

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who would like to see the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority remain in Humboldt. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

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

I so present.

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

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

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Tisdale, Porcupine Plain, and Rose Valley.

And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present. The prayer reads:

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

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Spy Hill, Regina, and Langenburg.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present a petition, reading the prayer:

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.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by people from the Rocanville and surrounding area.

I so present.

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

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

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province regarding very expensive . . . the drug costs and the deductible in our province. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many people in the community of Indian Head.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of residents of southwest Saskatchewan concerned with the state of the hospital in that community and the government's commitment to a new one. The prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to commit its share of funding for a new regional hospital in Swift Current.

The petitioners today, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Hazlet, and Vanguard, and the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here for people opposed to possible reductions to services to Davidson and Craik health centres.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Craik, Medicine Hat, and Davidson.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding the boundaries of the new regional health authority. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure the best possible health coverage for the communities of Govan, Duval, Strasbourg, and Bulyea by placing those communities in the Regina regional health authority as opposed to the Saskatoon regional health authority.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Bulyea and Strasbourg.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nation representatives to bring 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 the centres of Meadow Lake, Zenon Park, Bjorkdale, and Brampton, Ontario.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 7, 11, 23, 59, 132, 165, and no. 169.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my

pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, 19 grade 7 students from the M.J. Coldwell School in my constituency, and they are seated in your west gallery.

And they are accompanied here today by their teacher, Cheryl Mantei, and chaperones Bert Muench and Glenn Mantei.

And I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, of meeting with this group a little earlier for a photo and a brief visit, and they're now going to take in a part of question period and then have a tour of the Legislative Assembly.

So I'd ask all the members to offer this wonderful school group a real warm welcome.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a very special guest in the east gallery — a long-time friend of mine, Mr. Bob Stephan.

Bob and I were fighter pilots together, and Bob is a former commanding officer and team leader of the Snowbirds. And he's now an Air Canada pilot on a short stayover here in Regina.

So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Bob to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, an important person in the life and work of Regina Wascana Plains, my constituency assistant, Tammy Watt, who is accompanied today by a student willing to do work in the constituency during the summer months.

And I believe Carly is still young enough not to be too embarrassed about me telling you that she celebrated a birthday this week as well.

I would ask all members to give a warm welcome to the two young women seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, today in the Speaker's gallery we have three special guests who are representatives of the Legislative Assembly staff. Today there were several staff from the Legislative Assembly who received their Long Service Awards. Most of them are on the job right now and I would like to mention each one of them and introduce the people who are at the gallery.

First of all, recognized today for 10 years in financial services was Leisa Peebles; for 10 years Sergeant-at-Arms, Merv Kealey; 15 years in *Hansard*, Linda Robertson; 20 years in *Hansard*, Sharon Baldwin. Twenty years in broadcast services,

Kerry Bond; 20 years in broadcast services, Ihor Sywanyk; and 20 years in broadcast services, Gary Ward — and they were the original three people who set up the system.

Now in addition to that the people that are with us here today in the Legislative Assembly in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask them to rise when I mention their names, from . . . in financial services for 15 years, Marilyn Borowski; in the Legislative Library for 15 years, Gina Abel; and in the Clerk's office for 20 years, Monique Lovatt.

Now all of these people are ones that help the Assembly function and I would ask all members to convey their congratulations through our three special guests to all of the Long Service recipients today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Legislative Assembly Employee Long Service Awards

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I had the distinct pleasure of attending a special ceremony that was held in this very room. I shall also add that this ceremony, Mr. Speaker, is an annual event here in the legislature, and it's one that the official opposition is always pleased to take part in.

This morning's ceremony recognized the long service of legislative employees who have attained career milestones. This year 10 recipients received awards for their long-time service in their positions here in the legislature.

Receiving awards for 10 years of service are Merv Kealey from the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Leisa Peebles from financial services.

Recognition for 15 years of service went to Gina Abel from the Legislative Library, Marilyn Borowski from financial services, and Linda Robertson from *Hansard*.

Twenty years of service honourees are Sharon Baldwin from *Hansard*; Monique Lovatt from the Clerk's office; Kerry Bond, Ihor Sywanyk, and Gary Ward from broadcast services.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere congratulations to all recipients of Long Service Awards. Your years of service and dedication have ultimately led to many contributions being made, not only in your respective departments but for the betterment of all Saskatchewan as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with you and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, in paying tribute to the members of the Legislative Assembly who are recognized today for their long service to the people of Saskatchewan. I think it's worthwhile pointing out that their value to the Assembly is illustrated by the fact that many of them cannot be in the gallery to be recognized because they're working as we speak. I dare say the legislature functions just fine if one of us is absent for a moment or two, but not them.

They are essential and they deserve the recognition they're given today, and more.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that it takes many hands to make an organization function. We know that without the library, without the Legislative Assembly offices, without *Hansard*, without our security officers, and without our broadcast services and the moguls there, the performances of our duties would be infinitely more difficult.

At the risk of singling out one set of employees, I think we should all recognize and perhaps marvel at the fact that Gary, Ihor, and Kerry have worked together for 20 years in that little, dark, claustrophobic camera room and making sure that we all look movie perfect — or maybe near movie perfect, Mr. Speaker — and more to the point never publicizing those rare occasions when we flub our lines or miss our cues. That, Mr. Speaker, is fortitude and I am in awe of them.

It was a pleasure for me to work closely with them as Speaker, Mr. Speaker, as you will know, and on behalf of the coalition members I want to say thank you to the Long Service recipients and all Legislative Assembly employees for their assistance in our exercise of parliamentary democracy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Special Anniversaries

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a day for anniversaries today. I'm pleased to rise in this Assembly today to ask all members of the House to join with me in recognizing two very special anniversaries.

The first anniversary is a very important one in that it recognizes our colleague from the constituency of Battleford-Cut Knife. He was diagnosed with leukemia just over a year ago and we on this side of the House are extremely thankful that he is with us today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — During the past year the member underwent two gruelling and very exhausting rounds of chemotherapy to combat his leukemia. He lost considerable weight and at least one of us picked it up, Mr. Speaker. But although, through it all he continued to do his duty as an elected official of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we can't imagine anything more devastating than a serious personal illness that would cause an individual to let some work-related things fall by the wayside. But the member's duties did not suffer. We applaud him for his dedication and his sheer determination.

The other anniversary, Mr. Speaker, is one that the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Battleford-Cut Knife was extremely proud to have been a part of. Even as he faced this most personal challenge he was determined to leave his mark.

On June 26 . . . Mr. Speaker, today, June 26, marks the one-year anniversary that the official opposition defeated the government

in a 26 to 22 vote on the Economic Development . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, that vote is a sign of things to come as we are confident our next defeat of the government will be at the general election. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Expansion of Digital Cellular Service

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the title of this member's statement is: previously unserved areas to receive digital cellular service.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel Mobility announced the expansion of digital cellular service to the areas of Lestock, Punnichy, Kelliher, Norquay, Debden, Beechy, Canwood, Montmartre, Central Butte, Blaine Lake, and Elbow within the past year. Mr. Speaker, residents and business owners in these areas will soon have the powerful wireless advantage of digital cellular service in their communities.

SaskTel Mobility continues to expand high quality digital cellular service in Saskatchewan's rural communities where its competitors choose to boldly not go. And we hear daily, Mr. Speaker, members of the opposition presenting petitions asking for expansion of this service which competitors won't get into.

Up to \$15 million will be invested this year by SaskTel Mobility in bringing digital cellular service to more Saskatchewan communities. In addition, by next year, our digital cellular service will completely overlay today's analog cellular network with more than 90 per cent of Saskatchewan population will have access to digital cellular service.

Mr. Speaker, there's several advantages of digital cellular service over analog but there are probably too many to mention in the time that I have left. With digital cellular service, SaskTel Mobility offers mobile office solutions allowing customers to access all sorts of good information.

This is good news for Saskatchewan and, in particular, more good news for rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Lucy McRitchie Celebrates 100th Birthday

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, June 29, friends and family of Mrs. Lucy McRitchie will be joining together in celebration of her 100th birthday.

On May 23, 1902, Lucy Campbell was born in Iowa. Twelve years later, she moved with her parents to Canada where they settled in Rouleau, Sask. In 1925, she was married to Stanley McRitchie in Rosetown. In 1929, they moved to Blue Spruce where they farmed there up until 1946 when they moved to Nipawin. Mr. and Mrs. McRitchie had four children.

Mrs. McRitchie now resides at Pioneer House in Nipawin and she maintains an extremely busy life, Mr. Speaker. She is active in the church, enjoys playing cards, and is involved in many other activities.

One other thing that might keep her a little busy, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that she has 11 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, and 1 great, great-grandson.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Mrs. McRitchie is at home watching right now, and because I won't be able to be there on Saturday, I would like to say Happy Birthday, Mrs. McRitchie. I would ask all members to join me in congratulating Mrs. Lucy McRitchie in celebrating her 100th birthday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Attractions Canada Awards

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a line from that movie that says if you build it, they will come. Well that certainly applies to tourism in Saskatchewan which is, as we know, one of the fastest growing industries in our province. It is growing, Mr. Speaker, because the people involved in that industry are working to create and improve the kinds of attractions that bring tourists, and their work is being recognized nationally.

Attractions Canada is a national information program that's designed to heighten Canadians' interests in their own country by highlighting Canada's many attractions of cultural and educational value.

This year Saskatchewan has finalists in each of the five categories at the Attractions Canada competition which was recently held in Edmonton. Five more reasons for all of us to take in more of our province this summer, Mr. Speaker.

The attractions are: the Allen Sapp Gallery, the Gonor Collection in North Battleford; the Bredenburg Lights which won first prize in the Exceptional Community Involvement Category and Programs; our own Saskatchewan Museum with Megamunch and mega more; the Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site; and last but not least for where the Premier in the past has been known to park his bus in the summer, Buffalo Pound Provincial Park, one of our many beautiful provincial parks.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, five more reasons for us to hit the road and check out our wonderful province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pamela Wallin Named as Consul General in New York

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to congratulate Pamela Wallin who was raised in Wadena in my constituency. Pam has been given the honour in becoming Canada's consul general in New York City.

Pamela has always given her family and her rural upbringing credit for her success in life, from being the best known and most respected journalist in Canada to being a business owner

and an author.

She's interviewed prime ministers and presidents and never backed down when tough questions need to be asked. She speaks often of her love for her family and her community. But, Mr. Speaker, the affection is returned.

The town of Wadena named a street after her, and just a couple of years ago they put on a Pamela Wallin roast, the best kept secret in Canada. The local paper did updates and advertising for weeks before the event. But in order to keep Pam in the dark, the editor printed a special edition that only went to her and that deleted any information about the event. The town managed to shock Canada's best known interviewer.

Pam underwent surgery for cancer last year and is fully recovered. Her positive attitude will continue to make Pamela Wallin an important part of Canada's success.

Good luck to you, Pam, in your new job. We know you'll continue to make Wadena and Saskatchewan and Canada very proud.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Plans for Economic Growth

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, its very well known that the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow Saskatchewan and that the NDP (New Democratic Party) . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — And that the NDP has a plan to shrink Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's plan to shrink Saskatchewan is working.

In the first quarter of this year, we suffered a population loss of over 1,800 people and this was the . . .

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the first quarter of this year, Saskatchewan's population dropped by over 1,800 people. That's the 14th consecutive quarter that Saskatchewan has seen a population loss. Mr. Speaker, all of it under an NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP continuing to drive people out of this province? Why doesn't the NDP have a plan to grow Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The Leader of the Opposition seems to assume that if he says he has a plan, that he has a plan. Well he took his plan to the people of Saskatchewan and we know the turnout at the meetings that the people were invited to, to review the plan — four, six, zero, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, what is important now that we've I think reached

the end of the session . . . now that we've come to the conclusion of this session it's important not to talk so much about future plans, but let's just look at what we've been able to accomplish as a government in this session alone.

I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, you're going to give me enough time to review this, but I'll start. In this session the development of an ethanol policy that will lead the province . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, a leading ethanol policy. We've created in Saskatchewan now the generation of electricity from wind — first time in the history of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in the month of May we saw 11,000 new jobs in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about a plan for rebuilding this province? In this budget year alone 700 kilometres — 700 kilometres — of paving and reconstruction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, here's a plan. In this session alone \$1.2 billion for education and \$100 million for educational capital for the future. That's a plan in progress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day the NDP and our Premier mistakenly tells people what a great job they're doing. Mr. Speaker, yes mistakenly telling people that they're doing a great job.

Mr. Speaker, if they were right, if the Premier was right, why are so many people leaving this province? No matter how you look at it the NDP are failing and we see it every quarter. Mr. Speaker, in the last year Saskatchewan's population dropped by 6,000 people. In the last three years our population has decreased by 15,000 precious Saskatchewan people that have left our province.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's policies are not working. Saskatchewan's population continues to drop. What is their plan to stem the tide?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, now that we're coming to the end of the session, I think it's important that we look at — we look — at exactly what has been accomplished in this session. The Leader of the Opposition asked me the question, I'm very happy to respond.

In this session another balanced budget — another balanced budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, outside of the important work done in the tobacco tax issue, no general tax increases in this budget — unlike Alberta, British Columbia and other provinces. Continued reduction in personal income taxes in this . . . respect to this budget. And, Mr. Speaker, Moody's investment house of New York City takes a look at this budget, takes a look at the work and the plan of this government, what do they say — credit upgrade Aa3 to Aa1, Mr. Speaker.

In this session, Mr. Speaker, \$10 million new dollars for our municipalities and a brand new Cities Act. Mr. Speaker, that's a plan that's in progress. That's a plan that's being implemented.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen in this session consumer protection legislation; we've seen expansion of the Internet services to rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this is not a plan, this is work underway.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that's dropping faster than Saskatchewan's population and that's the NDP's polling numbers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — And you know what, Mr. Speaker, that is good news.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — That's good news because it means, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan is going to start to grow instead of shrink. It means Saskatchewan's going to start to have hope instead of hearing excuses from that government. Mr. Speaker, it means that Saskatchewan people will come back to our province instead of leave our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier cannot get around the numbers. Mr. Speaker, their plan for Saskatchewan is failing because people are leaving this province. Mr. Speaker, the Premier cannot even stand up in the House and recognize why they are failing. Why doesn't the NDP recognize how far short they've come on behalf of serving Saskatchewan people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about polling numbers. I know he probably looked at a sheet of paper which said New Democrats at 66. I think he had it upside down — it was 99.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, there are one or two left — there are one or two left — in this province who will carry the message of doom and gloom wherever they go. The one or two

are mostly gathered right over here.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the Leader of the Opposition on Friday of this week to attend to an event in this city where we are welcoming to Saskatchewan new Saskatchewan residents in large numbers, celebrating the fact that they're here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, some of us will remember a little cartoon that used to appear in the funny papers on the weekend, a little cartoon called "Li'l Abner" — "Li'l Abner."

Now there was a fellow, Mr. Speaker, Li'l Abner, a little fellow that wandered around, had a black cloud over his head all the time — Joe Btfsplk. Joe Btfsplk. The only Joe Btfsplk I meet in Saskatchewan is seated right across the way, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel's Investment in Cable Television

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we raised a concern about this NDP government's investment — going to be a \$65 million investment in cable television. And by the admission of the Crown officials, this is a very, very dangerous and risky investment that they're making on behalf of taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, the *Leader-Post* and *The StarPhoenix* reported Mr. Ching, the CEO (chief executive officer) of SaskTel, as saying that he believes the multimedia investment will be popular and eventually — eventually — generate a profit.

My question to the minister responsible for SaskTel is this: when does the NDP expect this venture to be profitable? What is their target date for this investment to be profitable?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to answer on behalf of the government members, and I have a question for the member from Swift Current. When is he going to get — when is he going to get — on the same song sheet as the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party?

Mr. Speaker, this guy here says, the Swift Current fellow says, you shouldn't do investments outside of the province; you should keep to your core business.

And I want to quote from the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party on John Gormley's show this morning:

These Crowns want to grow and they're restricted by the status quo.

He wants to release the shackles so they could expand beyond the boundaries of this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you've got the leader from Swift Current talking one story and the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party talking another story, Mr. Speaker.

What we're doing is clear. Our policy is clear. We're going to allow these Crown corporations to grow so they can bring profits home to Saskatchewan, so that we can keep low rates in insurance and in telephones and in power. We're going to have these corporations as healthy entities in spite of everything they say on the other side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Industry is answering questions on this issue, and it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, because he sits on the board of the Crown Investments Corporation. And what he just . . . is stood in this Assembly and failed to answer a basic question. Before he approved \$65 million of taxpayers' money being sent on cable TV, as a member of this board, it's his duty to know what the target date would be for this particular venture to be profitable. That's what he should stand up and say.

And, Mr. Speaker, though it shouldn't surprise us that he doesn't know the answer, this is the first House Leader in the history of House leaders that can't count to 27, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So I'll give him another chance. He sits on the board of Crown Investments Corporation. Before you . . . Before he approved the expenditure of \$65 million taxpayer dollars on what they say is a risky venture, what target date for profitability did he get from SaskTel officials?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member from Swift Current, I do sit on the Crown Investments Corporation Board, and I want to tell that member that I'm proud to serve on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible) . . . the finest economic development . . . (inaudible) . . . that this province has seen in the last 60 years.

The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party this morning on Gormley's show said, they've done a great job. You know what they've done? They've provided telephone service and power and cheap insurance, that's what he said.

This guy gets up and says they're money losers, they're no good, they're a millstone around the people of Saskatchewan's neck.

Mr. Speaker, one guy in Swift Current gets it right, one guy in Swift Current gets it right and I'm going to quote from the Swift Current *Booster*, the southern . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member has 15 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I must correct myself. I was so excited I said this morning, but actually it was March 13. So I missed . . . But the facts remain, Mr. Speaker.

But that member, that member's got to know what people are saying about his leadership — *The Southwest Booster*:

. . . what I see is an intellectual vacuum at the head of the (Saskatchewan) Party and a bunch of headless horsemen . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it shouldn't surprise us that the only House Leader in the history of House leaders who couldn't count to 27, who lost the vote on his own budget, could get March 13 and today mixed up, Mr. Speaker. March 13 and today — very, very close dates, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue underlying this issue of their investment in cable television — and he does sit on the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) board; he will have been privy to the decision to spend this much taxpayers' money investing in this very risky venture.

The other issue, the other issue is that SaskTel already owns, already owns over 1 million shares of Persona, a cable company already operating in the province of Saskatchewan.

So the question to the minister, to the government, to the NDP, is this: when this cable TV system is finally unveiled by SaskTel, when it's rolled out and when it is competing with other private cable companies, are they going to sell their investment in Persona, sell their \$15 million investment? Or will the NDP compete against themselves, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Saskatchewan Party are having a difficult time to listen to anything but themselves. But if they would just give me a minute what I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that all of the detail that comes before Crown Corporations, that member has every right to ask as a member of the Crown Corporations Committee. And they will give him, sir, all of the detail he requires.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, people of Saskatchewan, though, do understand that there are differences of opinion within the Saskatchewan Party as it relates to the operations of the Crown and as it relates to other issues that come before this House.

Mr. Speaker, some of them support the development of ethanol and some of them don't. Mr. Speaker, some of them support the initiatives we're doing as it relates to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and the choice for insurance and some of them don't, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of them want to see these Crowns grow and some of them don't.

And I just want to give you one final quote from the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party and he says, SaskTel, SaskPower are not structured in a way that they will grow well outside of Saskatchewan. So he wants to grow them outside of Saskatchewan. The member from Swift Current doesn't want to. Mr. Speaker, they should get it together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's what Don Ching also told reporters about this investment yesterday. He said it's very dangerous and a very risky investment on the part of taxpayers. And he said it's conceivable that SaskTel could, quote "stub its toe" on the \$64 million deal; that this was very dangerous and a very risky investment.

Mr. Speaker, when the people of Saskatchewan hear that this government is not only going to be competing against other cable businesses and other cable co-ops, and they've spent 64 . . . will spend \$64 million on a risky scheme; and then hear the CEO of SaskTel say well it's conceivable that we'll come back with nothing, we'll have blown the money, Mr. Speaker, we'll have stubbed our toe; I could tell that party opposite that the people of Saskatchewan are looking forward to the day when they will stub their toe booting them out of office, Mr. Speaker. It will be much more pleasurable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The question to the minister is this. The question to the minister is this. The government already owned \$15 million worth of a cable company. He sits on the board of CIC. They already owned \$15 million of a cable company, why in the world are they going to compete with themselves?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take an opportunity to tell that member what people around Saskatchewan are saying about him and about his party. And I want to quote from *The Southwest Booster*, June 15, 2002.

And it starts by saying: "Brad, thanks for biting," and I quote. And then it goes on to say, and this is the own person, guy's opinion. He says:

It may be just me, but what I see is an intellectual vacuum at the head of the (Saskatchewan) Party and a bunch of headless horsemen who will be slashing at anything they can find.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what they are doing. This one slashes at investments that SaskTel and other Crowns make. And this guy said it's just fine, the leader of the Saskatchewan Party said. And I want to quote what he said again on the open line show:

These Crowns want to grow and they're restricted by the status quo. And he's going to release the shackles so they can expand beyond the boundaries of this province.

Mr. Speaker, they should sit down, have a caucus meeting, decide what their policy is. Their plan to grow this province is to be on both sides of every issue until they're defeated in the next election again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it took the minister, it took the minister till the fourth question, but he's finally getting a little grumpy. We can understand why he's grumpy, Mr. Speaker. Consider their record this session.

There was the fudge-it budget, there was the attack on seniors that they had to backtrack on, they managed to mess up the development of the ethanol industry, there was the privacy scandal, the surveillance scandal, one of their ministers had to apologize, another they had to fire, Mr. Speaker. No wonder the House Leader's grumpy, he's had the worst session in history, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — But that doesn't excuse, it doesn't . . . Mr. Speaker, it doesn't excuse the fact that he needs to answer this question. The government owns \$15 million of an existing cable company in Saskatchewan. They're spending another 65 million taxpayer dollars to try to get into the cable business through phone lines.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: are they going to sell their interests in Persona when this thing's rolled out, this cable TV project, or is the NDP going to compete against themselves?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the House Leader for the government is happy. I want to tell you why. I want to tell you why. Because in this session, Mr. Speaker, we were able to introduce and pass ethanol legislation, the first of its kind in North America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And we were able to introduce, supported by the cities, The Cities Act, and we're going to have that as law. We were able to introduce amendments to the farm land securities Act, and we're going to have that as law. We were able to introduce a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to have that as law.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well, I want to say that we were able to define policy from a government perspective, something which they couldn't. And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, all I want to say to that member, to the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, that all they're going to get for sitting on the fence on these issues is slivers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dismissal of Health Department Employee

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. It is being reported today that an employee of the Department of Health has been fired for violating security policies of the department. This employee who is also a landlord reportedly accessed Department of Health databases to look up personal information on a former tenant.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this Assembly how and when this department breach of policy was discovered, and what process was there followed to investigate the situation, and when the department terminated this employee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in the Health department security is of top priority. It always has been and it always will be. Any employees who come to work in that department are very clearly advised when they start that there are some rules around the Health department that are very, very stringent and that if there are breaches of those rules then they will no longer have a job.

And so that's what's happened in this particular situation. This situation arose a number of weeks ago. It, basically the employee was suspended within days of knowledge of the situation. It was investigated and she ended up being relieved of her job two days ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the NDP said in this particular case no personal health information of this individual was accessed by the employee. However this does raise the larger question of the overall security of the personal health information of Saskatchewan people. The NDP government is well into the process, in fact tens of millions of dollars into the process, of establishing a provincial health information network with SHIN (Saskatchewan Health Information Network).

This network will contain all of the personal health information of every Saskatchewan resident and this network will allow the sharing of this information. Yet to this date, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has not proclaimed the privacy Act they developed to ensure the proper use of SHIN and protection of the health information that it contains.

Mr. Speaker, why has this government not proclaimed the health privacy information legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in the Health department, there are a number of databases but none of them have the kind of personal health information that the member is talking about because within the kind of system that we've got there's database security related to the various different pieces of that. Now what we have been working at very carefully together with all of the jurisdictions in Canada including the federal government is to set out the kinds of priorities, the kinds of databases, and how those will be protected.

I'm very proud to say that we in Saskatchewan are the leaders as it relates to health protection of information and that one of our staff chairs with the federal government the initiative around the whole Health Infoway to make sure that we do have a system that is appropriate before we actually collaborate the information.

We're going to continue to work that way, Mr. Speaker, because we want to be very careful and be very concerned about people's health information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Department of Health employee breached security policies, was caught, and dealt with appropriately. However other government employees are alleged to have shared confidential information with people outside of their department and they're at home with pay. The only difference between this Health employee and others appears to be an RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) investigation.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of who has access to personal information of Saskatchewan people that is kept by the government is very much a topic of much debate in this province. Yet we still have no answers from the NDP as to how secure all of the government databases really are and what tracking systems are in place to monitor how, when, and by whom personal information is accessed and used.

Today we hear of yet another breach of security, Mr. Speaker. It's starting to become a very alarming, repetitious problem.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the NDP investigate and release the appropriate use of databases in their government to make sure that these abuses are stopped?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, in the middle of all this alarmist behaviour, I would like to point out that we're talking about 8 employees out of 15,000 and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . As is appropriate . . .

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I'll just remind the members — because it's been a while since I answered this question — that employees have an employee oath of office. There are conflict of interest guidelines. There is an acceptable use policy for information technology. And there's a Freedom Of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

This issue was not about employees doing what they're supposed to do; it was about individuals doing what they're not supposed to do. And as was appropriate, when the information was brought to light, action was taken based on facts — not on supposition and fearmongering and kangaroo courts. And that's the way we do things properly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 387, 388, 390, 391, and 392.

The Speaker: — Answers to questions 387, 388, 390, and 391, 392 have been tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll convert for debates returnable.

The Speaker: — Question 389 converted to motions for debate returnable.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 79 — The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, as you're aware the Standing Committee on Agriculture has recently provided this Assembly with a report recommending amendments to the farm ownership provisions of The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act.

This government is strongly of the view that our farmers and our farm land are without doubt among the most important resources we have in the province. For this reason, changes to farm ownership legislation must be well considered and made with care so that we can grow our rural economy and ensure the continued vitality and security of our rural communities.

With this Bill, based largely on the recommendations of the standing committee, the following persons were to have no ownership restrictions respecting ownership of farm land: first, individuals who reside anywhere in Canada for at least 183 days in the year; secondly, Canadian citizens, regardless of where they reside; thirdly, agricultural corporations, corporations that are engaged in farming and are majority owned by Canadian resident farmers; and fourthly, Canadian-owned entities, that is corporations and other similar entities with 100 per cent Canadian ownership that are not publicly traded.

Mr. Speaker, this government supports these changes as an important but incremental relaxation of the existing farm ownership restrictions. The Saskatchewan ownership rules will be now more in line with those of Manitoba and Alberta, thereby ensuring our continued competitiveness for new agricultural investment.

By recognizing Canadian residents, Canadian citizens, and Canadian-owned corporations, we're seeking to stimulate the Saskatchewan economy in the manner that it was most supported by the majority of the consultees to the standing committee.

Mr. Speaker, I'd note that this Bill in no way removes existing rights for non-Canadian residents and non-Canadian entities. The rules for non-Canadian owners remain at 10 acres for both individuals and non-Canadian corporate entities.

In addition, the Bill is careful to confirm that existing exemptions previously granted by the Farm Land Security Board are not affected, so that no one will be required to divest property as a result of this Bill. Mr. Speaker, the Farm Land Security Board will continue to have the ability to grant exemptions to any person who's subject to restrictions under this Bill on any such terms and conditions as the Farm Land Security Board considers appropriate. And, Mr. Speaker, the members will know that the Farm Land Security Board is at arm's length from the government.

The Bill also contains housekeeping amendments to remove the northern administration district from the operation of the Act and to address certain procedural issues for the board.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to growing the Saskatchewan farm economy in a responsible manner. It's our view that extending the existing legislation to recognize unrestricted ownership for Canadian residents, Canadian citizens, and 100 per cent Canadian-owned entities is a responsible step in this direction.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to respond to the second reading of Bill No. 79, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act.

This Bill has been really talked about, I think, in the province for many, many years. I believe the legislation that restricted farm ownership came in in about 1974, and ever since that time there have been people talking about how that really has held back, we feel, the growth of the province.

It was perhaps an experiment that you could call . . . say that it started in 1974 and they'd experiment on restricting the people that could own property in this province — farm land property in this province to only people in Saskatchewan. And we look in the year 2002 and see how has that experiment worked, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's failed and it's failed miserably.

You look at the statistics just recently — 14 quarters in a row, the population of this province has dropped. Now I'm not saying by opening up and not having any legislation in this province restricting farm land ownership, it may have turned it all around completely. But it's one of the puzzles that has been missing in this province for decades, Mr. Speaker — for decade after decade — and the last 10 years under this NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it does open it up. It does open up land ownership, but only to a certain extent.

There was a committee struck, a bi-party committee struck to look into the land ownership question. They produced a report. They spent many, many, many hours of work talking to a number of the members, when they would be meeting in the evenings after session and many mornings to get all the presentations put to the committee and then produce the report.

And there was much discussion and debate, I am sure, in that committee. Because as the minister mentioned in his second reading, his second reading, he said that the government strongly agrees with the change in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I know that minister wasn't at the committee hearings and I wasn't at the committee hearings. But after talking to a number of our members that were at the committee hearings, it is not strong support from this government on this legislation. That government is divided over this legislation and divided deeply, Mr. Speaker. That caucus is divided deeply over this basic issue that we think is a basic element to growth in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly know that a lot of the . . .

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and it does have deep division in the NDP caucus, Mr. Speaker. And I will agree. The members are yelling from their seats saying that there is division in the province. Not everybody's unified on this subject, not at all — not anywhere close. But if you can find a subject that they are 100 per cent unified, I'd like to know it. It takes leadership from a government that pulls this province along, and that's what we haven't seen from this government for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation has been needed in this province for many years. Mr. Speaker, this legislation was put in place as a private member's Bill that could have been introduced over the last five or six years, that would have moved this province forward. But as a consequence, Mr. Speaker, the government failed to move on the private member's Bill put forward by the opposition. They failed to move on that and finally have raised the courage to put together a all-party committee to look into the issue. And as a result we see this legislation.

(14:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit on how does this legislation mirror what was decided on, on the all-party committee. Does it mirror what the all-party committee had heard from the number of delegations that came in? Does it mirror any of the recommendations put forward by that committee? Does this legislation mirror all the recommendations put forward, voted on by the committee, voted on by a committee with a majority vote suggesting changes that needed to be put in this legislation, Mr. Speaker?

And some of those legislative changes that were needed, that were put forward by this all-party committee, are not seen in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good first step, but, Mr. Speaker, it's a good first step on about a 100-yard dash. It falls far short, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we think . . . and it was voted on, again, by a committee that was . . . had majority of government members. I think that's very important for people to realize, that the majority of this committee was made up of government members.

So what happens is we go through this committee and they put forward recommendations, voted on in the committee by a majority. Now if the government was so against the recommendations, wouldn't have they had their members lined up and voted against it? But that's not what happened. Mr. Speaker, the recommendations were passed in the committee and it came to this legislation, and where are the recommendations in the legislation? Nowhere to be found.

Mr. Speaker, now I will talk a little bit about what this Bill does. It opens up the ownership for Canadian citizens. You know, to me I guess when I think of that, it almost boggles my mind to think that we've gone over the last 18 years in this province where we have — 28 years in this province — where we haven't allowed people from out of this . . . out of Saskatchewan, Canadian residents, the people from out of this province to come and invest in our province.

I just find that absolutely amazing. When you think of the number of people that we've exported from this province, but by golly, I don't want them to come back and invest in our province — no way. You know we have built walls around this province.

Many, many times we hear from the other side, well it's . . . you know there's an attitude problem in our province. Do you know what develops attitude problems? It's legislation that was put in place in 1974 that have built walls around a province that have kept people out.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it seems to work like a one-way valve — a one-way check valve. People can go out but we sure don't want them investing back into our province, Mr. Speaker. And that's what that legislation has done.

So it seems almost bizarre to me that we had legislation in this province that wouldn't allow Canadian citizens to invest in our province, Mr. Speaker. And I would applaud the government that they're certainly moving in that direction.

Another . . . they allow that certain corporations to invest in property, but corporations that are not publicly traded. In other words, major corporations that are not publicly traded can no longer . . . cannot — couldn't before — but cannot invest in our province and buy property.

When you look at our neighbouring provinces, Alberta and Manitoba, they have . . . their legislation allows that to take place. They have legislation that allows publicly traded corporations to buy land in our province . . . in their province. But not in this province.

And the member is saying, quite correctly, farm land, agriculture land. You bet it's agriculture land, Mr. Speaker.

One of the recommendations put forward by the committee though was to open it up to foreign investment, to let foreign investment come in and purchase land, purchase lands greater than 10 acres which is currently in place. If a foreign investor came into the province currently and into the future, wants to invest in our province, the most that they can buy is 10 acres of land, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at a number of intensive livestock operations, when you look at a number of agribusiness ventures that are . . . we're feeling need to happen in this province, they are unable to come into this province if their project is going to need more than 10 acres of land, unless they somehow get around the loopholes or through the loopholes that this government has put in place.

What the recommendation, what the farm land ownership recommendation voted on by the committee, voted on by the majority of members of this committee, have said that we should open it up to 320 acres. We should open it up to 320 acres.

And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we don't see that in the legislation. There is no big corporate farm that's going to invest in Saskatchewan for 320 acres. They're not going to compete against me or any other farmer in our province to take over the province for 320 acres.

But what it does do is open it up if they want to come in and develop an intensive livestock, whatever it may be that needs more than 10 acres. And right now we've shut the door on that unless they go through the farm land ownership which is . . . review committee which is still going to be in place. But what it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Farm Land Security Board, I'm corrected, and thank you. Farm Land Security Board, which is still in place.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, we have heard many, many times over and over again — and I know the government has heard this same thing — is the more roadblocks you put in the way, the more hurdles that people have to jump over, the more stones you throw in the crick, the sooner it's going to be blocked up.

And that's exactly what is happening with this. We had a chance to open it up, to let money flow, to let capital flow, but unfortunately the government didn't take that step and didn't move on to allow for foreign investment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill does certainly correct some miscalculations of the '70s, when we felt that we could close the borders to everything in this province, that we could keep everybody out of this province and protect ourselves from the big, bad world out there. And, Mr. Speaker, that has failed horribly in this province.

We have talked in this House over the last three weeks or four weeks about the agriculture issue, about the trade issue, about farm safety net issue, about the ag framework that is being developed between this government and other provincial governments, and the federal government, Mr. Speaker. We have talked on that over and over and over again. This piece of legislation doesn't change all that but it does help change an attitude. It help puts together the pieces of the puzzle that have been so sorely lacking under this NDP government and in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, opening it up to Canadian citizens . . . and I know I've had people on both sides of the issue come and talk to me, many of them — many farmers in the area that I farm in, neighbours will talk about it. And some are in favour and some are not.

But, Mr. Speaker, generally — generally speaking — the people that are not in favour are concerned that it may drive the price up. It may drive the price of farm land up which, you know, when you think about it, is that so terrible? Is the land, agriculture land in our province . . . if the price is driven up because of competition for investment, is that so terrible?

Or do we continue to build walls around our province, continue to limit the amount of capital coming into our province, and continue to protect ourselves from the world outside — is that the option? Is that the better option? And frankly I don't think so. Mr. Speaker.

By opening it up and allowing people to invest . . . And yes, if I want to buy a half section that I've had my eye on right next to me — the north half of section 22, I'd sure love to buy that half — and if I have to compete against somebody coming in, so be it. But also what that does, Mr. Speaker, is it makes the other three and a half or four quarters or sections, whatever it might be, it increases the value of those too.

If the quarter or the half that I'm wanting to buy right next to me all of a sudden shoots up in price because of foreign investment, it also increases the price of my land too. All of a sudden my asset value, my net worth, is increased accordingly.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's such a bad, bad solution, bad consequence through legislation like this, Mr. Speaker. I know many people that have asked me — many, many people — and I think you could talk to . . . I know of members on the other side that are no longer there any more that have been certainly buying a lot of farm land and friends of theirs buying a lot of farm land. Certainly a fellow that has been mentioned in this House many, many times, owns a consulting company that's pretty close to the government, has bought a number of sections right in our area. And I mean we all wonder why he'd be buying that land. It's not bad farm land, but this . . . The other issue is, does he see something that we didn't? Was he buying land knowing that perhaps the restrictions on farm land ownership would be opened up and increase the value of farm land? And I'm not sure if that's the case; but I tell you, as far as a business move, it was probably a very good move — because I think it will.

Will it drive it up a lot? I don't think it's going to drive farm land up a lot. But will it help? Will it take down the walls that we have put up around our province for the last 20 or 30 or 40 years? You bet. It's going to take down some of the walls, and I think it will help dispel some of the misconceptions, some of the poor attitudes, that people have of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, certainly we hear over and over again a number of people in our province talking about we have to — as the member from Athabasca I think mentioned — we have to up our attitude, Mr. Speaker. And I heard him mention that many, many times in the last session. He hasn't said it quite so many times this session. But certainly we need to increase our attitude and the way we feel about ourselves.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a small piece, but this is one of the pieces of the puzzle that will help people look at our province and not say boy, they're backwards there. You know, we have

enough issues in this province that people can look at and say gee, that's kind of a backwards way of thinking in the year 2002.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to say that this is one piece of legislation that's changing, that may help people look at our province a little more positively and say, you know what? They aren't trying to build walls. They're not trying to keep everybody out so that they can have this sort of euphoria amongst themselves, which has never really happened.

And, Mr. Speaker, after the Leader of the Opposition mentioned today, 14 quarters of population decline. Unless we start willing . . . unless we start . . . Unless we're willing to change — and this is a small piece of it — unless we're willing to change, we're going to continue to get what we've always got.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will move to adjourn Bill No. 79, The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act. Until we can consult a little bit further, I'd move to adjourn this Bill right now.

Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 72

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 72 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an important Bill to the workers of Saskatchewan because it affects them during their working days, Mr. Speaker, and it may very well affect a good number of them when they're no longer able to work, Mr. Speaker. Because Workers' Compensation Board Act is about protecting workers, Mr. Speaker. It's about providing workers that are injured on the job with some opportunities to carry on with a reasonable lifestyle after their injury, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) provides decent protection if you're injured on the job for a temporary measure. So if you break your leg, there'll be some compensation for you, there'll be some rehabilitation, Mr. Speaker. And at some point in time you will return to your place of employment.

All of this, Mr. Speaker, is paid for, not by the employees, not by the government, Mr. Speaker, but rather it's paid entirely by the employers of this province, by the businesses of this province, Mr. Speaker. They have agreed to pay for this insurance, Mr. Speaker, in return for which they are not in a position then to be sued by the employees.

So there's benefit, Mr. Speaker, on both sides. There's benefit to the employees in providing protection to those employees.

There's benefit to the employer, that he knows what his costs are going to be and he is not going to be hit all of a sudden, because of a catastrophic accident, with a huge settlement, Mr. Speaker.

But when you look at the Bill and you look at the operations of WCB, we have seen quite a number of problems, Mr. Speaker, over the last few years. We have seen that the employees feel that they're not being treated properly; that they're being pushed, Mr. Speaker, pushed through their rehabilitation programs, put into positions that may in their opinions be dangerous to their health or, Mr. Speaker, put into positions where the treatment regime forced on them is not necessarily appropriate to their condition, Mr. Speaker.

As you well know, my son was in Wascana Rehab for a year, Mr. Speaker. And that is also the location where a lot of the rehabilitation for WCB clients takes place. And so my wife, since she spent a lot of time there, had lots of opportunity to talk with and talk about the WCB claims that various individuals had and to hear their concerns and the problems that they were facing.

(14:45)

I remember her talking about one particular situation where a lady, Mr. Speaker, had been injured on the job, was taking rehabilitation for this — not a catastrophic injury but still a major injury, Mr. Speaker — and that she was going to have to take the rehabilitation regime for six months to a year. In that time period she became pregnant, Mr. Speaker, but there was no concern given to that fact and her regime was . . . she was forced to carry on with the regime that she had been given even though, Mr. Speaker, at that time she was five months pregnant.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has to be some opportunity within WCB to make some corrective judgments — to change the regimes that the employees, Mr. Speaker, are placed under when it comes to their rehabilitation. There has to be consideration and taking into account the physical condition they're in, the stresses that it's placing them under, Mr. Speaker. And that doesn't seem to happen.

Employees, Mr. Speaker, that are injured on the job not only go to the local doctor — whomever that might be at the location where the injury occurred, as an emergency service — but they also then consult with their own family physicians and consequently, depending on the injury, Mr. Speaker, perhaps with specialists. Then it gets transferred over to WCB, Mr. Speaker. But there seems to be a disconnect between the medical staff with WCB and the client's own medical professionals — their family doctor, their specialist, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess maybe it breaks down to where is the concern. The family physician and the specialists connected on that end are interested in that particular client. WCB though has two roles to play, Mr. Speaker — look after the client, ensure their rehabilitation, and also ensure the minimum costs for the corporation. And it seems, Mr. Speaker, in talking with a number of clients with WCB, that that concern has swung over to the financial side rather than the concern for the client, Mr. Speaker, in too many cases.

And so you run into a problem that there's inappropriate treatments being forced onto WCB clients which may actually be injuring them physically because of the stress and the workload that they're placed under. WCB has what they call a program of working yourself into condition. And so they put you under a load in the sense of make you exercise a good deal so that you're forcing those muscles and those bones, Mr. Speaker. And in some cases they're forcing them too much and they actually, the patients are regressing rather than progressing, Mr. Speaker.

And yet there seems to be no place for that employee to appeal those kind of decisions. How do you get this situation corrected, Mr. Speaker, when the treatment being forced on you by the doctors, who have supervision over you, don't agree that it's actually harming you?

And if you complain, Mr. Speaker, if you say no, I am not going to do this because it's harmful to me, now all of a sudden you become a difficult case, you refuse to follow the treatment orders placed before you by WCB so they cut you off of the program.

Very, very similar, Mr. Speaker, to what happens with SGI clients under the no-fault insurance program. Because they are similar programs. SGI no-fault took their model, Mr. Speaker, from WCB and the way they operated. And there seems to be a disconnect between the client and the client's family physician and the corporation's physicians.

And somehow, Mr. Speaker, that needs to be corrected. And I don't see that happening in this Bill, Mr. Speaker. I don't see that happening.

One of the other items that came to my attention having talked to a number of people over at Wascana Rehab, was how the funding is paid out, Mr. Speaker, for people who are WCB claimants. They get 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of their salary up to a maximum.

Now it's not through their own fault that they were injured, Mr. Speaker. So what's the justification for telling an employee that because you're injured on the job you're only worth 90 per cent of what you were when you were fully employed? I've never heard the government come up with a justification for this, as to why that happens. Why because you're injured are you forced to take a 10 per cent reduction in your salary?

Well the ex-minister is saying something but I didn't quite understand what he said . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, only if you're a farmer, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are farmers who are part of WCB and pay their dues and their premiums as they are supposed to pay them. But their employees also, Mr. Speaker, are deducted by 10 per cent if they're injured.

And it doesn't matter whether you're a farmer, whether you're a truck driver, whether you're a bag person at Safeway, or a government employee, you're all going to lose 10 per cent of your salary if you're injured in the workplace. And yet there's no justification for that, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the salary as it's paid out.

The government pays salary in compensation, Mr. Speaker, at the 90 per cent, and then they deduct from it what they consider to be the normal and natural deductions. They deduct EI (Employment Insurance) premiums; they deduct Canada Pension Plan premiums; they deduct income taxes, Mr. Speaker, and then they pay the net to the employee.

Now you would say well that . . . You would normally say that's fair. That's what that employee would have been earning had they still been on the job. So that's paid to the employee. And the employees in most cases believe that to be a fair situation, except perhaps the 10 per cent.

But then . . . So then, Mr. Speaker, what happens is that employee recovers. So they may have been off for six months; they may have been off for a year; they may have been off for two years. Now they recover and they want to go back into the workplace. Well maybe their job is still there, maybe the company they worked for is still operating and therefore they're able to go back to work. Maybe it isn't. In Saskatchewan there's a good chance that they've moved to Alberta and it's no longer here, Mr. Speaker.

In that case, Mr. Speaker, that employee should have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to draw Employment Insurance. You know he's been . . . they've been paying into . . . That client's been paying into it, let's say for two years, because it was deducted from their pay, Mr. Speaker, from WCB. As far as the employee is concerned it's been paid. But what happens is, Mr. Speaker, WCB actually never transfers the money from WCB to Employment Insurance or to Canada Pension Plan, or indeed even to the tax department, Mr. Speaker.

So the employee can't get unemployment insurance because the premiums were never paid. The employee has lost those two years of Canada Pension Plan because the money was never paid.

Let's say the employee goes back to school, Mr. Speaker, and now has a tax credit available, an educational tax credit that they could claim against the income tax that was deducted from their paycheque. But, Mr. Speaker, there was no money paid in income taxes. It was deducted from the employee but never paid. And so they have a tax credit, Mr. Speaker, against which they have no income to charge.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are some inequities in WCB. And these very same inequities, Mr. Speaker, take place in SGI, that the employee who has a catastrophic injury and will forever be on either WCB or SGI, it has no impact. But for the employee who will be returning to work, the fact that the EI, CPP (Canada Pension Plan) and taxes were not paid can have a major impact on their life.

So who pays then, when that employee cannot find employment after recovering from their injury? Do they go on welfare then, because the government has taken their EI money and their CPP money and not paid it to those appropriate corporations?

Where do they go for assistance? Does WCB step forward and say, well we'll cover you for an extra X number of months because we didn't pay your unemployment insurance? We deducted it but we didn't pay it to the corporation.

What happens to those employees? Who looks after them? When they've recovered from their injuries and have no opportunity — their employment no longer exists — who looks after those employees? That's some of the questions, Mr. Speaker, that has not . . . that have not yet been answered.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at WCB for the last number of years in this province, you see a corporation that has been not well managed. A corporation, Mr. Speaker, that lost \$69 million. This is an insurance company, Mr. Speaker, that deals with the people of Saskatchewan only. It's not like they're insuring buildings in New York, Mr. Speaker, or ships on the ocean that are sinking. They're simply insuring the people, the workers of Saskatchewan. And yet somehow or another, Mr. Speaker, they managed to lose \$69 million because they didn't do their actuarial work.

Every insurance company, Mr. Speaker, has actuaries in their employment. People who take into account all of the factors available — ages of people, the work they're doing, how dangerous that work is, what are the chances and opportunities for injury in those areas, how long do people live, how long are they going to be in need of WCB protection? All of those items, Mr. Speaker, are calculated in. They calculate in the costs of medicines and the consumer price index, how prices are going to change, up or down, Mr. Speaker.

Every insurance company has actuaries in their employment that calculate these things and then take that calculation and transfer that over to premiums for the people they're insuring. In this case, those premiums go on the employers for the employees that they have hired.

Every place, Mr. Speaker, has an actuary except WCB, Mr. Speaker. Oh well, they consulted with them once a year to see, you know, if things were adding up.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they didn't add up by the tune of \$69 million dollars. That's a large, large oops, Mr. Speaker. But that is an oops that this NDP government is becoming quite regular at doing. They just brush those off, Mr. Speaker. They lose money in Crown corporations all the time and it doesn't bother them. It's routine now. You know, it's like banging your head against the wall, Mr. Speaker — after a while you just get used to it and that's what the NDP government is like.

They're used to losing money, so losing another \$69 million is not a big thing for them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a big thing though for the employers of this province who are going to have to pay the bill to make this up. And it's a big thing for the employees of this province, Mr. Speaker, if these programs do not provide them with the proper services. And they're counting on these, Mr. Speaker, to protect them if they're injured on the job, just as the employer is counting on WCB to protect that business from an employee that is injured on the job.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you have to take a look. Last year, with that loss of \$69 million, who was the management of WCB?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it turns out that WCB's CEO is none other than John Solomon, defeated NDP MP (Member of

Parliament), Mr. Speaker; served one term as a Member of Parliament in Ottawa, and prior to that, served in this House, Mr. Speaker, for I believe two terms, two terms — served for two terms, Mr. Speaker. He served one term as, I believe, as a Member of Parliament and served two terms, I believe, in this House, Mr. Speaker.

(15:00)

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at his service in this House, he was here when Roy Romanow was elected premier in 1991; sat, Mr. Speaker, in the back benches; was the head of the Crown Corporations Committee, Mr. Speaker. And I guess that's what qualified him, Mr. Speaker, to be the CEO of WCB. So, Mr. Speaker, he became used to the idea, I guess, of Crown corporations not having the ability to consistently make a profit and simply transferred that expertise then over to WCB, Mr. Speaker. Since there seems to be no other outstanding criteria that would have made him the CEO, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been in the works for a long time. There has been a need for changes to WCB for about 10 years in this province. And finally the NDP government, Mr. Speaker, did get around to doing something about it. Four years ago they held, they put together a committee to do a review on this. And now four years later we're getting the results of that committee.

And that again is typical of the NDP. They take ages, Mr. Speaker, to look at something and then they bring it to the House and try and drive it through quickly before people can have a chance, Mr. Speaker, to have a look at the Bill and to consider it and to give it the proper consideration that it's due because of the need that the workers and employers of this province have in protecting themselves with WCB, Mr. Speaker.

Well just getting to the next part of it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the items that WCB does provide assistance with and is worthwhile, Mr. Speaker, is provides educational assistance for injured workers. This is very worthwhile. It gives an injured worker, while they're still injured, an opportunity to improve their circumstances.

But it's not done without a cost to the employee, Mr. Speaker. What happens is that the employee is given the opportunity to participate in an educational opportunity such as a year of technical school training or perhaps a year of university in exchange for which, at the end of that time period, Mr. Speaker, they will no longer be a WCB client.

They will have accepted that they have now received their dues and have been rehabilitated and that their training has qualified them, not necessarily to return to the job that they were at before because perhaps the injury they suffered does not allow them to do that, Mr. Speaker, but it allows them to move on to a different kind of employment.

And so that is a very good program, Mr. Speaker.

But when you look at WCB over the last 10 years, over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, you see some serious problems developing. We talked about the \$69 million loss, now where

did that occur, Mr. Speaker? What drove that to happen? Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that drove that to happen was the increase in administration over the last six years — a 48 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, in administration alone.

Now you wonder, Mr. Speaker, are we suffering an epidemic of injured workers in this province that we need so many more people in the system to look after them? Or is there some other reason? Have wages gone up so much in those departments that it means a 48 per cent increase in salaries, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. I don't hear too many people in government service saying that they've got a 48 per cent increase over the last six years, Mr. Speaker.

What's the reason for it? Well perhaps one of the reasons would be that SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) has been raising the costs of their buildings. Shuffling money around, Mr. Speaker, so that it ends up in the government coffers.

We've seen the government drain a number of funds this year to try and balance their books, which they failed at, but they tried, Mr. Speaker. And this is perhaps another one of the other areas where they were bringing people through SPMC and raising the costs of the buildings for that WCB would be charged for and so picking up additional money then for the government.

We see that the staff numbers though have increased dramatically. Now that's one of the areas, Mr. Speaker, that you have to question. Are we having an epidemic of injuries that we need new people looking . . . in WCB to look after them?

A 21 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. What's the reason for that? A 21 per cent increase in the number of employees at WCB. Is it are we hiring a whole bunch more accountants to find out why we lost \$69 million? Are we finally getting around to hiring an actuary to look after the company's interests? I don't think so. Or if it is, this just happened.

But what happened in the previous years that caused a 21 per cent increase in employment in this area? And I would have to suggest, Mr. Speaker, without a corresponding increase in productivity. Because the employees certainly don't seem to be any happier with it, and the employers certainly don't seem to be any happier with it, Mr. Speaker.

One of the problems that we see with WCB, Mr. Speaker, that is driving up the costs is the inability of WCB clients to get timely diagnoses of their injuries. Because, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan each and every person, either because of illness or because of injury, faces a huge waiting list to get into diagnostic services.

You're looking at six to nine months to get in for an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). CT (computerized tomography) scans, Mr. Speaker, are not timely. And so all of this drives up the cost to WCB. It's injurious to the worker because the worker has to suffer with that injury for a long period of time without treatment, and that means that the treatment to recover from the injury is going to take that much longer, Mr. Speaker.

Now I do know that both SGI and WCB were taking some steps to correct that situation. They were transferring their clients,

Mr. Speaker, to Alberta to utilize the MRIs and CT scans available there, paying private medical facilities to look after WCB and SGI clients. So Saskatchewan dollars are going to Alberta to look after the medical conditions of Saskatchewan employees, clients of Saskatchewan's Workers' Compensation Board, because this government can't run a proper health care system, Mr. Speaker.

In fact it amazed me one day last summer at the Riders' game to hear the Edmonton MRI advertising, come to Edmonton for your MRI, suppliers of MRIs to the Saskatchewan Roughriders and SGI. What is the Saskatchewan government doing, Mr. Speaker, when they can't even provide medical service to their own corporations? They can't provide medical service to SGI clients. They can't provide medical service to WCB clients.

Mr. Speaker, that's a telling indictment on this government, that they have to send the clients of Saskatchewan's own WCB out of this province for medical diagnosis. And they talk about a two-tiered health system, Mr. Speaker. Their own corporations are running two-tiered health care, paying for it, with the profits going out of this province, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite have no concern over that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of other issues that need to be debated on this particular Bill. I know that a number of my colleagues want to raise these issues; they have their own personal cases that have come forward to them that they wish to bring forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 57

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 57 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we just finished talking about the WCB Bill, and the automobile accident insurance Bill is quite similar. They both deal with no-fault, Mr. Speaker, in that a person is injured, Mr. Speaker, and then has to deal with the government's system of rehabilitation.

Now this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, is unique. This particular Bill is unique in all of North America, Mr. Speaker. It may very well be unique in the whole world, Mr. Speaker, in that it tries to put two different insurance programs all in the same wrapping, Mr. Speaker — tries and runs them together side by side.

We have, prior to 1995, Mr. Speaker, an automobile insurance policy program in this province that was known as the tort system where the individuals injured had the right to sue those at fault for pain and suffering, for rehabilitation costs, for damages, for all of those kind of things that you would need to carry on your life, Mr. Speaker.

In 1995 the NDP government brought a new piece of legislation to this House stating that we were doing away with the tort system because it was too expensive, Mr. Speaker. The clients who were injured under the tort system were spending too much money on lawyers, Mr. Speaker — that was the government's argument.

In reality, Mr. Speaker, it had very, very little to do with lawyers, and a whole lot to do with transferring the costs of rehabilitation from clients . . . excuse me, from the corporation, from SGI, onto the clients. It was going to save the government \$80 million, or so they claimed, Mr. Speaker. Well at the end of the day it didn't save the corporation any money but clients did suffer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government brought this Bill in on May 28. This is a very large Bill, Mr. Speaker, dealing with two entirely separate concepts of automobile insurance, two entirely different concepts in one Bill, Mr. Speaker. They brought this in on May 28. They brought it up again, Mr. Speaker, for second reading for the very first time when the minister stood in his place to explain what this Bill was about and how it was supposed to work, brought it forward, Mr. Speaker, on June 7.

Now today, Mr. Speaker, on June 26, June 26, we're debating it again. We've had an opportunity now, Mr. Speaker, to debate this about four times. And there's a lot of things in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, that needed to be changed — that needed to be changed in the no-fault side of things.

Mr. Speaker, we had a group in this province called the Coalition Against No-Fault. And they looked at the insurance program that the government had brought in and said, this isn't working for clients; we think we can design a better program. So the government . . . excuse me. So no-fault . . . The Coalition Against No-Fault brought forward their plan, calling it the premier option, which melded together both no-fault and the tort system. And that has happened, Mr. Speaker, across North America.

When Saskatchewan makes this change, if it happens, Mr. Speaker, it will be following a trend that has been set by every North American jurisdiction that went to the no-fault plan; that they would try it for five, six years, and that they would move away from it after that. And that's been the reality of it.

That's not when they walk into this thing. Oh no, it's going to be the best thing since sliced bread. But the reality has been that every jurisdiction that has gone to no-fault has moved away from it shortly thereafter and gone to a melded system of no-fault and tort. Some have gone all the way back to tort, Mr. Speaker. None have kept no-fault the way it was originally implemented. They have all moved away from it.

(15:15)

And what the Coalition Against No-Fault did with their premier option was take a look at the other jurisdictions and what had happened in those locations and saw the melding of the two and made recommendations, put forward a report to recommend to government, and they made their presentations at the government's travelling road show on how they would like to see this done. And they brought forward a melded insurance

policy, Mr. Speaker, taking the best of no-fault and the best of the tort system.

But that's not what this Bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. It's about a choice between going for no-fault and going for tort, but you can't have the best of both. You can have the worst of both, but you can't have the best of both, Mr. Speaker. And that's a problem, Mr. Speaker.

You know, when you look at this, the government is giving us the opportunity in the House to try and learn a little bit about this Bill — very little opportunity, Mr. Speaker. But the question has to be, what opportunity will drivers have to learn about this Bill and make the choices that they need, the information that they need to make the choice: do I take no-fault or do I take tort?

You need a lot of information, Mr. Speaker, to make that decision. The little bit of information that the government provided us in his presentation, went nowhere near providing the information that people need to know.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. Somebody is walking down the street. A car comes up on the curb and hits them. What insurance policy does that pedestrian have? Are they under no-fault and therefore receive no compensation for pain or suffering, no compensation for the loss of their dreams and hopes and aspirations? Or are they under the tort system and have the ability to sue that driver and the driver's insurance company, Mr. Speaker?

What choice does that pedestrian have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Saskatoon Eastview says I'm right in all three choices. You have a choice. Well, you have the choice before the accident, Mr. Speaker, or a choice after the accident?

Because if you're a driver, if you're a driver, you have to choose before the accident. You have to choose when you buy your insurance. When does a passenger, or when does a pedestrian get to make a choice? When does it happen, Mr. Speaker?

Is that the first thing they're going to do when they wheel you into the hospital? Sign here, which one you want. Don't worry about the broken neck; we'll fix that up later; pick your insurance. You know, those are the kind of questions that the minister needs to be able to answer, Mr. Speaker, and has not talked about that at all, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a whole lot of things that need to happen before this Bill can pass. We need a lot of answers on this Bill.

One of the things though that the government has brought forward in this piece of legislation is they've slipped a little extra piece in, Mr. Speaker. It's really nothing to do with automobile accidents. Not at all, Mr. Speaker. Not at all.

You know, this is sort of like an Americanism for the NDP where you slide a whole bunch of little extra pieces in on a Bill that you hope people are going to pass because I want my little piece. Well that's what they've done here, Mr. Speaker.

They've slid a little extra in on this particular Bill.

And it deals with drivers' licences, Mr. Speaker. It's got nothing to do with accidents. It's got nothing to do with automobile accident insurance, Mr. Speaker. It's got to do with acquiring your driver's licence.

So, Mr. Speaker, what the government was proposing to do is if you're a good driver, if you're a good driver long enough, we'll give you a discount. Other jurisdictions do that all the time, Mr. Speaker. If you have a good record, we give you a discount because that's what the actuary figures out. He figures out what percentage . . . what's your chance of having an accident with the following criteria. And if you fall into that criteria where you're not as likely to have an accident, we can charge you a lower rate.

So now SGI is coming out with a variable rate based on various criteria determined by SGI and you're never going to know exactly what the criteria is, but one of them is no accidents, no convictions of driving penalties, Mr. Speaker.

So if you can get away with that for seven years . . .

An Hon. Member: — Speeding's okay.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, one of the MLAs says that speeding is acceptable. I'm not sure how speeding can be acceptable, but it doesn't go against you I gather, Mr. Speaker, on your insurance.

So, Mr. Speaker, they have slid this little piece into this Bill. And they've been running around the province, Mr. Speaker . . . just remember this, Mr. Speaker. They brought this Bill in on May 28. They talked about it first on June 7. This is the 26th. So it's 19 days ago they brought this huge Bill in, Mr. Speaker.

But they slide this little extra piece in and now they say, Mr. Speaker, we have to have this passed by July 1 to implement it, Mr. Speaker. Have to have it by July 1. All of a sudden, as of noon today, Mr. Speaker, they're in a panic because they slipped this little extra piece on to this Bill and now they need to have it passed, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a solution for them. Never let it be said that this opposition does not come forward with good ideas and never let it be said, Mr. Speaker, that we're not willing to co-operate with the government when they are prepared to take one of our good ideas. Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to see an amendment come forward on this Bill making the discount for good drivers retroactive, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — We're prepared to offer that proposal to the government, Mr. Speaker. Take this idea: retroactive implementation of the discount, Mr. Speaker, to July 1.

This is the government, Mr. Speaker, that has no problem in deeming certain dates to have happened. You don't even have to do that, Mr. Speaker. You don't have to deem it. You just make it retroactive to July 1 and everybody qualifies at that point, Mr. Speaker. So there's no problem, Mr. Speaker, in

dealing with that little piece of the Bill that they tried sneaking in.

And what that does, Mr. Speaker, is allows us the opportunity to debate this particular Bill that's been before this House a very short time, a very complex Bill — 101 pages, two-sided, closely typed, Mr. Speaker, two-faced paper, Mr. Speaker — to allow the members of this Assembly to debate and gain an understanding of what this particular Bill is all about.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is like no other in North America. It deserves to have careful consideration given to it, to protect the interests of all people in Saskatchewan — not just drivers, Mr. Speaker, not just the insurance company, Mr. Speaker, but everyone who may come in contact with a vehicle needs to be protected from this insurance Bill, Mr. Speaker. They need to know and understand exactly what they're going to be doing when they go and buy automobile insurance when this Bill is implemented.

They need to know what would happen under all potential circumstances, Mr. Speaker, all of the implications; are you better off with no-fault for a minor injury; are you better off with tort for a medium injury; are you better off with no-fault for a catastrophic injury; or is everything completely reversed, Mr. Speaker? When is it worth your while to be able to sue and when do you need to have no-fault insurance? Or is there a circumstance, Mr. Speaker, where one is always clearly better than the other? The government has not come forward and said any of those answers, Mr. Speaker.

We need the opportunity and the time to study this Bill and time for the government to explain what is proper about this Bill. We need an opportunity for people like the Coalition Against No-Fault to gain an understanding of this Bill and how is it going to impact their . . . people that are already been injured and people who will be injured in the future.

We need an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan need an opportunity to be able to consult with experts in the medical fields, in the legal fields, and in the insurance fields to gain an understanding of this unprecedented type of insurance, Mr. Speaker.

There are, Mr. Speaker, lots of problems with the current no-fault scheme. The problems with it, Mr. Speaker, include not enough protection for rehabilitation — not enough funding, Mr. Speaker. For those people who are up in years, I think there probably would have been enough. But for those people who are younger, the protection under the past no-fault insurance plan was not sufficient, Mr. Speaker — that needed to be changed.

And I'm glad to see, Mr. Speaker, that the government did include in that an increase in protection. And I think that is going to be welcome by all current people suffering under the no-fault insurance plan, clients of the no-fault insurance plan. The fact is, the government in this particular Bill is already, Mr. Speaker, making that retroactive — going back to the original date of injury of those clients, Mr. Speaker.

So changing one more little piece, Mr. Speaker, in here and making the date for the discount for good drivers retroactive to

July 1 is not a major change. Retroactive to July 1, 2002, would only be fair, Mr. Speaker, given the amount of time that this government has allowed this legislature to look this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I ask the government, will you consider that amendment? We'll even allow the government to bring that amendment forward as a House amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — We won't even demand the credit for it, Mr. Speaker. So yes, if the deputy, if the Deputy House Leader for the government wants to claim the idea, he can have it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — So, Mr. Speaker, do the right thing. Include this little retroactive amendment in there to help this Bill through, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move we adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

(15:30)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 73 — The Status of the Artist Act/ Loi sur le statut de l'artiste

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To my left, Angie Gélinas, deputy minister; to her left, David Debono, president and CEO of SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network); behind Angela, Bruce Medhurst, senior policy analyst. Beside Bruce, Peggy Brunson; and behind Bruce, Emile St. Amand, director of sports and recreation. And beside Emilie, Elizabeth Kalmakoff, senior policy analyst.

And I think I neglected to mention that Peggy Brunson is the manager of provincial heritage resources and Bruce Medhurst is a senior policy analyst.

Clause 1

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome to the officials and Madam Minister.

Before we get into the specifics of Bill 73, I just find that there's a lot in this Bill that is very, very vague and very much — I'll just outline some of my points right at the onset here and then get into the specifics of them — but it's very vague and it doesn't have any real teeth to the Bill at all that I can determine.

So before I get into the specifics, could the minister please outline just a bit of the background behind the reasons for this Bill and this proposed legislation that's being brought forward.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much for that question.

I think the best way to describe this is the arts community has been very impatient for this legislation to come forward, and yet at the time when we sat down to review the possible legislative options the repercussions are actually fairly large of some of the choices one might make under the framework proposed here. And we felt uncomfortable with proceeding with some fairly major initiatives without more consultation than had taken place on this in the past.

So because the arts community was very anxious to have the commitment in writing that we were going to proceed with the work that needed doing, we've constructed a Bill which empowers us to proceed with the work and creates an expectation and a commitment that the work will follow and that in subsequent legislative sessions, when the appropriate level of consultation has happened and that we really understand the repercussions of the law that we would be making under this framework, that we would then proceed to flesh out the specific parts of the Bill.

But people did not want it to just slide away without a commitment. So this is actually at the urging of the arts community that we've taken the first step to create a framework for the work that'll happen over the next several years.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And it's my understanding that this Bill kind of parallels the federal one that was introduced and passed, I believe in 1992. I mean that's 10 years ago that we finally got around to doing something that's similar to it.

Will, in fact, this Bill be easier in interfacing with the federal Act? And if it is, can you expand on it? Because as I understand the federal Bill also, it really doesn't have any substance to it.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think in a way this question illustrates the response that I gave to the first question.

There's really two status of the artist Bills that exist in Canada. One is the federal and the other one is Quebec and they are both quite different. Quebec's is quite extensive in a number of areas. The federal Bill is a little more general, but still and all, they actually have a body that's established at the federal level to certify artist groups that are organized as essentially bargaining agents under that Act.

So we felt that before we proceeded either with the federal model or the Quebec model, we would wait for the review that . . . the federal government committed in their Bill to do a review which is currently going on of how that legislation is functioning. So we thought it would be useful to wait for the outcome of that review.

But also to compare it to the Quebec Bill to see which blend of provisions or something new that we may create as a made in Saskatchewan solution would be the most suitable to accomplish the goals that the artists hoped for under this framework.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Just going through the Bill . . . And I know I spoke to some of these issues the other day, but without answers to it, rhetorical answers, that I myself might read into it.

So I'd just like to pose some questions on the specifics of the Bill. Section 3 — the legislation refers to the many important and valuable contributions artists . . . contributions of artists to the cultural, social, economic, and educational enrichment of Saskatchewan.

I agree with all of that. They do make an extremely huge contribution to all of the cultural, social, economic, and educational enrichment of the province. But what I'm wondering, if you might explain how this particular section was included in the Bill.

They do add an awful lot to the province. We know that today. I don't really realize . . . or don't really think that we need it into the Bill to say that.

And is this on par with what other trades or occupations have in their legislations? Do we have to go through every piece of legislation that refers to any specific job and suggest that they're providing an awful lot of contribution to the culture, social, economic, and educational enrichment of this province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I would have to have someone do a review of some of the other professional Acts.

But I have to say that this is . . . One of the important parts of this Act — and I thank you for reminding me of it — is that it does bring a status to artists who . . . I think sometimes, although people value artists, they seem to think of it as a hobby sometimes and not a profession.

And so this is really to elevate the work that professional artists are doing to a professional level, a professional — and I don't mean at a professional level in terms of what they're doing, but people's recognition of what they're doing — to elevate it to that level.

But we could check into whether similar clauses are included.

But I have to say that it was very important to the arts community that this affirmation be there. Because even though you feel that we value the work of artists, and so do I, many artists feel undervalued. And so it was important to them and they were involved in having that particular wording in the Bill.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I guess the reason I pose this question is that we have people involved in other aspects of professional sports in this province. Do we have specific Bills that are saying hockey players provide a huge cultural importance?

We've got curling teams that have won national and world honours for this province. Do we have a Bill that says that they have provided an awful lot of social, economical, and educational enrichment of the province?

I know I stay very close to the rodeo, call it a business if you wish, which is a sport. Have we ever mentioned in a Bill in this province the value of a rodeo contestant — what he or she does for the enrichment of culture in this province?

And I'm just curious as to why all of a sudden we have just singled out artists as somebody that we have to include in a Bill

to satisfy — and this is why I'm at a loss — satisfy what? They said they'd like it in a Bill.

And what I'm suggesting is, if all of these other sports entities and cultural entities are mentioned in a Bill, if we have to include the whole gamut of the Bill that's in front of us today with every other aspect of cultural, recreational, sporting personnel within this province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Let me put it this way. I think first of all that if we were to include it in every Bill that all people are valued, that wouldn't be a bad thing. And so if other people felt that was important to include that, then perhaps we could have an omnibus Bill that spoke to the value of all the professions in this province.

I guess the second thing I would say is a lot of legislation that is passed by government is not just because it's what government wants or what government thinks. It's because it's what the community that that legislation serves wants or thinks.

So I would just have to say that this legislation, in its framework state, is very much a reflection of the expressed feelings and needs and desires of the community that this Bill is addressing itself to.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I'll let that be known to all of the other organizations and see if they can introduce a Bill that would allow your government to have another bunch of Bills, if another session does come up in the fall or whenever, that it would be a chance to introduce some more Bills of very little significance.

In, Madam Minister, in section 4, my interpretation is that the minister responsible, in this case yourself, will be given some fairly broad and sweeping powers and I just have a little bit of unease with this section. And knowing the individualistic nature of artists, I think that they might be a little bit uncomfortable with this as well.

Could you explain . . . expand on this section actually, section 4? Could you expand on us . . . on the section for us with your assurances that micromanagement will not be part of this Bill? And we know it's been done in other areas and it's just . . . it would provide some assurances that the intent is not to micromanage the artistic community.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Anything that we would proceed with under the powers of this Bill would be the result of the work done by working committees on the respective areas identified in the framework. It would go through all the normal review processes and then it would come to the legislature for discussion. So there's nothing really automatic here.

This really just empowers me to proceed with work that needs to be done. And we don't intend to do any of this work separate from the organizations and agencies that were expressing a desire to have a Bill that enabled this work to go forward.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Parts of section 5 . . . when I first picked up this Bill, it was section 5 that probably caught, caught my eye first off. And when it refers to the rights of artists to free speech and freedom of

artistic and cultural expression and the rights . . . right of artists to be fairly treated by government and society, that catches your attention right away because the very first thing that came to my mind is, is that not already covered? Is this not something that's covered under the Charter?

And when I look at this, it's again . . . it's almost like a rhetorical statement and we could have Bills that are very, very thick if we put in all of the things that are included in other Bills and legislations. So my question, Madam Minister, is why is it deemed necessary to put articles like this within the Bill that are already included in the Charter?

(15:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think it's history that requires this kind of a clause to be in here. I think most artists believe that it's their obligation to push the envelope in society. And pushing the envelope can often create situations where there's people who would work to censor what artists are doing. And certainly history has shown that in many political changeovers that have taken place throughout the world, repression of artistic and cultural expression has often been one of the key features of changes in political regimes.

And certainly we've had discussions in the past regarding purchases made by art galleries, works displayed, films shown, about whether or not there is a freedom of speech here.

So really what this is, is again reflecting back to a Bill being crafted to represent both the public interest and the interest of the people who are wanting the Bill. This just reaffirms that we do see artists and creative people as having a special role in society and that's to help be on the leading edge of thought, of challenging thought, and of being expected to be people who challenge the status quo — not merely being people who reproduce exact likenesses of reality.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Madam Minister, as far as I can understand it, this is still all included in the Charter the right to free speech. When you suggest that artists have a propensity of pushing the envelope, and some of their artistic views may not be — if they're pushing the envelope — they might not be held in the highest regard. Is this Bill going to in fact change that?

And I would suggest this Bill can't change that because I don't believe it can override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So again, I'm a bit at a loss why we would include all of the Charter articles within this Bill as a repeat of it. And we suggest the pushing the envelope . . . I mean we in this Chamber have the right to free speech and yet we have restrictions also. One might not call it artistic impressions maybe, but we are restrained from what we can say.

And so if artists feel they're restrained from whatever they're . . . what their expressions are or their speech are, society is restrained from their right to speak, free speech, in certain aspects. So I'm again just at a little bit of a loss why we would include that.

But I'll just go on to another part of section 5 of the various rights, for an example, to form associations and to form

advisory bodies and to enjoy the same economic and social benefits that are available to other workers in Saskatchewan. Again, wouldn't these rights be included in the Charter?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — You know, this is a difficult one because what you are technically worth and what people believe they have to pay you can be two very different things. I think what this really is, is an expression of the desire to be compensated in proportion to the investment of time and education and effort that goes into perfecting their craft, whatever it may be. And even though they may have the right to the same economic and social benefits, it's often not the belief of others that they need to pay them anything.

And I mean, it's not much different than when a small, independent contractor does a job for somebody and the person says, well, I don't really like that so I'm not going to pay for it. People are wanting some standards regarding how they would enjoy some of the same economic and social benefit that other workers do. And right now, I would say that creative workers are largely excluded from safety net provisions other than welfare, from pension provisions other than on the rare occasion that they would get paid enough to purchase an RRSP (registered retirement savings plan), I guess they could do that.

But I think what we're looking here is to set some standards. Now those may not always be followed, but they would start to present a guideline, and in some instances, more than a guideline depending on how it's incorporated into policy and practice. But at least, at minimum, a guideline for what's an appropriate level of compensation for people engaged in these types of activity.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Madam Minister, when we talk about pay and worth it's always an interpretation, especially when you get into the artistic aspects of artistic work because one person's treasure might be another one's non-treasure or garbage — so that's always an interpretation.

And so to include that, I think it's going to be extremely, extremely difficult because it's art. Whether it's in the music or whatever, it is still, it's still subject to interpretation by those that are going to purchase it or partake in the artistic event.

But it's our understanding that within the community, artistic community, there's already a number of unions and associations. And I guess . . . Has there been an increased call for more of them? For more unions and associations? Is that really the nature and intent behind this particular subsection?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's true that there are many associations. There are a very few unions. But I think this does speak to the employer/employee relationship. We're not talking about suggesting that if you buy a particular piece of art you should be paying a particular amount.

But often people who work in this area are independent contractors who work with various employers, whether that's a bar owner who may or may not decide to pay them at the end of the evening; sometimes it's a government who's contracting with creative people to do media or advertising work; sometimes it may be artists that are being engaged for public performance, for private performance. And the fact of the

matter is, is sometimes it's technicians that work in this area who are being engaged to work.

And I would have to say that it's a big question mark at this point how much of this would be establishing a principle or whether it would go further than that to establishing an actual payment regime.

For example, I'll just give you an example — and I don't know whether this will ever go there or not but I think it's a good example. In some areas I believe in Holland when part-time workers work, they work through a part-time agency and the employer contributes to that agency a portion of pension; you know, their worker . . . their occupational health and safety protection; their workers' comp I guess would be the best way of putting it; their . . . any benefit plans.

So instead of each individual employer having to do that directly with the employee, it goes through their temp agency and then that person actually builds up a pension, actually has some safety net built on the labour that they've actually been doing.

Now that's one model. I don't know if that's a model that would work and I don't know if there's only limited areas where it would work. But there's no doubt that as independent contractors these are very vulnerable people. I could give you example after example of artists and professionals who work in this area who have become ill and are just destitute. Their families are destitute.

And I think we need to find a way to create a little more economic security through better practices in terms of the relationships, the economic relationships, in that community.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Madam Minister, I don't disagree with that. But independent contractors — and I think we look at independent contractors as artists is what we're looking at in this Bill — I would suggest there's independent contractors in the business area of this province that really have a serious problem also that we're not addressing, because they're moving out of the province because of other situations that's being developed by the policies of this government.

But now we're doing it for the artistic community, so I think it's something that we need to look at for a little broader field within the whole. When you talk about independent contractors, it's far more reaching than just the artists.

But just carrying on on that, and I don't want to belabour all of this, but it seems like so much of this is already included, and I just want to make reference because it is in the Bill.

Section 5(h) says . . . makes reference to:

the desirability of making artistic works available to the public.

Well in my view, artistic work is available to the public. I mean that's why artists have their profession or their trade or whatever you wish to call it. So by putting it into a Bill that says the desirability of making it available to the public, how will this policy . . . how will this Bill make things different for

what's already in place today?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think there's two ways to answer that question. There's a question of artistic works being available to individuals. But when you say the public, you mean perhaps in a public building like this. Up on the third floor we have that beautiful mural that was likely a contracted artwork. It's a public work — it's not for sale to you personally; it's for the beauty of our community and for the improvement of our quality of life by having these kinds of things around us.

So for example, the city of Regina has a policy where a percentage of all their capital investments goes towards, goes towards purchasing of artworks for public buildings. There's also the question of what we do with our other public areas like schools and just generally to make art a part of the public realm, not just the private realm.

In the olden days, art was the purview of the very wealthy. This is a statement that art should be the purview of the public, not just the very wealthy, and that in order to do that, there has to be a public commitment to it, not just a private commitment.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to our members and guests in the House today, friends of mine that have just arrived in the city. I'd like to introduce Earl, Willie, and Joel Lieske from the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Earl and I go back a long time. We used to ride Triumph motorcycles together and that would probably have something to do with the T-shirt he's wearing there. So I would like to acknowledge their presence here. They're just visiting for a few minutes on their way through to Calgary.

And I'd like you to recognize them and welcome them to the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 73 — The Status of the Artist Act/ Loi sur le statut de l'artiste (continued)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for your answer to that but I don't know if I really got the question answered.

By making artistic works available to the public . . . And I understand what you're saying — how are we going to do it? How does this Bill going to do that? Is it going to be injecting funds? Is it going to . . . is there some way that we're going to just magically pass this Bill and all of a sudden everything's

available to the public? I think not.

So by just phrasing that in the Bill, I personally can't see how it's any different than what we have today. Is stuff available to the public — you mention in this building? Yes it's available to the public today. In schools? Yes it's available to the public.

So I don't know what is different or if there's a plan that you have that's substantially different that says magically now we're going to make this available to the public. And I'm just wondering if you can expand on that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I guess in the formation of public policy you start with an objective, what this policy's trying to accomplish. From there perhaps you outline a series of principles on which you're going to base any policy that's developed.

What this does here is articulate some principle saying, if we are developing new policy in the arts area, these are the things we want to take into consideration. And I think that happens in every area of policy development, that principles are articulated, and then as you go down your list and say, well, has this policy accounted for this, has it accounted for that?

Because you know we may think that these things are all around us and take it for granted, but the fact of the matter is, quite often, when I talk to parents who have moved here from other provinces, they're amazed at the wealth of program resources that are available to children in Saskatchewan, both within the schools and outside the schools, which have been the victims of cutbacks in many other areas. And what this does is that it outlines some principles about what we value, what we care about, and what we think should be part of a good arts policy in Saskatchewan.

(16:00)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well I think that was my point. It all is available, and I agree, it's available now. We have a wealth of it here right now. But what the Bill is doing really doesn't change that. But if you suggest that it's going to be a framework for the future I can understand that although it doesn't quite say that.

Section 6, Madam Minister, talks about the government undertaking with respect to artists and their work with specific reference about promoting within government — within government — the working conditions of artists.

Why just within government? Shouldn't the rest of the people be informed of the working conditions of artists and why is the phrase just, within government — could you explain that please?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think 6(c) gives you a little more fleshing out of that notion. The government often — and not sometimes directly, sometimes through a subcontractor — engages artists in production of commercials, production of creative work for publications, sometimes as part of events that are held. For example when we've been here in the legislature, we've had people from the symphony playing.

And what this says is that good behaviour starts at home. And

that in our relationship with artists we agree to abide reasonably with what's considered to be appropriate compensation in those areas.

And the organizations that now exist, the professional organizations, do have what they call scale, which identifies what they consider to be an appropriate level of compensation for different services provided by artists.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Again just for confirmation — and I've carefully read part (c) also — but abiding by the scales, now is this something that the artistic community has agreed to? Because if it's only within government, surely we're not going to have the whole artistic community come under the auspices of, within government.

So would there not be an air of unfairness if somebody is within government and has . . . there's a scale or that they, the government's, obliged to and somebody could be downtown at the casino doing the same work and not to the same scale. I think we're . . . would we not be creating such a difference there — it's not applying to all? And that's why the concern — within government — is bothering me.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm tempted to have a little fun with this.

The fact of the matter is we could have a minimum wage for artists that applied to the whole community. But every employer sets their own wage rates. And at this point in this whole process, we're not going further than what this Bill articulates. Because I said, we've got the working committees, we want to consult both with artists, with the employers that engage them.

What we're doing right now is just making sure that within our organization, the compensation that we set is fair and reasonable and in keeping with what those associations have identified. And of course that doesn't mean that you just . . . that the sky is the limit. But what it means, that you . . . that you deal with reasonable scale agreements that have been set.

And it would be no different than us setting a compensation level for a clerk 1 or resource officer. But we're not the ones determining what those should be. It's the professional associations themselves that put forward what they think a fair compensation is and where . . . and, if reasonable, we would certainly abide by those.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — You may have partially answered this, but I'm going to ask it anyway because I'm just going on with section 6, section 6(d). And it says the protocols respecting working conditions previously established by relevant artist associations representing the interests of artists shall be respected, honoured, and abided by in good faith by the government.

The implication there is we don't do that now. We don't respect them in good faith. I mean, that's just by implication that one could read into that. But it also seems like it's a very, very narrow focus. I'm just wondering what the reason behind that one also is and if past events necessitated this or, if so, is there an example that you could relate to us as why that would be

there?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well you know, in a way, this highlights the vulnerability of workers because in the absence of a union it really has to do with whether the employer decides to pay you the money or not. And what we're saying here is that, even where there is no union agreement, we still want to be a good employer, because you'll notice that this whole section of the Bill is the government's undertaking. So it's saying that we as an employer of artistic people would want to be a good employer and even if there is no union with those particular employees, we still will undertake to be a good employer.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I guess that's the dichotomy in it for me is because we're putting that in the Bill saying we will be, by inference that says we haven't been. And it just seems odd to me that by putting it in, it like I say, it seems like we have not been in the past.

Section 7, Madam Minister, refers to advisory committees. And I note one of the first things it's . . . it says is the minister "may." And that was a . . . that was a very catchy word right off the bat also.

And when I spoke to members of the artistic community, they like the idea of the Bill. But they had to also agree that there's nothing to the Bill. It's flowery. There's . . . there's absolutely no substance at all. It's standing up and saying nice things about the artistic community, but there's no meat to it at all. So when it says, "The minister may establish one or more advisory committees to investigate and report" that doesn't say a heck of a lot really. You may or you may not. You might investigate or you might not.

So there's absolutely no substance. In other words, Madam Minister, I can't see that there's any commitment here at all. There's no timeline, there's no time frame, if you wish, there's nothing that's definite. There's no obligation because it all rests on the word, may. If there was really a focus on this Bill for the artistic community, one simple word change in this whole Bill would make it entirely different and it would be the word, shall.

And I'm wondering if you have discussed this; if you have looked into the possibility of strengthening this Bill with the word, shall. And I would go on one step farther because even with the word, shall, the minister — if you just use my word in there — the minister shall establish, it still doesn't really have much meat to it because the minister shall establish, and there's no time frame.

You could go on for years and years and years and say yes, we're going to establish one. I mean we hear that on numerous occasions that something's going to happen and even Royal Assent to Bills already been passed. And some of them . . . I just was reading here a couple of days ago that some have been eight years and they haven't received proclamation yet.

So this particular one, I'm wondering if the people that put this Bill together looked at using the word, shall, instead of, may, and putting a timeline on it — say one year — we will . . . And you still are not really committing to an awful lot because, we shall within one year appoint an advisory committee to

investigate. And then there's some meat to it.

And right now I don't see any meat to this at all and I'm wondering if you'd like to comment on that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess a couple of things. One is, if I don't set up these committees then I'm going to send you to the arts alliance meeting next year not me, because I'll get eaten alive if the committee's not up and running.

But I'll just mention that we are in the process right now of developing the advisory committee, and we believe that it will be formed and the terms of reference established by the fall of 2002. So I'll be expecting you to be pestering me if you don't see an advisory committee announced in September of 2002.

But I will say that normally timelines aren't put in Bills, and that's a matter of the relationship, I guess, between the government and the community. And we ignore those obligations at our peril.

But I would say that there's a lot of very big issues in this list. As you can see, it's got pension plans, education, taxation, Workers' Compensation, safety nets, labour relations, collective bargaining. So these are a lot of big and weighty issues. Some of these things may be able to be done in a shorter time. Other things may take years to accomplish.

So I think before we've even had any initial meetings of the advisory committee, it would be a little foolhardy to put deadlines. But I do think that the fact that we, as we speak, are developing the advisory committee, that we are making a commitment, and it will be in the record of *Hansard* that by September of 2002 the committee will be very firmly on the ground and we will be able to move forward on the work that needs doing.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And again I wasn't looking at a deadline so much as a timeline. There's a huge difference. And the word may and shall also is a huge difference because, again, there's not a lot of substitute . . . substance to the Bill, even if you use the word shall in the time frame, because all you're doing is establishing an advisory committee. So that's not a deadline issue whatsoever. I mean that's a timeline saying we will. But you have it on record now as September of 2002. So that will be accepted.

Madam Minister, you touched on taxation in part of section 7 and I also wanted to touch on that taxation of artists as part of the policy. And I'm wondering how this might be carried out. And again the . . . (inaudible) . . . of it because I am one that really likes the visual — if you wish, paintings. And if I buy one, how are you . . . how is the taxation system going to be set up to tax the individual that I buy a painting from? And I'm wondering how this being put in the Bill, what's different about it, what's different than that's already in place? Or is it just a nicety in there and said, boy, we're going to be . . . this is a fluff Bill but we're going to be tough also because we're going to tax them.

I'm just wondering if you could expand on that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Actually the federal government has

done a little bit of work on this already, and I think it has more to do with the averaging provisions of the Income Tax Act and whether they might allow artists a longer time period to bring income forward due to the irregular nature sometimes of the income.

But I think in talking about the issue of taxation, there's no foregone conclusion of what we are going to arrive at here.

But certainly in all other areas of business, there are taxation regimes. In some places we have lower tax rates to stimulate activity in some areas. There's a whole variety of ways we could look at this.

And for example, we've granted some tax forgiveness to students at our educational institutions. I think it's very difficult to know all what this could or might encompass. Here is only the indication of the desire to have the discussion. But I do know that the federal government has done a little bit of work on this.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The last number we're coming to, section 8, refers to the regulations. And I guess it's an obvious question that I have, since 8(b) says regulations may be made:

(b) respecting any other matter or thing that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary to carry out the intent of this Act.

When I look at this Bill, it talks about respecting the many valuable contributions made by artists to society, and I don't think there's anyone that's disputing that. The Bill talks about recognizing freedom of artistic expression and freedom of association. And we've debated that already. I mean that's already there in the Charter. A Bill that gives no timelines, although you have since give a timeline with September of 2002 for committee to start. And there's not many specifics in the Bill, and yet it really concentrates everything to the minister of what you would like to do and the time frame.

So you've kind of answered this in the start, but I guess the final question I would ask is what is the overall intent of the Act? Again, I think you may have answered that at the start, but the overall intent to me is quite vague even after going through the Bill item by item.

(16:15)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I would say there's two things that are important about this Bill. One is to — in not an informal way, but a formal way — bring the profession of artists into the public policy realm in a formalized way and have it identified as a real and serious part of the balance of different activities in our society. The second part is about economic security for people involved in this profession.

So I would really say that it's those two things. The commitment to public policy that values and expends public funds in the area of support for the arts, but also that looks to the economic . . . enhanced economic security of people in this profession.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 73 — The Status of the Artist Act/ Loi sur le statut de l'artiste

Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I move the Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Culture, Youth and Recreation Vote 27

Subvote (CR01)

The Chair: — . . . found on page 38 of the Estimates book for those that would like to follow along at home. And I would invite the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I know that my parents are sitting on the edge of their seats.

We have the same officials that we had previously. Should I re-introduce them? Okay. Sitting beside me is Angela Gélinas, deputy minister; to my right, Emile St. Amand, director of sport and recreation. Behind me, Peggy Brunson, manager of provincial heritage resources; behind Peggy, Elizabeth Kalmakoff, senior policy analyst. Sitting beside Peggy, Bruce Medhurst, senior policy analyst; and to Angela's left, David Debono, president and CEO of SCN.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Madam Minister, it's a pleasure for me to be able to attend this particular session of estimates and ask a few questions of particular concern to residents and constituents of the Cypress Hills area.

Madam Minister, I assume that some of this ground will have been traversed already in estimates, but not having been party to that, I'd like to cover some of that again. I'd like to direct my questions particularly to the cultural facilities grant program that is part of the Community Initiatives Fund. And, Madam Minister, would you provide for us information as to the total amounts of monies dedicated to that fund, the cultural facilities grant program for the upcoming fiscal year.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The total allocation for the Community Initiatives Fund was six point . . . cultural facilities, pardon me, fund was 6.9 million over four years, and there's still 500,000 unallocated left in that 6.9 million.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, has the amount of money, the 6.9 million been equally divided over the term, the four years

that you talked about?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now I have a list here of — and we're just looking to see if we actually sent the answer over previously — but of 22 communities that received funding under the cultural facilities program, and these communities would add up to the total of 6.4 million. I don't have on the information I've got the exact date that each community completed or expended their project, but I do have a list of all the communities and the amount they got. So I can read those into the record for you if you want.

Mr. Elhard: — It's not necessary.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, could you give us some idea as to the variation in size of the projects? What the smallest project might be that you would have funded, and what the largest project might have been and the value of that project, please?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The smallest one was in Foam Lake, who apparently can really make their money go a long way because they did a great deal with \$1,200. And the largest one was the city of Prince Albert at 2.3 million.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, that represents a fairly wide variance, quite a substantial variance. And in view of the fact that there are grants as small as \$1,200 as you indicated, does the criteria for those grants, given the substantial difference in sums, does the criteria remain the same for any project no matter what the size of the grant request might be?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — So far the criteria has been the same in terms of matching funds for projects. Now some smaller communities and some poorer communities, particularly in the North, have said that the guidelines are too onerous for them to come up with the 75 per cent share of the project. So in the fall we'll be meeting with the board of trustees and discussing whether in fact they feel there's a problem with the guidelines and whether we should be revising them.

And if you have input from your constituents on what people think would be more fair for a smaller community or a poorer community, certainly I think the board of trustees would be very open to looking at that when they review the criteria in the fall.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. I think that reviewing those guidelines might be a helpful exercise frankly, especially for communities in small and remote areas such as the ones I represent, to be honest with you. And when I asked these questions, I did so on the basis of one particular project that I'm familiar with and it fell prey to or under the guidelines and, consequently, could not meet the criteria as they existed. The bar simply was too high for them.

Now I'm referring specifically to the Eastend Community Tourism Authority's grant application for the T.rex Centre in the town of Eastend. And while they had a very thorough and well-prepared application, they simply couldn't meet some of

the criteria. Now the funding criteria of 75 per cent, while it might seem acceptable — I guess it depends on the size of the project — but that wasn't the number one issue with the Eastend group when they made their application. They realized when they sent the application in that they were well short of the 75 per cent funding.

But the other criteria that stuck in their craw was the limitation or the size of area that your community is deemed to be the trading centre for. The grammar isn't very good so I'll go back and explain that.

Your criteria now requires the community that's getting the funding to represent a trading area of 4,500 people or more, and for a community the size of Eastend or any of the small rural communities, they are simply ruled out of this program on the basis of that criteria. The criteria as it stands would suggest, frankly, Madam Minister, that projects of cultural value could only be located in larger urban areas. It makes it impossible for any of these small communities to attain to any of these particular kinds of projects that many small communities are undertaking these days.

And I guess what particularly bothered the applicants that I referred to was that in their application they included 22 letters of support for their application. Some of those letters of support came from an area well as distant as 200 kilometres. And even within the 200 kilometres, if you took all of the rural population, they couldn't achieve the 4,500-person standard.

(16:30)

Now having made that point, Madam Minister, there was a letter of support in that application from the city of Swift Current. And if you took the population of the city of Swift Current and the rural municipalities around there, and included them as part of the trading area for Eastend, this application would have at least met that 4,500-person criteria.

So would you, Madam Minister, say today that as part of the review process you would reconsider that criteria? Because whether people drive from Eastend to Swift Current or from Swift Current to Eastend to take advantage of the unique project that the community is developing there, it has merit and does approach a critical mass.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess I'll respond in a couple of ways. One is, I've been out in that area and do think that the people there have been making a wonderful effort to build on the asset that they have there to create more of a tourism draw for that area. I mean, even the nice drive that they have that you take and they have all the different markers and the historic sites, they've been very proactive in developing.

And I think I would have to say that you represent their issues very well. And certainly when the committee meets in the fall, I think they're going to have to consider issues like tourism, like support. Because in my mind to have that centre there is not unlike having the Science Centre here. It provides a place where the children can go, study an aspect of science, heritage, etc.

So your point is well taken and I appreciate you for reminding us of the need to look at those projects in a different way. And

certainly we'll pass these remarks along to the committee that's going to be looking at the criteria.

Mr. Elhard: — Madam Minister, thank you for your response. I think your willingness to reconsider the way the criteria is applied and maybe even the benchmarks involved with the application would be well received by not just the community I represent on this particular issue, but on several communities in my constituency and many others throughout rural Saskatchewan.

There is a growing awareness of the need to work together in rural Saskatchewan. Where one community might have a project of one type, another community may have a project of a different type entirely. But if they can support each other, it creates a better working arrangement, a co-operative mentality, and certainly an opportunity for greater success in rural Saskatchewan. And I think that's something your government has particularly talked about trying to achieve.

Just as an aside, Madam Minister, if I recall correctly, the application was for an audiovisual system to make the theatre that exists in the current T.rex Centre more useable, more tourist friendly, more beneficial to anybody who wanted to use the facility for other purposes.

And as I understand it, the Premier and some of his colleagues are going to be in Eastend visiting the T.rex Centre on July 19 and it would have been nice to have that facility up to date and ready to roll. He would have . . . he would have enjoyed the presentation that they would have provided for him in the theatre.

I'd just like to pass that comment along. You might want to kind of rush that application through so you can meet that deadline. Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, last time we had estimates, we discussed SCN and there was a couple of issues that I neglected to discuss so I would like to do that now.

I understand that the contract SCN . . . or the legislative broadcast services has with SCN has expired and we are operating on the ad hoc or on a day-to-day or week by week basis. And I'm wondering what . . . where the, the state of . . . or what the state of negotiations are with regards to the contract.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — A Speaker's committee, bipartisan Speaker's committee has been working on this particular issue.

The contract doesn't expire till December 31 and what the question is right now is really looking at different satellite providers to look at the costs and which satellite provider would be the carrier for the service. But I think people are optimistic that an agreement will be concluded before December 31.

Two of the companies under consideration are, I think, StarChoice and ExpressVu. Yes.

Mr. Hart: — Madam Minister, I believe StarChoice currently does carry SCN. However, the video broadcast of our proceedings isn't carried by that, by that service. And I wonder, is that part of the negotiations? Since a large part of my

constituency doesn't have access to cable and so on, and I know there's . . . I've had requests from a number of constituents who have satellite service that they said it would be helpful to observe what we are doing in the Assembly. And I'm just wondering if that's part of the negotiations.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I can confirm to the member that our goal is to make you a star and we're going to try to make sure that the provider will carry that. It's our intent to have that as part of the contract.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Minister. At the risk of perhaps unduly influencing the negotiations, I would prefer the star as a choice, Madam Minister. Thank you.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I don't know if I'm going to have time to get into the sound stage because that in itself is going to be quite a large issue.

So I think I'd like to start now and just . . . I have a few questions on the centennial student employment program. And I note there's a significant decrease in expenditures on the program from 5 million last year to 3.8 million this year — a \$1.2 million decrease. And I'm just wondering if you can explain the decrease — straight budgetary or what areas will actually see a decrease in funding from the student employment program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Over the past two years since this program was created, there's been very close to 3,000 jobs created. Now last year we were able to provide 1,673 jobs and this year it will be 1,300. And it really was every department sharing the cost reductions.

So there is nothing more — what would you say — nothing more dramatic at play than the need to draw down expenditures this year. And certainly it's an area that we value very much and if funds are available, I would be very surprised if we didn't bump that back up again. This is a one-year reflection of budgetary requirements.

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

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure, members of the Assembly, to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of five guests, many of whom will be known to at least some members in the Assembly.

First of all — I notice, Mr. Chair, they are joined by the Minister of Finance — but first of all, it's my pleasure to introduce Mark Hanley, who's the president of the Board of Directors of the Regina & District Food Bank.

And with him is Mr. Ed Bloos, and many of the Regina members will know Ed. He's been the general manager of the Regina & District Food Bank for many years and served the community of Regina with a lot of distinction.

And he's joined this afternoon by the assistant manager of the Regina & District Food Bank, Mr. Gord Barnes, who will also be well known for his service in this community.

From Saskatoon, Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to draw to your attention the presence of Mr. Pius Sieben in the gallery, who has served as the manager of the Saskatoon Food Bank for many years and who will be retiring at the end of this month.

And with him, next to him, to his left, Mr. Chair, is Bob Pringle who is, I think, well known to all members of this Assembly and who served this province with great distinction for 10 years in this Assembly; served as the minister of Social Services, served the constituents of Saskatoon Eastview over three terms, and is now the new manager of the Saskatoon Food Bank.

These guests in the gallery will be meeting with representatives from the government caucus and later with members of the opposition caucus. And I know all members will want to join with me in extending a very, very warm welcome to these distinguished guests. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Culture, Youth and Recreation Vote 27

Subvote (CR01)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also would like to welcome the representatives of the Saskatchewan Association of Food Banks and I was wondering if the Minister of Finance was up there to get used to his new chair after the next election or if he was just up there greeting the people.

Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, I'm not certain whether I heard your answer — or if it was part of your answer — to the question. And I may have missed it, there was a little bit of noise going on. But the question: I understand the 1.2 million reduction, and how does that translate into number of positions or applicants? How many, how many . . . In terms of people, would it mean a decrease or if it is a decrease?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's always a little variability in the jobs because of the different job lengths and whatnot but it would be about 350 positions.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Overall from last year, what was the final result of this program? Do you get direct feedback from the departments that made use of it, and how many departments had made use of the program, and what kind of a feedback? Do you have any information on that for us?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I would have to say that one in government often isn't used to getting tonnes of mail thanking you for a particular program. But in this program here, we received a lot of letters from the community showing appreciation for the program. And anecdotally at one of the events we were at, a parent came up to me and said, you know,

my child was pretty close to dropping out of school, but as a result of having worked in an interesting job related to their area of study, they're going back to school with a renewed interest in the career that they had chosen.

And I just want to make it clear that these are not . . . these are public sector kinds of jobs but they aren't government jobs in . . . totally. Executive government has a portion. The Crowns are not involved in this but they do make an expenditure themselves on student employment. Post-secondary institutions qualify, urban parks and conservation areas, regional parks are a very large part of the program. Community based organizations are a large part of the program, the cultural organizations; and we do have a program that enhances access for students with disabilities as well and for students of Aboriginal ancestry.

So there's quite a range of employment locations and we . . . I think we distribute them quite evenly amongst northern . . . all the regions of the province — north, rural, east, south — and to make sure that all the students regardless of where they live in the province have an opportunity for quality summer employment.

(16:45)

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Minister. On the Web page of Culture, Youth and Recreation there's a line here, and I'd just like to read this line and it says:

Keep in mind that the program is intended to help students build careers in their chosen field of study or interest.

And, Madam Minister, I know we talked about this last year and I wish to talk about it again. If an individual's chosen field of interest is in the entrepreneurial sector, then they really don't have the opportunity to go into it through this program. And I know that was addressed last year and it was not part of the program last year.

I don't know if it's a part of the program for this summer; if there's any positions in the private entrepreneurial sector for students to seek summer employment. If there is, great. If there's not, can you explain why not.

I think we're losing a huge opportunity here by having them only in certain select departments; where in fact in keeping with the line on your Web site, "in their chosen field of study or interest," we may be negating that if they're not allowed to go into an entrepreneurial summer employment job.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think there's two things I would say about that. There's two purposes to the public sector portion of the employment.

One is to ensure that students have high-quality employment experiences, but the other purpose is to deal with the fact that the public sector is looking at a huge flow of retirements over the next few years as the baby boomers retire. And this is also part of our objective as employers, to develop the next workforce that will be working in the various public sector as I mentioned — parks, community organizations, post-secondary institutions, etc.

But the other thing is the federal government already has quite extensive programs for the private sector. And rather than duplicating what they're doing, we believe that this is a complementary program to what the private sector has available under the federal program.

So if, you know, oil revenues were to go crazy, I mean I suppose we could consider whether we wanted to supplement the programs. But the federal government actually does a pretty adequate job right now at supplementing jobs in the private sector.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Madam Minister, I believe they also do in the public sector, but that doesn't preclude them from entering into the private sector with summer employment positions for students.

And it seems to be very heavily one-sided on the public sector, and we do know that there's an awful lot of students where their interests are not in the public sector and jobs specifically related to the public sector, that it's more of an entrepreneurial nature. So we're extremely heavy sided, in fact 100 per cent to zero.

And I'm just asking again if there's some consideration, if it's not going to be for this year, would we look at the future of at least putting some degree of balance between the public sector and the private sector for youth employment?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess I'd mention a couple of things. The vast majority of this money goes into the community. A very, a very small proportion of it is within government but it's necessary that a portion be there because this is where some of the careers related to people's post-secondary education will be. But the huge amount of it is in places like parks and community organizations. So that money is going out into the community that doesn't have a huge financial capacity to provide this kind of work even though there's a lot of valuable work that they do.

Now, after having said that, I will say that I agree with you totally that it's important for young people to have entrepreneurial opportunities. And I guess I will just have to say that I hope that over the next year we can look at what our total entrepreneurial package is for young people in the province, including a whole range of issues around what makes it easier for young people to be entrepreneurs.

So I guess I'll just make a commitment to you that that is a priority. I've been out in different towns like Gravelbourg and other places where they've been working hard at getting the young people involved in entrepreneurial activities. And I do think it's important. But it hasn't been specifically the focus of this program.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Madam Minister, during estimates last year I had asked a number of questions about this program and how the program was run, who was in charge, how it would be monitored, and a whole pile of questions related along that line.

And at that time you indicated that you really had no way of knowing how well a student might be doing in the program because once he or she was hired by another department — and I believe you had said last year Crown and I know you referred to that the Crowns are operated a little bit different — but

there's no way of keeping track of how these students had done. It's putting the money out and then just letting it go and not really being able to track it.

Have there been any changes to the program this year so there's a monitoring process, an ongoing monitoring process from your department how you can track the program on a continuing basis. Not after the year is over and then find out from somebody by a letter, say, oh yes, we had a good time and we made money. I'm wondering if you have a methodology of actually tracking it.

If we're going to put hundreds of students out in various parts and they're gone, they're out of our hands, but the money is coming from your department, I would think there should be some tracking mechanism from within your department that would say hey, how are we doing; is it working in your department; is there a transfer capability if somebody is not working. Is there somebody within your department that is doing the tracking? Or are basically they just given the money and the students are all lost in a maze out there and nobody from your department really knows what or where they are or what they're doing?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now one of the decisions we made early on in this program was to have the community organizations like the parks association, etc., actually administer their portion of the employment grant. So there's a fair amount of responsibility devolved to the organizations that administer the money in terms of making the best decisions about what the most appropriate jobs are, where the greatest need is, where the best opportunity is for the students.

But we also conducted an evaluation at the end of last year with the students and with the employers to determine how they felt the program operated. And as you know, the project got going in quite a rush the first year. And this year again, there'll be evaluation and follow-up.

I'm planning to go out and visit on a random basis some of the sites to see what the young people have actually accomplished there. I won't warn them that I'm coming, so that they can't put their best foot forward. I want to see what they're actually doing when I go out there. But I'm sure they always have their best foot forward.

And we do know for example, we had objectives in the program to ensure Aboriginal youth are hired, etc., we know all the numbers on that. And so there are several evaluative mechanisms. And we haven't received any negative feedback at all from students or employers, so I would consider that in itself a good thing. But there are formal evaluative mechanisms.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:55.