

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to present petitions from citizens of our province throughout the Humboldt area who would like to see the territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority remain in the good city of Humboldt. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

And the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Humboldt.

I so present.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about 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 products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon are all from the city of Saskatoon and I'm proud to present on their behalf.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today with citizens concerned with the overfishing at Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

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

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Esterhazy, Spy Hill, and Regina.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous and deplorable condition of Highway No. 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Chaplin and Calgary, Alberta.

I so present.

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

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

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned with the fact that current tobacco legislation regulates the retailing of tobacco but not the possession. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

That legislation would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the city of Swift Current and the town of Stewart Valley.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here to improve Highway 42.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Eyebrow and Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from citizens concerned about being covered by WCB (Workers' Compensation Board). The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to acknowledge the concerns of the taxpaying citizen by causing the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that absolute fairness and equitable treatment be given to those injured and disabled people and their families and be diligent in this most urgent matter.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Blumenort, Swift Current, Waldeck, Neville, and Gravelbourg.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I stand with a petition of citizens concerned about Highway No. 15. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And again it demonstrates how well travelled the highway is, Mr. Speaker, because the signatures are from Watrous, Fosston, Abbey, Yorkton, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, St. Albert, Alberta, Rocky Mountain House, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Whitehorse.

I so present.

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

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

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from P.A. (Prince Albert), Saskatoon, Candle Lake, and Albertville.

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 the Saskatchewan Fish and Wildlife Development Fund; and

Addendums to previous tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 11, 18, 132, and 165.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: how much is budgeted in the current fiscal year for the We're Building Better Highways advertising campaign, including the budget for individual advertising mediums and including a breakdown of all the costs associated with the campaign?

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: regarding the civil suits arising out of the Martensville prosecutions, when will the government release the details of the settlement of the civil actions arising out of the fiasco of the Martensville prosecutions; (2) when the government does release the details of the settlement of the Martensville actions, will it also release protocols to ensure that the taxpayers are not stuck with million dollar bills again to compensate for botched investigations and prosecutions; and (3) has anyone involved in the key decisions surrounding the Martensville prosecutions been disciplined or demoted?

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Executive Council: what positions are currently vacant in Department of Executive Council?

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Executive Council: why is the Premier's itinerary coordinator paid less than the Premier's assistant itinerary coordinator?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, seated in the opposition gallery, in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, 48 grade 5 students from the very best school in Swift Current, from Oman School. And I could say that, Mr. Speaker, because both my kids also go to Oman School.

They are accompanied by vice-principal David Franz and two teachers, Debbie Mann and Patty Gatsky as well as 11 chaperones who have joined them for the trip here. I think they were at the Science Centre this morning and they are here to watch question period and then have a tour of the building.

I had a chance to meet with them earlier and hopefully was able to sufficiently brief them on what they might be able . . . what they might be seeing here in the next little while, Mr. Speaker.

But I just would ask all members to join with me in welcoming the grade 5 students and the chaperones and teachers from Oman School in Swift Current.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the

legislature, 25 students in the west gallery who are accompanied by their teacher, Marian Ready, as well as a number of parents: Ms. Nenson, Mrs. Seed, Ms. Eros, Ms. Shorten, and Ms. Scott-McPherson.

And I would like to have one of the students please stand up along with his mother, and that is Reece Topping and Ms. Scott-McPherson. Now these people are really important in the history of this particular building because Reece is the great, great, great-nephew of Walter Scott, the first premier of Saskatchewan.

And when Mr. Scott was the premier, he played an instrumental role in building this building and making sure that we had a building that would last us for centuries. And we finished the first century and we'd like to say thank you to the Scott family as evidenced here by Reece Topping. So thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cameco Victoria Park Festival, Saskatoon

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend thousands of people visited my constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale to attend the second annual Cameco Victoria Park festival.

The festival this year included the second annual Dragon Boat Races; the televised Western Canadian Strongman Competition; the 10-kilometre run, walk, and roll for Big Brothers and the United Way. It featured live stages of dancing, theatre, and music; food and drink in abundance.

Mr. Speaker, with the full co-operation of the weather this weekend, more than 15,000 people attended the Victoria Park Festival. Mr. Speaker, the festival showcased the community of Riversdale itself. It showcased our beautiful Victoria Park, the Riversdale pool. And it showcased the strength of my constituency, which is our volunteers and our cultural diversity.

And so our thanks to the many sponsors; to the many, many volunteers who made the festival happen: to Art and Theresa Mark, who only two years ago pioneered the idea of the dragon boat races; and to Dennis Neudorf, this year's festival Chair.

Mr. Speaker, I and 15,000 others are already looking forward to next year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Esterhazy Teacher Receives Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night the Esterhazy High School music program held its annual year-end concert. For the school's music teacher, Kevin Hrycay, this was not a usual year-end concert because during the evening he was presented with the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence.

When Kevin first arrived to teach the music program in

Esterhazy there were 160 students involved. Now there are 275. This number is amazing, Mr. Speaker, because the entire school population is 420. Overall 60 per cent of the school is involved in the music program and at the junior high level 90 per cent of the student population participates.

In 2001, Mr. Hrycay and the senior high school band travelled to Ottawa to participate in the national competition, MusicFest, where they won gold. This past year the high school junior band travelled to Calgary to participate in the same program, and they brought home the silver medal.

As a teacher, Mr. Hrycay always stresses excellence and always challenges his students. The accomplishments of this 28-year-old teacher who is only in his seventh year of teaching are commendable, Mr. Speaker, and says so much about the energy and enthusiasm that is in the Esterhazy High School.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating Kevin Hrycay for winning the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, and also for the dedication he has to teaching young people music.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Sedley New Horizons Seniors Centre Opens

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday I drove down the well-maintained Highway No. 33 to the town of Sedley where I was happy to stand in for the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) at the official opening of the Sedley New Horizons Seniors Centre. The members of the Sedley New Horizons Club were in turn very happy to see me because I brought with me a cheque from SaskPower to assist in the financing of the new building.

SaskPower directs over \$1 million annually to support programs and events across the province which focus on youth, culture, and social development. This is just one of the many examples where SaskPower gives back to the communities it serves.

What was most impressive though, Mr. Speaker, and at that same time was the least surprising, was the fact that this small community used volunteers both to raise most of the money and to provide 90 per cent of the labour for the new building.

The New Horizons Club has been meeting for 24 years and now has a brand new meeting place to continue their affairs for the next 24 years, Mr. Speaker.

I was very glad to take part, and I wish the volunteers and seniors of Sedley the very best in the years to come. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Awareness Week

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, June is ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) Awareness Month in

Canada, and June 16 to the 22 is ALS Awareness Week across the country. I ask all members of the Assembly to recognize this important event.

Mr. Speaker, ALS is a rapidly progressive, fatal neuromuscular disease. Those who have been afflicted with ALS lose muscle function until they are no longer able to walk, write, smile, talk, eat, and often breathe on their own. Yet throughout all of this, and in what we can only imagine must be incredibly frustrating, the minds and the senses of ALS sufferers remain unaffected.

Mr. Speaker, ALS can strike anyone at any time regardless of age, sex, or ethnic origin. And in at least 90 per cent of cases it afflicts people with no family history of the disease.

The national emblem of ALS is the cornflower, a hardy wildflower with a fragile appearance. This flower, Mr. Speaker, is representative of those who are living with ALS. These people show a great deal of strength while forced to cope with this devastating disease.

Mr. Speaker, to all ALS patients, their families, and their caregivers in Saskatchewan during this ALS Awareness Week, while we cannot know the many difficulties that you must face on a daily basis, we still recognize the strength of mind and character that is needed to deal with these challenges.

We will be thinking of you, especially this week. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Children's Festival

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regina's Children's Festival started yesterday, June 16, and it's going to run for three days, Mr. Speaker. This is the 15th anniversary for the festival. Prominent local artists are taking the stage in Chicken Cabaret — it's an artistic expression of chickenesque. The cabaret, I'm told, made its debut at the Cathedral Arts Festival two years ago, Mr. Speaker, and is a real hit with the audience.

As in previous festivals, this year will showcase inspiring performances from around the world. Festival president Barb de la Sablonniere says that the festival is to be a positive experience and something that engages the audience. She wants to have the children interactive with the performances and — something like this place — and thinks that they learn nothing if they're just sitting there and watching, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. de la Sablonniere says that the festival's acts focuses on the audience's experiences. As in past years, there is face painting, noodle art, and the return of the popular sound tent where children can make their own music.

Mr. Speaker, performances . . . performers are a diverse mix. We have a guitarist from Brazil, a dance troupe from Russia, and an Inuit storyteller from Nunavut all appearing. Experiencing a wide variety of cultures helps children understand their own culture and appreciate culture around them.

Children of all ages are welcome. It's at Douglas Park here in Regina. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grand Opening of Perdue Car/Machinery Dealership

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, June 14 I had the opportunity to join around 100 other patrons taking part in a ribbon cutting ceremony at the grand opening of Cam-Don Motors in Perdue. Cam-Don Motors has been a fixture in the community of Perdue since 1964, providing area residents with a friendly facility in which you receive quality service for everything from your farm machinery to the service you use daily.

They also supply the parts for all types of machinery and vehicles. As well, Cam-Don Motors also sells farm machinery as the local Ford dealership with a nice selection of new and used vehicles.

I have had the opportunity to deal with Cam-Don Motors over the years and have found them . . . found that they are eager to give prompt and excellent service. Cam-Don's is a large employer in the area and has a staff of friendly, knowledgeable, well-trained men and women that are always enthusiastic to give you the best possible service.

The Weir family is optimistic and sees a potential for the business to grow and continue to be a centre point for service and sales in west central Saskatchewan. With that optimism, they built a new and expanded dealership with service bays capable of accommodating combines and other farm machinery and vehicles.

I would like to congratulate Cameron and Scott Weir and their families on the opening of the new facility and the continued dedication to and the confidence in the community of Perdue in west central Saskatchewan in which they have been serving with distinction for the past 38 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Fire Hall in White City

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share more good news in Saskatchewan. Two communities just east of Regina — White City and Emerald Park — are growing quickly. One sure sign of this growth is the opening of the new fire hall in White City. I was able to attend the official opening earlier this month. White City town council decided to proceed with the new fire hall two years ago and the contract was awarded to Dura Structures of Regina.

According to volunteer firefighter Dave Morrow, the new fire hall was needed in order to accommodate the growing communities of White City and Emerald Park. He said, and I quote:

About five years ago we got to the point where there were three vehicles but the hall had just two bays and only about 1,200 square feet of space.

Although the new hall was completed late in 2001, the grand opening was delayed until this year to coincide with the 20th

anniversary of the White City Volunteer Fire Department. The grand opening brought together volunteer firefighters past and present at a 20-year reunion where various awards were presented at an evening banquet.

The new hall was built with many hours of volunteer labour and will ensure that White City's Volunteer Fire Department can deliver the best services to those in the communities in times of need.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite all members of this House to extend their congratulations to Mayor Rob Mitchelson and the council, to Fire Chief Richard Thiele, the White City Volunteer Fire Department, the First Responders, and those volunteers who gave of their time and effort to help make the opening of the new fire hall a reality. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Financial Assistance for Agriculture

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It now appears that the Premier's hastily arranged trip to Ottawa had no impact whatsoever on the federal government.

Lyle Vanclief is now saying that there will be no trade injury payment. And any farm package that the federal government does deliver, according to Mr. Vanclief, will have to be cost shared 40 per cent by the province.

Why isn't Ottawa listening to the Premier? Mr. Speaker, what price will Saskatchewan have to pay for the weak leadership we are getting from this government and from our Premier?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, if in fact Ottawa is not listening, Ottawa is not listening to this Premier, to the Premier of British Columbia, to the Premier of Alberta, the Premier of the Yukon, the Premier of Nunavut, and the Premier of the Northwest Territories.

Ottawa's not listening to the Leader of the Opposition from this province, the Leader of the Opposition from Manitoba, the Leader of the Opposition from Alberta.

If Ottawa is not listening, it is not listening to SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities). It is not listening to the large agricultural producer groups from across Western Canada. It is not listening, therefore, to the producers of Western Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Had it not been for the voice of this legislature — and if I may say, for my voice in Ottawa — they wouldn't have even heard the case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know it used to be said of leaders that the buck stops here. But with our Premier, the buck is passed on to whoever is convenient and handy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the opposition has been behind the Premier in this effort, and all farm groups have been behind the Premier. The problem is that every time we hand the ball to the Premier, the Premier fumbles the ball.

The entire point of this exercise was to get a trade injury payment funded by the federal government. And what's Lyle Vanclief saying? He's saying, no trade injury payment. And any package that we do get is going to have to be shared by the provinces — an unfair burden to Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan producers and Saskatchewan taxpayers are paying the price for weak leadership from this Premier and his government. Why has the Premier blown it so badly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Some day the Leader of the Opposition should just put down those printed, written-up questions, and speak a little from the heart — ask on behalf of the people.

Mr. Speaker, blown it? Here today is the headline in the national paper, *The Globe and Mail*: Deputy Prime Minister Manley, referred to here, fires salvo over US farm Bill. We have the . . . now the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada understanding the hurt caused by this US (United States) farm Bill on Canadian people. And I expect — I expect — when the Deputy Prime Minister raises this as an issue, that Ottawa in fact will act in an appropriate fashion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks about handling the ball on this file . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I recognize the Premier but I ask members just to tone it down a little bit.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks about handling the ball on this file. I want to remind the people of Saskatchewan and members of this legislature that that member sat in the House of Commons where the ball was in his hands. And what did he do? He preached a doctrine of non-subsidy — that's the doctrine he preached in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Handling of Ministerial Investigation

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, it's not surprising the Premier can't handle a major issue like the Ag file. He can't even handle a dispute between a minister and one of her own staff.

Mr. Speaker, everywhere I went this weekend, people were asking: what kind of a Premier would let this situation get so far out of control? The Premier managed to take a minor incident over birthday cards and he turned it into a full-blown crisis for his government.

Mr. Speaker, it would almost be funny, but it's not funny because the people of Saskatchewan are paying the price for

this kind of bumbling leadership.

Mr. Speaker, how can the people of Saskatchewan have any confidence in the leadership of this Premier when he showed such poor judgment in handling this fiasco with the former Environment minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I'll tell you about the fiasco in Saskatchewan politics. The fiasco is sitting right across the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Here, Mr. Speaker, here, Mr. Speaker, is an opposition that will not recognize 11,000 new jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, here is an opposition that will not recognize a credit rating upgrade to this province from Moody's of New York, only one of three in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is an opposition that hasn't come with a new idea to this House in the course of the session.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please, members. Order, please, members. Order, please, members. Once again I recognize the Premier — 20 seconds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let me continue. Here is an opposition that doesn't recognize record-level housing starts in this province . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — . . . doesn't recognize new investment in this province. Does not recognize reduction in income tax in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the fiasco in this House is seated directly across there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I picked up the *National Post* on Saturday, thinking that I might see a big story about the dire need for a federal trade injury payment. Instead, I saw this, Mr. Speaker. I saw this. A full page on the Premier's botched handling of the former Environment minister. That's the kind of national attention this Premier is getting these days.

And what's even more bizarre, Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't fire the minister for striking her staff member; he fired her for talking about striking her staff member.

Mr. Speaker, people all over this province of Saskatchewan are questioning this Premier's judgment. If the Premier can't even manage an internal issue like this one, how on earth can he manage the real issues like the farm crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, when I'm reviewing the national press these days, you know what I'm reading about, I'm reading about the challenges to the leader across the way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not reading about challenges to leadership on the government side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to literally hundreds and thousands of people in the last several weeks. Mr. Speaker, I take my strength, not from the criticisms of this group, I take my strength from the people of Saskatchewan who are saying to this government, you're on the right track, you're building this province, you're creating a new Saskatchewan for a new century. And we're not going to be stopped by these folks at all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I assure the now Premier of this province that the leader of the Saskatchewan Party will beat him hands down in the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, this Premier has spent thousands and thousands of taxpayers' dollars.

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that this Premier has spent thousands and thousands of taxpayers' dollars to investigate one of his own ministers. And after all that he still blows it.

First he puts her back in cabinet, and then he fires her out of cabinet. And he tells everyone there to keep their mouth shut, and then he fires the minister for not keeping her mouth shut. And after all that, we still don't know whether the former minister was guilty of harassment.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier spent thousands of taxpayers' dollars on this investigation and he's spending another \$50,000 to find out why the SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) minister doesn't know his own policy. We have a Premier who would rather order another investigation, Mr. Speaker, than lead.

Mr. Speaker, how much more are the people of Saskatchewan going to pay for the incompetence and the feeble leadership of that Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I understand why the members of the opposition do not want to ask about health care for instance. Not when we see, not when we see for instance our major districts growing in strength in national surveys. They don't want to ask about our universities; not when we see our universities growing in strength. They sure don't want to ask about highways; not one question, Mr. Speaker, not one question in this session about highways in question period . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well we understand that.

But then perhaps, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand — I understand why it is they don't want to ask about all the good things that are happening in our province. But perhaps, perhaps I could suggest, that perhaps they'd like to ask about some of the difficulties that face the Aboriginal people of our province. Perhaps they'd like to ask a question or two about some of the difficulties we have in the core neighbourhoods of our inner cities. Or perhaps they'd like to ask about some of the environmental challenges that face our province.

No, we get a lot of grandstanding, Mr. Speaker, but very little substance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agreement on Gaming with First Nations

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Liquor and Gaming.

Last week the NDP (New Democratic Party) signed the new gaming agreement with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). The official 25-year agreement commits the NDP government to a process that would give the FSIN full jurisdiction to all forms of gaming on First Nations land. Does this mean the province would no longer be controlling the expansion of gaming on-reserve? And there is also a question about what this means in terms of revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain specifically what granting full jurisdiction of gaming on reserve land to First Nations means in terms of the provincial government's control of gaming expansion and in terms of provincial revenue sharing?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to once again acknowledge the questions with respect to a very good agreement that's been entered into between this coalition government and the First Nations of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, an agreement that will allow, in co-operation, to advance our communities' economic benefits; over 1,250 people working in these casinos now and they will continue to be doing that.

And, Mr. Speaker, not only that but why does the opposition fail to recognize all the good things that are happening, such as

high standards and quality standards for people that need help in some of our communities. Like in Prince Albert where the group counselling centre gets 300 . . . \$302,000 donation, where the grand council chief is trying to help their communities help people and develop some more opportunities for First Nations people. Why are you, when your . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd just like to remind the minister to complete his answer through the Chair.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 25, the day the framework agreement was signed, CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio reported, according to Chief Perry Bellegarde, full jurisdiction meant that First Nations would receive all the revenue from on-reserve gaming ventures. He said, and I quote:

At that point it's our full jurisdiction and we set up our . . .

The Speaker: — Order, members. Order. Order. Must be able to hear the question. Order, members. Order. I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy and only — only — the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Full jurisdiction meant, according to Chief Perry Bellegarde, and I quote:

At that point it's our full jurisdiction and we set up our systems the way we want to do it. Because what other business — it's a business — we're sharing the profits, where else does that happen?

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree with Chief Bellegarde that full jurisdiction on-reserve would mean the end of revenue sharing between the FSIN and the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the short answer is no, it will not end that kind of an agreement. We have a great deal of mutual respect and confidence in our First Nations partners — not unlike the members opposite who still have some concerns about the agreement that we've entered into.

Mr. Speaker, the . . . we will be working with First Nations to make a representation to the federal government with respect to jurisdiction on reserves. We've agreed to that. That was part of the '95 agreement and it continues to be part of that agreement. Now I really, really can't understand, Mr. Speaker, why the Leader of the Opposition would say that the Gaming Authority . . . Hermanson, I quote:

. . . praised the FSIN for running a successful gaming business and complimented it for addressing . . . (government's) challenges . . .

Now I don't know why the members opposite will not support their leader in telling everybody what a great agreement this is and will continue to be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, again the minister does not clearly and . . . clearly define what the new gaming agreement means when it refers to full jurisdiction. Yet the government is committing \$250,000 annually to the FSIN for the next five years to enable them to move toward full jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, how can this government justify spending 250,000 of taxpayers' dollars to help the FSIN secure full jurisdiction over gaming on-reserve when the minister will not define clearly what full jurisdiction means?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Full jurisdiction is what the First Nations people will be requesting from Ottawa. Remember that the federal government controls jurisdiction on gaming under the Criminal Code.

Now we will be working, and we made an agreement in good faith in 1995 and reaffirmed it, that we will assist them in making their proposals to the federal government. That's where the final decisions will be made ultimately.

Now in any good business agreements and partnerships, Mr. Speaker, obviously the members opposite don't understand why would we want to have competing interests when we're into a partnership to benefit all the people of Saskatchewan — not just one particular sector of our community but the entire community at large, First Nations and non-First Nations communities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister refuses to give the people a straight answer, so I will direct my question to the Premier. The NDP government has not consulted with the public about this 25-year agreement. And they refuse to define what allowing the FIS . . . FSIN full jurisdiction means. Yet the NDP government is committing \$1.2 million over the next five years on a process to pursue this.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is on public record in the past as opposing gaming expansion in Saskatchewan. So will he explain what exactly full jurisdiction means? Will this allow First Nations to expand on-reserve gaming without the provincial government's approval? And will it mean all proceeds from on-reserve gaming will go to First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has answered this question now one, two, three times. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a question. I have a question. Who is it, Mr. Speaker, that speaks for the Saskatchewan Party opposition on gaming policy? Who is it? Is it the leader, is it the Leader of the Opposition, who stands in public at the FSIN Assembly and is quoted as saying in the Saskatoon . . . *The StarPhoenix*:

Hermanson praised the FSIN for running a successful gaming business and complimented it for addressing (the) "governance challenges" at SIGA.

Does the Leader of the Opposition speak for the gaming policy of the Saskatchewan Party, or is it the member from Weyburn, or is it the member from Humboldt, or is it the member from

Rosthern? Who speaks for the policy of the Saskatchewan Party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sound Stage in Regina

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just moments ago the Premier went on a small rant about why don't the people over here ask some questions. That's why we don't ask questions, we don't get answers from that government. We don't get an answer at all.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). According to CBC the NDP's \$11.5 million sound stage in Regina is actually going to cost taxpayers even more. They're reporting, CBC is reporting, at least \$500,000 over budget and the bill could go even higher.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell the legislature what the original budget for the NDP's Regina sound stage was, and what does the NDP now estimate the government will have to spend to complete the building so tenants will actually sign lease agreements?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit it was hard to hear the last half of the question but what I did hear, I will certainly answer, and that is around the budget around the sound stage.

The increase in terms of the cost. Actually I will tell the member that the project was under budget before enhancements were made to bring the windows up to heritage standard, before enhancements were made to the landscaping because it's built in the middle of Wascana Park, and before a wall had to be buttressed that they didn't believe had to be. This is what brought the cost up. Had it not been for that, the project management would have had it underneath.

Now what I think the members opposite should understand, and they should be standing for it and they should be telling people, is that this is a good economic infrastructure investment for the city and for the province and they should support it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we will wait to see how good it is economically for the city.

My question again for the minister. The minister tells the legislature and the media that the sound stage is 80 per cent leased and as it turns out, that is not true. According to the minister, according to the minister, many potential tenants for the sound stage production space have only signed letters of intent.

Mr. Speaker, what percentage of the production space at the Regina sound stage does the NDP actually have signed leases for? And what percentage of the sound stage production space does the NDP have signed letters of intent for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, letters of intent are legally binding documents and I would ask the member to apologize for accusing me of lying.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. It's not the Speaker's job to ascertain as to the facts, but it is the Speaker's duty to call to order any time members use language that's unparliamentary. And I would ask the member . . . Order, please. Order. And I would ask the member for Regina South not to use the word lie, whether it is in reference to himself or anybody else.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again I go back to the Premier's dissertation earlier on about why we don't ask questions. There's the prime example.

I ask the question again, Mr. Speaker, what percentage of the production space at the Regina sound stage does the NDP actually have signed leases for; and what percentage of production space does the NDP have signed letters of intent for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party once again has proven that it can rain doom and gloom on the most positive activities happening in this province. They've proven it again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, again the minister has answered, the minister has . . .

The Speaker: — I'm sorry members, I just have to ask the Premier to start once again. And I would ask members on both sides of the House not to interfere.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I attended to the Babelsberg studios in Germany with Team Canada. In Germany the largest European film studio has high regard for Minds Eye Pictures, for the Regina sound stage, and for what's going on in the province of Saskatchewan. I wish that kind of enthusiasm would exist in the opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now we have learned one thing today though, Mr. Speaker, we have learned one thing today: the member from Wood River, the Wood River member has now admitted it, they don't ask questions in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 78 — The Members of the Legislative Assembly Benefits Act

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 78, The Members of the Legislative Assembly Benefits Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the government today and convert questions 339 through 347 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Questions 339 to 347 have been converted to motions for debate returnable.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by saying how pleased I am to rise and move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act.

This amendment will increase the borrowing limits for the research parks business unit from 150 million to 170 million.

This government is on record of course as supporting research parks and the science and technology sector as vehicles for economic development.

Although SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) was wound down as part of the 2002-2003 budget, the business of the research parks must continue and grow. The corporation needs additional capital so that the research parks can continue with routine business operations. As well, there is potential to purchase two existing buildings from the University of Regina to bring much needed critical mass to the Regina Research Park.

Mr. Speaker, I need to emphasize that this enhancement in the borrowing limits is very crucial to the continued operation of the research parks and indeed to the continued growth of research and technology in general in the province.

Before I explain in a little more detail why this increase of 20 million is necessary, I should remind this House that it is a borrowing limit we are increasing. This is not a handout or a grant but monies that will be repaid with interest through the rental revenues from research park tenants.

The other important fact that needs to be stressed, Mr. Speaker, is that not having this increase would put at risk a lot of our present investment this government has in our two world-class

research parks.

The research parks offer specialized infrastructure that are geared to the needs of tenants engaged in a wide range of research activities from ag-biotech to information technology to petroleum, energy, and related projects. If we are not able to provide and maintain these facilities in a manner that will be suited to the specialized uses by tenants, we may over time find that the tenants will look elsewhere for space, or prospective tenants may choose other locations outside of Saskatchewan.

I want to remind those in the House, Mr. Speaker, that this government not only believes in the research and technology sector but that we see this sector as having an important role in economic development of our province.

I know that we are accustomed to seeing immediate or at least short-term results for our investment resources. The research and technology sector, however, is different. The money we spend on research today will be repaid several years from now in many ways — not the least of which is an improved economic climate and a better quality of life for the people of the province.

It's also important to clarify that Innovation Place and the Regina Research Park are part of the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. And that corporation, commonly known as SOCO, is in the process of being wound down. The assets of SOCO, as the Minister of Finance announced on March 27, are being transferred to Crown Investments Corporation.

This government is committed to the continuing existence of the research parks and has asked the management of CIC and SOCO to review the role of research parks to determine how they can be most effectively and efficiently operated over time. That review is underway and is anticipated that the final decision with respect to governance structure will be made later this fall.

I want to assure you in this House, Mr. Speaker, that research parks are continuing with business as usual during this review. It is continuing to meet the needs of tenants, to actively seek out new tenants, to make changes and improvements as needed to ensure the parks continue to represent the high standards for which they are so well known.

In the meantime, the two parks are in urgent need of tenant improvements, building improvements, and ongoing building and maintenance projects. As the parks are looking at the potential for growth and expansion, officials are ongoing . . . in ongoing discussions with the University of Regina to purchase two buildings that are known by the university . . . now owned by the university.

The buildings, known as no. 1 Research Drive and no. 2 Research Drive, are already located in the park. These buildings could be an important addition to the assets of Regina Research Park, making them better equipped to attract new tenants and to provide property management services to those buildings and relieve the university of this responsibility. The increase in the borrowing limits, as stated in the amendment, will allow the organization to continue to pursue these negotiations with the

university.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that we in Saskatchewan have the finest research parks anywhere in the world. And that's not just my view, Mr. Speaker, that's the opinion shared by many people who visit Innovation Place — both in Regina and Saskatoon — people from around the world.

We have been able to successfully operate research parks when others have failed in many places. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the management of the research parks get inquiries almost daily from other countries and the provinces are asking for advice in how to set up and operate a research park. And they have already provided such advice to Malaysia, Panama, Toronto.

Innovation Place and Regina Research Park are very strong symbols and evidence of growth and economic progress in both Regina and Saskatoon.

By increasing the borrowing limits for the research parks, we are enhancing our ability to keep our province's best and brightest minds here in Saskatchewan. No matter what political persuasion we represent, one thing we are all committed to is to provide an environment that will keep our young people here and to encourage those who left to return.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the additional capital will be used to improve and expand our research parks, which in turn means new jobs, enhanced economic growth, and more opportunity for innovation. It's obvious that virtually all of our initiatives requires a share of the pie in order to survive.

The additional funding to research parks, however, is not in competition with health care, with agriculture, or highways, or education. As I said, this is an amendment to increase the borrowing limit and the bill will be repaid from lease revenues from the parks.

I've been very fortunate to visit our research parks and to become acquainted with some of the exciting things that are happening in these facilities. And I want to encourage all members of this House to do the same.

The parks are a visible symbol of progress both in Saskatoon and Regina and are highly regarded in those communities. But they're more than landmarks and architectural masterpieces. They're environmentally efficient, very functional, and highly successful in attracting tenants. Right now both parks are about 95 per cent full with exciting potential for growth.

What many people do not know is that the research parks provide many economic benefits to the two cities and the provincial economy. Last year the parks contributed about \$390 million to our provincial economy.

Are we proud of our research parks? Yes, we are. Are we committed to their continued existence and growth? Yes, we are.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very optimistic about the future of this province and about the spirit and energy of the people who will take us into the 21st century as we prepare to bring new ideas and new methods of improving ag-biotech, and

pharmaceuticals, and information technology, and petroleum research, and so on. We need to support the infrastructure that will make these things happen.

I'm honoured, Mr. Speaker, to stand here today and invite members of the House to support this amendment to increase the borrowing limits for our research parks and to use this as a statement of our collective commitment to the future of our province. And therefore, I'm proud to present this Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act for second reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 74, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act is really quite a small Bill as far as text is concerned. But when you look at what it does, it raises the borrowing limit for the research parks — whether it's Innovation Place or Research Drive in Regina here — from 150,000 to 170,000, Mr. Speaker, and that I think on first blush looks like a . . . not a bad idea.

It was interesting, though. In the budget they've talked about winding down SOCO and turning it over into CIC, which honestly gives us a little bit of a scare knowing what the track record of CIC has been, Mr. Speaker. But certainly, when the minister was talking about these two facilities, whether they be in Saskatoon or Regina — and the intent of them is keep our best and brightest at home — Mr. Speaker, we could certainly say that maybe we should be doing a much better job than what we are.

The statistics show and the many, many stories that I've heard, albeit anecdotal, just tell us that so many of our brightest and our best are leaving the province for greener pastures. Quite often they go through these universities. They go through the universities and they tend to take the education and they leave.

And the member from Moose Jaw is saying that all I have to do is look at him as one of the best and the brightest, and I don't know if you're meaning the light off your forehead, Mr. Speaker, because that certainly is bright.

The Speaker: — Members, I realize that members . . . Order . . . that members may be taking things in jest, but I would advise members to stay away from personal references to other members.

Mr. McMorris: — . . . sides and that was mentioned in the minister's speech that the intent, be it whichever political party, is to grow the province and is to keep the people that we educate back here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And if this Bill leads towards that by increasing the lending limits . . . the borrowing limits, I mean, of the universities, the research parks, to increase that will accomplish that goal then, Mr. Speaker, I think in first blush that we'd be in favour of that.

However, Mr. Speaker, we would like to talk to the different facilities that are going to be impacted by this and get their opinion on it before we would just pass it on, on just the word of the government, Mr. Speaker.

So at this time I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 74.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 54

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 54 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and enter the second reading debate on Bill 54, The Urban Municipality Amendment Act.

And as the minister noted when he made his second reading speech and as did our member for Redberry Lake noted in his comments, that it's a fairly wide-sweeping Bill. It touches on a lot of very, very important issues in terms of municipal government and urban municipal government, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't clarify a lot about the intent of the government or the direction the government intends to go, but certainly it touches on them and brings them into the field in terms of being open for debate in this Assembly as regards Bill 54. So it is a pleasure to enter this debate.

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, I worked for some five years for an urban municipality. And although I worked in economic development, you got a sense from, you know, the director of engineering and the director of finance and certainly our city commissioner that there was this real desire on the part of the city of Swift Current administration and on various councils for some fundamental changes to urban legislation in the province.

Now this Act contemplates some of those changes that those urban municipalities have wanted, at least my colleagues that used to work at the city of Swift Current certainly wanted. Some of the more substantive changes though, that they have long sought out, frankly though, Mr. Speaker, could be found, I think, in The Cities Act which was also introduced into the legislature. Those changes there are perhaps even more important to municipalities than these are.

But as you will know, Mr. Speaker, this Bill 54 does address the very, very serious topic of assessment. And I don't think you can go to any city or for that matter any rural municipality in the province of Saskatchewan and not run into somebody who's very, very concerned about assessment.

And this Bill talks a little bit about or at least seems to indicate that the government is heading in the direction of the income approach. But that new system for assessment in the province might not be in place until the end of this decade. And so people who are really interested in change will be concerned about the pace of change.

Of course it's a very, very, very difficult issue, the issue of assessment. I think everyone will agree that there are parts of our current assessment system that are just patently unfair in terms of being the method of raising local levies, local taxes,

especially as regards education. Of course it doesn't matter how much of the education system you're using, as a property owner, or how much you're not using. The assessments are based on how much land you happen to own and the value of that land. And so, Mr. Speaker, it's a very, very serious issue.

There are also some provisions, smaller provisions some would argue, about allowing the dangerous dog bylaw to expand to cover other dangerous animals in the same manner, and also giving local governments some more autonomy with respect to charges for persistent false alarms.

You know, there's a couple of very seemingly housekeeping points of this Bill. But one would wonder why, if they are moving in the direction of the kind of cities Act that the cities of this province want, which is to have a . . . is to have the new legislation from the province not tell them what they are not allowed to do but rather prescribe . . . They would like the legislation, Mr. Speaker, to prescribe for them what they're not allowed to do; not list all the things that they can do.

And one would wonder why they would bring in these two pieces of legislation at the same time that seem to, these two points about the dog bylaw — the dangerous dog bylaw being expanded to other animals — and the local governments given some autonomy with respect to false alarms, might be covered off in the appropriate changes to the cities Act, should they be serious about making those, Mr. Speaker. Also in that category is the comments in this Bill that contemplate the subject of junk cars in the cities.

But, Mr. Speaker, clearly the most important part of the Bill is the issue of assessment.

The Bill also contemplates the water and sewer issues in cities in the province. And, you know, nobody's going to underestimate, Mr. Speaker, the importance of that issue in every city in this province, in every municipality — rural or urban — in this province in light of recent events, in light of the ongoing difficulties many municipalities are having with water, with sourcing quality water for their residents.

And I think specifically of cases in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. You know not long ago in this legislature we had a debate about Last Mountain Lake, and we continue to have it, and about actions taken by the city of Regina where . . . Now government members are quick to point out, fair enough, that it's treated effluent — treated effluent that is discharged through the system and could possibly end up in Last Mountain Lake.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I'm assuming it goes through a water treatment, the city of Regina's water treatment process, and the city and the Environment department allows these discharges to occur. But you know, Mr. Speaker, in the city of Swift Current historically, which uses a lagoon system to treat its effluent, in the city of Swift Current the city has from time to time needed to apply to the province for a permit to discharge. High rains or a very wet year perhaps, Mr. Speaker, are usually the years — and this has had to occur — and it's a fairly rare occurrence. It had been a very rare occurrence.

The other system that the city uses is they also irrigate. They do some effluent irrigation, permitted in process by Sask

Environment. So you can see though in a wet year that doesn't help because those who are taking the irrigation simply don't need as much. It's raining more and so you have this double whammy. And the problem our engineering department faces in Swift Current with the lagoons that are close to overflowing, they're overcharged, and what has to happen then is the city needs to apply for the permit to discharge treated effluent — mind you, similar to the argument they make for other cities — treated effluent into the Swift Current creek.

Now you can imagine that the word treated effluent is cold comfort for those downstream residents of the lake; and I have some that are very close friends. And I understand completely that they are very upset if ever that has to happen, because it's their creek as well, and what impact does it have on well water? And these are the questions that are asked every single time an application's been made.

And so the Environment department came down fairly unequivocally on the city of Swift Current when I was still employed there in the mid . . . might have been about the late 1990s, and clearly said to them, no more permits. No more permits. You're going to have to do something about this. We're not allowing discharges any more.

Fair enough. The city looked at its options and it elected a snow-fluent plant which they're having some problems with, and literally that's a system that would turn . . . make snow from the effluent and pump it out in the winter. And they're having problems with it. And the issue hasn't gone away to the point where they probably still need a water treatment plant.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, isn't whether the cities should be regulated with respect to quality of water. The issue is fairness. Let's make sure that whatever we do in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, whatever we do in Bill 54 on the subject of water and sewage, that every municipality that it affects is treated equally, that every municipality gets a fair shake. Especially those municipalities that really do their level best — their very level best — to avoid any environmental catastrophe, either purposeful or otherwise.

And so that's a concern certainly that I have as the member who represents the city of Swift Current when I see any municipal legislation contemplating the subject of water and sewage.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I know that there's many other members that would also like to enter this debate. And as a result, I would move at this time that we adjourn the debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 55

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 55 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 55, the rural municipal amendment Act, certainly is a very interesting Act, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister for Municipal Affairs has introduced a number of pieces of legislation. One we've just heard on is the urban, this one being the rural, and the one following will be the northern municipal Act, amendments being made to them.

And some of the amendments are quite substantial, Mr. Speaker. As I go through this rural municipal amendment Act, it talks about allowing more flexibility for the rural municipalities in terms of amalgamation. It allows perhaps easier amalgamation of one or more municipalities. Also even a portion of a municipality may be annexed by another.

And it's very interesting that this legislation is put forward. And I would, for the most part, have to agree with that portion of the legislation. It wasn't too many months ago — I guess about a year or a year and a half ago — when the debate raged on about municipal amalgamation and the whole idea of this government to force amalgamation.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we saw all over the province, municipalities — whether they were urban, small urbans, towns and villages, or rural municipalities — get up in arms. And they really, really made their voices and their feelings known, that forced amalgamation was not the way to do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we were of the same agreement. We felt that being forced into amalgamation, forcing municipalities to join, was not the way to go. Allowing legislation that would make it a little bit easier for this happen, which this Act does, was the proper way of going about it, Mr. Speaker.

What it also does, this Act, it talks about giving some of the municipalities a little bit more, greater authority, I guess. What it gives . . . one of the areas that I was noticing, it gives greater authority in taking action against so-called nuisance buildings. Also giving council greater scope in recovering costs associated with removal of nuisance buildings, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(14:45)

And I think if you travel throughout rural Saskatchewan right now, as the population is dwindling in rural Saskatchewan, a lot of the buildings that may have been used many, many years ago have been left vacated, there is no tax being collected on them, and they're sitting in small hamlets for example, or communities that used to have some population.

I can just speak of the community that I was born and raised in and lived pretty much my whole life in, the town of Lewvan, which I think the population now is down to six; no it might be seven now including all the . . . there's a couple of . . . one other family that moved in I guess. So it certainly isn't a booming metropolis that I knew of when I was a kid.

And there are a number of buildings in that community that I think you could consider would be the RM's (rural municipality) responsibility now, is nuisance buildings. Buildings that have come into disrepair and really are quite an eyesore.

And it is really quite depressing I think — not only think, I know — when I travel back down through the community that I

was born and raised in and see some of the buildings that were lived in, some of the buildings that had businesses operating out of them, because of changes in the rail system and the depopulation of rural Saskatchewan, those buildings are left in disrepair. And I think the RMs need a little bit more authority in cleaning up some of those sites.

It also gives authority, a little bit more authority, in dealing with junk vehicles which can be a problem in certain communities as well.

It puts in place provisions that allow income approach for property assessment. When the speaker just before me, the member from Swift Current, talked on Bill 54, the urban municipal Act, he talked quite a bit about assessment. And I think in rural Saskatchewan and for RMs, one of the biggest issues that I hear of over and over and over again is the issue of property tax and the effect of property tax on the farming community.

Now this government in its wisdom two years ago put in a place . . . put into place a bit of a program that would address property tax, the education portion of property tax. It didn't come to this conclusion that it needed to address this problem certainly on its own or with any thought of its own. It came to the conclusion after attending tax revolt meeting after tax revolt meeting after tax revolt meeting held all over, especially southern Saskatchewan, and it was spreading into northern Saskatchewan, before this government started to realize that maybe property tax is a huge issue, maybe the education portion on property tax is a huge issue in rural Saskatchewan.

And certainly I know in our area property tax can be quite a problem. So what I've been . . . a number of phone calls that I have been getting just recently all over the last month or two is the fact that first of all, we've got an enhanced crop insurance program — enhancement meaning taking out spot loss hail. How that could be enhanced crop insurance, I don't know, but we're hearing lots of phone calls on that, the enhancement, or the destruction of the crop insurance program with the removal of spot loss hail.

But that's only one blow that rural Saskatchewan has taken from this government this year. It's taken the blow of losing spot loss hail.

But it's also taken the blow of this government taking away \$25 million that it put in place 2 years ago — 25 million 2 years ago, 25 million last year — that people could access to down . . . absorb some of the blow of the education portion of the property tax that we're facing in agricultural land throughout this province, Mr. Speaker.

So what the Bill talks about is changing the way we look at assessment a little bit. And I guess one of the issues . . . I heard one person talk about assessment and how important getting assessment right is — especially in a province like Saskatchewan. It is crucial that we get the process of assessment correct in this province, because the provincial government that has downloaded so much onto property ownership that if the structure . . . if you call assessment the foundation of our system, and it is not a very strong foundation — in fact the foundation is crumbling a little bit or our

assessment system is a little bit suspect — and you keep putting more and more weight from the provincial government in the form of downloading on a foundation that is not structurally sound, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you run into the situations that we're running into right now in rural Saskatchewan. We're running into situations where people . . . with input costs and everything else.

But one of the major expenses is property tax because of the government downloading so much on an assessment system that may not be structurally sound, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So if the Bill addresses the whole assessment system and makes the assessment system a little more structurally sound, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'd have to say that would be a very good thing.

But until we talk to more municipalities on the impact of this Bill, because it is a wide-sweeping Bill — I've only talked about a couple of things, I've talked about assessment and I've talked about amalgamation. It also talks on water and sewage and that type of . . . those type of issues — all issues that are very important to rural Saskatchewan and the RMs of our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So as we get more information back, as the 300 RMs around the province have a look at this Bill as it impacts them, and they give feedback back to us on how that is . . . the impact is going to be absorbed by them, whether it's good ideas or bad ideas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd move that we would adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 56

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 56 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to make just a few comments on the Bill No. 56, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act. We certainly see that the government . . . This is quite a large Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in regards to northern municipalities, the 34 northern municipalities who will be affected by this Bill.

And certainly we see some good in here. We see some questionable, some questionable legislation being brought in. We have some curiosity around it. And certainly sometime in the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll get a chance to speak with the minister in Committee of the Whole about these issues.

But certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we take a look at this Bill, I think it's important that in today's debate that comments are made in regards to this government's attitudes towards northern municipalities and the detrimental affect it's had on the past . . . in the past decades in the growth of northern municipalities and their ability to govern and their ability to establish economic growth in northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the slight changes that is coming . . . And course in this Bill there is some tinkering, some tinkering that's going to take place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This government is looking at some flexibility in the number of councillors that are going to be allowed on municipal boards in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've certainly noticed in the two previous Bills, Bill No. 54 and Bill No. 55, in reference to changes to the urban municipal Act and the rural municipal Act, is that municipalities are going to be able to without, without approval from the minister get a chance to be able to set an appropriate amount of councillors to be able to sit on their municipal boards.

In northern municipalities, this is extremely important. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that many of the municipalities in northern Saskatchewan have a very limited amount of residents in their communities and having the flexibility to reduce in those situations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amount of councillors that sit on those municipal boards, it's very important that flexibility be allowed so that they're not always in a state of flux, so that they know on a three-year basis how many people that they're going to be able to find to replace those members of councils who want to move on for other purposes. And that's appropriately so, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So in many of the smaller municipal districts certainly there are very limited opportunities to find the appropriate amount of councillors that were necessary to operate, in the past, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those councils. And having the flexibility to reduce down to even as few as two councillors, the mayor and two councillors in these northern municipal districts, it's extremely important that that be allowed to happen.

But on the other side of the coin — and there is another side to the coin, Mr. Deputy Speaker — some of the northern communities are extremely large indeed. As an example, just as one example, we certainly know that the town of La Loche in northern . . . the town of La Loche has a population of about 3,500. Well even in southern Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a town, that's a large size. And so they need the flexibility to allow themselves to have larger amounts of representation on council.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of this, this tinkering in this Bill, this one small tinkering, that's going to be able to happen so that the very small communities will be able to have fewer amounts of councillors, and in the much larger communities will have significantly higher amounts of councillors. And that is very appropriate in today's day and age.

Another change that is being looked at in this Bill, Bill No. 56, the northern municipal amendment Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is changes to the assessment. Now certainly this government, whether being approached from either urban governments or . . . urban governments, rural governments, northern governments, is the dissatisfaction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the assessment system that is presently in place in this province. And certainly this government in the early 1990s, in their attempts to do what they thought at that time was upgrading the assessment system . . . And certainly it was archaic at the time. We were using assessment values that were significantly outdated, as many as 30 years of age old, and certainly that needed to change, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But this government in their lack of wisdom — and in many cases as we see in much legislation that is brought, especially that I've seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last three years — is in their desire for change and in their lack of consultation, in their lack of due diligence they've often rushed into situations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, making changes to legislation that has a tendency to have a negative, significant negative impact upon municipalities. And one of them of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as all members of the House are well aware, was the changes in the assessment system in Saskatchewan that was brought in, in the early 1990s. And certainly those changes have had a negative impact on the . . . (inaudible) . . . assessment is taking place in this province.

So we see in this . . . in these three pieces of legislation and specifically Bill No. 56, the northern municipal amendment Act 2002, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this government is starting to think that the changes are going to be need . . . made to the assessment system that we presently have in this province. Now we know that at times they . . . this government can rush into things kind of helter-skelter and then other times they can drag their feet. We see in this piece of legislation again a dragging of the feet of the changes that are going to be necessary in regards to assessment.

This piece . . . these three pieces of legislation certainly talk about in the future they're going to allow for income base to be allowed around commercial properties for assessment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now it's going to allow municipalities to use that when, when, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's changes made to the . . . to SAMA's (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) legislation, or the Saskatchewan assessment management authority, when their legislation or their regulations are changed.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they seem to be getting, this government, getting the cart ahead of the horse a little bit. They're putting the change into . . . in the municipal legislation that this is coming. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is going to be a change in government before that happens when . . . in regards to Saskatchewan assessment management authority.

And so we're wondering on this side of the House — and certainly sometime next month we'll get the chance maybe to ask the minister about that — is why they're changing this in the municipal legislation now when it might be more appropriate to have tied it in at the same time with changes to SAMA's authority in this regard when you talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about income based assessment also being applied.

Because we see very clearly in the Act is that even though it's going to be there for, going to be there for municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's also very clear in the Act that they're not going to be able to allow to use it at this time until there are changes to the assessment manual. And certainly we don't see anything in the near future coming along that lines, Mr. Deputy Speaker

(15:00)

There is an interesting little change that's coming, and certainly it's at the request, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the town of

Creighton. The town of Creighton for many years has operated under the authority of urban municipal Act.

But of course as we're all aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this House, that the town of Creighton is certainly in the northern district, in the northern administrative district in this province. And the town felt quite strong, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that what they needed to do to enable to enhance their opportunities is that the town of Creighton should be included under the northern municipal Act. And that's very appropriate.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as this government kind of wanders through the maze of trying to govern a province and, as we've seen, especially last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how they often drop the ball in this case, that this tiny request from a town, the town of Creighton, to be able to operate under different circumstances and follow the northern municipal Act, is highly appropriate.

Because as we know very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has not been very responsible . . . responsive to the people of Saskatchewan. And certainly it wasn't until the 1999 election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we were forced upon us this coalition government, that they decided they needed to start listening to the people of Saskatchewan. And this would be one small example of that.

So the town of Creighton, we certainly want to congratulate them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on their perseverance in finally getting what they need in order to operate as a town in northern Saskatchewan, the opportunities that are going to abound to them because of their access to better opportunities in the northern municipal Act. The town of Creighton needs to be congratulated for their efforts finally after all these years at getting this NDP government to listen to them.

One of the sad states of affairs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in northern communities, and certainly we know on this side of the House and maybe some of the members on the other side of the House also know this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the town of La Ronge operates under the urban municipal Act. And that's appropriately so. It's a very large town.

La Ronge proper, the town of La Ronge, probably has a population of about 4,500. It plays a very central role to economic growth and development in northern Saskatchewan. But all the other communities, and now including the town of Creighton, operate under the northern municipal Act. One of the outstanding ambiguities of the northern municipal Act was that it allowed no authority — no authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker — to communities in northern Saskatchewan.

At one time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, northern communities were allowed to enact dog bylaws. Well that was fine. But the fact of the matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a dog bylaw had no bite, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What northern municipalities had to act under at one time . . . how they had to operate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is if they wanted to enact a bylaw, they actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had to get permission from the minister — in today's circumstance that would be the Minister of Government Relations — actually having to be getting permission from a government minister to

enact a bylaw.

Well nowhere else was that happening in Saskatchewan. In southern Saskatchewan, in the areas south of the northern administrative district line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those communities were allowed to enact bylaws as they deemed appropriate for their communities. And if those communities didn't appreciate the bylaws all they had to do was simply wait for the next election, throw out that mayor and council, and bring in more appropriate bylaws.

Well the communities in northern Saskatchewan weren't allowed that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at one time. Well until this Bill passes — it may be some time next month or August, whenever that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're not allowed to do that in northern Saskatchewan.

And that's really unfortunate. It's unfortunate to think that a government in today's day and age, and specifically this NDP government, would actually believe, would actually believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people of northern Saskatchewan are not ready for self-determination.

They have the ability, they have the ability, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to govern themselves and we should allow that; we need to allow that to happen. But many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with communities in northern Saskatchewan, with mayors and councils . . . and certainly, we have found out that these people are more than ready to be able to take on the roles and responsibilities of operating local governments in northern Saskatchewan.

And finally, finally, if this government can get down to business some day in the very near future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this part of the Act can be changed so that municipalities in northern Saskatchewan are going to be able to have more self-determination in the direction that they would like to see their towns grow, and be able to operate . . . for the opportunities that people in northern Saskatchewan are certainly are asking for.

Another one of the areas that we're finding somewhat . . . we're finding it amusing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because certainly as I've mentioned already before, municipalities in northern Saskatchewan were certainly not even allowed to have a bylaw in regards to dangerous animals unless they had permission from the minister, the Minister of Government Relations.

Well that's changing, of course, under this Act. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's going to happen is that they're going to be able to allow to do that. Towns throughout Saskatchewan are going to be able to allow . . . have the opportunity to enact bylaws in regards to dangerous animals whether they're in southern Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan.

Well what's interesting, what's really interesting in this piece of legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that now municipalities throughout Saskatchewan, whether it be urban municipalities, rural municipalities, northern municipalities, will be able to extend those bylaws beyond canines, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because at one time, it was believed by this government that that was really all that it was necessary for.

And certainly in northern Saskatchewan, of course, with their proximity to the northern forest is that they need the opportunity to be able to enact bylaws on a much broader range basis. And we see that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this Bill that they're going to be able to put teeth into the legislation, so to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And finally after many years of NDP government, they're finally allowing the people of northern Saskatchewan the opportunity to self-govern. And unfortunately it's terrible we had to wait for a coalition government for that to happen, that the pressures of Saskatchewan people finally got to them and they were able to enact some laws in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will benefit the people of Saskatchewan.

And so we want to applaud the people from northern Saskatchewan for their due diligence in being able to impress upon this government the need — this government, this NDP government — the need, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow them to have self-government in Saskatchewan. And it's hard to believe in this day and age that in northern Saskatchewan that wasn't happening yet.

Now what needs to be looked at as we talk about the municipalities that is of great concern to us and certainly we've been trying to impress upon this government — we know that the Saskatchewan Association of Urban Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities have been trying to impress upon this government — the huge tax burden that is being placed upon the property tax owners in this province. The downloading that has taken place since the early '90s on the property tax owners . . . the property tax base, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province has been abysmal. It's provided a great burden upon the taxpayers of Saskatchewan and that needs to be righted.

We're not seeing anything in this Bill that's going to address this in the very near future. We know that there's a couple of Bills, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have been brought by the government that they believe, they believe, are actually going to help address the situation. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know — and certainly on this side of the House, and I'm sure many members on that side of the House also realize, on the government side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker — that that is only a pittance, that much more is going to be needed to address the property tax burden in this province.

And it is Bills such as this, the northern municipal amendment Act, 2002, this Bill No. 56, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would have given this government the opportunity to be able to start addressing those situations.

When we have a government in the early '90s that actually took — actually took — \$200,000 out of educational funding in this province and applied that, applied that to the property tax base, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it speaks quite loudly and very, very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government, certainly in the early '90s, did not have their priorities right.

Instead of buying up companies all over the world, they could have been investing those monies very clearly, Mr. Speaker, in education in this province — the education that is going to be so desperately needed when the member from Rosetown-Biggarr

becomes premier and the Saskatchewan Party is going to be enabled to enact their Grow Saskatchewan plan, a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is going to grow this province by 100,000 people in 10 years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know on this side of the House that there are still some members who want the opportunity in the future to be able to make a few comments about this Bill, and I think it's appropriate that that be allowed to happen. I know that the few comments that I have made have not covered all areas of this Bill and that other members on this side of the House would like to make comments on that . . . this Bill sometime in the future.

And so then, at this time, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 52

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 52 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today we want to just speak for a few minutes on The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act. Really all this Bill is dealing with is the amount of revenue sharing going to the municipalities this year.

Mr. Speaker, the government side made a big to-do about the extra \$10 million that they were putting into municipalities this year. The one thing they forgot to mention budget day was that over the past 10 years there's been about \$300 million in cuts to revenue sharing to municipalities, whether you be city, town, village, or the RMs, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if you divide that out, that 300 million that this government has cut in the last year . . . last 10 years to municipalities is about an average of 30 million a year. So the \$10 million increase this year seems very petty and very small, albeit that SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM were very grateful to get any kind of an increase because that meant the cutting was over for this one year.

City mayors alone, Mr. Speaker, have said they needed \$20 million this year just to try and turn the trend of having to raise local municipal taxes.

SUMA has also talked about the revenue sharing and the increases they need, Mr. Speaker. They figured which . . . this year they're getting close to 32 million, but it's about half of the 67 million that they were paid to urban municipalities about 10 years ago. And the 32 million that they got this year is actually less than they received in 1978, Mr. Speaker. So if you add inflation into that, they're far behind where they were at that point some 30, 25 years ago.

SARM also is very disappointed. I think they were happy to see the downloading stop for a year and the few million dollars that they had increased. But I think the thing that hurt SARM the

most this year, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the \$25 million education tax rebate was cut. When you put that in proportion to the \$4.5 million increase for SARM this year to the increased funding, and then take away \$25 million cut to education tax rebate, the rural taxpayers out there are losing a vast number of dollars this year, Mr. Speaker.

My colleague for Indian Head-Milestone touched on just how important that \$25 million was to farmers out there on their education tax and how badly that's going to be missed in this year's round of trying to balance their books out there, especially when we still have a large area of this province that's still in drought conditions, Mr. Speaker.

The South, south of No. 1, has received rain in many cases, ample rain, but the minute you get north of No. 1 Highway we still have many, many areas, Mr. Speaker, that are in a disaster situation. Their wells are going dry. Their dugouts are drying up. They have nowhere to water their cattle. They're having to move their cattle to other areas. Their crops, for in all intents and purposes, haven't even germinated in many cases.

So for those to think because in the South we have rain here, I think, Mr. Speaker, we should remember that part of this province is still in a very critical situation and will have to be addressed at some point in the future if the rain doesn't move north and spread very, very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm thinking of the area probably from Kindersley on the west, through to Saskatoon, through Watrous, Humboldt, all through those areas, and really straight across to the other side of the province. We have a large area out there that these people are still hurting very badly, and I know it must be hard for them to hear about all the rain in the South. And it sounds like at this point where maybe government they feel that, both federal and provincial maybe, for all intents and purposes have forgot that there still is a drought out there in rural Saskatchewan.

(15:15)

So what I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the hurt is going on out there in rural Saskatchewan, even though in the south side here we can quite easily seem to forget it because in some cases they've had 4 or 5 inches of rain.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the Bill that I actually started with, the municipal revenue sharing Bill, just a quote from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation on property tax bills over the past year and how they have jumped dramatically. And here's some of the listings, and I quote from the Canadian taxpayers: municipal, school, and property taxes for all municipalities, 7 per cent increase; total property taxes for rural municipalities, 9.5 per cent increase; total property taxes for urban municipalities, 4.3 per cent increase; total property taxes on agriculture land, 10.3 per cent increase.

And this goes back, Mr. Speaker, because partly of the \$25 million cut to the education tax rebate — 10.3 per cent increase on agriculture land when a big area of this province is one of the worst droughts that we've seen in many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

School taxes on agriculture land, 15 per cent increase. Again, Mr. Speaker, at a time when we can least afford to be jacking up taxes for rural taxpayers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders all over this province have wanted the downloading to stop, the increased revenue sharing to start, and maybe we saw a little glimmer of hope. But as we have seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, and we know that we . . . government has had a couple of deficit budgets, the overall debt of the province is starting to increase, so I hold my breath whether next year we would see any new dollars for municipalities. But I would certainly hope so, Mr. Speaker.

So I think we've addressed a number of issues speaking to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and at this time we would let it move to Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 45

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 45 — The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjonnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well Bill 45, local government election Act, is really quite straightforward, Mr. Speaker. I don't think SARM, SUMA, anyone has really any big problems with it. There's a few interesting points that we will have a number of questions on at Committee of the Whole. The one to do with telling or explaining how many dollars you spend in an election campaign, the 60-day deadline on putting this in place.

There's a number of questions there, Mr. Speaker. We would be wondering why this was brought in — whether municipalities have asked for this change, school boards have asked for this change. But overall, Mr. Speaker, we really don't have, I don't think, a big problem with this Bill and we'll be able to have our questions answered also on this Bill in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 34

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Melenchuk that **Bill No. 34 — The Education Amendment Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to stand today to discuss The Education Amendment Act, Bill No. 34 that was brought forward by the minister.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, addresses just three issues that are concerning education in the minister's mind. But I was disappointed when I read it because I'm sure the three issues that he's dealing with in this Bill is not the ones that most of the taxpayers and students and teachers in this province are talking

about.

The issues that most concern the people that are involved in education today is money, first of all. And this Bill does nothing to address the fact that since 1992 the government has cut \$380 million from the Education budget.

In fact if we would have frozen the Education budget in 1992 the taxpayers would have been much further ahead. This year Education needed \$25 million just to keep the status quo from last year, Mr. Speaker. And what did the budget give us? Just \$14 million.

That means that in many school divisions they are not going to be able to keep the programming that they had last year. Either that or they'll have to cut teachers or they're going to have to cut programs.

Mr. Speaker, this government has given education lip service since 1992. And I look at this Bill today and think that this government is actually going to address the problems in education, I think the minister is really looking at the world through rose-coloured glasses.

Mr. Speaker, on top of this the minister said that he was going to put more funding into a number of programs — things like Community Schools. And, Mr. Speaker, every one of us knows through the Role of the School report and other incentives and initiatives around the province, the Community Schools is a real benefit to many schools.

In fact the Role of the School says that every school should be considered a community school. But, Mr. Speaker, the additional money that's going to the additional community schools this year is coming from the existing budget. Every year since 1992 the government has talked about the money that they're going to be putting into education and all they do is take their money, the size of . . . the amount of money that they put into education and cut pieces of that pie into a different shape. They've never actually increased the amount of money to education.

So when school boards and directors look at the budget every year they're saying okay, how am I going to do more with less? There was conditional funding in this budget for community schools, more money for community schools, more money for technology, more money for distance learning, and a lot of initiatives that we consider very, very important.

But none of them came with the dollars that we need to actually to make a difference in this province. We have to pay for the teachers. We have to pay for the programs and the buying and maintaining the schools and these not addressed at all in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, a number of my colleagues before talked about . . . before this Bill came forward talked about the \$25 million reduction in education property tax. And this is something that really has affected education as well.

Mr. Speaker, that \$25 million made a huge difference to farmers. It's something that we know when it was brought forward it should have been addressed through the RMs; it

didn't have to be administered through this government, but at least it was money that came to farmers. And it was cut in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

And in many parts of the province there are farmers still experiencing a drought that's going to have a devastating effect on their future —if they have a future in farming. And this is just another insult to the injury they're suffering right now.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian taxpayers indicate that in the year 2001, Saskatchewan families were hit with huge property tax increases. The total property tax — municipal and education — is up 7 per cent from last year. The total rural property tax is up 9.5 per cent, the total property taxes on agricultural land up 10.3 per cent, and the total school division property taxes on agricultural land was up 15 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other issues that are affecting the education system that wasn't addressed in this Bill is the fact that we have a . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Members of the Assembly, it's really the tradition of the House to allow some wide-ranging debate but don't really allow for speaking about what is not in the Bill. Members are to address what is in the Bill.

And I would ask the member to take a close look at the Bill and compare it with the comments of the last five minutes and there's very little. So I would ask the member to revert to the Bill or pass the speeches on to the next member.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm delighted to talk about this actual Bill because the Bill was talking about community schools and the fact that the number of community schools in this province was increased in the last budget. It's an initiative that the government has addressed and something that the people across the province were looking forward to and Role of the School addressed it quite openly.

Mr. Speaker, the Prince of Wales Scholarship Fund was set up to help young people in grade 11 with future education but the students that are actually going to be affected by this scholarship or will have it available to them are actually students that are in community schools.

We now have 17 community schools . . . pardon me, we have an increase in the number of community schools in this province but it is not the total number of schools across this province.

So I've had calls from people who are saying, this scholarship fund is great; we appreciate it. But my school isn't a community school and how are my students going to be able to benefit?

Five hundred dollars may not be a lot of money but with the increase in tuition right now, Mr. Speaker, it would something that all students would look at. So again we have . . . the government is deciding who gets the money. And worse than that, the actual Department of Learning is going to administer the fund with the support of community partners.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering what the nature of this support is.

How is the Department of Learning going to decide how this funding is going to be approved to different students? Who is going to be getting it? I'm always a little leery when I hear that the government is going to be administering any program.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also addresses two other areas. One of them is the amalgamation of school divisions which now, through this Bill, there's going to be two different rates allowed in a school division. Before this Bill is passed, really there's going to have . . . There's only one mill rate allowed right across the school division but this Bill addresses the fact that during amalgamation there often is a difference in mill rates and this is going to give the boards an opportunity to apply two different mill rates during one year.

Mr. Speaker, we also are appreciative of the fact that this Bill doesn't force amalgamation and that there will be school divisions that will benefit from this new Act.

The restructuring of francophone schools into one school division is something that I'm sure most . . . the schools with the common interests and concerns are going to be pleased with. I am wondering about the logistics of . . . when you think that these schools are spread right across the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that we can address these concerns in Committee of the Whole so I move this Bill be passed on.

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

Bill No. 46

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Melenchuk that **Bill No. 46 — The Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to stand and address this music teachers association Bill.

There's two initiatives in this Bill. The consumer protection that would give citizens the confidence that the individuals in this profession have qualifications and standards that meet with everyone's approval. And then also it addresses the internal affairs of the music teachers profession and gives the dedicated professional people the opportunity to manage the affairs of their profession and bring forward their initiatives and concerns.

I'm very pleased this government recognized the importance of self initiatives in governing. I hope this government takes a page from this professional Act for other areas.

The Act allows professions to make bylaws in the areas of administration. Members of the association have lobbied for and persuaded the government that the change will be beneficial and we do agree with this.

Adding a public representative to the executive and to the disciplinary committee shows . . . underlines the fact the professions seek to be open and accountable. The university no longer is involved in the registration process for music teachers. They agree the association is more than capable of handling this

details. And the new Act outlines in more detail the process of disciplining. People will have confidence in the profession that has an open process.

A number of years ago this government tried to change the number of credits students would receive when they were taking music in school. But there was a public outcry and citizens . . . because citizens know that the value and importance of music to children and to basically people of all ages. Music is a gift that we can take into our old age.

And I can congratulate the music teachers like the one from the . . . the member from Saltcoats talk about today, Kevin Hrycay, a music teacher from Esterhazy who recently received the Prime Minister's award for teaching excellence.

So, Mr. Speaker, there will be detailed questions on this Bill, but I will be pleased to ask those questions in Committee of the Whole.

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

(15:30)

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Kelvington-Wadena on her feet?

Ms. Draude: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the House, I'm pleased to introduce to you 18 students from Archerwill School. They're grade 8 and 9 students and they're in the east gallery.

With them today is teacher, Mr. Rick Hamel; and chaperones, Yves Martin, Barb Hage, Linda Braaten, and Cindy Wittynek.

Mr. Speaker, these students have travelled from Archerwill this morning, and I think the members of the House will remember that we've spoken about Archerwill and the fire in that community in the last little while. And these are a number of the students that were involved first-hand with that — what happens to a community when they have a disaster like that.

So I'm pleased to see the students here, and I'll be looking forward to meeting with you a little later. So welcome to the gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 40 — The**

Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2002 be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to address the Act to amend The Highway Traffic Act and to make other related amendments to the Acts.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many amendments, it seems, that are stated here. And one of the clauses in this piece of legislation allows police to only attend to accidents where there is injury, death, hit and run, or impaired driving. And this will allow accidents . . . law enforcement more time to pursue other crimes.

Now we understand that police forces are in favour of this and my colleague, the member from Cannington, has spoken previously to that area of amendment.

There are also proposed changes for the fines imposed for speeding infractions, and these proposals also come from law enforcement officials in terms of road safety and deterrents. And so that appears to be quite explicit and good amendments.

There are also changes for the driver's licensing and vehicle registration, which according to the minister will reduce red tape, and the Saskatchewan Party opposition would concur with that.

The final piece though in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, deals with setting an offence for vehicles that repeatedly enter an area where it is well known to be a district that is populated by those exploited through the sex trade. And in the House, when the member from Cannington was debating this area of the Bill and the amendments that were necessary to deal with Bill No. 2, he clearly outlined to the minister responsible that there needed to be a more definitive area in a clause, or through a clause, that would explain to law enforcement as well as to the court that the amendments in this Highway Traffic Act pertain directly to Bill No. 2.

Failing to do that we may end up with some Charter arguments on this Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote from *Hansard*, the member from Cannington's advice to the minister of the Crown that is responsible for making sure amendments are succinct and clear and certainly definitive.

The member from Cannington says:

. . . the *Charter's Impact on the Criminal Justice System*, (a part of that that he read) seems to be indicating, Mr. Speaker, that the blanket powers that police have under The Highway Traffic Act will not be sufficient to allow for the enforcement of Bill No. 2 . . . under The Highway Traffic Act.

So what the government needs to seriously consider, Mr. Speaker, and do is include in The Highway Traffic Act that that (specific) Act applies to Bill No. 2, Mr. Speaker; (he says) Bill No. 2 which is the emergency protection of victims of child sexual abuse. If that particular Act is named under The Highway Traffic Act . . . then that protection, those powers of police, will extend to that Act.

But failing to name that Act . . . under The Highway Traffic Act, I think will have a serious (or rather I think will have a serious) implication in disallowing police to have those powers to stop and to investigate the possibilities of crimes being perpetrated under Bill No. 2 . . .

So (the member from Cannington went on to) . . . strongly suggest that before this Bill moves ahead, that the government go back to the drawing board and reconsider the text that they are placing under the wordings of The Highway Traffic Act . . . (and to make sure, he advised the government to make sure) they include a reference to Bill No. 2, the emergency protection of victims of child sexual abuse, Mr. Speaker.

That would go a long way if that amendment were reworded and if it was more definitive and succinct referring to Bill No. 2. That would in fact help to move along Bill No. 2 so that it could be effective and protect children in this province.

If the government fails to do that the powers of the police could be excluded from protection of those children. And that would not be a positive note for this government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, clarification of these kind of things are very, very important. We know now that oftentimes the police as well as other players in the system — in the justice system — have a great deal of trouble with the complexity of having to refer from one Bill to the other in order to understand and apply the law.

I think that the minister . . . or the member rather from Cannington gave a really sensible piece of advice there and it's beyond me why the government of the day would not take that advice if in fact they really want to see Bill No. 2 be effective and make sure that it's there to protect children and it can be enforced and acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, just one more note on this. I remind the government of the day that there was a Bill that was issued by the committee to prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and that draft Bill was an Act to provide for the protection, support, and assistance of sexually exploited children.

And this was an all-inclusive, comprehensive Bill. It had under it everything that needed to be done in order to protect children, including the confiscation of vehicles and the kind of things that would need to be clear to the law. And it would take for the courts just one reference to this Bill in order to know what could be done and what could be enacted in law and enforced through the law.

This was not done. The government chose not to take this Bill for their own reasons. Now we have a little bit of controversy already happening. And I'm not sure whether an item that was on the news of late is going to pertain to this Bill and maybe a Charter challenge, but there was a story on the CBC this morning that may shed new light on this part of the Bill. And the story states that a recent spot check by RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) in the province went beyond the powers of law enforcement. The judge ruled that Operation Recovery went too far.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will be asking questions in committee of the minister to see how this particular ruling might impact this Bill, if it does at all.

There are some questions that we have that certainly need to be asked in clarifying the legislation. And those questions can best be answered in committee, but we do have some amendments also relating to these clauses that we will be moving within Committee of the Whole.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move this Bill on to committee.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

The Acting Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'd like to invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'm pleased to have with me this afternoon, Glenda Yeates, who is the deputy minister; Lawrence Krahn, who is the assistant deputy minister. Behind Glenda Yeates, Dan Florizone, assistant deputy minister.

Directly behind me, Al Johnston, acting director, Saskatoon and west districts and district management services; to my right, Rod Wiley, executive director, finance and management services; and right behind him, Mick Grainger, who is assistant deputy minister.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. We'll go to Administration (HE01).

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and welcome, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials this afternoon. I have a few questions to do with the new health districts that we're setting up, Mr. Minister, and some of the concerns that are within the hospitals in my constituency and the area that I would be affected by.

The first one is, Mr. Minister, one of your officials from Sask Health had come out to the community of Kamsack and the concern that the community of Kamsack and surrounding municipalities had was with the accreditation that they were granted in Kamsack and the services that they could deliver within that hospital.

I had the opportunity to tour that hospital the same day that the official was out, along with that official, Mr. Minister, and they have a great little hospital. They seem to have excellent doctors, excellent nurses, but where their concern comes in is with the accreditation. I think their feeling is that they actually can provide or are providing more services at the present time than the accreditation allows.

And I think their concern is that will they at some point in time within the new health district be cut back and lose some of the services they're providing. Mr. Minister, was that brought to your attention and could you comment on that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. I think to clarify the terminology, you're talking about the hospital categories, not accreditation. Accreditation is quite a different process.

But effectively the question is, when we have designated different categories of hospitals in our new plans, how does that affect a community like Kamsack?

I think the thing that I want to emphasize is that these are . . . We're trying to set minimal standards so that the public will know that at least whatever that particular hospital has is as a community standard. So in the Kamsack area, and this is one that has some special attributes that are really positive, they've asked that question directly of me and of officials within the department.

And we've acknowledged that yes, they do many things. It's important that they have services that cover that whole part of northeastern Saskatchewan. And even though they are designated as a community hospital, there are quite a number of services where the intention is that they would stay and be part of the long-term care that's provided in that particular area.

(15:45)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm glad to hear that and I'm sure the members of that community out there will. As you know, they have Duck Mountain Park, and they have a ski hill there, and they have a number of things going for them out there; but I think the hospital as it is now and the services they're providing is very crucial to many of those happenings that are going on in that area. So I'm sure they're quite happy to hear that they will still be able to provide those services under the new system.

Mr. Minister, as you're aware, we have the new hospital in Melville that I think will be in the new health district in our area. As I said, we have Kamsack, we have Esterhazy that is a smaller hospital but very crucial to IMC Esterhazy, the mine there. They need a hospital in that area to service the mine and the surrounding farming community. We have Foam Lake at the other end, in the member from Canora-Pelly's constituency, and then we have Yorkton, Mr. Minister.

And I guess where I'd like to go right now for a minute — in East Central Health District compared to North Valley and Assiniboine Valley — I believe one of the other two had no debt, the other one had a small debt and now they're joining forces with East Central Health District; that if it's my understanding or my numbers are right, that I have been told that we are sitting with possibly as much as a \$20 million debt sitting there. And I believe this might be the first year that we're even into where we're starting to operate in the black, Mr. Minister.

Can you tell me what happens in the new health district with that \$20 million debt, if that is the number and if it's not if you

could correct me, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The plan that we have around dealing with debt also relates to assets. So both assets and debts will be moved from the existing health districts into the new regional health authority.

And so there are many assets. Obviously, we've seen the various facilities that you have talked about. The long-term debt is about \$20 million as you've indicated. That figure is accurate.

And what we've been concentrating on this year and next year is making sure that the operating costs are at a break-even basis. We'll have to have a broader strategy for the long-term debt that's going to deal with that kind of a problem over the whole province. And we're not, in this particular year, able to basically assume all of that long-term debt.

Sometimes the debt does actually relate directly to some assets as well. And so as we look at the different areas of the province there are different challenges, but clearly in East Central we've got the operating side, I think, fairly well set for a go-forward basis. The debt will be a challenge but it's one that we're going to work at for the whole province.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, as you're probably aware — and we've talked about this before — is I've had personal experience with the Yorkton Hospital. And as you know, there's been a number of cuts in that hospital over the last number of years. We've cut beds. We've lost our pediatrician due to cutbacks in beds. I think we're down to 12. At one point, we were at 32, years ago, and we went down, down, down.

Again I mention that we lost our pediatrician — one of the finest probably in this province or in the country for that matter.

But, Mr. Minister, that debt goes along into the three health districts through all into one. And when you think about that, it's not really fair for the two health districts that are moving into there who, in one way, whether it was through lack of funding that East Central got into this situation, whatever the reason, these other two health districts move into there now, one that has a clean slate, I believe — and my numbers again could be a bit wrong — but has no debt sitting against them. And they're thrown in here and they have to share this \$20 million debt.

I understand then, or I would presume that the responsibility of servicing that debt, which could end up being probably in excess of \$1 million a year, will be the responsibility of this new health district. Will it not?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The 20, approximately \$20 million debt that I confirmed is there is accumulated deficit, and it's about 16 million for East Central and about 2.5 million for each of the others. So they each probably have some share in this long-term responsibility. And I think probably the Yorkton-centred areas has a little bit more than the others, but it has a few more people as well.

So practically, I think the other thing to look at is that this is a

total province-wide system and a province-wide issue. And most all of the funding does come through the provincial budget that we're debating right now.

And so what we need to do is make sure we have policies that work for the whole province and all the different parts of the province. The goal is to make sure we don't burden any particular area in a way that they can't manage. Ideally, if we could, we'd like to start everybody with clean slates as quickly as possible. But we have to take into account both the assets and the liabilities and deal with it that way.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. But, as I'm sure you're well aware, there have been cuts lately in the East Central Health District to the care homes, a number of other facilities all across that . . . the old health district. I know there was staff lost in the Saltcoats care home and I'm sure in a number of others out there, where they have all paid the price.

But, Mr. Minister, you missed one part of my question. When this new health district sets their budget for the upcoming year, will servicing that \$20 million debt, whatever that amount will be — and if you know that amount, I'd be interested to know what that is — will that not be part of their budget for the upcoming year and will that servicing of the debt not take away from some of the services they normally could provide with the dollars that you allot them to run that new health district?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The specific question that you had around the debt servicing, that is an amount that is taken into account in preparing the amount of revenue that is forwarded to that new area. Right now it goes to the three health districts and then it will go to the overall regional health authority. So it is taken into account as we prepare the 2002-2003 budgets.

I would like to, though, maybe change the perspective a little bit from sort of half full to . . . from half empty, because there have been some adjustments in services out in the area as you've indicated, but there have also been some positive changes around dialysis for example and some other kinds of services which are provided in that whole area which I think are very positive.

And so what we're trying to do is work on a province-wide basis but also work with the local communities to enhance services where we can. And it does mean some adjustment in the services, but it's all . . . not always in a negative adjustment. There are some very positive things that happen as well.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know the example you gave about renal dialysis, I think we can thank IMC Kalium, Esterhazy for a large donation to the last renal dialysis unit. I think they put money into the East Central Health District.

Mr. Minister, if I heard you in one of your answers before, are you contemplating down the road then paying off this, in this case, the \$20 million debt, or 21 million now, accumulated between the three health districts? You said it would be great if they could start off at zero, and I agree with you. I think it actually would improve the services that they actually could provide for our local residents out there.

So is that in the near future? Are you working on that situation and trying to pay off some of these debts that are out there right now?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I just want to clarify one comment that you made around the dialysis unit. Clearly, with the dialysis unit we appreciate the community contributions that relate to capital, but the real cost in the dialysis is the operating and the long-term operating. And that's where we have the challenge. And so practically, we thank IMC Kalium for their contribution but it is the local board organizing their budget to have sufficient monies available over the longer term.

Now my previous comment about dealing with the accumulated deficits or debts right across the province is accurate in the sense that what we need to try to set out is a long-term plan that deals with these accumulated deficits right across the province. And in an ideal world you'd like to just be able to pay them all off, but practically we have to work within the kinds of resources that we have, making sure that we have the proper balance.

And sometimes some of the debts that are there in some of the new regional health authorities will be directly related to assets which are generating revenue — for example, like parking structures or some other kinds of things like that.

But the simple answer is yes, we would be . . . we are planning to develop a long-term plan once we have the new regional health authorities in place to try to deal with the accumulated deficits right across the province.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you bring up a good point and we've argued this one many times before.

We thank . . . I think we all are very grateful to IMC Kalium and community . . . interested people and businesses out there that donate to any health district out there.

But you talked about the most expensive part of the renal dialysis and providing that service is the staffing and the operating of those units. But think for a minute, Mr. Minister, and I know when we argued originally to get our unit set up in Yorkton, which has only been there the last few years, as I'm sure you're aware, that constituents of mine and other constituents — Canora, Pelly, and other areas out there — drove to Regina or Saskatoon some three times a week at a tremendous inconvenience. Their whole life revolved around going for treatment into Regina and Saskatoon.

That cost money in the health district in Regina here or in the health district at Saskatoon. Now that cost is transferred from Regina, say for the example for those people that come here. Would that money follow these people when they go out there to help operate that municipal health district because that's kind of an interesting scenario, it wasn't provided free in here; it cost for nurses and dialysis technicians and so on in here. Now we're transferring that out to operate another machine out there. Is that money transferable back to the new health district out there?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to your question

would be yes, if we were in a situation where there was no growth in the number of people who require dialysis.

Unfortunately in Saskatchewan, and I think probably across the country, this is an area where there's a huge growth in the numbers of people that actually need the service. And so we provide the service in Yorkton and I agree that it . . . the really valuable thing is that people can get the treatment close to where they live and they save all of the difficulties and expense.

So obviously though we need to be working and we are working on some of the diabetes issues and others that really are a major problem in this area.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees, and welcome to the minister's officials. Some questions about the hospital project in Swift Current, if I may. We briefly got into it a little bit last time officials were here and we were considering Sask Health estimates.

And I guess what I was looking for then and I am still looking for is some confirmation on the part of Sask Health about the current state of our facility in Swift Current. Specifically the question would be — through you, Mr. Chairman, to the minister — is it Sask Health's assessment, having dealt with various proposals, one to renovate and a new one to construct a new facility, is it Sask Health's belief that the facility in Swift Current is in need of some significant capital improvement or complete replacement?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I recall the conversation that was had around this topic not that long ago. And as you know, the process is for the people in the local area to make an assessment of the kinds of things that they need and put forward a proposal. And the people have done a good job of putting together a proposal that is different obviously than what they were thinking before. And now that particular proposal is being discussed and reviewed and I think prodded and probed to make sure that it fits with the various kinds of needs that are there.

Sask Health doesn't go out and assess the facilities and sort of make some statement as to their use, but they do rely very clearly on the local assessment that's made and then go from that and move, and move forward. And practically this project is one where the local people have identified a need . . . identified some positive solutions. And now working together with people in the department, the whole thing is moving forward.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, the other questions that I have revolve around the recent proposal by the group in Swift Current which does represent some neighbouring municipalities, the city, I think the health care foundation, as well as the district itself, that their proposal or their request earlier this year that the government consider a new funding formula for regional facilities using the same logic that allows . . . or that the government uses to fund 100 per cent in terms of capital projects in the tertiary centres, is the fact that a new regional facility also has a provincial role to play in the . . . in the government's new model.

And so their question was: would you consider in changing the formula . . . I think they specifically proposed 90/10 — 90 per

cent provincial funding and 10 per cent local funding. And I know, Mr. Minister, that Sask Health has . . . that the government has rejected changing their proposal . . . or changing the funding formula, I should say.

And so in the correspondence that went back and forth, I know there were several requests on the part of the — and these ones I believe came from the city — on the part of that local group to meet with yourself. I think there may have been up to three, and each time the response came back that there was really no need to meet.

And I wonder if you'd comment on that because I find that a little bit alarming. Even if the government knew from the first time the local group made the request to change the funding formula, even if you knew as the minister that there was no way you'd bring forward a change to that funding formula, it seems, on the face of it, that you may . . . would like to at least meet with them either here in Regina or in Swift Current to further discuss it; to discuss the project. It is one of the new . . . it will be one of the new regional hospitals for the provincial system. And I wonder if you'd comment as to why you wouldn't . . . you refused to meet with the various proponents in Swift Current?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would like to say categorically that I've never refused to meet with this group. This is a position that, unfortunately, some of the people in Swift Current have taken. They've written and asked for a meeting and I'm quite willing to meet with the people.

But, unfortunately, rather than have further discussion, they end up going and making these comments which you now have made in the legislature. So I'm happy to meet with the people.

Now the issue around 90 per cent/10 per cent funding, or 65/35 per cent, or 100 per cent funding is an issue where we're happy to consider other options. But the likelihood of any change in that particular area during this budget year is very slim.

And so . . . But I have never been in a position where I said I wouldn't meet with the people at all. I've actually been quite surprised when the mayor has said that in various ways. And I have not commented on it because basically I will eventually meet with the council.

I have talked to some of the individual doctors when I've seen them at meetings. I've talked to board Chair and other members of the board from out in that area, and I've said to them we'll, you know, we'll meet. I've obviously met with the member from that particular area and said, look, we've got to keep this thing moving along.

And so . . . But it's not that helpful to have the comments in the media that the minister refuses to meet when that's not accurate.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Well that's very encouraging, that's very encouraging because I've seen the correspondence that came back and I got that impression as well. And you have been very available to meet with myself here at the legislature, and that's something that I appreciate.

In fact we've had a brief discussion last week in light of some

of the events, and I appreciated the fact that you initiated them to indicate that the project should be moving forward and that also was relayed and well-received.

But I see . . . I saw the letters and I got that impression. I think there were words to the effect — I mean, I wish . . . I don't have a copy with me right here — but I think there were words to the effect about being . . . that the request for the meeting might be . . . or a meeting itself would be premature. I think there were words to that effect. And so maybe they were interpreted by people who would read that as an unwillingness to meet at this point.

And I think that the people in that community who are working towards this don't feel it's premature at this time. The horror stories at the current facility keep coming in. They come in to my office and they are . . . they're very serious in terms of the building that we . . . the facility that we currently have and the environment that staff work in and, most importantly, the environment that patients face on a daily basis.

And I just think they got that impression. I certainly take you at your word, Mr. Minister, that that's not the case and will relay that back, that there is an interest to meet. And I'm pretty sure they'll take you up on it because I think they pursued this in a very earnest way, has the local group, in terms of putting together the right proposal.

Most recently you'll know that the city council approved a local levy that would make up the local component under the formula that they don't think is right, by the way — under the formula of 65/30. Now I hear you say that the government may be open to changing that formula in, maybe not this budget year but in future budget years.

So now I think is the time to meet with them and to clear these matters up about, is the government prepared to move off of the funding formula for years outside of this budget year? I heard you at least intimate that. I think I heard that. And to clear up any misconception about whether it's too premature to meet now or not. I think that's good.

And I guess I would preface this question with those remarks, and the question is: certainly the minister is aware of then the decision by the local government there to pursue a local levy and to try to raise some money so that local levy would be less onerous on property taxpayers in Swift Current than it is right now, or even a better case scenario, to have the funding formula changed.

So the question then to the minister is: is the government prepared . . . What is the minister's view in the next budget year, as this budget year he's been pretty clear about, for the next budget year, will the minister be recommending — assuming the actual facility, the design, the plan is something that Sask Health agrees with — what is the minister's position in terms of supporting then the 65 per cent funding coming from the provincial government in the next fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm not sure that I dare use the word premature but I might, because basically what happens is that I have requests from every city and every community in the province to go out and meet and try to answer the same

question that you've asked.

And we have a process of working to try to assess the projects, making sure that they're flowing. And I think, you know, Swift Current is involved in that particular part, which is . . . which I think is good news because there are some challenges.

Now as far as next year's budget goes, we will be obviously asking all of the health districts and then the new regional health authorities to continue to examine their capital plans and their operating plans because it's . . . once again it's . . . you can build something but you also have to have the funds in the long term to make sure it operates in light of what new kinds of services that are required or adjustments or whatever that may be there.

And so we will be looking forward to getting those over the next number of months and then we'll have to look at the priorities right across the province. And I know, you know, the member from Moosomin, he's I'm sure going to get up and ask me about this particular issue. And the member from Canora-Pelly has a question. I don't think the members from Melfort and Weyburn have questions this year because those projects are moving along relatively and . . . although maybe we'll get some questions from the member from Weyburn.

But I guess what I'm saying is that there's not an unlimited amount of money available. And so part of our difficulty within the Department of Health is to figure out which ones can go forward because once a commitment is made, it's usually like about three-year's worth of budgeted money. And I think in the Swift Current case that's a, you know, a large project, probably larger than any of the other ones that we've done recently. And so that one, it's going to be a challenge.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, I would like to return very briefly back to the funding formula issue because . . . and again, I . . . if this is incorrect, I'd just ask the minister to clarify it. But I heard him say that the government may be open to reconsidering the funding formula for regional hospitals.

And I just want to clarify that because, for whatever reason, that local group in Swift Current is operating under the understanding based on correspondence that that's not on the table. And if it is still on the table, obviously that's a big . . . that's a very important issue that needs to be resolved, whether or not there's money in the next fiscal year. As you've pointed out, it's a long-term project but we need to begin anyway at least framing the deal between the local group and the Government of Saskatchewan and all of the stakeholders.

And essential to framing that then, is what the funding formula will be or what it could be, what the government may consider. And I would just ask you to please clarify if — not this budget year but in the future — is the government open to changing the funding formula for capital construction of regional health care facilities, acute care facilities?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The funding formulas that we're using right now are not under active reconsideration. But we're . . . we always are listening carefully to what people say and what communities say and looking at what kinds of things that we

need to do over the longer term. Clearly in the action plan for health, the roles of regional hospitals are important. And that ends up being part of our overall discussion.

But clearly the challenge — and especially from, you know, the communities on the west side — is around sales tax and income tax and the comparison to Alberta. And so every time we hold the line there or try to reduce that, it does mean that there's . . . there are fewer revenues available across the whole government. And I think I maybe don't need to remind you that Saskatchewan Health actually takes all of the personal sales tax, all of the personal income tax, all of the corporate tax, plus revenue resources, and still that doesn't cover the \$2.3 billion in Health.

And so we . . . we're under continual scrutiny by the Minister of Finance and the Treasury Board around the resources that are available. And what we need to do is work together with communities to get the right plans together to make sure we get the kinds of facilities that we need. And we've been working hard at that. And sometimes it doesn't go quite as fast as we would like, but we are able to proceed with a number of projects.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman. And in the meantime Swift Current has a very, very aging hospital. And in the meantime Swift Current is to be a . . . the centre for that particular region, for that particular authority that you've structured, that the government has structured under its Action Plan for Health Care. And everybody understands I think in this province the constraints that governments are under to provide the facilities and services that they need to provide. And certainly we on the west side of the province are very aware of the competitive nature of our neighbours across that particular border.

But none of that changes the need for the facility and the need that we . . . And not just for the bricks and mortar, of course, but for its ability to attract the very, very best medical people, front line people to our community and also for it to be properly equipped. And I think the health care foundation locally has certainly indicated it's willing to do whatever it can to make sure that a new facility would be properly equipped.

(16:15)

But I just . . . I think you can appreciate the frustration that I have. And I don't want to speak for the local group but, you know, they're trying desperately to find a way to go forward with this. Originally they would like to have changed the funding formula rules, and they felt . . . And I looked at the correspondence and I felt that that wasn't on and so they make some very bold decisions at the civic level, I think, to try to make this thing happen under rules that they may not agree with but rules that they think they have to live with.

And now we hear this; now we hear this answer here. And I'm not trying to be unfair but we hear an answer that yes, there maybe kind of, sort of, might be some room on the funding formula thing. Well the same constraints that this government is under are the same constraints that local governments are under. And certainly when they make this decision to look at the property tax base to fund a levy, a significant levy, they are

under pressure from their ratepayers as well.

And the pressure would be, you know, are you sure, is the government certainly not going to change the funding formula for certain. We need to know that before we pass judgment on this decision.

And so you could see the frustration that they would have and that I would have, notwithstanding the realities that you quite rightly point out in terms of funding, but what I'm hearing now is that the funding formula isn't written in stone and that they should perhaps pursue it. And you know I . . . That'll be up to them. But I'll understand it if they are frustrated by this.

And I think if I can, Mr. Minister, is, and you've already given it so I don't want to . . . I'm not trying to beat a dead horse here, but I think my last question would just be a final commitment that the time is right now, for these and other reasons, to meet with a group there and — either there or here, like I don't think it would matter — and to get that commitment and . . . so that some of these issues can be resolved and the thing can go forward and progress.

And I think that both Sask Health and yourself, and the local group and myself all have that as a common goal — that it proceed and that it move forward so that the facility can be provided in as timely a manner as possible.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm happy to meet with the people from . . . It's primarily the mayor and the council and the chamber of commerce, and I have talked with the board Chair of the health district and also of the new regional health authority and other board members. And so I know the kind of hard work that people are doing. I think the Dr. Noble Irwin Foundation as well, those people I've talked to, some of the ones that were involved with that as well. And so practically I'm happy to talk about these kinds of things.

Unfortunately I'm not in a position to hold lots of hope that the formula is going to change. But what I do say is that we have to do all this together. We have to work together if we're going to get some of these new projects in place — the capital side — but just as importantly the operating and long-term operating costs. And that's part of a total province-wide strategy in which the Swift Current and area facilities will be a crucial and important part.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is a great deal of concern being expressed in the Watrous constituency about the new proposed Regional Health Authority No. 6.

The Watrous constituency had at one time pieces of three different health districts. Now the entire constituency will be all contained within the Regional Health Authority No. 6. And there is a feeling from the letters that I'm receiving and the phone calls that I've been receiving that it's going to be a disaster for the rural facilities within the regional health authority.

So one of the first concerns that I will ask the minister about is the size of the district. It has a population of just under 279,000 residents, which is over a quarter of the population of the province.

So the question that's coming forward to my office is, why did the minister choose for this one particular regional health authority to be so large? And if indeed that is acceptable and will function extremely well, why do we not then have only four regional health authorities rather than 12 because this particular regional health authority is indeed a rather large one.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As the member knows we've had much discussion about the size of health authorities and about the whole organization of health care in Saskatchewan. I think ultimately we should remember that we have 1 million people in Saskatchewan.

The Capital Health Authority, which is Edmonton, has 1 million people in one health authority. And I think some of the ones in BC (British Columbia) are even bigger than that.

But we are . . . This is Saskatchewan. We have challenges around distances, around sizes of communities, around how various groups work together.

And one of the things that I think happens around the Saskatoon area is clearly that many people have services in the city, but they also have services in their communities in which they live or if they're farming or have other businesses around some of the smaller places, they have services there as well.

What this new regional health authority no. 6 has — obviously a lot of the benefits of some of the most sophisticated equipment and the most well-trained specialists, all those — but it also has, like you identified, a number of the smaller facilities that have served people for a long time and served people well.

My understanding is that they are working as a new regional health authority board to try to maintain the proper balance between those kinds of communities, and that they are very cognizant of making sure that the people right across the whole regional health authority feel a part of it.

And any time there's change there are adjustments that need to be made and some of the . . . there are concerns that are registered. But my sense, listening to the people from all of the regional health authorities across the province, is that many new positive relationships are being built.

There are some challenges and we'll continue to work on those challenges.

The Chair: — Why is the member from Melville on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to take this opportunity and introduce to you, my colleagues, sitting in the Speaker's gallery the Consul General of China from Calgary, Mr. and Mrs. Song. They're up in the gallery. And the Vice-Consul here, Mr. Tian.

And I had the privilege of hosting these people at a luncheon this afternoon, who are here for a first visit to Saskatchewan with a promise to visit many, many more times, I'm told, and to strengthen our relationships between the People's Republic of China and Saskatchewan in our trading partnerships and our relationships.

So I would ask everyone here to please welcome these fine people to our great province and invite them to come back again with our hearty welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And on behalf of the official opposition, we too would like to welcome the Consul General and the Vice-Consul from China.

With that, to follow-up on the minister's answer. He said that consideration was taken by his department as to the service routes and business routes of the residents of Saskatchewan when deciding the boundaries for the new regional health authorities, although I'm still, you know, getting questions and concerns to my office about how much thought was actually put into that.

And an example that I will give to him is that the town of Strasbourg — which is less than an hour's drive from Regina but well over two hours from Saskatoon — is in the Regional Health Authority No. 6. So it only stands to reason that the people from Regina are going to go . . . or people from Strasbourg are going to go to Regina for their tertiary care.

And I know that members on this side of the House are hearing a concern, and I'm sure the government members are also hearing a concern, where service industries have been expressing a desire for coterminous boundaries more and more. And by the service industries, I mean education, health, social services, and justice. And we're being told that it would be far more efficient and more economic to deliver services if there was some correlation in the boundaries.

And I would like to ask the minister if this was something that his department considered. It was the perfect opportunity to completely redo these boundaries, perhaps have three school boards or school districts within one health district for example.

Did they consider using this opportunity, where they're redesigning boundaries, of actually lining up some of the boundaries instead of using the existing ones that they've had trouble with, that they've heard complaints about, and seeing if they could make things more efficient?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The legislation which is now in front of the House provides a very clear method of adjusting these boundaries to deal with the questions around a community like

Strasbourg or some of the other places that are of concern.

One of the things that was part of the discussion, both in the public discussion — I think in Mr. Fyke's consultation as well as the kinds of things that were heard by government members, and obviously the members opposite — did relate to how we can provide services across the province. And ultimately what we did in this particular plan was used the existing boundaries of health districts. But we put a very clear mechanism in which allows for an adjustment of those boundaries based on some of the community concerns.

And so we anticipate that once the new regional health authorities are in place, that there are a number of places in the province where some adjustments will be made to boundaries to deal with that.

Now I don't . . . I'm not sure if I heard the member saying that she's rueing the decision that she and her members made around the whole issue of rural municipalities and the numbers of rural municipalities and services that are dealt that way, or if she's reconsidering that particular area. But if she is, I know that our Minister of Agriculture and Food would be quite happy to hear that there's been a change in mind.

The Chair: — Hon. members, the Chair has a special guest he would like to introduce.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, hon. members. My . . . I have a special visitor in the Speaker's gallery, and that's my son Eric. And he decided yesterday that as a Father's Day gift he would come down to Regina today with me and tomorrow his other brother is coming down on a school trip. So he decided to come down a day earlier.

So I'd ask all hon. members to welcome my son, Eric, to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The other concern that I'm hearing from my constituents is the lack of rural representation that will be on the new regional health authority no. 6.

The CEO (chief executive officer) that's been chosen is the existing Saskatoon CEO. And of the 12 appointed board members, nine of them are from the existing Saskatoon Health District and the remaining three are one each from the three rural health districts that have been put together.

So I would like to ask the minister how he considers this to be a balance within the regional health authority? And how are the rural residents going to feel any confidence that they will be able to retain adequate health services and the health facilities that they have within rural Saskatchewan?

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd be happy to answer that question. I'm not sure if the member has the populations of the existing health districts, but if she wishes I can set them out. Central Plains Health District has 20,626 people; Gabriel Springs has 11,923; Living Sky has 13,506; Saskatoon has 240,416 — for a total of 286,471.

I'm not sure of the exact percentages, but I would think that Saskatoon does have more than three-quarters of the population of the new regional health authority, comes from the old Saskatoon Health District. The way that the members were divided was to have about . . . well, three-quarters from the old Saskatoon boundaries and then one from each of the other three.

As far as numbers of people who have a rural base, there are a number of the people who are part of the old Saskatoon Health District who are rural-based people, farm . . . either in farm or in smaller towns. So we've tried to gain that balance. And I know that it's always a challenge when you replace 48 people with 12 people, which is effectively what's happened in this particular area. And I know that the new regional health authority in this area incorporating all of these — the existing health districts — has, as part of their agenda in their planning committee, how to make very strong connections with all parts of the new regional health authority.

Ms. Harpauer: — I would like to perhaps comment, before I move on to a different topic, on the minister's perception of balance. And we need look no further than the present agriculture policy that we're having such difficulty with in negotiating with our federal government.

We have representation by population in our country. And we're seeing how well that works out here in Saskatchewan when we have no representation — or we do not have, I should say, the population in order to have programs and funding in place to assist us at a time of great need — and the funding is all going to the Eastern provinces, particularly Ontario and Quebec.

So when he says that this is balanced, I'm going . . . I would again like to stress that this is not making the rural residents feel secure at all. Yes indeed, Saskatoon has a bigger population, so therefore the rural representation is quite a bit less than that of Saskatoon, and when it comes time to make decisions at the table, they have a real fear of how those decisions will be made and where the funding will go. And I think that that fear is real, and it needs to be addressed by the minister. They need to have some sort of confidence that they can retain some services.

So with that, I would like to move on to a document that was done within the Living Sky Health District. It was a review of the Living Sky Health District, and done by Bert Boyd, Janet Williams, and Stewart McMillan. And I would like to ask the minister who commissioned Bert Boyd to do a study of the

Living Sky Health District, and who paid for this report, and how much.

The Chair: — Order. Why is the member for Elphinstone on his feet?

Mr. McCall: — Leave to introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And thank you very much for the good grace of the member from Watrous, for ceding the floor for this introduction.

I would like to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and through you to the members of this legislature, and the assembled officials of course, one David Standingready, who's sitting at the ready, up in the western gallery.

Davey is a student, an avid student of politics, and comes from a long and very active line of political people who've been working diligently for the benefit of this province. So, Davey, if you could please stand, and we'll . . . if we could all give Davey a warm welcome to this place — Dave.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to the question is that this was arranged by Living Sky Health District and Saskatchewan Health together. And Saskatchewan Health paid Mr. Boyd for the work that he did.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister for the answer. He hasn't said how much the report cost. It actually is an interesting report. I think it would have been of great help to the Living Sky Health District had they been able to remain as a district. However, a lot of it, perhaps, was wasted money considering that they're going to be part of a larger health authority.

The interesting thing that was written in his report, and I would like to read that, if I may:

That within this context of a mix of local versus district management, it is difficult to completely quantify the corporate management requirements. However, the review team believes there are opportunities to reduce the corporate structure and related support with resultant ongoing operating savings. As the community managers continue to assume more leadership roles at the local level, the function requirements within the corporate structure should be streamlined and positions consolidated.

And if I'm understanding Mr. Boyd's message in that . . . is that they have in Living Sky Health District put community managers in place in each of the communities within the district. And these community managers have done a great job of being the liaisons between management and the communities, of coordinating the community services. And therefore Mr. Boyd is suggesting that they don't need as many management positions as they presently have.

I think that's a fine example of how representation in the local level is extremely efficient and effective. And this is definitely the direction that this study has suggested.

So again I go back to the number of issues that I brought up that is a concern — the size of the district; how will local representation fit into a district of that size and how will local representation be heard, how will that voice be heard, when it is heavily represented on the board by Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think it's quite clear that the information that was gathered together by the Living Sky Health District with Mr. Boyd's assistance will be advantageous to the new regional health authority and will provide some assistance for them in that particular project.

But I think your question is once again about how does a board of 12 represent a whole big area and deal with the kinds of issues that are there. I think very clearly the 12 board members, who are a part of a new regional health authority planning committee now, and eventually will become the board, are set to represent the whole area.

There also is a mechanism which involves community advisory committees, which will be organized around issues or other kinds of things that happen within a regional health authority. We are seeing some very innovative ideas being brought forward about how these will be used to involve people right across some of the larger regional health authorities. And I think that what we are going to see is some new exciting ways of providing health care across the province.

Ms. Harpauer: — I would just like to comment to the minister that no, I wasn't suggesting 12 members on the board cannot handle the regional health authority. What I was suggesting, again, is going back to the lack of representation or voice at the table of having only three rural as opposed to nine urban.

And perhaps this will help him understand the point that I'm getting to. It's a letter by Clayton Hobman, who is the reeve of the RM of Wreford. And this is just one of many letters and phone calls that I've received. And it's a letter that was written to the Premier of the province, and it states:

Your Saskatchewan Action Plan for Health Care calls for the regional health authority boards to have an urban/rural balance, and yet in regional authority no. 6, there are nine Saskatoon appointments and only one appointment each from the other three health districts. This hardly seems to represent an urban/rural balance.

Premier Calvert, as you know, Mr. Romanow is going across the country in an effort to consult with people at the grassroots level about health care reform. It appears to us

that while Mr. Romanow, from a federal perspective, is looking at rural Saskatchewan residents for their input, our own provincial government does not want to hear from rural Saskatchewan.

This concern is out there and I do believe it's real. And again I will, I will, you know, bring up the agriculture issue and how representation by population sometimes is to the detriment of the least populated areas. So I would ask the minister again if he feels this is in balance.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If you will refer to the population figures that I gave you earlier, 84 per cent of the population in this particular new regional health authority is in the old Saskatoon Health District. But I need to emphasize that the old Saskatoon Health District wasn't just urban areas, it included some rural areas as well.

And I think if you look at the nine people who come from the areas that were in the Saskatoon Health District, there are at least two who would qualify under your definition as rural, which then makes the balance five against seven. You have Les Alm, who's the mayor of Allan, and you have Carol Teichrob, who is a farmer, lives outside of town, and basically both of those people would qualify under your definition.

But I think the important thing is that communities work together with the new boards and that we end up having the kind of contribution that's necessary from all of the people of the province.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question through you to the minister deals with transporting blood. When the blood is taken from a client at a home, what's the criteria of and the procedure of it being transported to a lab in Regina?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer is that the rules around transportation of blood are under federal law; so that there are regulations that are very specific around the transportation of blood. And I think it does have some fairly high standards around basically the protection of the public.

And I think some of the officials here may be able to answer some questions that you have around this, but that the actual rules are not ones that we set in the province, they are ones that are set on a national basis.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could a nurse transport blood, a registered nurse or an LPN (licensed practical nurse)?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well as I say, some of the very specific kinds of questions that you have obviously relate to federal regulations and we don't have all of those right here. And if there is a specific instance or a specific case that you're asking questions about, we'll maybe seek some advice from the people who do this regulation in this area in Ottawa. But I think you may get the answers as quickly, you know, working with some of the, with some of the federal officials.

But practically we, you know, within the province we try to make sure that the transportation of blood obviously meets all the federal rules but doesn't get into any kind of an impractical

nature because in Saskatchewan we obviously have long distances and sometimes we maybe only have one or two labs in the province that can do analysis of blood products, if that's what the issue is.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you. Maybe I'll just narrow it down a little bit. What I have is a constituent and what they are is blood samples. They have to be taken weekly for . . . It's for her son. And the Lumsden doctor and lab can usually do that; every week they do the testing there. But he's going on holidays for two weeks and she's been told that . . . And she can't leave the child alone.

A nurse comes out from Regina, will draw the blood, but that nurse can't take the blood back, that sample back to Regina to be tested. The nurse told her that she had to find arrangements to get it there and she just said she can't; she can't afford to leave the child alone for any length of time. And so she had phoned my office with the rules and I'd phoned your office, but we still, kind of, didn't get, kind of, a satisfactory answer.

So that's . . . I guess I should have been more specific. These are blood samples. This isn't like whole blood. This is a sample that's taken once a week. This boy has to be tested weekly for, you know, for the rest of his life.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — My understanding that some of these kinds of challenges that arise and this specific one, they haven't figured out a solution exactly yet. But the Regina Health District, who obviously is in charge of this particular area, is working with the appropriate people who control the transportation of blood to come up with a solution.

And so I guess all I can say is that some of the officials know about the particular case. It's not the simplest problem to solve because of some of the federal rules, but there is hope that it'll be sorted out before the vacation starts.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, welcome.

A few questions today about the new health district structure. Of course, Mr. Minister, as you would know, that most MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) are receiving many questions about the new health districts, about their structure, who they're accountable to, where the body of the health districts are going to be located, and so on.

And so my first question today is, who is actually making the decision about the location of the administrative office within the districts?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That decision is being made by the Regional Health Authority Planning Committee, which is the 12 new members of the . . . which will eventually become the regional health authority board.

Ms. Bakken: — Pardon me, I should have said regional. I'm used to saying district. So we have to get used to this new terminology.

So you're telling me then that although the regional boards have not officially been appointed, they are already making these

decisions and acting as an appointed board?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The name of the group is the Regional Health Authority Planning Committee. So they're making the plans. And when the new health authority comes into place, it's anticipated that that same planning committee will then be the new board of the regional health authority and at that time the decision would be made.

The committee reported progress.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it being near 5 o'clock I move the committee recess until 7 o'clock.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.