskatchewan about aid for Canadian producers — the Saskatchewan producers — the Minister of Agriculture at that time was saying, there's no more money; we're going to work within existing programs and that's it.

Well it is of some benefit, I think, that we see headlines in the national press today talking about a program for Canadian farmers with new money. Yesterday the Prime Minister did not divulge to me any specific numbers, but the good news is we have made progress from January.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Premier said he was insulted that the federal government was talking about the farm aid package through the media.

Well from what we understand, yesterday the Premier got a message loud and clear that the Prime Minister is of only one opinion, and that is that any farm aid package will only be offered on a cost-shared basis. Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, we will not see the proper offset of damage caused by the US (United States) farm Bill.

Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, the emergency trip was the Premier's last ace in his hand and he played it too late.

Even with all the support of Western provincial governments, premiers, leaders of the opposition . . .

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Premier listens closely because even with all the support of the Western premiers, leaders of the opposition, farm groups, support right across the Prairies, the Premier has thus far failed to secure the \$1.3 billion in federally funded injury support that has been desperately needed.

Mr. Speaker, the question that all farm families in Saskatchewan want me to ask the Premier is this: what does the Premier plan to do now to try to drive home the important point to the federal government, that \$1.3 billion is needed from them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I took the opportunity to meet with some farmers, Saskatchewan farmers, this very morning in Southey, Saskatchewan, who reported to me their pleasure that I had taken the opportunity to take this message to Ottawa and their support for the position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — What we intend to do is to maintain the solid position that has come from this legislature, from the agriculture producers of Saskatchewan, and the groups, and the Western premiers, and hold firm to that position.

The Prime Minister assured me that decisions have not been made; that they are at the cabinet table, And we will continue to press the point in every way possible that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Release of Report on Harassment Allegations

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

The other day the Premier released a sanitized, one-page summary of the investigation of harassment allegations against the Environment ministry. However that summary left out the

most important finding — whether or not the minister was guilty of harassment.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: did the independent consultant find the minister guilty of workplace harassment?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I take great objection to the member's comments suggesting that Ms. MacKenzie has provided, in his words, a sanitized report.

Mr. Speaker, the report that I made public is signed by Ms. MacKenzie; provided to me, Mr. Speaker, on our request of the work that she had done. Now is the member standing in this House today, somehow questioning the credibility of Ms. MacKenzie? If he is, he'd better say so.

Now listen, Mr. Speaker, and members, I will read again . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I will read again what Ms. MacKenzie reports to me and to this legislature and to the public of Saskatchewan:

The Complainant was justified in expressing her concern . . . The Respondent admitted touching the Complainant's face and has apologized . . .

Now note these words, Mr. Speaker:

The investigation of the incident resulted in a finding that the touch, although physical, was not of a sexual or violent nature, but one intended to be given in a friendly and affectionate manner.

That is the report to me. Based on that report, my conclusion is there is no harassment here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Deputy Premier indicated that cabinet ministers do not have to follow any rules. He expressly ruled out them having to follow the guidelines in the . . . provided by . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. Order. Order, please. The member may start over if he wishes.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Deputy Premier was very clear. He indicated that cabinet ministers do not have to follow any rules. He expressly ruled out the fact that they have to follow Public Service Commission guidelines or rules.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is quite simple: what policy framework, what benchmarks, what guidelines were followed in order that he could arrive at the conclusion that there was no harassment?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member comes into this House, he tries to twist the words of Marilyn MacKenzie. He describes her words, her report as something sanitized, in his words. He twists the words; he then follows up by trying to twist the comments of the Deputy Premier yesterday.

The clear fact of the matter is that in regards to ministers of the Crown, no protocols to date have existed. Ms. MacKenzie has observed on this; she has recommended that protocol be put in place. I have accepted that recommendation and such protocols have been . . . will be put in place.

Mr. Speaker, if I may say to members of the opposition, it is my recommendation that for all elected members, such protocols should exist. Does the opposition caucus have protocols in this circumstance? It is a learning that I think we have all had in this situation, this unfortunate situation. Ms. MacKenzie has recommended a protocol be established, and we will work towards doing just that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Resources for Law Enforcement

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister of Government Relations. Saskatchewan communities are sending 400 police officers to assist with security at the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis at the end of June. On Monday, the Saskatchewan Party warned that communities would be left to pay part of the G-8 security bill, but the Minister of Health told the legislature that all costs related to the provision of security at the G-8 Summit would be covered by the federal government.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we find out that once again the NDP (New Democratic Party) has provided information to the legislature that was not true. According to SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), communities will have to pay the overtime costs of bringing in officers to cover off shifts left empty by the 400 police officers that will be taken away at the G-8 Summit.

Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP once again provide information to the legislature that was simply not true?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is not in fact from the government side that this misinformation is being spread. And I think the member should be careful to bear in mind that people are worried about their safety and security across this province and they're . . . they want to be assured that there are . . . there's adequate policing for their communities.

And I can assure the member and I have it on . . . in writing from Assistant Commissioner Boucher, the commanding officer of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), that all costs associated with the redeployment will be borne by the federal government while people are away from Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the minister maybe should take a look at the news release put out by SUMA because, for their information, that's not at all what's going to happen out there.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan communities are just the latest victim of the NDP government that says one thing and then does another. On Monday, the Minister of Health told the legislature that none of the security costs for the G-8 Summit would be downloaded onto the municipalities. But this morning, as I said, SUMA issued a press release in which they clearly state communities will be forced to pick up a significant overtime cost because 400 police officers will be going to the G-8 Summit.

Swift Current Councillor Allan Bridal says his city will be on the hook for thousands of dollars in overtime cost because they're losing seven police officers during the busiest weekend of the summer.

Mr. Speaker, SUMA has a question for the NDP government. Where does the city of Swift Current and every other community send the bill for extra policing costs in Saskatchewan when these police officers are away at the G-8 Summit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The news release from SUMA points out that there are some concerns about who will pay. That is SUMA's view. And then they go on to make all sorts of suppositions about who will pay.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that Saskatchewan has a responsibility to help — and I don't suppose the member will disagree with this — help with the security operations at Kananaskis.

The last time Saskatchewan police officers were called upon to do this kind of work, actually the time before that, but Quebec City, there were no extra costs. Calgary for the Winter Olympics, in fact, not only were there no additional costs, the province received a significant credit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has made a habit of saying one thing and doing another. They make election promises like hiring 200 new police officers and then break those promises. The NDP provides information to the legislature, like the minister's statement, that no community will pay . . .

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And then the NDP provides information to the legislature, like the minister's statement, that no community will get a bill for G-8 security, and then a few days later the truth comes out and the NDP is once again forced to change its story.

So, Mr. Speaker, here's a chance for the NDP to actually back up just once what they're saying. Will that minister, Mr.

Speaker, promise the communities in this province that if the federal government isn't picking up the tab, that this government will pick up the tab and not leave communities hanging out to dry once again under this NDP government rule?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — I don't think this government needs a lecture from that member about police services in this province. There has never been the number of police officers we have at the present time in this province. There has never been the expenditures ever on policing and security and safety in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — And let me just say, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, that the Commissioner of the RCMP tells me that all costs will be borne by the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister still did not answer the question I asked. Should the federal government back out of funding for the G-8 Summit, policemen going to the G-8 Summit, will he promise that this government will pick up the tab? Will he not leave the communities . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if pigs could fly I suppose we'd do a whole bunch of things. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, the federal government has committed itself to covering these costs. I don't know why the member won't accept that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Water Quality Concerns at Last Mountain Lake

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Environment.

Dealing with Last Mountain Lake again, apparently there is walleye washing up dead on the lake again. Dealing with the fishing derbies that have been going on, it's quite a concern there, and I was wondering if they did some more investigating and if the results from the last fish that were up there a month ago, if any of them test results have come back and what they are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed there were, I believe, three additional walleye that were found on the banks of the Last Mountain Lake. I may be in error on the number, but I do know that what my staff have determined is that the dead walleye are likely due to stress from the spring spawning season. As we all know, this has been an extremely difficult spring with low water levels and we've seen problems with all sorts of animals. And these fish also have had problems.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, my question is again for Madam Minister of the Environment. There was a letter sent to the Madam Minister, and this is just . . . I'll just read a little piece of it:

We are requesting the Minister of Environment show the leadership that is expected of . . . (their) position by a creating the Last Mountain Lake Stewardship Committee that is so very needed. Our community would jump at the chance to have . . . (to be represented) on such a committee.

My question to Madam Minister is: have you formed this committee? There is a huge concern out there. Have you talked . . .

The Speaker: — Please redirect your questions through the Chair.

Mr. Brkich: — I apologize for that. My question through the Chair to Madam Minister is, has she been in contact with the mayors, with the council people along there? Are they forming this committee to monitor the lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite no doubt knows, on May 21 Larry Spencer, the Member of Parliament for the area, sent a letter to the acting minister of the Environment, with a copy to department staff, asking to have representatives at a meeting at Regina Beach on May 27.

Mr. Speaker, the acting minister of the Environment, the current Minister of Northern Affairs, did attend that meeting. It was a full and frank discussion, I understand, of the issues and the concerns. And we are certainly considering very positively what kinds of measures we can implement so that the people of Last Mountain Lake understand that their water is safe for recreational purposes, that their water is safe for the fish, and that they can continue to enjoy that beautiful lake as they have in the past.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Information Services Corporation

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under the old manual land titles system that served this province for 100 years, the government had a cash cow that was returning revenue of about \$20 million. Then they said they were going to automate it and they said the cost of automating it would be 20 million. Then some civil servants decided that they should fly around the world and market it and the cost rose from 20 million to 80 million.

Now that the head of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), the head of this government, has officially acknowledged that there will be no foreign sales, that the cost of the land titles system is going to have to be totally borne by

the users of the land titles system — we haven't marketed it anywhere, we're not going to market it anywhere — my question for the Minister of Justice is: what is going to happen to land titles fees? Are they going to skyrocket to cover the \$60 million shortfall that . . . (inaudible) . . . covered? Or is it going to fall into the deficit of the province?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even the member from Swift Current knows the answer to this question, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — And, Mr. Speaker, even he knows well enough not to ask it. But the member from North Battleford had to, had to ask it, Mr. Speaker, and carry on some of the misrepresentations that in fact the member from Swift Current had carried on, about the costs of this system.

But I'll give the answer to the member that the member from Swift Current always really likes, Mr. Speaker. And that is, Mr. Speaker, the system works — people know the system works, Mr. Speaker. The costs have been significantly less. And Microsoft, Bill Gates — Mr. Speaker, this is why the member from Swift Current likes it — Bill Gates likes the system so much he says that now, now ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) are industry leaders in land information systems, Mr. Speaker.

Isn't that good enough for the member from North Battleford?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, no matter what the Minister of Justice says, the initial budget for automating land titles was 20 million. It's now increased to 80 million.

Now Fraser Nicholson's gallivanting around the globe was going to rack up sales that would cover that 80 million and make a bundle of money for Saskatchewan. Now Frank Hart says there won't be any international sales so that 80 million has to come out of Saskatchewan. We all know that information technology has about a two- to three-year lifespan. Then it's going to be . . . have to be upgraded.

(14:15)

So now Fraser Nicholson is gone and so is his dream of marketing the latest version of GigaText around the world. Now that the plan to sell this technology around the globe is gone and there's no more foreign trips, what is the provision for the cost of future upgrades? We're going to need them in two or three years. What is the provision in the budget for that? How much is it going to cost? Who's going to have to pick it up?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I may use the member from Swift Current again, even he knows that the \$80 million figure, Mr. Speaker, is incorrect. The figure is \$60 million, slightly over, Mr. Speaker, which was what was budgeted. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from North Battleford — indeed all members opposite — will know that the Provincial Auditor, the corporation's own auditors, see the level of variance between spending as very minor, Mr. Speaker,

in comparison to similar technologies. This system is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please. I'm finding it impossible to hear the answer. I would ask the minister to proceed once again.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I'll save the member the opportunity to hear it again. But the system is at budget, Mr. Speaker. All auditors have said that is the case. The system is working, Mr. Speaker. And the vice-president of the corporation, Mr. Speaker, did not say, did not say that efforts to sell this system overseas are not ongoing. In fact, completely the opposite. He said that they are, that there's significant opportunities for this technology, Mr. Speaker, and every effort will be made to ensure that there are full returns to the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, my question is: where do these returns come from now that the plan to market around the globe has been thrown on the potato pile?

Now, Mr. Speaker, Janice MacKinnon questioned why we were expanding this system with no business plan — and of course we know what happened to her. You don't ask questions over there.

The minister argues that was only 60 million, so apparently that's all right. It's not 80 million they've lost, it's only 60 million. So that's just fine. That's not a problem with him. But he is forgetting the figure of 20 million that the old system used to net as revenue to the government. That's now gone. Instead of a revenue stream we've got a cost.

And I ask him, now that the plans to fly to Britain are gone, now that we know Britain's on a different land titles system than we're on, they're not going to buy it, who picks up the 80 million? Where's that going to be covered? That still hasn't been answered. He says Bill Gates is interested, and is he going to give us the 80 mil?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the member will know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a marketing arrangement with EDS (Electronic Data Systems), another one of the very large computer companies in the world, to help market this project. They see it as a marketable project, Mr. Speaker, that's why they're involved.

We see it as a marketable project, Mr. Speaker. Experts across North America see it as a viable project, Mr. Speaker. This will be sold across the world.

And, Mr. Speaker, last week when the minister was . . . when the member from Swift Current was railing against the system, we had, Mr. Speaker, in the gallery, government officials from Ukraine to come to look at this very system to use it there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 77 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002 (No. 2)/Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 77, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002 (No. 2) 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.

TABLING OF REPORT

The Speaker: — Members, before orders of the day, it's my duty to at this time advise you that I'm tabling the annual report on operations for the year ended March 31, 2002, submitted from the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand on behalf of the government to convert questions no. 314 and 315 to debates returnable.

The Speaker: — 314 and 315 converted to . . . converted.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses to questions 316 and 317.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 316 and 317 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 70 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002 and will formally move second reading of the legislation at the end of my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes just to outline the background of this legislation, a few details on what it does, and explain how it benefits Saskatchewan.

Members will know that The Labour Standards Act has always had exemptions for those who are, in the Act's words, employed primarily in farming, ranching, or market gardening.

Mr. Speaker, in agriculture the workplace is also the home. It is a business where children, grandparents, and relations regularly pitch in and help during peak times like seeding and harvest. Agriculture in Saskatchewan has traditionally been an endeavour where the workload has varied wildly depending on

the climate and the change of seasons. And that, Mr. Speaker, briefly explains why those who originally crafted The Labour Standards Act exempted workers employed in farming.

But the face of agriculture in this province has changed, Mr. Speaker. One change has been the growth in large commercial hog operations. The growth of this sector is a significant success but it has also resulted in a different approach, an industrial approach, to intensive livestock operations.

This industrial approach differs from the traditional farming operation in a number of ways. The large hog barns employ highly specialized, well-trained staff with specific responsibilities and they are no longer dependent on the climate and the change of seasons. These large commercial barns are producing hogs entirely indoors where control of the environment and the production cycles are important tools.

While intensive operations have significant economic benefits for Saskatchewan, not everyone is part of a traditional farming operation. Nor should they be treated as such.

Commercial hog barns are a specialized industry that has grown rapidly in rural Saskatchewan in the last 10 years. Today's commercial hog production facilities are not the same as traditional farms.

Last fall we announced our intention to consult with hog barn employers and employees about the most appropriate way to amend The Labour Standards Act to extend coverage to commercial hog operations.

This legislation is about fairness. Mr. Speaker, when businesses in Saskatchewan hire employees, those employees are covered by The Labour Standards Act. This is true for mining companies. This is true for mills. This is true for forestry companies, for manufacturers, and retailers right down to the neighbourhood corner store and gas bar.

Mr. Speaker, the regulations accompanying this Act define commercial hog production facilities as undertakings engaged in the production of pigs, hogs, or swine and employing the equivalent of six or more full-time employees. Traditional farming operations are not affected.

In addition, in the case of mixed-farming operations, only those employees directly involved in the hog operation will be considered in determining the number of full-time equivalent employees. And it will not apply when only members of the employer's immediate family are employed.

The changes will come into effect on September 1, 2002. This will give labour standards officers an opportunity to meet face to face with the affected operators to explain the implications to them. It will also allow these operators the time to implement any adjustments that may be necessary.

The application of labour standards legislation to commercial hog operations is good for Saskatchewan's economy. It ensures a level playing field for employers and is a valuable tool in attracting and retaining skilled workers, especially in a specialized industry like commercial hog production.

Skilled workers are reluctant to work without minimal labour standards protections and it's unreasonable to expect them to. This amendment to The Labour Standards Act will better enable commercial hog production facilities to attract the skilled labour that they require and thus enhance investment opportunities in this industry.

Let me hasten to add that through consultations I know that most commercial hog operations in the province meet or exceed provincial labour standards. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, a spokesperson for Saskatchewan Pork says this legislation isn't necessary because commercial hog production facilities are already paying top-notch wages and benefits.

This Bill will have no significant impact on any commercial hog production facility already meeting or exceeding provincial labour standards. The only impact of this Bill will be in commercial hog barns that do not meet labour . . . or provincial labour standards. This Bill levels the playing field in the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I've also heard critics of the legislation complain that there are . . . were no consultations with the industry before we introduced this legislation. There have been consultations and I've been in meetings with industry representatives.

I would remind all members that earlier this year, Mr. Tom Halpenny carried out consultations on this change to The Labour Standards Act. That consultation process was undertaken to ensure the views of those directly affected — employers and employees working in commercial hog barns — were taken into account in determining how the changes to the Act will be implemented.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Halpenny's consultations in January and February with industry players were not the only consultations undertaken. Further meetings were held in late April and early May and the Department of Labour has received input from stakeholders since then. And that doesn't include meetings with Sask Pork that I attended along with the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, critics have also argued that this legislation will place the industry at a competitive disadvantage. However, Alberta's hog industry is already subject to most of that province's labour standards legislation. And if, as the industry tells us, commercial hog barns already meet or exceed the minimum standards, this legislation will have no negative impact on our competitiveness.

Labour standards are a fact of life in more than 30,000 provincial workplaces and there has been no logical arguments advanced for not adding commercial hog production facilities to that number.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the amendment to The Labour Standards Act we are proposing is straightforward. It provides coverage under the Act for workers in commercial hog operations, it only applies to commercial hog facilities employing the equivalent of six full-time workers, and it does not affect traditional farming operations.

There are a number of good reasons for passing this Bill. First,

it levels the playing field for the industry by requiring commercial hog operations to meet the basic employment standards required by provincial legislation. It also levels the playing field for working people by giving those rural residents working in commercial hog production facilities the same minimum standards and protections in law that other workers in the province already enjoy.

This legislation is good for the province. It will also help to attract and retain skilled workers, especially in a specialized industry like the commercial hog production. Saskatchewan's future will best be served by developing a quality labour force whose knowledge, skills, and motivation are what attracts employers to the province. The legislation before us will help do that.

Mr. Speaker, there are indeed very good reasons for passing this legislation. And I invite all members to support it.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 70, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, whenever a Bill is brought forward from the government side of the House, the opposition has a number of responsibilities to the province when they look through the Bill.

And two particular responsibilities that I feel that we have, as an opposition, is to examine how the piece of legislation will be to the benefit of Saskatchewan and to consult with the people that it's intended to benefit.

And secondly, we need to examine how the Bill will negatively affect our province and the growth of our province and the sector or the individuals that the piece of legislation will indeed negatively affect.

And this Bill, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, has been difficult for the most part to understand why it's even on the floor of the Assembly at this point in time. The reason why I say that is, throughout our consultation process, we kept on hearing that question of why.

There's so many questions that surround this Bill. Why was six employees chosen? What study would back that six employees is where we need to have The Labour Standards Act, but five is not? Why the hog industry? Quite frankly, we have other intensive livestock operations and other types of animals. Why the hog industry? Will it stop only at the hog industry? Are we looking at putting all of agriculture under a Labour Standards Act in due time? How many direct hog barn employees actually have lobbied the government for these changes?

Because in my particular case, Mr. Speaker, I live quite . . . where I live or where I'm located is surrounded by a number of intensive hog barns. Probably the most near and dear friend that I could ever hope to have is a hog barn worker and I asked her about this particular piece of legislation and she said that it doesn't really affect her. She didn't care one way or another,

quite frankly. She was being very well paid and she has an extremely important benefit package that's offered to her through the barn she works in.

And considering that many, many of my neighbours are hog barn workers, they value their jobs because it allows . . . quite often, it allows their husband to remain on the farm; quite often, it's the women that are working in the hog barns. There's a number of skilled employees in the hog barns that enjoy living in rural Saskatchewan and appreciate the fact that there's a job locally that does pay well.

The hog barns in my area are not demanding a number of overtime hours, and my understanding is when they do they will pay for that service by their employees. I know my neighbour is paid if she's on call. She knows her schedule well in advance.

So I question, you know, who has lobbied the government to make this change. Because quite frankly, I'm not hearing it in my area.

How does it affect . . . how will this Bill affect the mixed farms or the family farms? And, you know, and that is . . . opens up another whole question of how do we define a family farm. I know the minister has said that the piece of legislation won't affect the family farm. However, we have . . . it's pretty hard to define a family farm, and that's a very, very broad term. There is a family farm, as a matter of fact, also in my area that owns an intensive hog barn.

A very important question that it raises is, you know, has there been any thought to a regular set of labour standards that's more tailored to the hog industry? Has that been considered by the government? I know that the hog industry itself is quite receptive to that idea. They would like to see something more tailored to their needs rather than the standard Labour Standards Act that applies to the shoe store worker or the worker in the neighbourhood grocery store. They're saying that let's have something that's tailored to the hog industry.

This is a whole new area that we're looking at within our province — agriculture businesses have . . . or agriculture sectors have been eliminated from the mandatory Labour Standards Act in the past so we're kind of setting ground here. So perhaps we should look at tailoring it to meet the needs of the hog barns.

How will it affect the industry's ability to attract outside investment, Mr. Speaker? We hear time and time again, not just in the hog industry, but in many industries that we need to stay competitive with our neighbouring provinces. All provinces are competing, quite frankly, to attract investment dollars to different industries.

So therefore we in Saskatchewan must be quite diligent in being competitive. We have to compete with the best. And we have to set forward a friendly environment that encourages businesses and investment dollars to come into our province. The hog industry is no different, Mr. Speaker. They are also trying to attract investment dollars.

So if we now seem more regulated and there's more red tape and more complications in coming to Saskatchewan, guess

what, Mr. Speaker? History has shown that those investment dollars simply won't come. So we're quite concerned.

And that's another question. Will the operations, Mr. Speaker, at the edge of being regulated now simply decide that they're not going to expand? And when I say that, I mean a hog barn that is employing five employees. Will they feel that there is . . . you know that they just will not expand at this point in time? Or will they do so in another way by setting up a different company or whatever. It's a very, very, very difficult thing to standardize, Mr. Speaker.

Will the barns that have proven to be good paying local job opportunities — and I described already how that's so important in the area that I live — will they now hire part-time employees? Will the employees that are presently in the barns, or those in the future that will be hired into the hog barns, will they now have a difficult time getting a full-time job? And they probably need a full-time job to meet their financial needs.

And will the barns instead go to part-time employees — and they'll have a few more but they'll all be part-time? And that will, instead of helping the employees, in my mind, that would be a hindrance.

The minister spoke a number of times that this will just affect commercial hog barns. And again, I guess that falls in how do we define a commercial hog barn. I didn't hear a definition of that in her description of the Bill and why we have the Bill.

And the other question — and there's many, many more, but ones that I can think of at the moment — I guess another question that came to mind when the minister was speaking is that if there is a couple who own a hog barn and their two sons farm with them along . . . and one of their sons' wives is involved in the farming operation, that would be five people involved in that particular farming operation, Mr. Speaker.

So if they hire one employee, they only need to hire one, is that one employee then automatically under The Labour Standards Act?

So therefore I think that would be a deterrent for that particular farming family to even hire one employee. And we know from the statistics, Mr. Speaker, there's fewer and fewer farms that are hiring people to help due to the prices to a large extent — they can't afford to do so.

But we've seen a decline in agriculture employment. I think it's serious and needs to be addressed. Would this be yet another deterrent that's going to affect the decline in agriculture employment in Saskatchewan?

You know, Mr. Speaker, the more and more that I talk to people, and that definitely includes hog barn workers in my area, because there are so many, I still . . . the question's why? Like why is this being done?

And the reason why seems to have nothing to do with good governance, Mr. Speaker. And it seems to do . . . have absolutely everything to do with political expedience. It was a promise that was made by this Premier during the leadership race of the NDP Party, and there seemed to be no thought of the

consequences, no consultation with the industry, and there was just nothing meaningful made whatsoever about who it will directly affect.

And it's going to directly affect the hog industry, it's going to directly affect the workers in the hog industry, and as I mentioned earlier, they may not be all positive.

This Bill has . . . it's a short Bill, but I believe it's got serious ramifications for our province. And it's interesting that this particular government they commissioned an ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) Committee to do a study on what we could do to help revitalize rural Saskatchewan.

I commend the ACRE Committee; they did a lot of work. There was . . . the commendable members on that committee. And they formed subcommittees and these subcommittees studied different areas and what could be done, what could be changed, what could be added to help revitalize rural Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan as a whole. I mean if the rural area is doing well economically, of course it's going to affect the province as a whole.

And one of the subcommittees that they formed was one that was going to deal with labour issues. And when the ACRE Committee made their formal presentation to this Assembly we were told, at that point in time, that the ACRE Committee had not completed their study on labour issues. They're going to continue with that and they would be presenting a report in the future.

And my understanding is that the government should be waiting for that process to take place. Why are we making this decision when we have, ourselves, commissioned a very important committee? We've all recognized on both sides of the House that these are things that need to be considered quite seriously, recommendations by the ACRE Committee, and yet the labour area where they're studying has not been presented yet.

So I feel that the government's failing to live up to the promise of looking at their own report or their own studies.

And the consultation process is probably the most serious concern that I have with this Bill because it basically has not taken place, Mr. Speaker. In a media release by Sask Pork, dated May 14, Joan Steckhan who is the director of industry development for Sask Pork said, and I quote:

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

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

And as I mentioned earlier, I don't believe the hog producers or the hog industry as a whole, and I know the members on this

side of the House don't feel that we absolutely can have no regulation or standards. But we think that there should be a consultation process that's put in place and that we should look at tailored regulations.

And we've got to look at what we're competing with. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we're competing with Manitoba and Alberta. And we need to attract investment dollars. So we have to use our heads about this. We cannot implement something that's going to be viewed as another reason why we shouldn't invest in Saskatchewan.

The consultation process, Mr. Speaker, has, as I understand it —and I mean I'm sure if I'm wrong, at some point in time in the debate I'll be corrected — but as I mentioned earlier it became a promise by our Premier during his NDP leadership campaign. And it wasn't a promise, Mr. Speaker, to the hog industry. And quite frankly it wasn't really a promise to the hog workers. It was a promise to unions.

And that became more than obvious when in November, the Minister of Labour announced that the hog industry would be brought under The Labour Standards Act. And you know where she announced that, Mr. Speaker? It wasn't at a hog symposium. It wasn't at a hog workshop or a convention. She announced it at the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour conference. That's where the announcement was made, Mr. Speaker. That's the type of consultation process and fairness that we're talking about here. And that's why we question the actual intent of this Bill.

The pork industry, do you want to know when they found out about it, Mr. Speaker? Well, guess what. They found out about it the next day and they heard it on the news.

And it's kind of humorous when we have a Premier today who is extremely upset because he found out a decision that the federal government made and he found out about it through the media, and he said that's no way to run a country. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is no way to run a province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

Ms. Harpauer: — Betty Anne Stevenson, who works for Sask Pork, immediately sent a letter to the Minister of Labour requesting a meeting because she had obviously heard the news. In December of 2001 Sask Pork finally received a reply from the Minister of Labour and . . . it wasn't until December 17 actually when they finally got a reply from the Minister of Labour. This is the minister who said that she's consulted with the industry. And the other rather astounding thing is in the letter, and I quote, the Minister said:

I recognize and appreciate that most commercial barns already meet the minimum labour standards provisions. Furthermore, I concur with Sask Pork's position that there is an opportunity to learn from those hog operations that not only meet labour standards provisions outlined in the provincial legislation but they also exceed them.

Mr. Speaker, it took . . . again took some time. We still haven't

... keeping in mind we still haven't started a consultation process. This is the legislation the minister is saying is going to happen during this session and has but lists keep on going down the timeline of the consultation process.

In January of this year the government agreed to a consultation process but it would not be to negotiate what and if but rather who and how. So the result is already predetermined. So let's just make it happen and humour everybody in the hog industry by pretending that we're going to actually consult with them.

On March 7 was the first meeting that the hog industry had with both the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Agriculture, keeping in mind that this session also begins in March — March 7 was the first meeting.

March 13 was the second meeting with the two ministers and at that point in time the government apparently presented some options — not on whether or not this should work. This was options of how they could make it work. It wasn't whether we need it or didn't need it. It wasn't how we could perhaps set up a different set of labour standards that would be tailored to the hog industry. It wasn't a matter of hearing the hog industry's point of view at all, quite frankly. It was for the government to lay out perhaps a couple of options and you guys pick which one and you're going to have to live with it.

In April of this year a consultant from the government phoned the Sask Pork office and informed them that a committee was going to be set up that handle the negotiations between the government and the industry. The committee had until May 17 to come to a consensus and submit a report. Well you know and I know, Mr. Speaker, that's a ridiculous short period of time.

The really goofy part of all that is, that if the committee came to an agreement, the legislation would be introduced this session. But the other ironic thing is, if the committee didn't come to an agreement, that was okay, the legislation would be introduced this session. So what was the point? The outcome was predetermined. We all knew that the legislation was going to be introduced this session.

And also in April, a little later, the government announced who would be on that committee, Mr. Speaker. And there would be three people from the government, three who would be hog producers, and three people who were supposed to be hog barn workers. But in actual fact, that did not take place. The three people who were supposed to be hog barn workers ended up that only one of them, I believe, are.

And all of them — surprise, surprise — are quite active union representatives. And they say that the intent was not to please a promise to the union. But the question keeps on coming up, how can they keep saying that? What is the intent of this Bill when the union is so heavily involved with it?

And the Minister of Agriculture, he implied, you know, I had spoke to him — I forget the date, no, I have that here, I'm sorry, on May 17 or 13 — when we had Agriculture estimates on the floor of the Assembly. I asked the Minister of Agriculture about that and he gave me the roundabout, you know, when you do consultation processes it's extremely hard to get people to participate on these committees and so on and so forth.

And I reminded him again, I live in an area that's surrounded by hog barns. I know many, many, many hog barn workers. Why didn't he pick up the phone and ask me? I'm sure I could have come up with three hog barn workers that would have been quite willing to enter into this consultation process. I don't think he even tried, to be honest with you. I don't believe there was any effort that was made to involve actual hog barn workers.

Mr. Speaker, beyond the consultation process which I've just sort of outlined or ... and which has already ended, I believe I already read the press release where Joan Steckhan had raised concerns that after only one meeting the process was shut down.

My understanding — and again I could be corrected if I'm wrong — the department isn't even returning phone calls to Sask Pork at this point in time. That's how wonderful the consultation process is going.

There are so many concerns of how this will affect our province and growing our province. And ultimately, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party believes that we must view every policy and every legislation on whether or not it's going to help grow our province. And our concerns are definitely centred around that it may not help grow our province. In fact, it may work in the reverse effect. It may create yet another piece of red tape, another deterrent for attracting investment dollars that would help the industry grow.

We're concerned that it's showing discriminatory opinion within the agriculture industry itself. I raised the question earlier: why hog barns? Why was that industry chosen? And is this just a beginning? Is this just the beginning of where they want to go as far as legislating Labour Standards Act throughout the agriculture industry?

We are concerned about the mixed operations — there can be no doubt — because there are mixed farms who have barns and fieldworkers. So will this impact them in a real negative manner?

We have concerns, Mr. Speaker, of how this is going to affect the Hutterite colonies that's in our province. And they're an extremely important player in the hog industry — 22 per cent of the hog production in this province is on Hutterite colonies. So there is concerns of how are they going to fit into this type of restrictions and regulation.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to put into the record something that was written by the Chair of Sask Pork. He's a fellow I know personally and have had the occasion to work with him on a few agriculture issues. And he wrote on April 23:

The pork industry was advised by a government consultant ... last week that it is to negotiate the terms of both the legislation and regulations with three industry employees. Those appointments, now made, are not representative of pork industry employees. Further, (to) this process has a restrictive deadline in which it is to be completed with consensus by May 17th or the Government's commitment would be to introduce legislation by the end of this current session.

"We believe the pork industry has been betrayed by the

government and the Premier, . . . Our producer representatives had clearly met and entertained discussion with the government on labour standards in good faith. We had asked for a process that would be consultative with agriculture and our industry and which would undertake the required due diligence necessary for the introduction of proper legislation. Instead, three of our producers have been asked to negotiate legislation and regulations with three individuals from unionized labour who do not fairly represent our industry, or its employees. Save one commercial barn with 12 employees, our industry, as most of agriculture, is not unionized. The Minister of Labour is basically saying to the pork industry, along with agriculture and business in this province, that legislation affecting Saskatchewan people and business is now to be made by unionized labour. This is a huge wakeup call to not only our industry but also to any family farm operation, agricultural business, commodity groups, or business, either rural or urban, wishing to set up new business or venture capital opportunities.”

And the hog industry — make no mistake, Mr. Speaker — the hog industry is extremely important to our province. And this government actually has taken a number of steps and had a number of initiatives to encourage the growth of that industry, but they now are going to take an initiative to cause deterrent to the industry.

The document that was prepared by Derek Murray Consulting Associates called *The Economic Impact of Saskatchewan's Hog Industry*, prepared in May of 2002, said that “Saskatchewan ranks third behind Manitoba and Alberta in terms of hog production.”

So again I, you know, really have to stress that we're competing with Manitoba and Alberta for investment dollars for hog production.

In 2001 Saskatchewan hog production was 1.8 million compared to 3.3 for Manitoba and 3.6 million for Alberta. The total employment impact of hog production and processing in Saskatchewan is 8,250 jobs generating \$289 million in employment income.

If current growth projections are accurate, the impacts of the hog industry would more than double to 18,563 jobs by 2005, generating \$650 million in employment income.

And, Mr. Speaker, we would love to see that growth opportunity happen by the year 2005. So you have to understand why we have some concerns that this is going to be seen as another piece of red tape that'll stop investment dollars coming to Saskatchewan.

(The) taxes paid to governments average between 26% and 30% . . . (in) the total wages paid. Using 28 % applied to the total wages paid, the total tax impact is \$80.9 million annually.

So I don't think that we should question the importance of the hog industry for our province, for the economy of our province. And I think that we should be looking very carefully at legislation that will prevent that growth.

Some questions that need to be answered before this legislation can be passed in the House is: why does the NDP government even want to take the chance with the economic development in the industry that has proven to be a success over the last few years? In fact the hog industry has been one of our . . . probably one of the few success stories this province has had because they've had rather a dismal record in the past.

New investment and growth in the hog production in the coming years is good for everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker, so why is the Premier taking this chance with so little consultation and, quite frankly, so little complaint from workers demanding that this change be made?

Mr. Speaker, there is another article that I have. It's written by the chamber. And the chamber also poses many of the questions actually that I've mentioned. They write:

It is discriminatory to segregate the pork industry from the rest of agriculture. It must be made clear how this legislation will affect the 95 per cent of producers that are mixed operators.

And again I say, 95 per cent of producers are mixed operators. I know the minister earlier said that this is going to only affect commercial hog barns, but we've yet to hear a definition of that.

There must be clarity of future intention. Does the government intend to later bring other agriculture sectors or all of agriculture, including the family farms, under the Act?

And this goes further, Mr. Speaker. I've mentioned about this piece of legislation perhaps creating a difficulty in attracting investment dollars. But I'll tell you, it'll create difficulty in investment attracting . . . or difficulty in attracting investment dollars to other industries as well. Because they're going to look at what we've done to the hog industry and the cattle industry's going to say that . . . see it and they're going to say, aha, I don't know, because that . . . they're going to do that next to the cattle industry, and so on and so forth. So it doesn't just stop at the hog industry.

The chamber goes on to say:

There must be a clarity of future . . .

(15:00)

Oh, sorry. I read that, Mr. Speaker.

There must be thorough economic analysis to determine how this legislation will affect the growth and development of an industry that the government Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization has itself promoted and supported.

And so I must question the minister: have we done an economic analysis on how this is going to adversely affect the industry?

It appears, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP are simply going to push ahead with this legislation without any consultation, without any analysis, without any thought to the effects that it will have

on the economy of the province.

And I find I guess there's probably rare to no occasion where — or, well I shouldn't say no occasion — rare occasions where I can say I agree with the member from Watrous that was there before me. However I know that the member who was in Watrous prior to my being elected really, truly had huge expectations for the hog industry. And it would be interesting to see what his opinion is of his government's piece of legislation that's now being introduced.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to give this piece of legislation more thought. We would like a lot of the questions that I posed answered. We would like to hear the government's explanation as to why they're even bringing forward this piece of legislation because it's definitely looking like it's politically motivated and not motivated by good government sense.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear more and more of the minister's answers on these questions and there are a number of other questions that I feel absolutely need to be answered by this government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a very important issue today — both labour standards and the economy, Mr. Speaker, and how they interact. In particular, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about how labour standards interact with the agricultural economy in this province, Mr. Speaker — our largest single industry.

Now the government has long said, and it's been a long practice in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that the agriculture industry is outside of The Labour Standards Act; that while corporate farms, if they wish to, may place themselves voluntarily under The Labour Standards Act, they don't have to be under The Labour Standards Act, Mr. Speaker.

Because agriculture isn't like a normal industry. Agriculture doesn't work a nine-to-five job at the same location every day. Agriculture works, depending on the season, Mr. Speaker, from first light to last light and even beyond. Or, Mr. Speaker, at some times of the year, there's very little work to actually be done on the farm. People are doing maintenance, they doing cleanup, they're doing make-work projects, Mr. Speaker.

But at times like seeding, at times like harvest on grain farms you put in long hours, Mr. Speaker. And it's not just five days a week. It's seven days a week, Mr. Speaker, because it runs for a very short period of time.

In the livestock industry you run in a cycle also, Mr. Speaker. There are times when you're busier and times when you're not as busy. And so the employees, Mr. Speaker, in those industries know when they enter that industry that it's not going to be, you start work at 8 o'clock and you get an hour off for lunch and you're done at 5 and you have coffee breaks in between.

No, Mr. Speaker, employees know that when they go to work in the farm industry that you work as long as the work is there to be done. That means you start early and you work late. And when it rains you go for coffee, Mr. Speaker, that the work isn't there that day.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why the agriculture industry has had a special exemption from The Labour Standards Act. Now the minister wants to bring a portion of agriculture under the labour standards.

They still face those same cycles, Mr. Speaker. It's just that now these farms — some incorporated, some not perhaps — family farms have got bigger, Mr. Speaker. Bigger than they were in the '60s, bigger than they were in the '70s, but they're still family farms and farm corporations, Mr. Speaker, still dealing with the same kind of problems and the same issues, Mr. Speaker. How do you raise and feed, in this particular case, hogs?

So, Mr. Speaker, while things have got bigger, the requirements in those industries are still very much the same, Mr. Speaker, very much the same. And so there's still a need, there's still a need to have that flexibility, Mr. Speaker, in place for labour in those industries. And my colleague has mentioned a number of the problems associated with labour and the regulations as set out under The Labour Standards Act.

You know she mentioned the Hutterite colonies. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've worked around Hutterite colonies for a number of years, got to know some of the people on the colonies, and a lot of cases, Mr. Speaker, there is no salary paid to an individual. So is that individual an employee in the hog barn? Is he or she an employee in the chicken barn? Is he or she an employee on the grain farm? Or are they all owners, Mr. Speaker? Are they all owners? Therefore if they're all owners, they're not employees, Mr. Speaker. So how and where do you draw the lines in this particular case?

I look at the minister's Bill, Mr. Speaker — that's it, one page, Mr. Speaker. One page that is changing the working facts of life in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, the way things have been done in Saskatchewan for a long, long period of time. And it's not just the hog industry, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind you. It's not just the hog industry that is going to be impacted on this. It's going to be people who operate egg hatcheries, greenhouses, nurseries, brush clearing operations, and commercial hog operations.

And that's an interesting thing, Mr. Speaker. That's an interesting thing. What is a commercial hog operation? I don't know very many people across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that raise hogs for pets. Now there may be the odd one, there may indeed be the odd one and fact is, I think I have a person in my constituency that I know of that has a hog for a pet — not a very big one, he only stands about yay high off the table — but they do have a hog for a pet, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't . . . in that particular family there isn't six people looking after that hog so I don't suppose that they could classify as the six-plus employees.

An Hon. Member: — He's talking about his Harley-Davidson.

Mr. D'Autremont: — No, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite hollers, is that a Harley-Davidson? No, it's a real live, breathing, eating hog, one of those little miniature, fuzzy ones.

An Hon. Member: — Does it put any carbon dioxide in . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker . . . yes, and it does produce carbon dioxide, Mr. Speaker . . . but so does the Harley-Davidson.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at a commercial hog operation, what does the minister really mean by that? Does she mean the single person on the farm operating with 10 hogs who runs a farrowing operation? Is that a commercial? Because he sells it and, hopefully, makes a profit. Or at least at some point in time, Mr. Speaker, intends to make a profit from it.

Is it 20 hogs; is it 100 hogs that makes you a commercial operator, Mr. Speaker? Or perhaps, seeing as how farming is so tough, is it, you made a profit or you didn't make a profit — does that make you a commercial operation?

Or, Mr. Speaker, is it that you actually pay someone to be an employee of your operation? Does that make you a commercial operation?

Well if it is, you want to take Mother's Day off to take the missus out for dinner and you've got to hire somebody to look after your hogs, Mr. Speaker, does that mean that you're now a commercial hog operation?

Mr. Speaker, there are lots of questions here dealing with this particular piece of legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Pork, Sask Pork has raised a number of issues, Mr. Speaker, about this particular piece of legislation. And the first thing, Mr. Speaker, that they raised as an issue was consultation.

Now there's been some heckling back and forth here and I'm not going to comment on all of the comments that were made, Mr. Speaker. But the, Mr. Speaker, the consultation as set up by the minister seemed to allow for two weeks for the regulations and the rules to be developed between the owners, Mr. Speaker, the employers in the hog industry, and representatives of employees.

Now interesting thing there, Mr. Speaker, only one of those employees was actually an employee in a hog barn. But, Mr. Speaker, it took . . . they allowed about two weeks for that. Mr. Speaker, that wasn't even as much time as it took the Premier and the cabinet to make a determination on the harassment complaint against the Minister of the Environment. They had three weeks for that one, and that was a fairly open-and-shut case, Mr. Speaker. Everybody was in the same office to deal with.

Here you have an entire industry to consult with and they're allowed about two weeks. So, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly a lot of problems in this particular piece of legislation, and the first problem is the lack of consultation.

The operators of the larger hog barns around the province, Mr. Speaker — and the minister even admitted to this — are meeting the labour standards and in some cases even exceeding labour standards. So it's not a question, Mr. Speaker, that some employees are being hard done by. So you ask yourself, since there isn't a rash of complaints, what is the motivation? What is the motivation driving this forward?

Well perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the minister gave that motivation

when she made the announcement that this legislation was going to come forward. The location she made that announcement, Mr. Speaker, was at the SFL, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour convention. That, Mr. Speaker, I think is the hint on what the motivation behind this is. This is payoff for support in the leadership campaign of the Premier — payoff to the unions.

Now you have to ask yourself, why do they need that? Why do they need that, Mr. Speaker? Because there's nothing stopping the unions today from going into every one of those hog operations and seeking to unionize them. In fact one of them already is.

So why was that promise made and why was the announcement delivered at the SFL? One can only speculate, Mr. Speaker. One can only speculate as to what the reasoning is. Mr. Speaker, one can only speculate why these announcements were made to the unions of Saskatchewan at their convention. Why wasn't it made to the hog industry? You know, that would have seemed more appropriate.

I remember years ago — I wasn't paying much attention to politics at the time — but there was a major change in marketing of hogs that took place in Saskatchewan. Major change, Mr. Speaker.

Jack Messer was actually the minister of Agriculture at the time who later became the president of SaskPower under Roy Romanow and who actually happened to get fired under Roy Romanow as well, as the president of SaskPower.

Well Mr. Jack Messer made the change that hog marketing was going to be done through a marketing board in the province, and he went to a large gathering of hog producers and told them that's what was going to happen. He didn't go to the SFL. He didn't go to the dairy producers to announce it. He didn't go to the chicken board, Mr. Speaker. He went and told the hog producers. This minister doesn't even have that courtesy. She goes to the SFL to make the announcement, a friendly crowd to her, but ignored the hog industry that's going to be impacted. At least Jack Messer had the courage to face the people he was going to be dealing with.

(15:15)

Mr. Speaker, the hog industry has a great deal of concerns about the consultation process that has taken place. They want to have the ability to sit down and negotiate with the minister before this legislation is passed, Mr. Speaker, not after. Not after.

One of the things you look at in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, is where are the limits? Where are the lines drawn here? Well the minister stood up and said this Bill will apply to people, to operations with six or more employees. And yet, you look at this and there are no lines and rules drawn in this piece of legislation.

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to the speaker, just . . . or to the presenter.

I wanted to point out that we do have a very special guest in the west gallery. He's from my hometown of Ile-a-la-Crosse. His name is Gerald Roy, and Gerald served on council in Ile-a-la-Crosse, worked for the Friendship Centre Board and is actively involved with many young people.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, at one time, he was going to be perhaps a candidate for mayor of our home community. And when I asked him to join me in that capacity as deputy mayor when I served as mayor, his phrase was to me, blow my hair back, you know. So at the time, he wasn't ready for that. But obviously, as time goes on, he's becoming more and more of a prominent politician in northern Saskatchewan.

So I would ask that the Assembly recognize Mr. Roy and make him welcome here. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 70 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002 (continued)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister says that this is only going to apply to operations that have six or more employees. I guess the question has to be, where is that written down, Mr. Speaker? How can the people involved — not only in the hog industry but also as the Bill points out, the egg hatcheries, greenhouses, and nurseries, and brush clearing operations — how can they be comfortable that that line isn't going to move? That it is always going to be six or more? Because it's not in the Act, Mr. Speaker. So tomorrow . . . some time down the road, let's say, the Bill has passed and received Royal Assent and is now the law of the land.

The minister can wake up one morning and decide h'm, I think it's time to change the regulations on this that it's going to be four employees now. There's nothing to prevent her, Mr. Speaker, from doing so. There is nothing in this piece of legislation bringing agriculture under The Labour Standards Act that prevents that minister from — on a whim — changing the line where it now becomes the labour standards apply to that operation.

The minister, if she wanted to, on a whim — or any, any ministers to follow her — can simply say any one of these operations that has a single employee now falls under The Labour Standards Act. It just takes a stroke of the pen from the minister to accomplish that. It doesn't come to the legislature for review; the minister is solely responsible and has that power.

Well, Mr. Speaker, personally, and the members on this side of the House, and obviously the hog industry, do not trust that not to happen. Because one of the advertisements they put forward, Mr. Speaker, says, who's next. The government says the hog

industry is unique and the rest of agriculture doesn't have to worry.

Well, Mr. Speaker, because the minister has the power to unilaterally make changes to regulations, and the number of employees is in regulation, the minister has the power to change the entire context of what this Bill is about, Mr. Speaker. And that's unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the people in the hog industry are not opposed to bringing their operations under The Labour Standards Act. But they don't believe that they fit into the square hole that the Minister of Labour has set out for The Labour Standards Act. They believe they have unique circumstances that need to be recognized and they wish to sit down with the minister and negotiate those unique measures.

But the minister hasn't allowed for that consultation. The consultation that took place, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, was with one person from the hog industry, one person who actually worked in a hog barn, and two others, one representing the Grain Services Union, and the other one representing another union, Mr. Speaker. I believe I have which one that is here. The other union member represented Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union.

You wonder how that ties into hog operation — Communications, Energy and Paperworkers, Mr. Speaker. It seems to be a bit of a stretch to get into a hog barn from a communications operation. But maybe, you know, who knows — maybe they talk to the hogs, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is too much power being given to the minister under this change. It allows for too much uncertainty in agriculture, not just in the operations that are being affected, Mr. Speaker, but in the entire agricultural operation in this province. There needs to be further consultation.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, should be held up, held back by the government, brought forward after consultations; perhaps brought forward in a fall session, Mr. Speaker, that would be appropriate. That would be the thing to do with it, Mr. Speaker.

Take time over the summer, the early fall, meet with the hog industry, meet with the people who actually work in the hog industry, Mr. Speaker, go through a proper consultation process. And that isn't driving passed a hog barn or introducing yourself to a hog worker; that's sitting down and talking to them, Mr. Speaker, giving them time to express themselves.

I've seen some of the ways the government consults. I've seen some of the way the federal government consults. You go to a one hour meeting with a lot of people, everybody introduces themselves and says who they are, and by the time you get around the circle it's time to go home. That's not consultation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government needs to give some hours of consultation to the hog industry to develop a method of bringing these employees under a proper labour standards that fits their unique situation, Mr. Speaker. A unique situation for the hog industry, for the egg producing, Mr. Speaker, a unique situation for all of agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we have asked the government a number of times, both now publicly and privately, to hold this Bill in abeyance. Do the proper consultation. The minister says when did you do that?

I've done it a number of times with your House Leader. I've done it with your House Leader, who makes the determination, Mr. Speaker, with how this legislation comes forward, Mr. Speaker — how this legislation comes forward. So, Mr. Speaker, we do have a great deal of concern just as the hog industry does on this particular piece of legislation.

Their recommendation, Mr. Speaker, in the selected issues forum presented to the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce annual convention by the hog industry says:

Government should pull back legislation from this session and engage in a complete and fair consultation with the pork industry and stakeholder groups. They should conduct the impact assessment on the provincial agribusiness and rural economy.

There's a good point, Mr. Speaker. Just what kind of study has the minister done that will deal with the impact this legislation will have on the hog industry and on agribusiness in this province?

Do they have any studies that indicate it's good for the industry? Do they have any studies that indicate it's bad for the industry? The hog industry thinks it's going to be bad, Mr. Speaker.

But what does the government think? Does the government have any proof, one way or the other, that it's going to be a benefit or that it's going to be a negative? Or are they just going ahead, Mr. Speaker, because the Premier made a promise? Is that why, Mr. Speaker, just because the Premier made a promise?

They further recommended, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Labour, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, and potentially Industry and Resources should carry out proper consultations with agriculture and agribusiness.

So they want to bring in, Mr. Speaker, more than just the Department of Labour but all of those areas that the government has brought forward that says they're interested in economic development in Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan. Labour, Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization as well as Industry and Resources, Mr. Speaker — they want to consult with those.

And furthermore the consultation report should clearly identify issues and costs and assess the impact on growth and sustainability of the pork industry. We've heard the Minister for Economic Development stand up and say how we need to expand our economy, how we need more hogs in this province. And the backbenchers are always standing up and saying, good news for Saskatchewan — another pig was born, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is good news for Saskatchewan. We need to have, Mr. Speaker, more industry in this province.

So what impact is this particular Bill going to have, Mr. Speaker, on the potential for economic development in this

province?

The minister has given no proof, either in her statements outside or her statements in the House, that this is in any way, shape, or form a benefit to Saskatchewan. It's only in compliance with a promise made by the Premier.

You know, it's too bad, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't keep some other ones of his promises. That would also be of benefit to the province, like the creation of 30,000 jobs. Now that would be a benefit, Mr. Speaker.

But he takes these little ones that are given for reasons we don't know or understand, Mr. Speaker, to fulfill, even though they have a negative impact according to the industry on themselves, whereas he fails and fails miserably, Mr. Speaker, in fulfilling his other promises.

Mr. Speaker, I'm in agreement with the industry that there needs to be more time for consultation. We need to give the government the opportunity to sit down with the people in the hog industry and develop what they want for consultations, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore I would move, seconded by the member from Humboldt:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

Bill 70, The Labour Standards Amendment Act be not now read a second time, but that the Bill be read a second time this day six months hence.

The division bells rang from 15:31 until 15:41.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Hermanson	Kwiatkowski	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Gantfoer	Bjornerud	Toth
Wakefield	Stewart	Elhard
Eagles		

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Members, I would ask for silence during every vote — every voice vote. The voting will proceed.

McMorris	D'Autremont	Bakken
Wall	Brkich	Weekes
Harpauer	Hart	Allchurch
Peters	Huyghebaert	

Nays — 30

Calvert	Addley	Atkinson
Hagel	Lautermilch	Serby
Melenchuk	Cline	Sonntag
Osika	Lorjé	Kasperski
Goulet	Van Mulligen	Prebble
Belanger	Axworthy	Nilson

Junor	Hamilton	Harper
Forbes	Jones	Higgins
Trew	Wartman	Thomson
Yates	McCall	Hillson

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I declare the amendment defeated. The debate resumes on the main motion.

(15:45)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to stand and represent the many . . . not only the many farm families in the province, but especially the hog producers that are really concerned with this Bill that's been brought forward by the government — not that there's many of the hog producers that are really concerned about not meeting the standards, because we all know that they not only meet the standards but in most cases exceed the standards that are brought forward by this government.

The problem with this Bill is the consultation process, or better said, the lack of consultation that this government had when they brought forward this Bill. And the other issue that many of the farmers are concerned about is the fact that this is really the thin edge of the wedge. If the government has decided right now that hog producers should come under the labour standards, what will be the next group of people that will be brought under labour standards?

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the consultation process . . . the minister talked about the consultation process. It was interesting to get the other side of the story from the many hog producers, many of which are in my constituency.

Actually I went to a meeting in January in Humboldt this year to talk about this Bill with the consultant that the government hired, Mr. Tom Halpenny, I believe his name was. And at that meeting he said that the discussion today wasn't what and . . . it was what and if, and who and how. Really they wanted to know the definition of a family farm. The decision was already made. They weren't there to consult with the people who are actually raising hogs in this province. They weren't there to find out what the people actually wanted. They came to tell them what was going to be happening.

When the government decided they were going to bring forward this labour legislation, they didn't announce it to the hog producers, they announced it at a convention of the SFL. Now that is not the group of people that are really concerned about the industry and the potential growth of the industry in this province.

The hog producers in this province actually knew that the — under the former premier of this province — that the hog industry is one that they felt had a potential for growing the province. Everybody on this side of the House knows that that's what has to be done. If we're going to have money for health and education and infrastructure, we have to be able to grow the province.

And actually the former premier, Mr. Romanow, indicated that

the hog industry is one area where yes, we could grow the province. So they had faith that this was something that was going to be a success for the province. But then this government comes forward with this idea that maybe to be successful what they should be doing is putting it under labour standards.

Mr. Speaker, there is many issues that could be spoken about on this Bill, and I and many of my colleagues would like to do it in the next little while, but for this time I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 72 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to address The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002. And at the end of my remarks I will be moving second reading of the legislation.

This afternoon I'd like to give a little bit of background to this piece of legislation and details on what the amendments will do.

Mr. Speaker, members will know that there is a statutory requirement for a committee to review and report on all matters relating to The Workers' Compensation Act every four years. That committee is made up of a Chair and an equal representation from employers and organized employees.

The most recent committee of review was chaired by Mr. James Dorsey and it held eight days of public hearings last fall. The committee heard 89 oral presentations and received over 100 written briefs. The committee submitted its report containing 48 recommendations to me, which was made public in March.

Mr. Speaker, I can report that to date 29 of the 48 recommendations have been or are being implemented as matters of Workers' Compensation Board policy. Fourteen are being implemented through the legislative amendments before us, and five recommendations have been deferred. In terms of those five deferred recommendations, two deal with appeals.

Mr. Speaker, we will not be moving forward with the recommendation to establish a chief appeals commissioner at this time. The establishment of an office of the appeals commissioner is a very complex undertaking. It will require the careful development of appropriate responsibilities and the establishment of due processes, as well as a complete review of the Act for consequential amendments.

Mr. Speaker, following the release of the committee's report in March, five stakeholder groups were invited to meet with me so that we could begin the process of gathering their feedback on the recommendations.

I met on two occasions each with the employee and employer representative groups to receive their feedback on the committee's recommendations. As well, another 23 groups representing a wide range of interests were invited to make written submissions.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments before us are the result of

extensive consultations with employers and employees. We believe they will result in a fairer and a more accountable workers' compensation system.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of all members, I'll now take a moment to outline the amendments to The Workers' Compensation Act we are proposing.

First, the maximum wage rate. Since 1985, the maximum gross insurable earnings for an injured worker has been set at \$48,000. The amendments proposed will raise that level to \$51,900 on January 1 of 2003, to \$53,000 on January 1 of 2004, and to 55,000 on January 1, 2005.

Alberta sets its maximum insurable earnings ceiling at \$58,000, while in Manitoba the figure is \$54,590. It's time that we change with the times, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments before us also increase burial expenses. Actual costs associated with burials have increased over time, but the legislative provisions for such costs have not kept pace.

The legislation currently authorizes a payment for burial expenses of \$5,000 with an annual consumer price index adjustment. Today, the payment for burial expenses is \$5,870, where actual cost may run as high as 10,000. The amendment will set the burial expense . . . expenses payment at \$10,000 and the indexing provision will continue.

Our current permanent functional impairment award now has a minimum of \$1,100 and a maximum of \$22,600. Our levels in this regard, Mr. Speaker, are among the lowest in Canada. As a result, the committee of review recommended doubling our minimum and maximum permanent functional impairment awards, and the amendments do that.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I should draw all members' attention to the impact of this amendment on the independence allowance.

The independence allowance is currently set at 10 per cent of the permanent functional impairment award. Since the PFI (permanent functional impairment) award levels are being doubled, these amendments set the independence allowance at 5 per cent of the new PFI award levels.

The committee of review also recommended a change to section 30 of the Act, the presumption of death clause. Section 30 currently says that where an employee is found dead at work, it is presumed that his death was the result of injury arising out of and in the course of his employment.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment will add the phrase "unless the contrary is shown." The new . . . provision will then read that where an employee is found dead at work, quote:

. . . it is presumed that . . . (his) death was . . . (a) result of injury arising out of and in the course of his . . . employment, unless the contrary is shown.

A similar clause existed in the legislation before 1979 and this amendment is being made because the current provision is too inflexible when dealing with situations where a worker is found

dead in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, the committee of review also identified nine amendments to the Act that are of a housekeeping nature. And those are: amending the definition of a common-law spouse from two years of cohabitation to one in order to be consistent with the federal government; including a provision that requires employers to be notified of a worker's application to be included within the scope of the Act; allowing the injured workers to choose to take a lump sum payment when they reach retirement age and if their annuity is \$20,000 or less; providing flexibility to consider comparable salaries when assessing benefits for casual, seasonal, or part-time employees; establishing consistency respecting the apparatuses covered by the Act — sorry, Mr. Speaker — and establishing consistency in the definition of average weekly wage wherever it is used in the Act; replacing the title, executive director with the title, chief executive officer; requiring the board rather than the executive director to certify assessments are owed and recovery is required by the courts; and including a provision that identifies the maximum wage rate as the upper limit for gross earnings.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to support these needed amendments. Our government and the Workers' Compensation Board are working with the employers and employees of Saskatchewan to ensure the most accountable and responsive workers' compensation system possible. These amendments are based on comprehensive consultations with those employers and employees. And they reflect the informed input we have received from them.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting forward a balanced set of amendments that meet the needs of injured workers and their employers. The results will be an improved workers' compensation system in Saskatchewan, one that is both fairer to those who rely on it and more accountable to those who fund it.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 72, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 72, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, is a piece of legislation that, as it comes before us, raises our attention greatly because any time we start talking about the Workers' Compensation Board there are a number of issues that come into play, not the least of which is how the Workers' Compensation Board has operated over the last year or two.

They're talking about some changes and I know it seems like about every four years there is a study done on the Workers' Compensation Board and recommendations are made, and then nothing is done about them. Then four years later more recommendations are made from another report. The recommendations are almost identical and very little has changed.

It's interesting now that the Workers' Compensation Board, this year especially, is . . . shows some real concerning — disconcerting I guess I could say — issues. This first one is a 40 per cent . . . a 48 per cent increase in administration costs, Mr.

Speaker. Those administration costs are coming strictly out of businesses' pockets, Mr. Speaker.

And when you have a Workers' Compensation Board that has an adjustment, a \$56 million adjustment because of an actuarial adjustment, Mr. Speaker, and we don't know about it until right near the end of the year . . . one thing that we've been saying is there needs to be, at the very minimum, quarterly reporting process and that has not been done. They find out in December where they are standing for the whole year and that's a little late, Mr. Speaker, to do any adjusting, Mr. Speaker.

So there are a number of things that we think that the Workers' Compensation Board need to adjust, not the least of which are some of the recommendations that are put forward in this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

I think until they get their own house in order . . . And I mean they've hand-picked the person they want running it — a former NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) I guess he was, and MP, Mr. Solomon — and it's interesting to see the shape of the Workers' Compensation Board after the first year of his tenure. It's not very positive, Mr. Speaker.

The recommendations put forward — although there are I believe 14 of them and 5 have been deferred — really makes me question: of the 40 recommendations that were proposed, how far along are they moving?

And so in another three or four years when there's another report done on the Workers' Compensation Board, the recommendations that we don't see in this Bill will probably be mentioned again four years hence and nothing will probably be done about them, Mr. Speaker.

The minister also talked about consultation — wide-ranging consultation — and we certainly heard in the piece of legislation that was spoke before about all the consultation that was done, unfortunately none with the pork producers and that's the Bill that affects them directly.

(16:00)

Well I question how much consultation was done in this process. I stood and spoke to a Bill yesterday, the Watershed Authority, and they were talking about consultation that was done in that Bill. And the people that run the C&Ds (conservation and development authorities) weren't even notified; they don't have any idea.

So what kind of consultation does this government really do? They like to hang their hat on the fact that they consult and they have talked to the interested parties, until we go and talk to those interested parties and they had known nothing about the legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, until we're able to discuss with business owners, with workers, how this Bill is going to affect them, it gives us some real concern.

And certainly I think all of us, as MLAs, would probably be in the same position. I know in my office, Workers' Compensation issues are a major part of our work. We have a lot of complaints coming in from employees and also employers on the whole process of how the Workers' Compensation Board works, Mr.

Speaker.

So until we're able to consult, ourselves with a number of the organizations that this Bill is going to be affecting, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we would adjourn debate right now.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 13 — The Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Amendment Act, 2002

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'm pleased to have with me this afternoon Lawrence Krahn who is the assistant deputy minister; Duane Mombourquette who is the director of health planning in the policy and planning branch of Saskatchewan Health; and Cathy Dermody, who's a policy analyst, health professions, policy and planning branch.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome this afternoon, committee, to the minister and the Health officials.

Minister, Bill 13, The Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Act, as I read it and understand it, is a Bill to facilitate the professional association of this group of medical professionals. And I would like you to indeed confirm that. And if you could outline some of the highlights of the changes, it may indeed cover the couple of questions that I have.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'd be happy to outline the changes. The first change will increase the number of public representatives on the council from one to three representatives and extend their term of office from two years to three years. And this puts it so that it's similar to all other professional legislation in the province.

The second change is to clarify that regulatory bylaws do not receive automatic approval if the minister does not respond within 90 days after submission of the bylaws. This is a clause from another decade of law-making and at this point we're . . . we have quite a different procedure in the professional legislation. So this will just allow it to match present-day legislation.

Third change is . . . will allow the minister to amend, repeal, or add regulatory bylaws.

The fourth change will require the association to file an annual membership list.

The fifth change will require the association to file an annual report.

And there will be some administrative changes to add definitions for administrative and regulatory bylaws, require that certified copies of the bylaws or amendments be filed with

the Department of Justice rather than the long gone Department of Consumer and Commercial Affairs

And finally to delete the requirement to file certified copies of a bylaw as well as an amendment to the bylaw since the bylaw that is being amended will already have been filed at some earlier date.

So I think that's the summary of all of the changes.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. And I understand from your comments and the information that I have that these, in the main, these changes are consistent with the way new professional regulatory frameworks and legislation are set in place.

Are these frameworks for health professionals any different than they would be in other professions like law or accounting or things of that nature? Or has there been a move towards a fair degree of standardization among the professions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think we could say that there's standardization among all the different professional groups and the legislation that governs them.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand that these are routine in nature and that the professional association themselves are supportive of them, and therefore, we'd be pleased to vote.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 13 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

The Chair: — The minister has the same officials so I won't invite him to introduce them again.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, and minister and officials, my reading and communications on Bill 37, the medical professionals Act, is designed primarily to accompany the professional supervision and regulation of podiatric surgeons in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I believe that they do not have a sufficient number to have their own independent professional association, but that it's the desire of the department and I guess the whole health care system is that there is a framework for professional regulation and oversight of their medical profession as in other cases.

I understand that when the College of Physicians and Surgeons was tasked and communicated with them and asked that they consider being the vehicle for this oversight framework, that initially they were reluctant but when they thought about it they recognized that perhaps in the general public good or in the best public interest that they would accept this responsibility.

I also understand that there are other jurisdictions and as I understand it, that the college of medicine in Alberta provides a similar function in that province. Can the minister confirm that there are other jurisdictions where a College of Physicians and Surgeons actually provides the oversight supervision and responsibility for podiatric surgery as is being proposed in this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'd be happy to confirm that the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons do regulate podiatric surgeons and we have actually worked with what they've done in Alberta and modelled what we've done here based on their experience so far.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I'm sure the minister is also aware that the Saskatchewan Medical Association did address some concerns about this framework of having the College of Physicians and Surgeons provide this function.

I would like to ask the minister, what communications have you had with the Saskatchewan Medical Association to address the concerns that they've raised? And secondly, have you been able to satisfy to the Saskatchewan Medical Association's satisfaction the concerns that they raised in regard to this proposed amendment to the medical professionals Act?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We have been in discussion with the Saskatchewan Medical Association all this year, starting in January, and we've also had some understanding that they've had questions about this.

They wrote a more formal letter about this on May 3 this year. And we, in fact, ended up talking with them, but also wrote them a letter in response explaining why we wanted to do this, on May 17. And they aren't in total agreement with doing this but they understand for the good of the people and for our ability to regulate podiatric surgeons that we need to do this.

And so that's where it's at now — they're not total agreement but they're, I think, at least having a better understanding of what we're doing.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was cc'd (carbon copy) a letter dated May 1 to Mr. Lawrence Krahn about the medical professional Act's amendment. And is this the letter that the minister is referring to? And since I was cc'd to the original letter, would the minister make a copy of the government's response available to me?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, and I would correct myself. The letter to us was dated May 1, as you point out, not May 3. And we'll be happy to give you a copy of the letter. I think it would be similar just to the information that was there before.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, you said that you've had some discussions with the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) subsequent to that letter. Has there been correspondence in reply to your letter that would indicate that the Saskatchewan Medical Association is at least concurring or recognizing that this is in the general public good as you indicated in your statement?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We haven't received a written response to our letter of May 17, but verbally they've acknowledged that we're planning to proceed with this and accept the fact that we need to set up a method of regulating podiatric surgeons in the province.

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Minister, under the current framework where there isn't this regulation, are there any podiatric surgeons actually operating in the province? And how are they currently being . . . What oversight mechanism is there currently in place for them?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There are no podiatric surgeons who currently operate within the province.

(16:15)

Mr. Gantefer: — Does the minister have some expectation or has there been some communications that with this framework in place that some podiatric surgeons will indeed be interested in coming to establish practice in our province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — Well, Minister, I'm pleased to hear that. And that's why we are supportive of the general thrust, because I think there is a whole issue coming out of the condition of diabetes which creates some fair . . . severe limb damage and extremity damage that requires this type of training and intervention. And I would hope that this framework legislation is going to be a major assist in having people come to this province that are particularly trained and suited to deal with this condition.

And so, Minister, we certainly support the general thrust and the specifics of the legislation and we're willing to vote it at this time.

The Chair: — Members, the Bill before us has 45 sections. Is leave granted to deal with this by page?

Leave granted.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 45 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — And I would also like to thank my officials who were in assistance on this particular two files that we dealt with.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

The Chair: — Does the minister have new officials?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I have one new official who I'd like to introduce and that's Andrea Laturas, and she's a pharmacist, and she's part of the information management union of the drug plan and extended benefits branch of Saskatchewan Health.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome to the new official that's joined us this afternoon.

Mr. Minister, I understand that Bill No. 39, The Prescription Drugs Amendment Act is a direct response to a very tragic situation in Saskatoon that came out of a coroner's inquest that related to the death of Darcy Ironchild; and that this legislation is designed to be able to track and keep track of multiple prescription type of conditions that could lead to individuals inadvertently or purposefully having an overdose of prescription drugs.

And I've been made aware in my inquiries about this legislation that it certainly has the support of the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and virtually all the medical health professionals. And I think it's a very important and appropriate bit of legislation.

Mr. Minister, I very much support the intent of this legislation and I believe the detail. And I wonder if you could just comment on, given the need to make sure that there isn't a capacity for this multiple prescription writing and scripting, and also purchasing, have you taken reasonable precautions — and I emphasize the word reasonable — to make sure that this process doesn't inadvertently sort of impede the right to individual's privacy, and that that has been put into the mix.

I don't want to suggest that we should go overboard and be so cautious about safeguarding the privacy that the Bill becomes ineffective. But that is always an issue and I would like you to comment on how you've addressed it.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate that question, and that is clearly a concern in Saskatchewan Health as it relates to all kinds of patient information. And in a specific situation what we will be doing is using the very strict controls that are around the present prescription drug program and then just adding in the information from the purchases across the province. And that includes the First Nations purchases, some of the armed forces, RCMP kinds of things that happen, and the general ones.

I think the key thing is we're making sure we have what were protections that we do have now; plus with more sophisticated protections that we have now, we will clearly have other ways of dealing with patient consent and also with tracking who actually has access to the material, which we do have now.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. One final question. Is the new system, when this legislation comes into effect, going to be able to make this determination of duplications or multiple uses in a timely fashion?

Because quite often if a person is seriously trying to make sure that they get multiple prescriptions, they might be wanting to move forward very quickly to do this. So is the system going to be respond . . . be able to respond in a timely fashion?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What you've raised is clearly the intent to do this. And the first part will be gathering of all of the information and then setting up the appropriate methods

whereby professionals, pharmacists and doctors, can access the information. And also to set up automatic alerts that deal with the extra or duplicate or triplicate prescriptions.

So all of those things will be built. But the first layer has to be to get the information. And all of these things will be proceeding as quickly as possible.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Minister, what timeline do you envisage that this whole system will be in place, including the automatic safeguards that will trigger misuse of the system?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The hope is to have all of this fully operational within the next year.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I note that the Bill will come into force on proclamation. I would trust that it's the intent of the government to proclaim it very early on and not hang onto this Bill because I think the whole inquest coming out of the tragic circumstances involving Darcy Ironchild sort of have a timeliness issue involved with it.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're prepared to vote at this time.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. And before I make that motion, I will thank my officials for their good work and with that, I will move that this committee report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Clause 1

The Chair: — And does the minister have a new official? And I would invite the minister to introduce the official.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. I'm pleased to have with me Bob Firnesz, who's the associate executive director of the medical services branch, to assist with this Bill.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome to the new official that joins us this afternoon.

Mr. Minister, as I read this legislation, it strikes me as the main intent of this is to put chiropractors, dentists, and optometrists into the same situation as physicians in their ability to have medical or professional incorporations. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. That's the main intent, but I also might as well tell you very simply what the other two points are that are here.

We also have made an amendment that allows money owed to the medical services plan due to a billing error or reassessment to be collected from the practitioner's professional corporation. And so this is one where we needed to make sure that the

professional corporations were responsible for these overpayments in the same way that an individual physician would be. So that's another change.

The other one is that there, there was a reference to certain taxes paid under The Health Services Act. The Health Services Act was appealed about five years ago and so we're just deleting that reference. So those are the two changes.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We certainly on this side of the House have been very much in favour of the ability for medical professionals to establish incorporations to be a vehicle for them to perhaps have an added advantage to conduct their practice in the province. So we're very supportive of this direction, and we understand the housekeeping nature that, for billing purposes, that the corporation has to be considered the same as the individual. And that's an appropriate amendment as well.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly am willing to do it . . . and support this and vote it. And since this is the probably the last opportunity that I have to thank the officials for their attention this afternoon, I would like to do that and indicate that I'm ready to vote this as well.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I would like to thank my officials who have been here this afternoon. And I also like to thank the member opposite for the questions and clarifications that we were able to make this afternoon. And with that, I move that this committee report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(16:30)

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 13 — The Speech-Language Pathologists and
Audiologists Amendment Act, 2002**

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Highways and Transportation
Vote 16**

Subvote (HI01)

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce to the House today deputy minister of Highways and Transportation, Harvey Brooks, who is seated on my left. On my right is assistant deputy minister, Barry Martin, for operations, and behind me on my left is manager of transportation, trade, and logistics, Mike Makowsky. And next to Mike is assistant deputy minister Don Wincherauk. And further to my right is Fred Antunes, director of operations, planning, and business support; and leader of our budget development team, Cathy Lynn Borbely in the back row.

And I'd like to note, Mr. Chair, that I also have answer to the questions that were asked by the member opposite, and I would ask that the Page take that to the member. Thank you very much.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, Mr. Minister, and to your officials as well today.

Before we get into the line of questioning that I had originally anticipated covering, I would ask if the minister would provide me an answer in terms of the globals requested of the department. I think the questions were made available to the department towards the end of March, and I think the original anticipated arrival date for those globals was about May 23 and we're well now into the month of June.

Could I have a confirmation from the minister as to when we could expect them.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, I would report that we are still working on those and that we'll make them available as soon as possible.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I think there's some urgency on the part of the official opposition to have those globals answered. There's information gleaned from those particular questions that are important to the job that we perform and we would appreciate your co-operation and expect or anticipate the early arrival of those responses.

Mr. Minister, we're going to move to an area that I think is

fairly contemporary or immediate in terms of interest. I refer to the June 6 story that was carried by several media outlets in the province regarding the department's offering of a \$250,000 sum of money to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition in Saskatchewan, allowing them to prepare for a bid on the federal grain car fleet that is anticipated up for sale this summer.

Would the minister outline for the House the details of the loan, describe . . . I'm sorry, I assume that it's a loan. Maybe I can ask the minister to describe the amount of money, what in fact it is, the terms of reference for that amount of money, and, if you could, also the purposes of the money.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — The \$250,000 that you're referring to was actually part of the policy that was developed in 1996 and that was to give what support we could to producers and to enable the Farm Rail Car Coalition to make its position known to the federal government.

At that time, the federal government was talking about getting rid of the federal hopper car fleet which is about 13,000 cars. And there was great concern that those cars would be going directly to the railroads and that the cost would then come back again to producers. And so the Farm Rail Car Coalition was formed and began to put its case before the federal government.

The partners who also contributed funding to the lobbying and development process for the Farm Rail Car Coalition are the Manitoba government and the Western Economic Diversification. And so our portion of the funding, the portion the provincial government puts in through the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, is indeed a loan contingent on the Farmer Rail Car Coalition receiving the cars in the end and they would pay it back out of the returns from leasing those cars.

I think basically that gives the outline of where that decision was made, where the funding came from, and the terms of the funding.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, I'm not clear at all actually, given your answer, where the money came from or how it's going to be handled.

I gather from what you said that the loan is contingent on the Farm Rail Car Coalition being successful in their bid. But what happens if they're not successful? Is this then a repayable loan or a forgivable loan, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. I'll try and clarify. First of all the funding that we have put in as a province has come through the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. And that funding has already paid significant dividends.

In 1996 when the government was, federal government was, talking about selling these hopper cars and the farm rail car coalition began to put together its plan and to speak to the federal government about how important it was that they have a place at the table in terms of dispersion of these cars, what their work has done has given us another five years where the federal government held the cars and returns were coming to the province. And we can estimate . . . we have estimated those returns at somewhere around \$1 a tonne over those years.

So that's about 30 million a year. We're looking in the neighbourhood of \$180 million that is basically for our investment. Because of the work of the Farm Rail Car Coalition, that money has been returned to producers.

And if indeed the cars had been sold, there would not have been that kind of dollar per tonne estimated savings for the producers in the province.

So even though the Farm Rail Car Coalition may not in the end be successful in their bid — and we continue to hope that they are and will continue to support them in that process — but even if they are not in the end successful, there have already been significant savings for producers in this province which we consider to be well worth the investment.

Mr. Elhard: — So if I understand the minister correctly, Mr. Chairman, the very existence of this five-year extension has allowed money to go back into the farm economy and to farmers' pockets ostensibly.

But that still doesn't answer the question of, you know, where does the \$250,000 come from? Does it come directly out of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation? And will it be a forgivable loan or will it be a repayable loan depending on the success of the offer or the bid by the Farm Rail Car Coalition on this possible purchase?

(16:45)

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Through the lease of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation cars, there are 1,000 cars held through the lease and through returns for damaged cars is where the funding comes in. The money comes then through to the . . . this \$250,000 loan, through that return, goes to the . . . was taken out and given to the Farm Rail Car Coalition.

It is . . . the simple answer is that it is a forgivable loan. If they do not receive the cars, it's forgivable. And in terms of rationale, as I said earlier, the return that it has brought to producers over these five years has already been well worth the investment in our view.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Minister, the press release I alluded to only talked about the \$250,000 the provincial government has given the Farm Rail Car Coalition. But you have mentioned other partners — the province of Manitoba, and I don't recall the other partner off the top of my head. So can I assume that the coalition has got similar funding from the other partners in this effort to put a bid together?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I know we have the information available, but I don't have it right at my fingertips, so we will provide that to you at our earliest possible time.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Minister, would you be prepared today to give us an indication of what this money is intended for? We're sending a sizable amount of money to an organization that has representation from various groups. But would you be specific today and indicate to us what the money is expected to cover; what the project will entail?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. The \$250,000 which was

allocated many, many years ago, I think it's very important to recognize there has been a lot of ongoing work with the federal government working to try and make the case of the Farm Rail Car Coalition.

There has also been work on developing a business plan, work in partnership with a number of other bodies. There has been work on developing operating procedures. There's work on developing a financing package. There's been work . . . primary work has been in terms of representing the shippers' views and the shippers' interests in relationship with the federal government.

The process of lobbying, of making the case, of bringing forward the shippers' interest to the federal department and to the federal politicians has been very, very important. And we believe that it's because of that work that we got the extension, as I indicated earlier.

So that's been the primary work — is business plan, operating procedures, development of financial package, what is needed now to move things further ahead, and there has also been that very diligent work of putting the case forward.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister. Mr. Minister, are there consultants being hired by the Farm Rail Car Coalition? Are there professional people being hired as lobbyists? Is some of the money going to groups or individuals or businesses that specialize in preparing business plans and unique financing packages? And is there somebody in particular in mind in terms of the lobbying effort that you describe?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Yes. The Farmer Railcar Coalition has used consultants. And in their . . . the work of those consultants has been to help them in lobbying.

There have been consultants used in terms of industry expertise and they have tried, wherever possible, to pick up that industry expertise and use that. They have used consultants for the development of a financial plan. They have also been working with consultants as they try and set out a process for operating . . . operating procedures. They have used consultants and lobbyists to bring the information forward to the political scene in Ottawa.

And I think it's very important to note that the other interests . . . the railroads have significant bodies of lobbyists who live and work in Ottawa constantly. And so it's remarkable actually that the . . . that the Farmer Railcar Coalition has been able to go down to Ottawa and have their influence felt as strongly as they have. And when . . . again I would allude to the five years that they gained through their initial lobbying.

Now we know that the federal government has kind of changed, shifted the scene a little bit because the right of refusal for the railroads comes to an end at the end of June. And so really now the Farm Rail Car Coalition is truly ramping up its efforts to make sure that they've got the whole process of operating the fleet lined out, that they have developed a very fully informed plan of the producer/shipper option. And that they have made sure that the federal government, both the elected officials and the officials in the department, know what the issues are for producers and shippers.

And so they're really intensifying their work. And you may have — just bring forward the news releases that the Farm Rail Car Coalition has put out recently — you may have copies of those. And they indicate the kind of work that they've been doing, who they've contacted. And so you can see the intensity certainly is gearing up now as we're looking at this possible dispersion becoming more of a reality.

So the consultants that they are using are talking about and working with them to make sure that the best case is represented for producers/shippers and for the possibility of producers/shippers either owning the cars or certainly having a place at the table in terms of the dispersion and allocation of cars.

And so they're gearing it up and looking for further support in order to make sure that their views are well known and that their bid is hopefully successful.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. There are many, many additional questions I would like to ask in regard to this particular subject because it seems to me that there's lots of ramifications that might arise from this potential purchase.

One of the things I alluded to when I responded to the ministerial statement on the fact that this purchase might go ahead, was that I think it's more important for farmers to have access to the cars than actually owning the cars.

And it seems to me that there is some flawed logic that comes from the argument that if farmers own these cars outright, it's going to save them money in the long run. I don't see how buying them a second time will achieve that. And I certainly don't understand how having a commercial rail operator haul the cars down on trackage is going to save them any money either.

So I think there's some issues there that we need to develop. And I'd like to also talk more about who's been involved with this bid and so forth.

I see that we're rapidly running out of time here, so I'd just like to change gears briefly in the last few minutes, Mr. Chairman. And I have a question I would like to ask the minister. It has to do with railways and basically the question is this: have there been recently any discussions or negotiations between the Department of Highways and Transportation and the Crown Investment Corporation on the potential development of a provincially owned railway?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Unequivocally no. We have no information available to us that would indicate there have been any discussions going on. If they have been it's not been in relationship with our department.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.