

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are angry with the government's decision to transfer the surplus from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund to the General Revenue Fund. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to refund the \$1.6 million intended for the Saskatchewan Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and discontinue its present policy of using this money for other government purposes.

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

This petition is signed by approximately another 75 residents of Regina.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon, Foam Lake, Young, and Rosthern.

I so present.

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

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

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

**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 is used as a whole 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 the good people of Churchbridge, Esterhazy, and Rocanville.

I so present.

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

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the community of Chaplin.

I so present.

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

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

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

And I have several petitions, Mr. Speaker, and they are signed by residents of Weyburn, Lake Alma, Saskatoon, Regina, Pangman, and Fillmore.

I so present.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of residents of my hometown of Swift Current concerned about the state of the current hospital facility in that city. And specifically the prayer of their petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, all of the petitioners today come

from the frontier city, the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Kenaston, Hanley, and Englefeld.

I so present.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned with the new regional health authority boundaries. 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 care 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 community of Govan.

I so present.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned about the crop insurance premiums. And as in duty bound . . . or the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from the dried-out centre of Marshall and my dried-out centre of Spiritwood.

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 no. 7, 11, 18, 22, 165, and no. 168.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 78 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation: what is the nature of the \$105,341 in consulting work paid by SaskEnergy to RBC Dominion Securities in 2001; has SaskEnergy or its parent company retained any other firms such as RBC Dominion Securities to establish the value of TransGas?

And while I'm on, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 78 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation: has CIC or is CIC currently conducting a review/evaluation of the rate review panel; if so, will the results be made public?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Trew:** — Mr. Speaker, I thank you and it's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two very fine people seated in the Speaker's gallery.

One is a long-time friend of mine, Leslie Griffin. Leslie has the, at times, dubious distinction of being my very first campaign manager in my first nomination. I find it very gratifying to remember those happy times.

Seated next to Leslie is a lady well known in Regina, having run for city council and making her views known widely. She writes letters to the editors regularly — Lucy Eley. I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming these two guests.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to my colleagues in this Assembly, I'd also like to introduce a guest in your gallery. Seated there today, Mr. Speaker, is Crystal Martens. Crystal is a summer student at our constituency office in Swift Current and wanted to come to the legislature and certainly she was invited to come and see the proceedings live and have a tour of the building.

We're enjoying Crystal's work in the office this summer and we want to wish her well as well. Now, Mr. Speaker, she's planning to return for her third year at the Millar College of the Bible in Pambrun when fall begins again.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I just ask all members in the Assembly to join me in welcoming Crystal here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce a group of young people sitting in the east gallery,

over my shoulder here. These folks belong to the Association Jeunesse Fransaskoise. They're organizing, they're coming here to prepare for their youth parliament here, the francophone youth parliament that will be held October 17, 18, 19, and this will be their seventh edition.

And today they're represented by members of the cabinet and a member of the opposition. So I'd like to introduce some of these folks. I'm not sure I can see them all.

The Premier is Maxe Joannis-Blackmore from Regina. He will stand and then we'll know you're here. Maxe? And then Deputy Premier is Gent Laird, and I understand he had some exciting times up at Prince Albert this past weekend. The Speaker is Alexis Normand from Saskatoon. The member of the opposition is Erica Potié, from Saskatoon as well; and the House Leader Natalie Berard.

Now they have a debate and elocution instructor, Janique Dubois, and the director of AJF (Association Jeunesse Fransaskoise) is Dave Turcotte who happens to be a constituent of Saskatoon Idylwyld.

And all members of the House will be invited to a luncheon October 17 at their event.

So I'd like to ask all members to give them a warm welcome here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Area Transportation Planning Committees

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's 11 area transportation committees working across the province working with the Department of Highways and Transportation to develop and implement transportation plans for their specific regions.

This regional consultation, Mr. Speaker, is necessary to deal effectively with the changes that are going on in the grain handling industry and in other changes that affect our transportation system. The area transportation planning committees are necessary for shared decision making and responsibility that are used to help make our roads and highways the best they can be.

Area transportation planning committees make recommendations to their rural municipal and urban municipal and First Nations memberships and to the province on local transportation priorities, truck traffic management, short-line rail initiatives, northern access, and northern airports.

Mr. Speaker, Highways and Transportation began this program, this initiative, when it signed what has proven to be a very successful one done in the Southwest. I want to commend and thank each of the 11 transportation planning committees for the excellent work they have done and that we know they will continue to do into the future.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

##### SaskTel Prepaid Cellular Service

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not long ago SaskTel decided to make some substantial changes to its prepaid cellular service product. It used to be, Mr. Speaker, that those who purchased this prepaid card would have to make at least one billable call within 60 days of purchase to keep their minutes activated. But effective the week of June 16, SaskTel announced that prepaid customers would now have to keep their total minutes prepaid topped up to their original level every 60 days or they would lose their minutes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it didn't take long for SaskTel customers and residents of our province to start expressing their concerns about the unfairness in this policy change. Sask Party MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) have fielded many inquiries and concerns about SaskTel's new use-it-or-lose-it policy. So, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party raised the issue at the Crown Corporations Committee not long ago. And wouldn't you know it, Mr. Speaker, by the end of last week, only days after we raised those concerns, SaskTel admitted it was also getting a lot of calls and that it would look to improve this problem and to change its policy perhaps by extending the current terms to the . . . for the prepaid cellular customers to the end of this year.

That would be a step in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. And it has proved that the system can work. Mr. Speaker, residents calling Sask Party MLAs from city and country, the Sask Party raising the issue, the problem getting solved, Mr. Speaker — that is a preview of what is going to happen on a lot more regular basis after the next election.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(13:45)

##### Maintenance of Northern Saskatchewan Roads

**Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, there was a good northern article written by Gil Gracie in a recent edition of her independent magazine called *Opportunity North*, a journal of northern Saskatchewan business, industry, training, and employment. And as someone who knows a bit about road construction and bridge building, the article made me feel good about progress in the North.

The article consisted of one short paragraph of prose and then two columns of facts and figures. The headline — "\$34 million for northern roads in '02-'03". The paragraph says that:

. . . \$34 million will be spent on northern . . . (roads) again this year.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're fixing the roads and we're fixing them in the North as well as in the South.

The columns listed projects: major capital projects, nearly 12 million; partnership expenditures with mining companies, 1.5 million; major preservation projects, 2.8 million; other preservation projects, 2.8 million; the Centenary Fund expenditures, 500,000; and strategic rural roads partnership, 300,000.

From Cumberland House to La Loche, to Pelican Narrows, to Green Lake, to the Sucker River, and all places in between, work is taking place to provide better and safer roads for northerners, to provide jobs for northerners, and also to promote tourism and northern cultural exchange and to, of course, solidify the vital infrastructure of the North.

That's good news, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **New Restaurant in Bellegarde**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in spite of the NDP (New Democratic Party) roadblocks put in front of entrepreneurs in this province, we have three new, young entrepreneurs that have started up their own business in the village of Bellegarde, Mr. Speaker. They have started a new restaurant called the Bistro Belge and it's going to be open from June 28 to August 23.

And what's unique, Mr. Speaker, about these three entrepreneurs is they're all grade 10 and 11 girls. Bonita Wolensky, Lindsay George, and Chantel Bauche have started up their own little restaurant as a summer project, Mr. Speaker, supported by their teacher, Mrs. Prefontaine.

Mr. Speaker, these girls are putting on an excellent meal. They're inviting everyone in the area to come and attend. And what they specialize in, Mr. Speaker, is Belgian cuisine. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to read here, it says:

Our specialty, homemade desserts.

And, yes, Mr. Speaker, they are good. I tried them on Saturday. And they make an excellent little waffle that they coat with Belgian chocolate. And, Mr. Speaker, it is excellent. And I recommend that everyone visit Bellegarde and try out the Bistro Belge.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **18th Annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference**

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 18th annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference makes its way back to Saskatchewan from October 1 through October 5 of 2002; 425 high school student representative council members and 200 student activity advisers from across Canada will be in Saskatoon for the Canadian Student Leadership Conference.

There will be a pre-conference tour from September 29 to October 1. This tour will take the participants to visit Saskatchewan's north country. The students will be visiting Batoche, Waskesiu, and Duck Lake.

Mr. Speaker, the conference keynote speakers will include Tamara Hall, Mark Tewksbury, and Mark Scharenbroich. There will be a variety of leadership workshops, time management in-services, communication seminars, and community building.

Mr. Speaker, the conference will be located in a variety of high school settings in Saskatoon, the Centennial Auditorium, the

Delta Bessborough Hotel, the Saskatoon Forestry Farm, and Wanuskewin Heritage Park, and the Prairieland Exhibition.

Mr. Speaker, conferences of this nature go a long way to help forge the new ideas and visions of the next generation. I think all members of this House will join me in hoping the organizers and delegates from across Canada will benefit from this conference and we wish them a wonderful time here in our province next fall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **SunBridge Wind Power Project**

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that just last Thursday, the member from Saskatoon Greystone commented on this particular project, but I would like to bring it to the attention of the House once again.

It's a very successful venture that has given rise, technically, in my constituency. And on Thursday, I attended the grand opening of the SunBridge wind power project which is located south of the No. 1 Highway and a little east of Gull Lake.

This \$22 million project is a 50/50 partnership between Enbridge Incorporated and Suncor Energy Incorporated that signals the start of a growing initiative to harness an alternative energy supply in Saskatchewan.

Now this is an encouraging venture for our province, and most particularly southwest Saskatchewan. Typically for a windy prairie area, that conjures up a negative attitude, yet this convenient power source has generated a positive turn and indicates a significant potential well into the future.

I'm sure that everyone in Saskatchewan will agree that our wind is indeed a source that should be considered renewable. Having already received commitments from purchasers who are willing to pay a premium to buy GreenPower electricity, this project shows that there are consumers who are anxious to reap the environmental rewards of this clean energy source.

Dave Byler, executive vice-president of Suncor, indicated this project may be the first step of a \$100 million expansion by his company into renewable energy by 2005.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that government policies will be forthcoming to encourage the private sector to continue this type of initiative rather than discourage them through over regulation and direct competition after the risks have been taken by the private sector.

My congratulations on behalf of the entire constituency of Cypress Hills to the SunBridge wind power project.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Saskatoon Students Have a Case**

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a group of University of Saskatchewan students from Saskatoon have decided to raise awareness about the plight of farm families in their own way.

Mike Baker, Bryce Brodie, Rob Gilroyed, and Shaun Janzen pooled their cash together and bought a Case 2090 tractor. They have driven their tractor to Ontario to raise awareness about the plight of Saskatchewan farm families. Bryce says that people are also signing the camper trailer as a petition of support.

Bryce said that they were inspired to embark on their trek after they heard that a friend's father had to sell the family farm due to American subsidies in part. The student quartet report that they have been well received by the people of Ontario and that easterners do care and have shown a great deal of sympathy towards the hard times being experienced by farm families. Local media also have shown support to the group as their travel ensues.

The example set by Mike Baker, Bryce Brodie, Rob Gilroyed, and Shaun Janzen is exactly the kind of tenacious spirit that inspires the people of Saskatchewan in the face of adversity.

I am sure all members join me in saying that this is an action that commands their immediate respect and appreciation for the province and for all farm families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Financial Reports

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, we are now a quarter of the way through the province's fiscal year and the Finance minister has promised to release quarterly financial reports, and I understand that these reports just aren't ready at the moment. But I wonder if the Finance minister could give us a general idea where the government is with its budget.

They have obviously been . . . there have obviously been increased demands on the budget since it was released last March, like forest firefighting costs, a new teachers' contract that is currently being negotiated that will affect at least seven months of this current fiscal year.

So could the minister give us an update? Are revenues up or down? Are expenditures up or down? And what adjustments is the government making to meet its new budget targets?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should know that retailers who will collect taxes until the end of June will have until some time, I believe, in early August to remit their sales tax receipts to the government. So if the member opposite is suggesting that at the third . . . the end of the first quarter, immediately there's a third quarter or first quarter statement available, Mr. Speaker, that is not accurate.

Mr. Speaker, what will this government do? This government will continue to do what this government has always done which is to manage appropriately, Mr. Speaker . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — And we can have, Mr. Speaker, claims by the opposition that the province is being mismanaged to which I would say this, Mr. Speaker. Before I take the word of the members opposite I'll take the word of Moody's of New York who have looked at the budget, Mr. Speaker, and have given us a credit rating upgrade and restored the credit rating of this province to straight As, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we understand that the minister has already received at least two months' worth of financial information from the department of treasury, so there is an understanding about what is going on in the province of Saskatchewan even though the minister does not want to admit this. He does know this and I'm sure that he's looking forward to the next month's report.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's budget in March indicated that the government projected a . . .

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, the government projected a razor-thin surplus of \$45,000 and they're spending more than that investigating their own ministers.

There are also some bigger expenses that they are now incurring — a new nurses' contract, the upcoming teachers' contract I've already mentioned, forest fire costs, a \$1.3 million legal settlement, and millions more expected in pending settlements.

Mr. Speaker, these additional costs are going to add up to millions of dollars. The Finance minister estimated government spending of \$6.319 billion this year and a \$45,000 surplus. Is this still his estimate or does he expect spending to be up from the budget he released?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer to the member's question is that we will monitor the situation. We will meet the forest firefighting costs, we will see what happens with the teachers' negotiations and we will manage accordingly in the same way as we have for the last 10 years.

And I want to say to the House and to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, that one must be very suspect listening to the claims of the opposition. For example, on Friday last we had the member from Kelvington-Wadena saying, Mr. Speaker, that every year an interim supply motion is heard at the end of June in order to provide payments for July.

We look at the record, Mr. Speaker, and what do we see? Mr. Speaker, we see that what the government has done this year is exactly the same as what the government did last year, Mr. Speaker.

The only mismanagement and incompetence in this House, Mr. Speaker, is the incompetence of the members opposite who took one year to realize that there is no interim supply motion at the end of June, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Members, oral question period . . . Order, members. Oral question period . . . Members, oral question period would go much better if we had one remark at a time and one response at a time. I ask members to allow the question to be put.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems like it's a . . . it must be Friday already this week, and here it's only Wednesday.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, the NDP was forced to make some major last minute adjustments to its revenue estimates. That left the government scrambling to revise its budget at the last minute. This year we're hoping that they're keeping a lot closer tabs on their revenues so they don't get nailed with another last minute surprise.

Mr. Speaker, in March the minister forecast revenues of \$6.094 billion. Is that still his estimate or have there been major changes to the revenue estimates since the budget was delivered in March?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite which when they were in power did not have mid-year financial statements, and one year did not even produce a budget, Mr. Speaker, we are going to produce quarterly financial statements. And when the first quarter financial statement comes out, that will show the member what the estimate for revenues and expenditures for last year is.

But I want to say — and for the current year — but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite that what we are not going to do is to advocate what they advocate, such as the member from Lloydminster who says what? He says the Saskatchewan Party can no longer promise to maintain income tax cuts brought in by this government, Mr. Speaker.

Then we have him going on to say what are they going to do? Quote, "If BC is doing the right thing, we want to learn from that." Well they have, they have a lot to learn, Mr. Speaker.

Then we have the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. What does she say? She says she wants to increase provincial sales taxes for individuals and families in Saskatchewan, in the *Weyburn Review*.

We're not going to increase personal taxes and sales taxes like they would do, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, for two consecutive questions I've asked the Minister of Finance to indicate whether his \$6 billion expected revenue budget was on target or whether his \$6 billion expenditure budget was on target. And he goes forward by talking about things of the past and demanding to know what kind of a policies are going on.

Mr. Minister, I'm going to read a quote. And I want you to . . .

**The Speaker:** — And I would like to be able to hear the quote. I ask the members to tone it down a bit. Once again, I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like the members opposite, including the opposition leader, to determine who made this quote. Is this the Minister of Finance or is this Leader of the Opposition? The quote reads:

The economic forecast assumes an average crop in both quantity and quality annually through to the end of the forecast period. A poor harvest, as a result of drought or other causes, would detract from economic growth while a bumper crop would add to the province's economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, do you know whose quote that is? That is the Minister of Finance in this current budget. Are revenues and expenditures on target?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite don't know that the economy of Saskatchewan is affected by commodity prices, there's not much I can say to help the members opposite. Although, although I do note that the opposition Finance critic is now taking the same acting lessons as the Leader of the Opposition has apparently been taking.

But I want to inform the members opposite and I want to inform the House, Mr. Speaker, not what the Finance critic from the opposition says but what the Investment Dealers Association of Canada say. They say the province is running its fiscal affairs in a very responsible and prudent way, they say, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say this while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, what we are not going to do in this province is adopt the remedy of the Fraser Institute, which is to get rid of all the business taxes and put a bunch of new PST (provincial sales tax) sales taxes on consumers, on individuals, harmonize the PST and the GST (goods and services tax).

And what does the member from Weyburn say, Mr. Speaker, quoted in the *Weyburn Review*, she says and I'm quoting: "Brenda Bakken feels the report echoes what the Saskatchewan Party has been saying for years." In other words, talk to the people, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Firefighting Costs

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Environment minister. There are municipalities in Saskatchewan that could be bankrupted by bills amounting to millions of dollars in this province for fighting forest fires.

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities has

asked the government to waive any charges with respect to helicopters, water bombers, and provincial firefighting crews. So far all they've heard is that the province has set up a committee to find out how these costs should be handled. Mr. Speaker, I asked this question yesterday and so did the media. None of us got an answer.

Will the minister explain who is on this committee, what are the terms of reference, and when is the committee expected to reach a decision on assistance for communities?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, there is no question that on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan that I want to emphasize that there is a lot of compassion, a lot of sympathy for the many people that lost homes, and the many challenges that people have faced throughout this very difficult fire season.

I think, as a province, we want to stand next to the RMs (rural municipality), and next to the towns, and next to the people of the North who've had a dramatic effect on their life, adverse effect, in the sense that they've had their life disrupted and certainly many of their lands under threat from fire. And we want to stand next to them, Mr. Speaker.

And what I'll point out to that member, Mr. Speaker, is we do have a plan. Normally this government covers many of those costs. And what you have to understand is in this partnership approach, we will stand with the RMs, we'll work with them to a very solid conclusion on how to deal with some of the challenges of fire seasons. Especially this year where we've had a dramatic effect, a dramatic increase in fires, Mr. Speaker. We will stand with them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister came nowhere near answering the question. And with stickhandling like that, Mr. Speaker, the minister's political career is going to come to an end just as quickly as his mediocre hockey career came to an end.

Mr. Speaker, the minister told the media and I quote:

We want to foster local . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. No hitting under the belts, please.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the minister said, and I quote:

We want to foster local responsibility when it comes to firefighting.

I think that means perhaps the minister has been listening to the federal government because that's the same approach that they're taking with farm families. This is the minister's bureaucratic way of telling RMs (rural municipality) that they're out of luck.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a commitment to the

community of Nipawin and surrounding RMs for disaster assistance. He completely blindsided his own Minister of Public Safety in the process. Is it fair to expect that other communities would expect the same treatment?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why the Premier promised disaster assistance for Nipawin if they weren't prepared to offer municipalities the same assistance for firefighting? And maybe this time we can get a big-league answer, Mr. Minister.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, I can tell that member has been playing hockey once too often without a hockey helmet and . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — And I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, as we've said time and time again in this Assembly, that we're going to stand next to the RMs. There is certainly a plan in process that we're undertaking to address this very serious challenge, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point out that he should expect within the next couple of weeks — this is for the media as well — that within the next couple of weeks they should expect an answer to some of the work that we've been doing, because it has been a very tough firefighting season and many RMs have been adversely affected as I've mentioned, Mr. Speaker.

So it's very important to point out is that we're not going to have an ad hoc approach. We're going to have a very thorough approach. There are many things that the RMs are capable of doing and they have been doing. There are many things that we will do to help, Mr. Speaker. We will stand with the RMs and the many communities that have had this challenge facing them time and time again.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, why did that member and that party vote against the new firefighters that we hired in last year's budget? Then they have the audacity to get up and criticize that, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — There's only, there's only one thing consistent about the NDP: they consistently don't provide answers.

Mr. Speaker, we know there is nothing in the Forest Fire Contingency Fund because the NDP moved that money to the General Revenue Fund so they could fudge the budget. Now the Minister of Finance says he estimates the NDP will pay anywhere from 10 to \$50 million over budget this year due to the severe fire year we've had so far.

Yet, the Premier promised Nipawin to help deal with its fire bills and other RMs are also requesting that same kind of assistance because they can't possibly cope with the \$3 million worth of bills that they face.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Environment, isn't it true that the NDP are now trying to weasel out of their commitment because of their budget difficulties? Will the minister commit that there will actually be financial assistance for communities?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, let me explain to that peewee player there that we are going to address this issue in a very timely fashion, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that we've asked for a couple of weeks to respond to this matter.

And as opposed to us taking criticism and taking suggestion for a party that never understood finances, Mr. Speaker, I will not take direction from that member from that party, from that member and that party that voted against a budget to increase firefighting, Mr. Speaker. I will not take any, any message from that party or that, or that member on how to manage the finances of this province, nor will I take any advice on how to fight fires, Mr. Speaker.

We have a Minister of Finance and a Premier and a government that's saying today that we're going to fight the fires no matter what the cost. We're going to stand next to the RMs. We're going to come up with a solution, Mr. Speaker, that's going to be a timely solution, Mr. Speaker. And to me, that is good progress, Mr. Speaker, and that is a good game plan.

And again, I ask the members opposite, you have the audacity to stand up today and complain about forest fires . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday and today again, we've had the minister talk about consulting with communities. A lot of these communities haven't even received invoices from Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Manager. Mr. Speaker, they don't even have any way of determining what those costs are going to be, whether they're shared or not.

Mr. Speaker, we are also . . .

**The Speaker:** — Sorry. Order, please, members. Order. Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Mr. Speaker, now the official opposition is getting phone calls from individuals who are extremely angry about the fact that they're not being allowed to volunteer for firefighting in their own immediate areas. They are being refused access, in some cases, to their own land, to fight fires. Could the minister explain to us when and why are volunteers being refused access to fight fires in their own areas?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we always have a coordinated approach to the many challenges of fighting fires. We often incorporate volunteer fire departments and many people are conscripted to firefight. And recently, Mr. Speaker, we've upgraded many people's skills and training to make sure that they're safe out there fighting fires.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we take a very solid approach to the manner in which we fight fires. And we appreciate the many volunteers that are out there and to the many community members that want to fight to protect their communities. We appreciate that. But safety and progress are so very important to us. We want to make sure that we know where everybody is at all times, Mr. Speaker.

So I would point out it is about strong leadership; it is about making sure that we respond to the growing threat against our communities and to . . . against our RMs. And I would say to you, let the professionals firefight — the same professionals that you voted against . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I have done this before — order, members — I've done this before but I would once again bring to the attention of the hon. member from Athabasca to complete all of his remarks through the Chair and not to repeat. And I would ask you to pay . . . ask the member to pay special attention to that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Softwood Lumber Industry

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry and Resources. In early May, the Saskatchewan Party raised the question of how American turfs . . . tariffs against Canadian softwood lumber would affect the . . . our Saskatchewan lumber industry. The Saskatchewan Party presented a motion that if a conference of the Western provinces was held to develop a united position in response to the US (United States) farm Bill, there should also be a discussion and a position taken on the softwood lumber tariffs as well.

The NDP did not allow debate on the motion and they didn't allow it to go to a vote in the House. Now the headlines are starting to tell the story. They're telling a story about how the softwood lumber tariffs are costing jobs in Saskatchewan's lumber industry. Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP ignored the impact US softwood lumber tariffs are having on Saskatchewan?

(14:15)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member will remember when this issue was first raised that there were significant meetings in Ottawa, significant work done to ensure that Saskatchewan's interests were protected. The industry was onside with the position we took, Mr. Speaker, and we took that position to Ottawa. There was a concerted effort on the part of all the provinces and the federal government to meet the US challenge here, Mr. Speaker.

That work continues. That work is the responsibility of the federal government. We've done everything we can with the

industry to be onside with that position, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do that and we'll continue to make sure that every effort is made to protect Saskatchewan and Canadian softwood lumber workers.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We now have a new logger.

Mr. Speaker, *Sask trends monitor* reports that employment in the forestry and lumber industry has dropped by 33 per cent so far this year. Total employment in forestry, logging, and wood products is now only at 2,500 jobs.

The Weyerhaeuser mill in Big River has told employees that they will be shutting down for at least four weeks this summer instead of the usual two weeks. Vice-president Steve Smith says it's directly due to how low prices are and the countervail duty. In fact, most mills in the province have either laid off people or are running out . . . or running just at the break-even point due to the trade penalties.

Mr. Speaker, what action has been taken by the NDP to lobby the federal government for trade injury support of this industry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond on behalf of the government to say that the government is well aware of the impact on the forest industry that the softwood lumber dispute has had, not only here but across Canada. It's an unfortunate circumstance and we know that and we believe that the actions by the Americans are unfair. We have taken that position to the disputes and to the discussions along with our federal counterparts.

And it is unfortunate that it has had some impact on our job numbers as it relates to dimensional lumber here in the province, not only in Big River, but in La Ronge and other sawmills across our province. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we will continue to work to ensure fairness in trade whether it's in the softwood lumber industry, or whether it's in our agricultural commodities in which we would like to trade in a fair and a non-distorted marketplace.

But I want to say in closing, Mr. Speaker, that it's very apparent that the smile that was brought to the face by that member when he recognized that there were fewer jobs in the forest industry because of the trade dispute, is very disconcerting.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## 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 412 and 413.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to questions 412 and 413 have been tabled.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

#### Motions for Interim Supply

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Chair, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, guests who are in the west gallery today, Dave Coleman and daughter, Glenna, who live in the northwest corner of the city. Dave is a teacher at Elsie Mironuck School.

And they were also part of my congregation at St. James where Glenna often helped her mother, Jean, teaching Sunday school. So I'd invite all members to welcome them here to the Assembly as they are able to take some time and watch the proceedings. Please join me in welcoming them.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

#### Motions for Interim Supply

**The Chair:** — I would invite the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials when he's ready.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today is, to my left, is Mr. Ron Styles, the deputy minister of Finance; to my right is Mr. David Pratt, who is the senior analyst with taxation and intergovernmental affairs. Behind Mr. Styles is Ms. Lori Taylor who is the manager of the financial management branch of the provincial comptroller's division.

Behind me is Mr. Glen Veikle the assistant deputy minister of the treasury board branch. Behind Mr. Pratt is Mr. Dennis Polowyk who is the assistant deputy minister of the treasury and debt management division.

And, Mr. Chair, I would like to move resolution no. 1:

That a sum not exceeding \$477,941,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 2003.

And I so move.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you. Thank you, very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to first extend my appreciation to the minister's officials for being in attendance this afternoon for a number of items. The first being the interim supply.

Mr. Minister, the request that you have given to us today is for one-twelfth of which was similar to the last request. And interestingly enough, Mr. Minister, during the debate that just occurred in the legislature during question period — or not necessarily the debate, exchange of questions and answers — you indicated that for the last three years, I believe, there have been no requests for an interim supply prior to June 30, and you indicated that it was not necessary.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, since there seems to be some indication that this House is not going to sit to the end of July, it will end sometimes in the next week or two, could you indicate to the people of Saskatchewan why you felt it was appropriate to introduce an interim supply Bill today rather than wait for the budget to be passed?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Chair, I do not believe that I said the words that were just attributed to me by the opposition Finance critic in question period. I believe I referred to what occurred last year in 2001.

The member said that I said something about what occurred the last three years. In fact, I did not so state. But what I did state to the House, which of course is correct, is that the procedure we're following this year with respect to interim supply is precisely the same procedure that we followed last year insofar as the month of June is concerned. Which is that we have not, when we're going into July and hoping to pass the main appropriation Bill early on in July, we have not passed an interim supply Bill.

And I point this out because the member from Kelvington-Wadena said in the media last year that we, you know, every year in the last week of June there would be an interim supply Bill which is actually contrary to the facts, Mr. Chair.

And then this morning in the *Leader-Post* and *StarPhoenix* we had the columnist Murray Mandryk in fact saying, and I quote:

... it happened to have passed an interim supply bill last year in June before returning to wrap up the 2001 session in early July.

And in fact, even though the media and the opposition have stated to the public that this is something done at the end of June, that has not been the case. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Chair, what the opposition and Mr. Mandryk say is simply factually 100 per cent incorrect, and I want to point that out.

The difference between last year and today is that last year the government, through the House Leader, was able to negotiate with the opposition to pass the main Appropriation Bill on a certain day, which turned out to be July 7. And it was not necessary to have an interim supply Bill because we knew the budget would be passed by July 7.

This year — and the public should know this too, Mr. Chair — the opposition has not come to an agreement with the government, as I understand it, or if it has up until this morning, I have not been so informed. The opposition has not agreed with the government on a specific time to pass the budget. And of course the budget has to be passed so that third parties, the

school boards and so on, that the opposition claims to be concerned about, can be paid and people can have their money, whether they're receiving social assistance or the teachers being paid or health districts needing money and so on.

And so, because we have not had that kind of co-operation from the opposition, I think it is prudent at this time to pass an interim supply Bill, and that's what we're asking the House to do. And since the opposition claims, Mr. Chair, to be concerned about the school boards as opposed to playing politics, I would think that the opposition would want to pass the interim supply Bill without too much complaint since the member from Kelvington-Wadena said in the media last week that the opposition wanted to do that at the earliest opportunity. So one wouldn't think this would be very controversial, notwithstanding the inaccurate statements being made by the opposition.

So I believe that an interim supply Bill is in order because I don't believe there's any agreement as to when the budget will be approved by the opposition. And out of respect for the third parties, we're going to present this interim supply Bill today.

I want to say to the member opposite as well that, contrary to the statements in the media by the opposition that somehow people are not going to be paid and that problems are going to be caused by a lack of an interim supply Bill last week, there is no such problem. And in fact I've spoken to the School Trustees Association and I'm advised that a few days' delay in getting their payment is not a problem for them; it doesn't create a major difficulty.

(14:30)

And there are ways, Mr. Chair, that if the opposition spent any time at all on thinking about solutions instead of running around the province saying that there was a crisis and the sky was falling, if they thought about it for a minute, there's some very easy ways to ensure that there are absolutely no interest costs to the school boards. But one would have to be interested in helping the school boards instead of playing politics in order to figure out how to save those interest costs.

We will figure out how to save those interest costs. I don't expect any co-operation from the opposition in that regard, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, we do intend to co-operate today but we also intend to have you provide factual information to the school boards and to the people of Saskatchewan.

And my first comment, Mr. Minister, requires that you clarify why you said that there would have been an appropriation Bill passed on July 7, when we adjourned the House last year on July 6. I've just checked with the Clerk's office and we did adjourn the House on July 6. And you make reference to the fact that the opposition did something on July 7. I think that needs clarification, Mr. Minister, because you are indeed factually incorrect.

Mr. Minister, you also have stated, you also have stated that school boards shouldn't be concerned and that no school boards

have indicated that there is a problem. Mr. Minister, I do want to read to you an e-mail sent out from Saskatchewan Learning, from a person who is . . . whose name is Lynn Hendry, and this is to boards right across the entire province, and it says this:

School finance of Saskatchewan Learning has been informed by Saskatchewan Finance that our total appropriation for the month of June will not be available prior to June 28. Some school divisions, including yours, may not receive the June grant payment until the legislature has passed the budget.

Thank you for your patience in this matter.

Mr. Minister, that's totally confusing to school boards. You're stating on one . . . in one instance that you're doing something different this year, that there's no agreement with the opposition. Well let me tell you that there was no agreement from your House Leader in terms of where we were moving with this session.

As a result, you did not introduce an interim supply Bill at the end of June. As a result school divisions have received this e-mail that says bear with us, but Saskatchewan Finance has told us because the budget isn't passed, we're not giving you any grant money. That's what message the Department of Learning has communicated throughout the entire province on behalf of the Department of Finance.

So, Mr. Minister, you have to come clean with the people of Saskatchewan here. Did the boards of Saskatchewan receive their money on June 28 which is the last business day of the year, which is the customary time for receiving that money? Or is it going to now be delayed as a result of the fact that we're dealing with an interim supply Bill today, being July 3?

There was no agreement prior to the House Leader of the government introducing a motion that shortened last week to allow for an extended long weekend. There was a change to the fact that we sat Friday hours last Thursday. You understood those things as well as every member in this House. Yet there was no interim supply.

Now you stand today and you say it's the opposition's fault. It's the opposition's fault that the press has now misled the public of Saskatchewan.

You've indicated two things today that seem to be misleading. One, we weren't even here on July 7 and two, there is a memo from the Department of Learning to the school divisions telling them, you're not getting your money because the budget hasn't been passed.

Well, Mr. Minister, what if we weren't going to adjourn in the next week or two? Would you not have had to have an interim supply to ensure that school divisions and all other third parties receive their money? I ask for your comments.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Chair, the member is correct that when I stated that we passed the budget last year on July 7, that was not correct. We passed the budget on July 6. That was simply an error in the date but . . . and it was given Royal Assent the same day.

In answer to the member's question, I would say this, Mr. Chair, that what we are talking about here is if an Appropriation Bill is passed today, that is an interim supply Bill on July 3, we're talking about payments to school divisions being two days late. That's what we're talking about, two days. The interest cost would be very minimal, Mr. Chair.

But what I intend to do, subject to the main budget being passed prior to the end of August, is to send out the September instalment, which is the next instalment for the school boards, two days early or three days early so that there will be no additional interest costs for school boards.

And as I say to the members opposite, I believe, Mr. Chair, that it's important, when third parties are involved, for the opposition and the government to proceed in a proactive, co-operative fashion. And so I'm suggesting to the opposition that we should pass the interim supply Bill as soon as possible so that we could even process payments today.

And the longer this discussion goes, Mr. Chair, the later it is today that those cheques may be processed, or perhaps they can't be processed until tomorrow now.

But I want to say to the member opposite that if we try to be co-operative and think about the school boards instead of politics, then what we could do is simply agree that the government can send the September payments two or three days early so that there's absolutely no extra interest costs for the school boards.

And from the point of view of the government, our concern, Mr. Chair, is not to prolong this or have a lot of political debate. Our concern is the third parties co-operating with the school boards. And I would ask for the members' co-operation in passing the interim supply at the earliest possible moment so that we can get that money out to the school boards, which is what we should be concentrating on, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Mr. Minister, I'd like to concentrate on the fact that a circular that comes from one of the departments, in this case Saskatchewan Learning, that says that Saskatchewan Finance has indicated that boards are not going to receive their money because the budget is not passed.

Mr. Minister, you know as well as I do that that implies that the opposition has held up passing the budget. Well I want you to indicate, for the record, that passing the budget — we are not going to pass the budget today — that that has nothing to do with the fact that school boards and hospital boards, etc., are going to receive their money; that that would take place anyways.

Mr. Minister, I also want to have you indicate to the people of Saskatchewan as to the fact that you did not request of the opposition any time prior to today that an interim supply Bill should be put forward. Would you clarify that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well traditionally, Mr. Chair, the legislature will have passed the budget by the end of June or very early in July. And last year we were able to obtain the agreement of the opposition to pass the budget, I said July 7 —

the member corrected me; it was actually July 6, and I acknowledge that — and we are hopeful that the opposition will agree to pass the budget at a fairly early date.

But I acknowledge that, with the member, that beyond my control or the control of the government, we don't have the agreement between the parties to pass the budget as of a certain date. So it seems prudent, in the interests of the school boards and other third parties, without that agreement, to have an interim supply Bill so that we can pay the third parties. And the government is asking for the co-operation of the opposition to pass an interim supply Bill so that we can get those monies out to third parties, and that's what we're trying to do here today.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, in the year 2000, the second interim supply was requested on May 26, which is before the new month of June. In 2001, it was requested on May 30, prior to the next month. And in fact this year the last time we dealt with the second interim supply was May 30, prior to the June month, month of June.

That enabled the Department of Finance, the Department of Learning to indeed ensure that the June transfers of grants were made on the correct date.

Mr. Minister, why did your department not present to this House last Monday, last Tuesday, an interim supply knowing full well that we were going to sit through a great portion of July?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well I want to accept responsibility for that, Mr. Chair, because I want the House to know and the public to know, as I stated publicly, that my officials advised the House business office on June 20 that we would not be proposing an interim supply Bill at the end of June. That was something that we very deliberately did. It's not something as the member from Kelvington-Wadena is accusing the government of that we forgot to do something, that we overlooked it. What we did was very deliberate, and I accept responsibility for that.

Our hope was that in this current week, right now or tomorrow, we would be passing the budget for the people of the province. As it transpires, the member has said we're not passing the budget this week. I accept that. I respect the role that the opposition plays and they'd like to stay here, and that's their right. And they like it here, their House Leader says, and I respect that. And a member says we don't mind working.

And I'll just comment on that, Mr. Chair, because that's another observation that was made by that member from Kelvington-Wadena last week — that somehow this happened because we did not want to work.

I want that member to know that I was at my constituency office early on Friday morning. I was not taking a holiday. And on Friday afternoon I was in one of their ridings at a public event where, Mr. Chair, they didn't even show up. So we were working on Friday.

I can't account for the whereabouts of the members of the opposition on Friday. I don't know what they were doing. I was working, and I think other members on this side of the House

were working.

But what I want to say to the member opposite, to answer the question, is that we did not do an interim supply Bill last week because we were hopeful that the opposition would agree to pass the budget this week. If the opposition does not wish to pass the budget this week, Mr. Chair, then an interim supply Bill is necessary and that's what we shall do.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Minister, this . . . Well, you said that you would hope that we avoid the politics and start to deal with what is right for the school boards and other third parties. I would venture to say that many of our MLAs had many different functions to attend last Friday and I take your comment as being an insult and I would hope that you would retract that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, also . . . I mean, Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. Also, Mr. Minister, last week, last week, in fact in the last 10 days, we've had new legislation introduced by government. New legislation that requires a time to actually deal with it in second readings and Committee of the Whole.

How would you have expected that the budget — after in fact your House Leader introduced a motion to shorten last week and not return until July 2 — how would you have expected the budget to either have been passed by June 27, or in fact I guess yesterday would have been the first opportunity. How did you make that type of deduction that indeed the budget would get passed in that short of notice when we were still getting, as an opposition, we were still getting new legislation? Could you indicate why you felt that way?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well there have been many occasions, Mr. Chair, where Bills have been passed in one day. In fact it is my hope — and I think the member has indicated it's his hope — that this very Bill, interim supply Bill we're talking about right now, would be passed today. And the fact is, Mr. Chair, that the business of the legislature can be concluded, you know, in a timely fashion.

Having said that, I want to make it perfectly clear that I respect the rights of all of the members of the legislature, and in particular the members of the opposition, to have full debate and ask questions that they need to ask about legislation. And that's the process that we're into now that we haven't quite wrapped up the business of the Legislative Assembly. We haven't passed the budget; we'll wait to do that until an appropriate time. And in the meantime, because we haven't passed the budget, an interim supply Bill this week is necessary and that's what we're doing.

And what we're asking the opposition for, Mr. Chair, is their co-operation in moving the interim supply Bill along so that we can pay the third parties and then they can go on asking other questions about the budget before we give final approval to the budget. And I fully respect that. And all we're asking for, Mr. Chair, is that the opposition co-operate with us so that we can make payments to the third parties, including the school boards.

And really, that's what it's all about. It's about getting that

money out to the third parties. And once again I would ask the member for his co-operation and the co-operation of his colleagues to do that, Mr. Chair.

(14:45)

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Chair, while the minister asks for co-operation, I think what has to happen within the departments of government is there has to be better communication.

Mr. Minister, as of today's order . . . routine proceedings, there are four Bills in adjourned debates, there are 36 Bills in Committee of the Whole, and as you might be aware, Mr. Minister, of the departmental estimates, no estimates have been voted off.

You have indicated that it was your hope that the budget . . . and you respect the role that the opposition plays, and you had indicated that you felt that the budget should have been passed either last week or today or sometimes yesterday, I guess, is your other choice. How could you have expected that to occur?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Chair, people who observed the proceedings of the legislature will know that the business of the legislature usually has ended by the end of June. It doesn't always. And if it doesn't, I respect the role of the opposition to ask questions and continue debate on Bills.

But the fact of the matter is, in answer to the member's question, that if the House resolved to finish the business of the House and put those Bills through committee, that's what would happen, Mr. Chair. It hasn't happened, so we need an interim supply Bill and then we can continue getting to those Bills that are in Committee of the Whole and need to be completed, which is what the government wants to do and I think the opposition wants to do.

And once again, Mr. Chair, we're simply asking for the opposition's co-operation in putting an interim supply Bill through this House today so that we can get the money out to the school boards which the members opposite have indicated is a priority for them. It's also a priority for us. And all we're asking for is the co-operation of the members opposite in passing the interim supply motion that I've made.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, there's no question that the interim supply Bill that is being discussed today was required last week. There has been no agreement, there has been no consideration. And in fact, as I pointed out, the workload that we have before us will require us to be here for a number of days of July. I think your officials understood that.

In fact you have Saskatchewan Learning officials circulating to boards of education, not that they were expecting that the opposition would pass the budget on July 2 or 3 and indeed two or three days of being late is okay, they were implying that the budget is not passed and as a result, there is no money.

So I think, Mr. Minister, while you're trying to imply that the opposition has somehow misled the people, that somehow we've held up the things in this Legislative Assembly. That's simply not the case.

As I've pointed out to you in the routine proceedings of today we still have a large amount of work to be done and indeed we are now looking to doing extra work at nights and maybe sitting until 10 or 11 or midnight tonight and tomorrow night.

So, Mr. Minister, I think you have to come clean on this one and indicate to the people of Saskatchewan that the interim supply Bill presented last Monday would have been the right thing to do. It didn't take place based on the fact — and if you're to be taken at your word, which I do — you've indicated that you've said to the officials as early as June 20, I believe, or 21st that you weren't going to introduce that.

That's fine. But you have to communicate to people outside of your department that indeed it's not the opposition's fault that they didn't receive their grant payment on June 28, which is what these school boards are implying. They didn't get the payment because there was no interim supply and there was no budget passed.

Today there is no budget passed. There won't be one passed tomorrow. So we're dealing with the interim supply today. That's the procedure that probably should have taken place last Monday.

So I would ask you to clarify for the people of Saskatchewan the fact that indeed there is no budget being passed today, that school boards will receive their one-twelfth supply as a result of the passing of the interim supply today, but that could have been done last Monday or Tuesday.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Chair, I've already indicated to the House, and of course I'll indicate to the people, that it was our hope that the budget would be passed by now so we would not be doing interim supply.

Mr. Chair, the budget has not been passed. It apparently will not be passed today or tomorrow or the next day, so we need to have an interim supply motion to get the money out to the school boards. And all we're asking is for the co-operation of the opposition to do what they say they want to do, which is to pass an interim supply motion to get that money out to the school boards.

I've also indicated to the member opposite that no school board will incur any interest costs whatsoever because what we will simply do, assuming the budget's passed by the end of August or third week in August, is send the September payment out a number of days early equivalent to the two or three days late that the payment may be received for June or July.

And so no one will lose any money, there is no major problem. I've spoken to the School Trustees Association who say this is not a major monetary issue for them. And all we're asking for, once again, is for the co-operation of the opposition to pass the interim supply Bill so that we can get on with the other business of the House and so that the third parties can receive those cheques that the opposition says they want them to receive.

**The Chair:** — Why is the member for Cypress Hills on his feet?

**Mr. Elhard:** — To ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and to the assembled members and other guests in the House a family that has come to Saskatchewan, to Western Canada, to enjoy the beauty of our area, to see for themselves what Western Canada has to offer and also to pick up their daughter who has been an exchange student in the community of Eastend for the past year.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce to you today Gerd and Sigrid Heinze and their children, Torsten and Ute who was the exchange student. Would they please stand? Now they're from just outside of Berlin, Germany.

And I'd like all members to welcome them. And before you do that, I'd like to also introduce my wife Marilyn who is accompanying them around the city today. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'd like also to ask for leave to introduce a guest at this point.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, Mr. Chair. I see, sitting in your gallery, Mr. Jim Yuel who is a respected businessman in Saskatoon and also the former Chair of the regional economic development authority and named as one of the 10 most influential business people in Saskatchewan by the *Saskatchewan Business* magazine.

And I noticed, in the last edition, he wrote a letter pointing out that his next-door neighbour was named as one of the most influential labour leaders in Saskatchewan. So you can . . . They live side by side. I've been to at least one of those houses, Mr. Chair. And I'm sure that the most influential business leader and the influential labour leader have very interesting conversations over their back fence.

And I'd like all members to join with me in welcoming Jim Yuel to the legislature today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

#### Motions for Interim Supply

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, could you — while we've been talking about school boards today — could you indicate to the House whether any other third parties would have been affected by the fact that the last business day of June was on Friday, June 28 and whether or not, as a result of the interim supply Bill not being introduced

that they would not have received their grant payments — their appropriate grant payments for the month?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Chair, I believe that there would be many third parties that would be affected and would receive their cheques, you know two or three days later than otherwise.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I am pleased to hear that you're going to try to compensate boards by — that small amount of lost interest — by indeed providing a grant payment I guess in advance.

But I recall back in . . . previous ministers of Finance that that was a common practice where school divisions, in light of the fact that the budget wouldn't get passed in the . . . at its inception, there were many times when school divisions have received three months or two months in advance to indeed offset interest costs or those kinds of things. So I'm pleased to hear that school boards will receive that kind of payment.

Mr. Minister, the other questions that I have deal with your budget. Today in question period you did not comment on the current budget because you indicated that you did not have the available information to provide any different information on revenue or expenditures that is being provided in the budget. But, Mr. Minister, also included in this year's budget is the forecast or the estimated year-end of March 31, 2002, the fiscal year that just ended.

You indicated I think in your budget that last year there was . . . projected surplus for the year was going to be \$412,000. I'm assuming that we're going to see Volume 1 from the auditor very soon — sometimes in the next month, month and a half — but could you indicate to the people of Saskatchewan and to this House what the numbers are really showing for the fiscal year that just ended on March 31? Are we still looking at the estimated numbers that you have in your budget document for both the revenue and the expenditures?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well at this point, Mr. Chair, I would say that you know the numbers will be released when the public accounts are released, and I can't comment on what the numbers will be today.

But as I said to the member in the House, with respect to the current fiscal year and the forecast for this year, it's very difficult to put that together today because we don't have the returns from retailers, for example, who would remit their sales taxes for the end of June, which is the end of the first quarter, perhaps in August. So it will be some time before we can speculate on the first quarter. Or at least I can't see that being the case until toward the end of July.

But at that time when we release the public accounts — and we have been releasing them earlier than in the past — and put out the first quarter statement either at the same time or at some subsequent time, those numbers will certainly be made available to the member and to the public.

And I want to say that — the member's asking me for those numbers today, and I don't have them — but I want to say to the member that we're releasing those numbers faster than we've ever released them before. And we're making more

information public than we've ever made before.

And as soon as we have the first quarter numbers available, those numbers will be released to the member opposite and to the public. And that's the best that we can do today, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And yes, we look forward to the first quarter report, Mr. Minister, and by release of all those documents from your office.

Mr. Minister, though, my question still is connected to March 31 of this past year, 2002. And while the auditor is going to do a complete analysis, I'm wondering if your officials could indicate to the House today whether the projected . . . forecasted revenue of 5.957 billion, as indicated on page 12 of your document, and the expenditure for last year, which was to be March 31, 2002, which was to be 6.368 billion, which is on page 13, are those numbers accurate to what you still believe to be the numbers that have come in for the fiscal year? Because that quarter is long past, March 31 is long past, and I'm sure your officials have all the revenue numbers and all of the other things that were estimated in this document on March 27. We're now into the fourth month past since March 31.

So I understand your answer for this current fiscal year and I await your quarterly report at the end of July and I thank you for that. But can you tell us whether the March 31 projections for revenue and for expenditure on your documents are within reasonable expectations from what we could expect in the auditor's report?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well I want to make it perfectly clear, Mr. Chair, that I am not going to get into giving numbers about what is in the public accounts that have not been released yet. I will comment on the numbers when the public accounts come out.

But in answer to the question, I will say this to the member. The member asks, do I believe that the numbers will be within reasonable expectation, words to that effect, of what we projected them to be. The answer is yes, I do believe that. If anything, I believe that the numbers will be somewhat better than what we had projected. And I want to say to the member, I'm not going into any more detail other than our projections will be met, if not exceeded, when those public accounts are made public.

Motion agreed to.

(15:00)

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the officials from the Department of Finance for being here and assisting us today. And I also would like to thank the Finance critic and the members of the opposition for their co-operation in passing the first resolution for interim supply.

And with that, I would like to move resolution no. 2:

That towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, the sum of \$477,941,000 be granted out of the General Revenue

Fund.

And I so move.

Motion agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

## FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

## APPROPRIATION BILL

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly I move:

That Bill No. 80, The Appropriation Act, 2002 (No. 3) be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a first time.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly and under the rule 55(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### 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. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 57, The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, is a fairly substantive Bill by the size of the . . . the look of it. But I'm not so sure that it's as substantive in terms of what it does or accomplishes as the size of the paper might indicate.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill introduces some changes to SGI's (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) no-fault insurance provisions. What it's trying to accomplish is a recognition of the disappointment many people have had with no-fault coverage and is making allowances for a return to the tort system where individuals could use the legal system to address injuries and get compensation for injuries as a result of an accident. And we'll talk a little bit about whether or not this Bill accomplishes the intended purpose as expressed in the explanatory notes that accompany this particular Bill.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, no-fault insurance was introduced

to this province by the current administration in 1995. It was a significant departure from tradition, from legal jurisprudence, from insurance protection. We had never seen no-fault insurance in this province before and it was held up as a means of providing fair and reasonable coverage to most insurance holders while not allowing for exorbitant settlements which could potentially bankrupt the insurance business in this province.

And of course being that SGI is a government owned entity, the bankruptcy of that particular insurer was of paramount importance to the government at that time.

I'm not so sure that the reality matched the concern. There were substantial settlements being offered from time to time through the courts to aggrieved parties — people who had suffered injury. But whether or not that trend would have continued, whether or not the amounts would have escalated or continued at a high level is debatable. And the imposition of the no-fault insurance system brought a complete and total end to the tort system and the high insurance settlements.

But while it achieved a reduction in settlement costs on one hand, it also limited fairly significantly the payment for pain and suffering and injury to legitimate victims of accidents who for one reason or the other fell through the cracks as it pertained to the no-fault program that was introduced by SGI and the government in 1995.

It was apparent after a relatively short time, Mr. Speaker, that no-fault as designed and as implemented in the province of Saskatchewan was not going to meet in an adequate way the reality of many accident victims.

And without going into a lot of details on specific cases, every member of this House, and I'm sure including the government side, heard of cases where individuals were significantly injured in a bizarre type of accident sometimes and were offered absolutely no compensation or no assistance or no coverage through the new no-fault program.

And it was those types of situations, what one would often describe as hard cases, that it became apparent that there were serious shortcomings in the no-fault insurance program as we knew it.

There was one individual in this province who was determined as a result of her own rather unfortunate and unhappy experience to redress those kinds of circumstances. I'm referring to Ms. Lorie Terry who spearheaded a campaign by victims of no-fault to collect all of the information they could to encourage people who had suffered unnecessarily as a result of no-fault coverage to put their stories on paper and to make them public.

And Ms. Terry undertook a tireless campaign to make sure that the awareness level of the general public was raised to a point where everybody could see that no-fault as a concept might be wonderful, but in application, it could be a disaster.

No one, I don't think, realizes the significance of these types of programs until they personally suffer the consequences of that legislation, of that agenda, of that program.

So, Mr. Speaker, we had a committee of Victims of No Fault established, a committee that aggressively pursued a campaign to raise awareness of the issues and went from community to community around this province hearing of specific cases, testimony from individuals who were victims of this particular type of insurance coverage.

I believe every member of this legislature was eventually presented with a compilation of those case histories. I had a stack of three or four very detailed and complete testimonials on the floor of my office.

It was an immense effort by that committee to bring attention to this very unfair and unyielding insurance system. Mr. Speaker, sometimes it takes people of immense determination to develop and to initiate, I suppose, first of all, a campaign to raise awareness in those kinds of situations.

And because of the determination of one individual, several came together; many ultimately were represented. But what we saw was an impact made with the government to the extent that they were willing to accede to the fact that they had been in error by introducing no-fault alone.

This particular piece of legislation is an admission by the current government that no-fault insurance, while on paper looking so attractive, was not what it was intended to be or what was expected of it. It was a failure. And what this particular piece of legislation does in Bill 57, it allows for members of our society to choose the type of coverage they want, whether they want protection through the no-fault system or if they want protection through the legal system, commonly known as tort.

It will give people a choice and it will give people protection of varying types at varying levels. There are some serious risks associated with the choice that individuals will have to make, however. And it is the fear of many people who have looked at the present Bill that even though the option of using the legal system to redress injury claims, even though that's available to them, it may be so expensive or it may be undermined in some way that it in practicality will not work.

So I think that we have questions about whether or not Bill 57 will achieve the genuine option of choosing on behalf of the motoring public. There will be a choice but whether or not it will be an adequate choice, a choice that is of benefit to the individual making the choice, remains to be seen.

Part of the original legislation that introduced no-fault into this province contained a provision for a review after five years. The opportunity to look at no-fault as a workable or unworkable insurance system was subject to review according to the initial, introductory legislation.

(15:15)

We don't see the same commitment to review with this current Bill, Mr. Speaker. I think that's one of the shortcomings of this particular piece of legislation. There is not an option for review; there's no offering of a review opportunity made in this legislation.

And it would quite possibly be improved if the government had

considered making that type of review opportunity available right in the legislation so that people who wanted to avail themselves of the tort system would know that if there was a failure or a weakness in that particular system that it might be redressed and looked at by the government at a date some time in the future.

But that is not available to them according to this piece of legislation. And I think that's one area that we should look at in terms of improving this particular Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose the big question here is: why did it take the NDP government seven years to admit that they were wrong on this particular piece of legislation? Why did it take seven years?

You know one of the signs of leadership, I believe, is to look at what you've done and if it's plainly been an error, if it's clearly been a mistake, to admit to the mistake, to make the appropriate corrections, and to move on.

This government, in almost every instance, has been determined to refuse responsibility for mistakes made. And I think that's one of the weaknesses of the current NDP administration. Not that they don't have the ability to make change, it's their refusal to make change. And in this instance it took seven years to correct an injustice in terms of insurance protection for the people of Saskatchewan.

This legislation came in in 1995, as we mentioned earlier, and we have seen, individually as members of this legislature, as members of the official opposition, and as members of the government, we've seen people's lives affected in some of the most disappointing and debilitating ways. When people have suffered injury as a result of accident to be this unfairly treated, as has often been the case under no-fault, it is not just a shame, it's an abrogation of justice. And I hold the NDP government accountable for their lack of leadership in that particular area.

Mr. Speaker, the agents that provide coverage to the motoring public on behalf of SGI also have some concerns as they pertain to this particular piece of legislation.

We have been informed that they have just recently become aware of the intended changes as accorded in Bill 57, but nobody as yet has received any training as to how they are to treat the motoring public when they come to individual SGI agents and ask for coverage for their insurance purposes with their vehicles.

And I believe that this Bill is going to take effect reasonably soon after passage. I haven't heard specifically from the government when they plan to proclaim it but I would assume that their intention would be to move on it fairly soon after passage. And if that's the case then the SGI agents in this province should already be aware of the implications of these changes and how they can best advise their clients.

It's going to be a difficult day for the individual who goes into an insurance agent's office to buy protection, to buy coverage for their vehicles, without knowing what it is specifically they are being asked to buy, or what they are being asked to compare.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we will see many, many individuals in this province faced with a dilemma. They will be at the counter of their insurance agent and saying, can you tell me some details? Can you give me some examples of how this new insurance option through tort will work?

And the agents, being unskilled or untrained in this particular area, will not be able to advise them properly. They know that they will probably be paying more for the tort option but will it provide them the security and the safety and the protection that they require as a member of the motoring public?

You know we've discussed this particular piece of legislation several times. And one of the interesting comments that I heard today was from an individual who travels a lot and who's had occasion to hit deer on the highway from time to time. And he said, you know when it comes right down to it, the people who are going to be most happy with no-fault insurance are the people who are hitting deer most commonly because no-fault insurance provides them protection that insurance through the tort system may well not provide for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, if that is the most that the no-fault system has to commend it to the motoring public, I can see where there are going to be a lot of people who would want to bail out from that particular type of coverage.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other problems as we look at this particular piece of legislation, over and above the difficulty of the agents not being trained or not being prepared or not being adequately versed in the changes and the implications of this legislation, is the motoring public themselves. What kind of efforts will be undertaken by SGI to inform people looking for proper insurance coverage? What kind of efforts will be made by the government of the day, their insurance company — Saskatchewan Government Insurance — to let people know what their options might be? What efforts will be undertaken?

Will they undertake a campaign that has something more than a happy face on it? Will they undertake a campaign that promises so much more in terms of discounts if you have a safe driving record but in reality applies to virtually nobody in the province? Will we see some hard, specific facts on these changes?

Will there be a public relations campaign? Will there be a direct mail-out? Will there be an effort on behalf of the government's insurance agency to really clearly and specifically delineate what the options are and what the alternatives might be and what the pros and cons might be of any decision that the motoring individual might want to make?

Mr. Speaker, the reality is, I believe, that this government has introduced this legislation in response to tremendous pressure. And it didn't come, I don't believe, from the legal profession who might stand to benefit from this.

And as a matter of fact, having mentioned the legal profession, they haven't really jumped on the bandwagon and promoted the tort proposals that the government is touting here. So I would take from that that they're not all that impressed with the option as has been introduced by the government.

But we need to, we need to look at who will benefit the most

from the way this particular Bill has been manufactured and written and promoted by the government. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that SGI will benefit the most. Because while the government will be able to say, we introduced legislation to allow for a choice on vehicle insurance, the decision will be so favoured, so loaded on the side of no-fault insurance, that only those people absolutely determined to get out from under no-fault will even consider the option. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that's a fair choice. I don't believe that that's really giving people a fair opportunity to make that kind of a decision. If the decision is so potentially weighted in favour of one side as opposed to the other, there really exists no choice at all.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation will provide exactly that kind of a situation.

So we are concerned that while the tort option has now become available, it will not be as appealing as it might have been. It will not serve the interests of the motoring public as well as it might have. And it might be something that's really been done for public relations purposes by the government, some cosmetic changes I guess is one way to describe that, when in fact it could have been so much more.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has raised the issue of no-fault insurance over the past several years repeatedly in this legislature. We have gotten to know some of the victims of no-fault insurance personally. We have understood the tragedy that has befallen them as a result of no-fault insurance, and we feel strongly that an injustice has been done to many of those people.

We looked forward to the introduction of these changes as a means of addressing those inequities but, Mr. Speaker, in many ways this particular Bill falls far short of our expectations.

This Bill or a very small part of it, Mr. Speaker, allows for the safer driver recognition program. I think we alluded to that a little earlier, about the little happy face that showed up in the mail. A nice bright yellow colour, big grin, two black . . . coal black eyes, and a little bit of a dab on the nose. And as I mentioned earlier while the campaign made you feel good when you looked at that happy face, when you looked at the details it was sadly lacking as well.

I understand that while there are individuals who might benefit from safe driver deductions or reductions in their policy premiums, many, many people in this province have been excluded. I had a couple of calls to my office shortly after the information material, or the introduction material, showed up in the mail. And one of the individuals that called my office is a commercial truck driver. He's not a long-haul truck driver and he doesn't run heavy rigs around the province, but he has a . . . he has a business whereby he hauls small loads of cattle and machinery from farm dealerships to farm locations and maybe he does odds and ends of that type, hauls various types of machinery around the province.

He also is a . . . has a route, a delivery route for one of the major daily newspapers in this province. And he picks the papers up at 6:30 or 7 in the morning and drives all through the southwest part of the province delivering those papers to communities. I

would . . . I would estimate he probably takes in maybe 8 or 10 different communities in the Southwest. So he makes quite a circuit.

This gentleman is on the road all the time. He would put on literally hundreds of thousands of kilometres in a year and he has a very good driving record. But because he's a commercial operator, he is ineligible — ineligible for the safe driver discount that was introduced with such fanfare earlier this spring.

The other people that I think have been put off by this particular program are those individuals who jointly own vehicles, whether it's a husband and wife whose name is on the registration of their car or truck, or some other arrangement. If there's more than one name on the registration of a vehicle, those two individuals, no matter how safe their driving record might be, are ineligible for the safe driver discount.

I've heard of similar and several other types of examples where people are automatically eliminated from the safe driving discount because they don't fall within a very narrow category. And having looked at it, Mr. Speaker . . . I'm going to make some assumptions here. But having looked at the criteria, who qualifies and who doesn't for the safe driving discount, I would say that SGI has undertaken a massive publicity campaign to promote safe driving but only a very, very few people will benefit from the program as it currently exists.

The criteria are so narrow that it looks to me the only people who could possibly benefit would be single drivers, maybe 25 and under. Now I suppose there will be some older than that. I might be going to extremes with my assertion.

But there's so many people who do not qualify, so many people who would ordinarily qualify because of their marital status or because of the fact that their vehicle is registered in a company name or they undertake driving for commercial purposes — when those people do not qualify, how many people does that leave who will qualify? And I think, Mr. Speaker, that SGI has actually undertaken a publicity campaign in such a way that it's become a cruel hoax for the people who would ordinarily be considered safe drivers.

(15:30)

Maybe it's an attempt to bring more responsibility to drivers who are youthful and exuberant and who don't think that there's any consequences to their driving behaviour, I'm not sure. But as it looks right now, it would appear that that was the ultimate intent of SGI — to get young people to be more responsible in their driving.

However, having said that, there is at this point, I think, substantial interest in seeing the government proceed with legislation that would compensate for the failures of the no-fault legislation that has been with us since 1995. And while we see some weaknesses in this Bill, as we've alluded to earlier, while we see it as maybe underwritten and maybe not as specific or as directly beneficial to the people who are looking for alternatives in terms of their insurance coverage, we will not stand in the way of this particular piece of legislation. And we hope that after some considerable time in Committee of the Whole that

the government will accept some possible suggestions from the official opposition as how this Bill can be approved . . . improved.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move that Bill 57 be moved to Committee of the Whole.

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

### Bill No. 70

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 70 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to talk about Bill No. 70, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002.

I think, Mr. Speaker, first off we have to go back a little bit in the history of the hog operation of this province. There was a time not long ago when the hog operation was quite a small industry in this province, and governments and industry had encouraged the hog operation to grow. And, Mr. Speaker, it has grown to the extent now where the hog industry employs about 8,000-plus people. It has an economic impact of about \$289 million with about 30-some million dollars going into direct wages.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that this is a success story. And if it's a success story, then why are we attacking it? Why is the government bringing in labour laws that could jeopardize the hog industry?

Mr. Speaker, it appears that when something is successful in this province the government . . . the NDP government has a propensity of trying to control it, take over it, or attack it. And that's the case that it appears in The Labour Standards Act in relation to the hog industry.

Mr. Speaker, the labour legislation that's before us is quite a complex, complex set of rules. In here we have a government that has a feeling that one size fits all, that we can include the hog operation into the same legislation as governs shopping malls, as an example, and I don't see that as being correct. It's obviously a different and unique industry and here we have a government that tries to put it into the same package as every other industry such as shopping malls.

And a concern, Mr. Speaker, of all of us is putting the hog operation under The Labour Standards Act puts . . . what's next? What is the next step? And that's a fear from an awful lot of people in the hog industry. Is unionization going to be forced upon them as the next step? And also what other part of the agriculture industry is going to be affected? Is the livestock industry going to be affected? Is it going to come under the same jurisdiction? If we expand and have large feedlot operations, are they going to be subjected to The Labour Standards Act? How about larger farms? And how about mixed operations?

And I don't think we have a clear understanding yet about a mixed operation.

How about a hog operation plus a farming operation? Is that going to be subjected to The Labour Standards Act? Those are all questions that people outside of the legislature have and that's where we're getting an awful lot of our questions and concerns from, Mr. Speaker.

So when we look at the hog operation and how it's progressing and expanding in this province, one really has to stand and wonder, what are we doing? What are we putting this Labour Standards Act in place for? Do we really know why, the ultimate reason that we're doing it?

I think the main reason is because the Premier, in his bid for the leadership of the NDP Party, had said that he was going to. He said that to satisfy the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. And I believe that's the only reason that it's being pushed through and pushed through in this session.

Does it make any sense for the industry? Definitely not. The pork producers definitely are not in favour of this. Mr. Speaker, the government is now rushing into putting this Bill through and it's been without meaningful consultation. Now the government has suggested that they have had a consulting process and that is a bit of a laugh to say the least, Mr. Speaker.

A consultation process. The government says they're forming a committee and going through a consultation process. Well I'd just like to talk about the committee that they had. There was three employers including three pork producers representing the spectrum of the industry. Employees included one hog barn worker for Saskatchewan's only unionized commercial hog operation, and two non-industry employees: one from the Grain Services Union and one from the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union.

Now is this consultation with the industry? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out this was a predetermined set-up case of a committee going out and getting the answers that the government wanted before they even went out. In other words, Mr. Speaker, here's the answer we want from you, committee, so you go out and consult with a couple or three or four or five people that are really onside with us and come back with this answer. Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not consider that a consultative process. Now I can suggest that in my constituency I have a number of hog operators and I can suggest that not one of them was consulted, not one.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I visit with people that work in the hog industry in my constituency, I can relay some of their fears and concerns. One is, what does this Bill do?

The employers are extremely happy the way it is. The employees are extremely happy the way it is. Why in the world would we want to introduce something that is going to change that? It really does not make sense, if everybody's happy except the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour — thus, ergo the NDP government. And that is why this Bill is being introduced.

And now the next step as I suggested, Mr. Speaker, is unionization. And I spoke with members from one of the hog

barns in my constituency and they are 100 per cent against unionization — 100 per cent. Every member there says they will fight against unionization. And these individuals are extremely happy the way things are right now in their hog barn. So why in the world are we going to try to change it?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we look at what's going on in Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan. We talk about rural revitalization. We totally agree. We need to revitalize rural Saskatchewan.

How do we do it? Value-added. Let's go with our strengths. What are our strengths in rural Saskatchewan? I'm going to use southern Saskatchewan where my constituency is. One of the strengths that we have is lots of agricultural land. We know diversification is essential now to stay afloat in agriculture. So what can we do? We can add hog operations; we can add extensive livestock operations. And with those comes value-added industry such as feed mills, ethanol.

But now we introduce legislation that is going to have an extreme impact on expanding these industries. And why? It is because investors are not going to want to come to a province that is going to be totally controlled by labour.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have heard from companies and I have talked to companies who come into Saskatchewan, they have a look . . . We've got a great province here; there's no doubt about it. But companies come in here and they have a look and they turn around and will go back — so many of them go back — for two basic reasons. And I've heard more than a few that have said the two basic reasons they will not come into Saskatchewan is, one, your labour laws; the other is your labour attitude.

So why, why in the world are we going to introduce more stringent labour legislation when we're already chasing businesses out of this province because of very stringent labour laws and labour attitude?

Now who wants this? Is it the people of the province? No. It's the government to support the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

Now we look at, look at revitalization of rural Saskatchewan — in fact, in all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We look at the hog industry, and where can it go? We've grown from 1997 until now to a 1.8 million hog industry in this province, with projections that in three years we can double. In three years the hog production in this province could double.

What would that do for this province? It would create something in the neighbourhood of 10,000 new jobs — in three years. Mr. Speaker, we are talking on this side of the House how we can create 100,000 jobs in 10 years. In three years the hog industry alone could create 10,000 new jobs.

Look at that compared to the record of what's going on under the leadership or lack of leadership of the NDP government. We've lost 25,000 jobs in the last few years — 25,000. And yet we get a little hurrah from the government side because the stats out the other day were that we've got a few of those jobs back. The net is still a loss of about 15,000 jobs.

So here we have, here we have a hog operation, a hog production, a hog industry that in three years could double — create another 10,000 jobs, direct and indirect. And what do we have the government doing? Bringing in legislation that is going to inhibit the investors to grow the hog industry.

Mr. Speaker, that just does not make sense.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we look at, we look at what happened, like I mention in the consultation or lack of consultation that was announced. The government and the Minister of Labour out of the blue announced that this is going to happen, we're going to introduce a Labour Standards Act. Well, it didn't take long for the hog industry to reply.

(15:45)

But also, Mr. Speaker, the chamber of commerce. And here are the issues as the business sector sees them. And I would like to read these into the record — into the record as the business sector sees them.

1. It is discriminatory to segregate the (pork) industry from the rest of agriculture . . .

I think we would all agree on that.

- (It must be made clear) . . . how this legislation will affect the 95% of producers that are mixed operators.

Again that is one that I just spoke to — how are we determining the hog operators, the mixed operators, and where is it going to go. In the piece of legislation, it really doesn't say anything to those numbers or how it's going to work. So therefore what is it going to do — come in regulation, again, where it's not going to be debated in this House.

3. There must be clarity (of future intention) . . .

Does the government intend to later bring other agriculture sectors or all of agriculture, including the family farms, under the Act?

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very valid question: bringing family farms and ranches under the Act. Can you imagine, can you imagine, a cow-calf operation that has to come under The Labour Standards Act?

How do we have, how do we have people under this Act that are going out and calving heifers in the spring? Are we going to try and do selective breeding so they're only calving between 8 and 4? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. So it's totally ludicrous to even contemplate this coming under The Labour Standards Act.

Number four:

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

And that's what I was just referring to, Mr. Speaker. The

economic analysis, was there any economic analysis done on this? Absolutely not. How could we have a government stand up with a hip shot and say, we're going to introduce labour legislation at any cost? Well if there's an economic analysis done, I would assure you, I would assure this House, that if we're going to introduce a Labour Standards Act that this industry will not grow, or will not grow at a rate as if it was left alone. And again I would suggest that if it's left the way it is, investors will come. We've got to get rid of that government first, but then investors will come and they will come in force.

Mr. Speaker, the chamber passed a resolution I would like to read into the record. The chamber passed the following resolution:

(The) government should pull back legislation from this session and engage in a complete and fair consultation with the pork industry and (its) stakeholder groups . . . (and with agriculture and agribusiness in general, and they) should clearly identify issues and costs and assess impact on growth and sustainability of the pork industry.

It's not too much to ask. It's not too much at all to ask, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, I'm a firm believer that this piece of legislation is going to do nothing to help the hog industry. It's going to do nothing to help jobs in the hog industry in this province. It's going to do nothing to help rural revitalization. The only single thing that I can see that this legislation is going to do is to satisfy the Premier's statement that he was going to bring in this legislation, and this statement is totally and solely to satisfy the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

The division bells rang from 15:50 until 16:00.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

#### Yeas — 30

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, order. Order, please. Order. Voting will proceed.

Jones	Higgins	Trew
Wartman	Thomson	Yates
McCall	Hillson	

#### Nays — 25

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### 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. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments regarding Bill No. 72 before we allow the Bill to move forward to committee. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, if we had our druthers, we probably would like to see this Bill die and be reassessed because while there's some improvements . . . the Bill brings forward some improvements for injured workers, there are a number of questions that the Bill doesn't address, Mr. Speaker, and I think we need to speak to those.

The facts are, Mr. Speaker, you look at the Bill, and I believe what the Bill does, it increases some of the costs that injured workers have had to deal with in the past, such as burial costs have been increased from 5 to \$10,000.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you think that a family may have lost a loved one due to an injury related to the workplace and then find that in today's age that \$5,000 was all they were afforded to help cover the costs of dealing with that tragedy, it's certainly imperative that that be looked at that appropriately. And the Bill does recognize the fact that \$5,000 doesn't go very far in dealing with situations surrounding the death of a loved one in an industrial accident. And so the movement from 5 to \$10,000, Mr. Speaker, is certainly appropriate.

We're certainly not disputing the fact, as well, that the average maximum wage cap, which goes back to 1985 and was set at about \$48,000, is now as a result of this piece of legislation, will move up to 51.9, and by 2005 will move even further to \$55,000 dollars . . .

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Swift Current on his feet?

**Mr. Wall:** — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the members for leave, and especially the member for Moosomin who is speaking.

Mr. Speaker, earlier, before question period, I had the

opportunity to introduce a summer student from our office, Crystal Martens. Joining her in your gallery now, Mr. Speaker, is her mother, Nancy Martens. She and her husband operate a business in Swift Current and she has joined Crystal to view some of the proceedings today. And I just ask all members to join with me in welcoming Nancy to the Legislative Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 72 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002 (continued)

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating that there are some positive elements to the Bill No. 72 before us. And just before we had an introduction of guests I talked about the wage cap, and the wage cap which sits today at about \$48,000 and will move up to fifty-one nine as a result of this piece of legislation. And by the year 2005 will move up to \$55,000. So we believe, Mr. Speaker, that that certainly is an important move, in view of the problems that people in the workplace face if they receive an injury as a result of an accident in the workplace.

And, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I, and I'm sure all members of this Assembly, have on numerous occasions had individuals come to their offices asking for some help and basically asking them where they should turn or who they should turn to as a result of a work-related injury, and the way they've been treated by the Workers' Compensation Board.

And indeed on many occasions we can talk to the minister, we can talk to government officials, the board will tell us that well we do have an appeal process in place. And we mention this to constituents or individuals who come to us, and they tell us of the continuous problems and the hassle they've had in dealing with the board, and even going through the appeal process.

And on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, I often ask, wonder, and ask myself if we wouldn't be further ahead in some of these departments if we had an appeal mechanism that was totally independent of . . . whether it's the Workers' Compensation Board or whether it's the Department of Health, or other avenues of dealing with government. We do have appeal processes in place; unfortunately, those appeal processes are in place right within that agency.

And on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, we find we're dealing with — as members of the Assembly — we're dealing with individuals who have followed the process to the letter and yet continually find themselves in the position where as a result of a work-related injury and the inability to be fully functional yet. And yet they're being, basically being told, that well we've given you the help that is needed to correct this health problem, and our medical staff indicate that you're well enough to go back to work, and we would . . . we're going to cut off benefits. And therefore they're left in the situation, well they're . . . still have an aggravating problem, whether it's a pain, aggravating pain, that they have to deal with, and trying to actually work in

the workplace.

And I know this situation that . . . one of the most recent ones that was brought to my attention was a shoulder injury. And the individual came to me basically — almost in tears, Mr. Speaker — because they were told that their benefits were being cut off.

And I went to the board and the board said, well we followed a process, there was some monetary assistance until they received some medical help and we feel now that after this period of medical assistance that they should have recovered to the point that they were able to go back to work and maybe do light work or light duties and then proceed from there.

And the individual I'm talking of had a real problem with the shoulder and just couldn't get, no matter of all the therapy sessions that that person had taken, Mr. Speaker, just could not really lift their arm above the shoulder height. And the job that she was involved in was one that required some lifting.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was a frustrating process dealing with Workers' Comp when we were trying to address the concerns and trying to come up with Workers' Comp recognizing that the therapy that they had sent the individual to really wasn't working, that they had to find a different avenue or if nothing else, realize that this may take a lot longer than maybe the six-month period. And I just don't remember all the total time period that that person had been dealing with, with Workers' Comp on the issue.

But it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that every injury is different. I don't think we can treat everyone the same way, that one person's response to rehabilitation may be very effective, and in a matter of a few short weeks or a few short months they might be in a position to be totally, feel totally comfortable in going back to work. The next person it doesn't work that way, their body doesn't respond in the same manner. It takes a period of time.

And therefore it's imperative that Workers' Comp be there to deal with those problems. And I think Workers' Comp needs to take a very careful look as to how they deal with the workers that they're responsible for and how they manage the related injuries that fall at their desk, and how they respond to each and every work-related injury.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we do have some major concerns with the Bill in the fact that in the year 2001 the workers, the board actually made a huge mistake in its actuarial adjustment for the year 2001. In fact that mistake, Mr. Speaker, was a \$69 million mistake.

And so when you look at the legislation before us and we talk, I talked about the fact, the pluses of this piece of legislation, increasing the benefits from 5 to 10,000 for burial costs or increasing the maximum wage cap from 48 to fifty-one nine and to 55,000 by 2005, we realize, Mr. Speaker, that there will be some costs associated with this. And we've been trying to get some answers to the types of costs that would be associated with the legislation before us.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, when we get into estimates or Committee of the Whole we'll have an opportunity to get down

to some of the nitty-gritty and the debate asking the government exactly what this piece of . . . what Bill No. 72 is going to mean for employees and employers. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because when you look at the \$69 million mistake that the Workers' Comp Board made in the year 2001, and we also note that in the last six years the administration of the board has increased by 48 per cent over the six-year period while at that same time period we've had a relatively stable number of claims and employer accounts. And one would have to ask, why would we need almost a 50 per cent increase in administrative costs when your claims and your employer counts really haven't increased — they've been fairly stable?

And so there's some very serious questions that need to be asked in that regard. And that's one of the major concerns with regards to this piece of legislation today. And the costs associated with the increase of caps here and what those costs will mean to employers across the province of Saskatchewan. Because at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the . . . it's business men and women across this province who bear the brunt of the . . . of this program.

And while we're calling for some fairness, and what we realize that the government needs to find a delicate balance for workers and business owners, we also believe, Mr. Speaker, that the board itself must be accountable for how it administers a program, how it addresses their financial obligations, and they must be accountable to their . . . to the employers and to the employees, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have . . . we are concerned about the fact that the costs for this program must be affordable and it must not be a program that just becomes so expensive that employers just start really balking at it. I believe most employers across the province of Saskatchewan are quite conscientious and they are very concerned about their workers and the people that are their employees, the people that are working for them. And . . . but at the same time they . . . and I haven't had an employer actually complain to me, Mr. Speaker, about WCB (Workers' Compensation Board), except for the fact that every time they turn around and they find an increase on their desk, Mr. Speaker, they have . . . there hasn't been any real rationale given as to why that increase has been . . . has come forward.

Now the government might argue, the minister might argue that there was a reduction. And that was about a year ago — there was a reduction in the fees because the premiums that had been collected had actually given the Workers' Comp such a huge surplus. And one had to ask, what was the surplus being used for? And we looked many occasions where that surplus actually ended up as a positive in the general revenue pool when it really should not have been accounted for in the general revenue pool whatsoever because it has nothing to do with government.

(16:15)

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of questions that need to be raised. We have to ask ourselves, are the amendments going to make the system more transparent? And I think that's what employers are looking for.

Are the amendments explicitly stating that the maximum rate is gross earnings so that workers are not misled by the amount of

coverage that they actually receive? And do the amendments make the system more transparent for employers and employees?

Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that the first order of business for WCB and for the government would be to fix the internal problems within the Workers' Compensation Board.

And when we look at the number of complaints, while the complaints have been relatively stable, there is no reason, Mr. Speaker, why we should not be able to arrive at a simpler and more clear method of dealing with these complaints so that workers don't end up having to come to the offices of MLAs asking for some help and asking where they turn to.

So, Mr. Speaker, while there are a number of questions that need to be raised, there's no doubt that when we get to Committee of the Whole, we will have to have some clarification on this Bill. And exactly why this Bill maybe only went . . . as we see it, only as going part way to address a number of problems that exist in the Workers' Compensation Board, and how are we going to address them? And why the government would have brought a piece of legislation forward that seems to only address a portion of the problems that are occurring at the board at this time, Mr. Speaker?

So those are some of the questions that we need to look at while we keep in mind how employees are looked after and treated fairly. As well as the fact that employers aren't being raked for more money to try and address an internal WCB problem in trying to . . . in the way they manage their finances and the fiscal responsibilities are theirs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

### Bill No. 35 — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Amendment Act, 2002

#### Clause 1

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the minister and ask the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me this afternoon, to my left, is Ms. Joanne Brockman who's the executive director of the economic and fiscal policy branch of the Department of Finance. And behind Ms. Brockman is Mr. Hale Ramsey, who's the senior fiscal policy analyst of the economic and fiscal policy branch of the Department of Finance.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. Welcome this afternoon again, Mr. Minister, and to your two officials.

Mr. Minister, in the year 2000-2001, you introduced a new Act creating the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and today you're proposing an amendment to that fund. Could you indicate the

reason why we have to have the amendment that we see before us?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'd be pleased to indicate that. We had, last year when we passed The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act, said that at any given time the government should have in a savings account 5 per cent . . . an amount equal to 5 per cent of the revenues from the previous year, which would amount to approximately \$300 million, or \$280 million, in a given year.

And as it transpired, we certainly have that amount in reserve at the present time. But as people will know, we experienced a bad drought in 2001, along with softwood lumber duties, lower oil and natural gas prices, an economic slowdown in Canada, and a recession in the United States. And all of these factors contributed to a slower economy which then meant less revenue to government than had been projected.

And so we had to make a decision whether to leave money in savings at the end of the current fiscal year to keep the \$280 million in savings, or whether we should allow the government to draw that down below \$280 million, in order to continue paying for health care, education, highways, and so on, and in order to avoid raising taxes.

So we really were faced with two main possibilities. One possibility is we would say, you don't have to leave that much money in savings. If we didn't do that, we would have to either cut back on services to people or raise taxes. And we felt that at this time we should not raise taxes, we should not cut down on services — it made more sense to draw on our savings in order to meet the expectations of the people of the province. And that's what this amendment would allow us to do; to avoid cuts in services and to avoid tax increases.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in your communiqué from the Saskatchewan Finance department back in 2000-2001, you indicated that the General Revenue Fund would receive the final SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) retained earnings dividend for that year.

Mr. Minister, could you then explain to the people of Saskatchewan how that transfer occurred? Was money placed into an account, was there an actual transfer of dollars in one bank account to another, or are we talking about a line of credit that had been maintained as a total of retained earnings of . . . I would imagine a number of years in Liquor and Gaming Authority, because I don't think that they would have accumulated a significant amount of that kind of dividend.

And secondly, what was that number that was actually taken out of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority dividend credit line?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — The number, Mr. Chair, is \$700 million.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, each time that you have indicated that — over the last two years — that the Department of Finance uses the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to offset an expense, there is an indication in your comments from the last mid-term report that the amount of debt of the province goes up.

Could you explain to the people of Saskatchewan . . . and I think you said just a few minutes ago that there is sort of money in a fund that's sitting there and we can use this occasionally. Why does it mean when you say that you're using the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that the debt of the province is going up as well? The two don't seem to mix.

Could you explain that to the people of Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to.

The Government of Saskatchewan employs normal principles of cash management which also would be used by any private sector company or other governments. The principles that we apply are the same as they're generally applied in the business world and by other governments across the country.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in your budget document for this year you've indicated that it is expected that you will draw on these retained earnings or line of credit to the tune of about \$225 million, which should leave a balance in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund of about \$139.3 million. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, that is what is indicated in the budget document.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Minister, in reference to that budget document, on page 28 which is I believe the page that you're on, you also indicate that to deliver that budget next year you anticipate that for the year 2003-2004 you may use up that entire \$139.3 million worth of credit in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

If that is so, Mr. Minister, if your projections are accurate indeed that money is . . . that transfer is required, will you be removing or asking for The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act to be amended, or will it just remain in a situation of abeyance until there is a transfer of monies to that on some year down the road when I guess the revenues exceed expenditures?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — I believe, Mr. Chair, that The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act with this amendment should continue to exist in the form as amended and should continue to be used in the same way; that going back to 1925 the province has always had a stabilization fund. It used to be called the Liquor and Gaming Fund; now it's called the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

And whether or not we have this amendment, we should keep having a fund. And when times improve and we have surplus dollars, we should do what we've done in the past, and that is put those dollars in savings, to draw on them at difficult times as we've had to do this year in order to maintain services for people and to avoid raising taxes.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the line items in revenue of course is the transfer of I believe it's profit of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. And in your communiqué of two years ago, you indicated that the transfer of SLGA dividends was going to end because you were transferring that dividend credit, and that's how the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was created.

Could you indicate, Mr. Minister, in both this year and last year, when you indicate in your budget that there is a transfer of money from Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, is that the full amount of profits for SLGA for that year, and indeed that there would be no retained earnings back in SLGA?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — That is correct, Mr. Chair.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 36 — The Corporation Capital Tax  
Amendment Act, 2002**

**Clause 1**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the minister and ask him to introduce any new officials who may have joined him.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me this afternoon Mr. Len Rog, sitting to my left, who is the assistant deputy minister of the revenue division of the Department of Finance; behind Mr. Rog is Mr. Kelly Laurans, the director of corporate taxes and incentives in the revenue division of the Department of Finance; and behind me is Mr. Eric Johnson, who is the senior analyst with taxation and intergovernmental affairs in the Department of Finance.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and welcome to the three officials who have joined you this afternoon, Mr. Minister. A few short questions on this Bill, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, in written questions I asked a question of your department, that was: how many companies in Saskatchewan paid corporate capital tax during the year for which the most recent statistics are available? And your response to me, Mr. Minister, was that there were 1,053 corporations.

(16:30)

Mr. Minister, the clauses that you've put forward, the clauses for amendment purposes in this Bill, how many — do your officials know — how many of those 1,053 corporations will be affected by the most significant change, which is, of course, that the level of . . . the \$10 million level be raised to \$15 million?

Do you have an estimate as to the number of corporations that will be affected by that change?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well every corporation that paid the corporate capital tax would be affected because the corporate capital tax would now be applied at a higher threshold, so they would all be affected. And 1,436 filed returns last year; 1,053 paid taxes. All of those would pay less because of the higher threshold. And we believe that about 100 corporations would be exempted from payment of any corporation capital tax.

So that would be approximately 10 per cent of the corporations that paid corporation capital tax would no longer pay it. The other 90 per cent would pay less corporation capital tax than

they paid before.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that estimate. And I fully understand that it is an estimate, that you're expecting of the 1,053 about 100 may not have to pay any more tax.

Mr. Minister, one of the concerns expressed by some businesses is that the formula for the exemption is going to be developed and placed in regulations, and there doesn't seem to be any clarity about the formula.

Could you indicate whether or not your officials have already created regulations that will indicate how businesses will be eligible? And will the formula treat all businesses the same or will there be some difference in how the regulations will relate to one particular corporation or another?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question. I'm advised by the officials that we have exemptions from other taxation that are prescribed by regulation. And this would be similar to the other formulas prescribed in the regulation, such as the resource surcharge deduction.

And the reason is to allow for flexibility in the event that some corporations come along and say that, for some reason, the way in which the threshold is being applied doesn't quite work for them and sometimes some change needs to be made. And it's easier to make it and respond by regulation than having to come to the legislature, especially if the legislation isn't sitting.

And I can tell the member that the department has prepared, in co-operation with the Department of Justice, a draft regulation which they intend to pursue as soon as the legislation is passed, and it actually is quite complex. There's a formulae which I . . . a formula which I'd be happy to share with the member with the usual A equals \$5 million times B over C and saying what A means and B means and C means and so on. And I think the reason to do it by regulation is simply that it is complex.

There may be a need for flexibility if the formula doesn't quite work or works unfairly to some particular business. And the experience with exemptions of this type has been, in the past, that it makes more sense to be able to respond to the business community by meeting the intent of the legislation, but being able to amend the way the threshold is calculated in a timely fashion should problems arise.

Now we don't anticipate any problems, but that's the reason why the Department of Finance in this and in similar other cases likes to propose to do this by regulation rather than through a Bill in the legislature.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, while I realize the formula is complicated . . . no, I don't want to know the particulars. My question, and you didn't make comment to it, was, is this formula going to be the same formula for all corporations or do you create, do you create . . . are there corporations that could be dealt with in one fashion and others in another fashion or does the formula apply to all?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — I apologize, Mr. Chair. I think I did misunderstand the question. The formula applies to all.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. My final question, Mr. Minister, is . . . I think it was the Simon Fraser report indicated that Saskatchewan is the largest user of the — in the country — of the corporate capital tax and it's often referred to as Canada's worst tax. Do you agree with that statement made by Simon Fraser?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well actually, Mr. Chair, I believe that Simon Fraser was an explorer that died a few centuries ago but I think the member is referring to comments by the Fraser Institute.

And generally speaking, I try not to agree with the Fraser Institute but I suppose if the Fraser Institute, as opposed to the late Simon Fraser, noted explorer, after whom the Fraser River I believe is named and the Fraser Valley but . . . And I don't know what Simon Fraser . . . I don't know if Simon Fraser would approve of the use of his name associated with the right-wing think-tank like the Fraser Institute but he's long gone so we really don't know.

But having said all that, in answer to the member's question, I think the Fraser Institute probably is correct when they say that our reliance on the corporate capital tax is higher than in other jurisdictions.

Now having said that, I would point out that our reliance on other taxes that affect business is lower. For example, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland apply a payroll tax so they have a lower corporate capital tax but they have a payroll tax and also they charge their corporations more sales tax than we do.

So our corporation capital tax, yes, is higher but some of our other taxes are lower. And one has to look at the whole picture.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I do apologize for the incorrect reference to the Fraser Institute and I thank you for correcting that.

Mr. Minister, one thing I did forget to ask you: when you indicated the number of companies that actually paid tax and suggested that about 100 would benefit by your change to the tax structure, could you indicate what you think is the average amount of money that would be saved by those 1,053 corporations with the introduction of the changes that you're proposing in this Act? Is there any estimate as to the dollar figure on the average that these companies will save?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, I would just correct the member in this respect. I did not say that 100 corporations would benefit. I said 100 corporations would have the tax removed altogether. I also said that all of the corporations that pay corporate capital tax would benefit — they would all get some kind of reduction.

On average, the reduction would be \$4,500 per company less corporate capital tax. But as I've said, some would pay none. So some would benefit to a larger extent, some would benefit to a smaller extent depending on their circumstances. But the average saving would be \$4,500.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the minister and ask him to introduce any new officials who may have joined him.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me is Mr. Brian Smith, who's the director of the Public Employees Benefits Agency of the Department of Finance.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I understand that, of course, that the Bill was required to comply with the federal income tax changes, Income Tax Act changes, and that's where we're headed.

Mr. Minister, when we look at the new pension plan that's being created and . . . What advantage is there now for the fact that the plan which contained retired members, which contained members that are still within the House, the transferring of that plan into the Public Employees Pension Plan, what . . . how will that meet the standards of the federal Income Tax Act?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well the . . . In answer to the first part of the question, the major benefit I think of this legislation in terms of the plan members, would be that instead of having a special MLA pension fund, the funds would be mixed with the regular public service plan which would be a larger pool. And it's felt that with a larger pool, the rate of return tends to be better, the risk is less, and the administration is simpler.

In terms of the changes to comply with the Income Tax Act, I should point out that the Public Accounts Committee, on the advice of the Provincial Auditor of course — and the member, Mr. Chair, is the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee — the Public Accounts Committee has recommended that we have legislation to comply with the federal Income Tax Act in compliance with what the Provincial Auditor has recommended. And that's what we're doing.

The main problem with respect to the current plan, I think, has been that the current plan does not describe pensionable earnings in the same way that is required by the Income Tax Act, and this legislation corrects that.

I should point out also, as I have in the House, that this is not something unique to the MLA plan. We have . . . almost every year, it seems, we're amending various pieces of pension legislation to comply with the Income Tax Act. And the reason we do that is because if you don't amend the legislation from time to time to comply with the Income Tax Act, then the plan can cease to be registered under the federal legislation, in which case it's not a pension plan any more, which would put the pensions of the members at jeopardy. And we're doing for the MLAs what we've done for various employees of pension plans that we administer.

So they're mainly technical amendments of a housekeeping nature, really. And I think the reason for that is because this plan was enacted in, I believe, 1978 or '79, thereabouts, and it

hasn't been amended since. But the Income Tax Act of Canada has been amended several times and now we're bringing this legislation into line with the federal legislation.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Chair, it is also my understanding, Mr. Minister — and I just want you to confirm this — that there isn't really any increase or decrease in the benefit levels to MLAs who might retire, and as a result of that, really this Act does not increase any additional cost to taxpayers in the province. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — That's absolutely correct, Mr. Chair. There is no change to the pensions of the members. These are changes of a housekeeping or technical nature that are required in order to comply with the income tax law of Canada.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(16:45)

### **Bill No. 66 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2002**

#### **Clause 1**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I'll ask the minister to introduce any new officials who may have joined him.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — I have the same old official, Mr. Chair — Brian Smith.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, we recognize the official as being a veteran and an experienced . . . and an experienced member, and I thank him for being present.

Couple of short questions on this Bill, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, under current municipal pension employees . . . there have been some people that have called our office who are . . . they're seasonal, part-time municipal employees. Are all municipal employees required to be part of the municipal pension plan? That's the question that I have for you.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — I'm advised, Mr. Chair, that every permanent employee of an employer covered by the Act must join the plan. But there may be employees who are non-permanent, and I'm advised that the non-permanent employees must join the plan after meeting a certain threshold of hours, and I'm advised that the hours are 700 hours in each of two consecutive years. And after that, the temporary employee would have to be a member of the plan.

So that every permanent employee from the first hour of his or her service would be a member of the plan and the pension contribution would be taken off and made — the employee and the employer contribution. That's the permanent employees.

And then the temporary employees, they would not initially be in the plan and they would not initially have deductions made

and payments by the employer to the plan. But after they put in a certain number of hours, they would be required by the Act and the regulations to then be put into the pension plan, once they have worked a certain amount of hours.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that would explain to a few of the individuals who had called us. And I need you to also clarify, when you said temporary, then I would take it that urban municipalities, rural municipalities that hire students for summer employment and only work for that one summer, as long as they remain under 700 hours for each of their two consecutive years, then in the third year they still would not be obligated to be contributing to the pension plan.

But if they were over 700 hours in each of their two years, consecutive years of employment, then they would be required to begin contributions. Is that accurate?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — In answer to the question, I think that's basically correct with this caveat. That if a student was working for an employer during the summer and occupying a position that was considered to be permanent, albeit they're only working for the summer, then they would have to join the plan.

But if they're classified as a temporary employee, which I think is the member's question, then what the member says is correct. That they would work each summer for any number of summers I suppose and as long as they never worked more than 700 hours in two consecutive years, if they were a temporary employee they would never become members of this plan.

On the other hand if they were for some reason classified as a permanent employee working for the summer and then say they had leave to go to university but they were hired on permanently with some leave, then the situation would be different. But for most students they would be temporary employees and what the member says would be correct.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one final question regarding designated members and general members. And I understand that police officers, firefighters may fit into the category of designated members that allows them to contribute additional amounts of pension to be able to retire earlier than the age 65.

What changes are you making to this Act that will, I understand, combine the two and allow for I guess withdrawal of pension monies on a more consistent time? And secondly is it changed, the benefit, to the actual retiree?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes, the member is correct that the reason that the police officers and firefighters are called designated members is so that they can retire at age 60. And the plan has allowed them and the employers to contribute somewhat more to take into account that they will work for a lesser period of time.

But the situation up until now has been that some of the police officers and firefighters have not had the option to retire at 60, so they have been general members not designated members. What this amendment would do insofar as they're concerned, it would allow their employer — I believe the city of Swift Current is one of them — to say that the firefighters could now

retire at 60. My understanding is that the — in the city of Swift Current up until now — the firefighters have gone beyond age 60. And this amendment would allow the city of Swift Current to negotiate with their firefighters that they could retire at 60 like other firefighters and be designated members. They then would be allowed to contribute more to the pension plan in order that they could get their pension at age 60.

So basically up until now some of the police and firefighters have not been able to be designated members because of their own arrangements with their municipalities. This says if you become designated members we will accommodate that, extra money can be put into the plan to make you equivalent in effect with firefighters from Saskatoon who have always been able to retire at age 60.

No additional cost I don't believe to the plan, but there may be additional costs to some members who may be buying the additional service. And so that is the intent of the amendment insofar as firefighters and police officers is concerned.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

#### **Clause 1**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I'll ask the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce, first of all, to assist us this afternoon, Mr. Russ Krywulak, who is the executive director of grants administration and provincial-municipal relations, and Mr. Keith Comstock, who is seated behind him. He's the policy manager in policy development branch. There are other officials that are here but I will introduce later on, if that meets with your approval. Thank you.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and welcome to your officials, Mr. Minister.

I have no real problems with this Bill at all, Mr. Minister. I think as we've talked before on this Bill, everyone seems quite satisfied with it.

The only question I have some curiosity about, Mr. Minister, is disclosure of campaign contributions and expenses, and you have put in a 60-day limit. I'm just wondering what was the reasoning behind that? Is there a specific reason?

(17:00)

The only reason I ask, Mr. Minister, is that possibly in — and I think it would be a city that this would probably affect the most possibly — that the incumbent council could possibly play games, I suppose, if they really wished, if the incoming or the opposition to them running was getting close, and they may

want to put limits on that person.

Was there a reason you brought the 60-day limit in?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, and with sincere due respect to the member, we are dealing . . . I believe that's under The Local Government Election Amendment Act. We're dealing with The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act.

With all due respect, we have, we have all the answers to the questions, but I don't want to get the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, prefer later.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. You're right, we are . . . we got ahead of ourself. We told you things were going to move along today, and I guess we were moving so fast, we missed one Bill.

Mr. Minister, the question I have on that Bill is there's one spot in there where you talk about in existing provisions. But you've changed the wording and you've went from "shall pay" when you're talking about the revenue sharing and the new money going to municipalities. And if I understand it right, it used to be "shall pay," and for some reason, if I'm reading this right, you've changed that to "may pay." And I'm just wondering why that is.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, the reason for that is because they are grants and not entitlements, so the "may pay" of those grants. There could be some changes to that.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, the new dollars that you put in this year — I believe for urban, it was four point some million dollars, rural was four point some. Is that the form that they're being paid in is grants and will it be affected under this provision?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — The member is correct, Mr. Chairman. Because of the additional amounts, there will be some changes and that will apply. Yes.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess where my concern comes in, and I think it's understandable that when you change from "shall" to "may," is there a situation that you may not pay these on? If the budget come out and these were in the budget, is there for some reason down the road that these grants may not fully be paid?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, that funding, that money is committed. And I have to say at this point I can't think of any reason why they would not be because those are commitments that are made through the budget for the revenue sharing. And I would say quite confidently that there would not be any reason that would suggest not meeting a commitment that's been made.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that was my main concern with this Bill. So at this point we can let this Bill pass on.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 45 — The Local Government Election  
Amendment Act, 2002**

**Clause 1**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I'll ask the minister to introduce any new officials who may have joined him.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ken Kolb is joining us. He's a senior policy analyst in the policy development branch. And he's seated next to me here.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Well, Mr. Minister, now we'll try this one more time. You probably know the question that's coming.

I just need clarification on why the 60 days was chosen and just how you came about making this provision in the amendment?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, it was felt that the 60 days was a reasonable notification period so that there would be an opportunity for the public to be made well aware of any bylaw that would be passed. And 60 days was chosen as a reasonable time frame.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's really the only concerns. I think everyone that I've talked to out there is quite happy with what's in the Bill here and quite satisfied. So, Mr. Chair, at this time we will pass this Bill on.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

**Clause 1**

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Would the Minister of Government Relations introduce his officials?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've had an addition to the very capable and competent people that have been assisting me — Mr. Rod Nasewich, who's the senior policy analyst, policy development branch who has joined the previous members that I introduced earlier.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I think the same goes for this Bill. I don't think there's any big controversy out in Saskatchewan with municipalities.

I just have a few questions, Mr. Minister.

Can you tell me or give me some explanation of what you feel the change to the assessment system that we have now, with the changes that you've brought in this Bill, what effect do you . . . instantly will this have on the way we're doing assessments now?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for that question. I think it's important that people that will be affected by these amendments are aware that the amendment, first of all will enable the use of new assessment methods that the member has alluded to, such as the income approach, once these methods have been approved by use . . . by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency), for use by SAMA, and set out in the assessment manuals that are prepared.

And secondly, it will in fact enhance the ability of assessors to collect the information needed to make proper evaluations such as rent and income information, and increasing the consequences for individuals who are non-compliant in providing requested information.

And finally, I think it's important as well, it'll provide some additional measures to safeguard potentially sensitive information from improper use, access, and disclosure throughout the assessment and the appeal processes.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The one part of the Bill that I know has had some controversy and a fair amount of discussion on is the income-based approach. Have you had . . . well the one example I know for sure is the inland grain terminals system are not very happy about if the income-based approach was used in their situation. Have you had concerns brought forward to you that they don't like the idea of using the income-based system?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, to the member. The business community has not indicated any significant concerns. As a matter of fact, they welcomed that type of opportunity for assessment, for more accurate assessment and valuation of their buildings.

There have been some that have indicated a concern about the information they may need to supply. However, as I mention again, the Act will provide for confidentiality of that information.

But in answer specifically to your question, I have to say that there have not been any serious concerns raised by the business community. As a matter of fact I believe that they welcome it, recognizing it as perhaps a more valid way of more accurately valuating properties.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. And possibly at the time maybe they didn't understand how this was going to work. And I guess at to this point they maybe don't know how it will affect them until it actually happens.

But as we know, the concerns that many have had in the province, no matter what area you're in, with the way assessment has gone in the past, understanding that SAMA has new leadership now, and I've heard nothing but positives coming out of where we might be heading. I think, Mr. Minister, you passed on that productivity will be used now for agriculture land out there. You had talked about that before. I think that's a positive. I know SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) themselves are very happy that that is you know down the road and coming in to be used, maybe bring some sensible assessments back into the system, especially because of the education portion of the tax that's

charged to farm land.

So you know the direction I think that we're heading in SAMA is a positive and I've heard nothing but good from that. And hopefully we can continue to make changes that when the next time around, that the improvements will just filter right down, because you know the problems we've had in the last two reassessments. The first one was a nightmare for the government and for everyone involved. And the last one had a number of problems. So I think we're starting, hopefully, in the right direction to address that.

So one question I had, Mr. Minister, any changes in here that directly will affect SAMA right away, like in this legislation that we're changing right now from what it was before to what it is now?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, there's no way that these amendments will be affecting the governance of the board. And I'm not sure whether the member was asking that specific question. But it will allow the SAMA board to proceed with implementing the new assessment manual and including the process to be used for the income approach and move towards the agricultural production base evaluation as well. So it will allow them a little more latitude in that respect. It will also allow the assessors the opportunity to access or request more information.

Those are basically the immediate changes. It will in effect make it a little bit easier for the assessment board. And I appreciate the member's comments with respect to the direction being taken because I know there is a genuine interest by the board to ensure that we have parity in our assessments. But as far as any significant immediate changes other than those that I mentioned, it'll just open the door a little more for allowing us to proceed in the direction that I'm sure we agree we need to go.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, anywhere in this Bill, and I don't know, I haven't seen exactly where it might be affected, but I'm sure you're well aware and you've had many concerns brought to you between resort villages and RMs and the problems that they are having out there.

Have you anywhere in this Bill tried to address any of those problems and are you getting those same concerns from resort villages and from RMs whether services have to be provided by the RM, what the resort villages are planning on doing? I know they both have concerns, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that there's nothing in the Bill that deals with the incorporation of resort villages. What the Bill has included is the opportunity and the removal of impediments for small communities, hamlets, villages, and even resort villages to restructure. And that will give them the opportunity under the new legislation.

The intent again being that the department will be working with these communities in their best interests, the direction that they see would benefit them in whatever way they take, but weighing the interests of both rural municipalities and resort villages. And a lot of that needs to come from the type of discussion and consultation between those two entities.

But from the Government Relations perspective, we'll be there to assist them in any way that they feel they may change or restructure for the benefit of the citizens that they represent.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Because we have heard and are sure you have heard the same concerns brought forward by resort communities. And a number of them may be banding together to form village, towns, even if they got to that point.

But I certainly understand the concerns of the RMs out there in many cases that may have to provide fire services, roads, and a number of other things. So it's a problem I don't think that's going to go away very quickly. And I think we have to try and find a happy medium there where we can appease both sides.

Mr. Minister, one of the other concerns that many municipalities have out there, and it's been talked about in this House a number of times now this session, is the accountability to do with water and sewage treatment, and stuff like that; the accountability on councils. And I guess where my concern comes in here is that in many cases right now we have a hard time finding enough people to serve on councils there. And I'm somewhat leery that if we go too far with something like this it will be virtually impossible to find people to fill those spots. We've saw the problems that North Battleford's had and other communities have had boil-water advisories and things like that go on. So it is a grave concern out there. Would you care to comment on that, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And the member asks a very valid question. And the concern that perhaps exists as a result of the responses and reaction to the direction that's being taken to ensure a good quality and safe drinking water. The intent is not to discourage people from wanting to serve in public office to meet those types of responsibilities. And it may be seen as added responsibilities, but they're not. Those responsibilities I believe have always been there, and people which I commend a great deal for stepping forward to serve in public office to make some tough decisions and look after the safety of the citizens that they represent, I commend them a great deal.

The concern I know was expressed that, oh my goodness, we're . . . you know, who wants to serve now? Because if something goes haywire we could go to jail. That was never the intent. And I say sincerely that I do not believe that anyone, unless they willingly and knowingly did not carry out one of their responsibilities to ensure the safety of whomever they had in their charge, if you wish, if they willingly and knowingly ignored that responsibility or a particular requirement, then I believe there may be the investigation, the need to inquire as to why. But I don't believe that anyone would willingly and knowingly want to do something to harm the people to whom they're responsible or responsible for.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In this new section, 199.1, I believe it talks about the accountability and so on. But I think it goes on to state that these new rules will be brought in through regulation. When will this happen, Mr. Minister? When will these regulations be brought to light so people will actually know what is in them?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm told that these regulations must be in place by 2005, in advance of that, and that gives us some time again to work with municipalities, with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and with SARM and with the cities to make sure that the regulations that are in place are those that everyone will support, is supportive of, and that make sense to the approach that will be taken and the direction that the entire water strategy program for the province . . . the direction that it will be taking.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I always, and I think many on this side do, shudder when they hear the word regulations, because we're being asked to pass a Bill and yet we won't know what's in it. So I'm very happy to hear you say that it may be 2005 before these regulations come in — maybe long after our time, Mr. Minister. We may not have to worry about it at that point. One or the other or both of us may be long gone from this fine institution.

But anyway at least that way people will have time to possibly have input into what comes out in those regulations and I'm quite happy to hear that.

Mr. Minister, that satisfies I think the questions that we have at this point. We'd be willing to pass this Bill on.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 30 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

**The Chair:** — I don't see any new officials so . . . same capable, competent officials.

#### **Clause 1**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, just a few questions on this Bill. I believe we have many similarities between all three Bills so we have answered a number of our questions I think when we were talking about the urban Bill.

Can you maybe explain the requirements around putting long-term financing in place for water and sewer systems contained in all three of these municipal Bills?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, it will all be part of the safe drinking water strategy that as far as . . . now unless I've misunderstood the question, as far as municipal financing board being available for access to assist in the financing of infrastructure or addressing water needs and concerns by municipalities. And that's just part of the long-term strategy, using whatever resources that a community may require access to.

If they do not have reserves to address any of the problems that they face, then the availability of the municipal financing board to access some long-term financing to address any immediate issues. I believe that's . . . I hope that's the gist of the question.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Another area I believe in this Bill is where RM councils provide grants under this Act. What was the reason for this change, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, that change was merely to bring it in line with The Urban Municipalities Act. There was that disparity, so that change was merely made to make it the same as the other Acts.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, again in this Bill I think everyone's quite satisfied with what's in the Bill. We didn't hear . . . very few concerns with what's in the Bill from municipalities, so at this point we're quite . . . we're satisfied with this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 30 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

#### **Clause 1**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, the necessity for ministerial approval of bylaws is now I believe being removed for northern municipalities. Are there any exceptions, though, to this? Does it . . . is it a broad coverage and has to do with all bylaws or is there certain ones that are exempted from this?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, there are no exceptions. And if there are some concerns, again just to underline that any of these communities or hamlets or villages have and require some assistance in determining the direction they might take, then that assistance would be available to them. But there will be no exceptions.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, how would the changes in this Bill affect a town like or a village like Creighton, who sits on the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border? Can you maybe just touch on how this will affect them?

(17:30)

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, this will now bring Creighton fully under The Northern Municipalities Act. Before it was under the urban Act. And I'm also advised that it does not affect Creighton's unique situation with respect to sitting on the border similar to what Lloydminster is. It will bring them fully — and it's at their request — that it will bring them totally under The Northern Municipalities Act.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, then how . . . maybe I'm not sure if you have these numbers but the community of Creighton now under the new system, what would they be . . . what would they get this year out of the Northern Revenue Sharing Account compared to what they got before? Will that change? Will this see an increase for them in funding or will they stay at exactly the same rate they were before, the same amount of dollars?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, nothing will change as far as their revenue sharing is concerned. They will get the same as everybody else — a portion of the increased funding for this year. But as far as a formula for the sharing, there will be no changes for the community of Creighton.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Minister, just a question a bit off of . . . tied possibly a bit to this Bill. But is firefighting paid in the northern municipalities totally by the government where in the southern municipalities that the municipality actually, it looks like now, picks up the tab for firefighting? The northern municipalities that we're dealing with here, do they . . . is it totally, when fire costs come into play, is that totally picked up by the government?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, there's a bit of a unique situation there, under the northern administration district is what the North is considered, which is totally a provincial responsibility. I will give that answer to the member, Mr. Chairman, and with some degree of confidence that the northern administration district, being a provincial responsibility to the province, would pick up all those firefighting costs.

Now if I may, with all due respect, add a caveat. Given the seriousness and the severity of what's happening with our fire situation this year, there may be some other considerations, but not lessening the provincial responsibility to the northern administration district.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So how far does that funding go, Mr. Minister, that if our community and I can't . . . any community in the North, it doesn't matter, if they have firefighting equipment and trucks and so on, is that supplied and paid for by the government of the day, Government of Saskatchewan, or is that picked up by the community and then the costs are paid? How does that work, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, once again I must respectfully request consideration for having that question asked of Environment and Resource Management. That falls more into their responsibility area with respect to protection under those kinds of circumstances. I'm afraid I can't answer that question with any qualification.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then I think if I gather right what you're saying is that that's not funded through Municipal Government, that's funded through SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) or Environment and Resource Management?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — I believe that's right. It's not funded through Government Relations, but I feel fairly certain . . . but once again qualify that by suggesting that perhaps Environment and Resource Management might be in a better position to respond to that particular issue. Thank you.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, that satisfies our question with this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 22 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

## Bill No. 75 — The Cities Act

### Clause 1

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I know this has been a long-awaited Bill for the cities. They've put a tremendous amount of work. The cities had give you a draft, presented all of us, I think, with a draft of where they'd like to see legislation go.

Mr. Minister, can you just give me a quick breakdown on how the legislations you're presenting today, that we're passing today, varies from what the cities actually provided to your department?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, perhaps in response to the member again, if he'll bear with me. If I could just refer to . . . and I agree, the cities worked long and hard on preparing some framework for now coming to this stage. And I'm pleased that we're here able to discuss it.

The replacing the prescriptive legislation that sets out in detail how a city's authority is to be exercised, that's the general philosophy of the Act itself. And basically that general philosophy presented to us by the cities remained the same.

There was a little more detail as to how a city's authority is to be exercised with more enabling legislation that allows a council to tailor its activities precisely to the needs and the desires of its communities. And I think that's what the cities wanted, is to have some autonomy to take . . . to make some immediate moves in the direction that they felt was necessary and of an immediate nature for the benefit of their communities and their citizens.

It's reversing the traditional approach of itemizing a city's administrative, regulatory, and service powers in favour of a natural person's powers, which was a natural person powers in areas of jurisdiction, were a couple of the issues the cities felt would provide councils and administrations with a broader authority to deal with a wide range of local issues and matters within these powers and within these areas — and not increasing a city's jurisdiction or responsibilities, but rather giving councils greater flexibility and discretion within the existing areas of jurisdiction.

This was a process that was long and arduous and I once again commend the cities for their initiative in bringing their proposals forward. I also want to commend people within the Department of Government Relations that dedicated a great deal of time and effort working with representatives from the cities in achieving what was then felt to be mutually agreeable.

There were some things that initially did not conform with what the province felt was adequate enough responsibility, or accountability rather, to the citizens of the communities. And there was — as you can appreciate, and it was no small task, given the size of the Bill and the extent of that particular legislation — and there was a lot of give-and-take, and the need to ensure again protection of citizens' rights while at the same time allowing the cities more flexibility to react or act on those

issues which were felt to be immediate of nature within the communities, that would make things better for the citizens in the cities.

So I hope that answers it. I can't underline enough how hard the people worked to make sure that this was all brought together and mutually consented to as a piece of legislation that would take us into the 21st century with a difference of approach — a partnership, if you wish, with the provinces and the cities.

So I again, I believe it's a good piece of work. I know that there was some concern that perhaps it may not happen. And, Mr. Chairman, I believe that I feel as strongly and as pleased as the member does that we were able to achieve this kind of mutual agreement with the cities in arriving at this, what I would say is significant, not only significant, but a historical piece of legislation.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I agree with you. Mr. Minister, had the cities at any point asked for special powers to be able to initiate new forms of taxation? And I'm thinking, for an example, of so much on a litre of gas. They've had other . . . We've heard other things in the media that possibly could have been used. Have they actually asked for those powers or was that not part of this package?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the cities did not in fact specifically ask for any taxation powers. There was one area where they asked for the opportunity . . . or the right or the decision to go ahead and impose taxes on certain projects after notifying their citizens, and projects that would be paid for within a year. So the accountability aspect, again, was built in very strongly with the guidelines that they had for doing that for a particular, particular activity.

But as far as, the member mentioned, the fuel tax — no, the cities were not adamant in that respect. They were more concerned about the minor tax that I just referred to.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if a city should wish to continue under the urban municipal Act instead of coming under the new Cities Act, is that a possibility?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Yes, Mr. Chairman, by all means. The Cities Act will come into effect January 1, 2003. Councils must indicate in advance of that first day of the year their intention to opt into the Act. So it will allow cities to determine whether it's in their best interests or not to opt into The Cities Act or remain under the urban municipalities Act. That was felt to be both beneficial to all the cities that are concerned to determine; again there may be some cities that feel that perhaps, at this point, they may want to remain under the urban municipalities Act.

(17:45)

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, once a city has, on January 2003, has gone under The Cities Act, I would presume at that point then they're under The Cities Act and there's no going back. Is that right?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — That's right, Mr. Chairman. Once they've opted in, then there won't be an opting out.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, is there anything in this Bill that will change the level of funding that cities will receive in revenue sharing or any type of assistance that the government gives them before to what they will receive in the future after 2003?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I can say to the member and to the cities that no, there will not be any changes with respect to the formulas that currently exist in our revenue-sharing and grant programs.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Another question is: now that the cities have their own Act and the towns are separate, have you been contacted by the towns that they might do work on their own to try and update their situation under the old Act?

I know there was concerns with the towns out there when the cities were in the process. And I think it was understandable, but I think they felt maybe the cities were trying to get a larger share of the pie or getting priority treatment from the government rather . . . what the towns would get.

I think it was a valid concern they had out there. Are they in the process of maybe looking at something like this and having new legislation drawn up that would affect them, that would remove a lot of the red tape and a lot of things that we've actually seen done in this Bill?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, the SUMA does have a committee that's looking at The Cities Act, and in an effort to determine whether there's some of that legislation or some of the makeup of that, that Bill would certainly be applicable to the smaller towns and communities that SUMA serves. So the opportunities are there and we'll help them any way we can.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does the passage of this Bill affect the way SUMA operates in any way because the cities are under one Act now and the towns, villages, etc., are under the old municipal Act?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, the answer to that is no. SUMA will continue to be representative of the urban municipalities. There have been no changes under the Act that would make it otherwise.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Does this Bill affect, Mr. Minister, in any way when a city wants to take on a project where they have to go in debt? Does this Bill have any effect on what . . . how they can do that now from what they did before?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, virtually there's no change. They still . . . it's business as usual with the restrictions that currently exist under The Urban Municipality Act. They still have to be accountable for their citizens, to their citizens. So but as far as the process for the borrowing, nothing has really changed under that Act.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, when removing red tape usually means we've cut down on administration and things like that. Is there actually a cost saving because of this Bill?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, it's difficult to specifically respond as far as savings are concerned. The cities tell us that they'll be able to streamline their administrative processes and have a little more flexibility.

If there are savings, it will be recognized by the cities. And once again, they'll have the autonomy to put into place whatever administrative streamlined processes, they . . . you know, they feel is of benefit to them.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I thank your officials. And I have to commend you for bringing this through as fast as you have. I think tonight if the mayors and aldermen of the cities of Saskatchewan out there happen to be watching or seeing that this Bill is passing tonight, there should be some pretty happy councils out there.

So thank you, Mr. Minister. And I think at this point we will let this Bill pass on and make a lot of aldermen and mayors happy in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I want to sincerely thank the member from Saltcoats for the questions that have been posed on each of these Bills that have come before the committee. It's a responsible exercise that we go through here. And I want to thank the member for his direct questions, for the concerns that have been brought here on behalf of the people that we all represent.

And again, I want to thank the officials that have brought us to this stage as well with all the legislation that is intended to be beneficial and of benefit and of assistance to the people that we are all responsible to in this great province of ours. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 421 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 76 — The Cities Consequential Amendment Act,  
2002/Loi de 2002 apportant des modifications  
corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Cities Act**

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I believe — maybe the minister would just comment — but I believe the necessity for this Bill was brought about because of The Cities Act.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Yes, Mr. Chairman, that's correct, the French translation.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And at this time I believe this is our last Bill, so I want to thank your officials for their help tonight in explaining to us some of the parts of these Bills, and thank you for your time.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 68 — The Saskatchewan Water Corporation Act**

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

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to introduce to my immediate right, Mr. Stuart Kramer who is the president of the Sask Water Corporation. Bryan Ireland is seated just behind myself; he's a regional director, regional operations. Directly behind me is Mr. Michael McDougall, our general counsel. And to my further right is Mr. Greg Argue who is the director of marketing and business development.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I only have a few questions about this Bill. I want to welcome the minister here and officials today.

Now this is quite a lengthy Bill. And it also, I think, deals with, I believe, with kind of a giving a . . . splitting up Sask Water Corporation, I think, moving some of the irrigation is going to be going into under Agriculture. The conservation development authorities, I believe, will be moving under the Environment, if I'm right. And this particular Bill is going to be dealing with water and sewage.

Can you go into a little more detail of this Bill, will it be . . . with your department, will you be increasing it with the engineering department right now?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, the purpose of the Act primarily is to turn Sask Water into solutions providers in order to enable Sask Water to work with the communities, determine their needs, and as well, work with the private sector in addressing the needs of communities.

So it's a solutions provider basically. And the purpose of the Act primarily is to set it up as such.

(18:00)

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Will your department be growing though with a . . . If you're going to be providing solutions, a solution provider, does that mean you're going to be hiring more engineers, more consulting engineers? Will towns be able to come and hire that surface, or do you already have them engineers that they can come to? Or are you going to be increasing your department?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, there are no immediate plans to move in that direction. What we want to make sure that the department is capable of doing is responding to communities to assist them in identifying what kind of problems they may have. But as far as the immediate plans for increasing the staff or engineering staff or otherwise, that's not in the immediate plans.

There are adequate, capable people, technical people now that are able to do the kind of work that's expected of Sask Water at this point. If down the road, who knows? There may be some

opportunities for more work with the private sector to address some of the communities' needs. But again it will be based on a determination, perhaps decisions that communities themselves may wish to make as far as their choice of solutions to their problems and who they want to partner with to solve those problems.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Minister, didn't Sask Water do this before? And what's the thrust behind this Bill? Because I believe they already provided the services. They would come out to towns and provide some consulting information.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the intent will be the same as it always has been, to be available to help communities and provide whatever assistance they may require in any immediate situation.

The corporation as a whole — Sask Water Corporation — was something like 240 employees, 70 of which will be going directly to the Water Corporation to deal with the types of issues that will require some immediate response or assistance to communities that may be faced with difficulties with their water projects.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Will this Bill be setting up a separate Crown already? Will the company . . . How is Sask Water splitting up? You said 70 employees will be coming over directly to Sask Water Corporation. How is the rest of Sask Water being split up?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — The 70 employees will continue with the Sask Water Corporation, and it will remain the same. It's the next Bill that we'll be dealing with, the Watershed Authority, that will be . . . will involve the balance of the people that are now coming out of what we knew as the Sask Water Corporation. So the corporation will not . . . the name will not change. We will remain a corporation.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So then the conservation and development authorities, they will be going over underneath the Watershed Authority, I believe. Did Sask Water do any consulting with the president, with any of the association itself? Have any meetings with them informing them that they will be falling under the Environment and not under Sask Water?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, this move is essentially all part and parcel of the long-term water strategy program that was announced previously, I believe sometime in April. And there were consultations and discussions and deliberations about how the response . . . the response departments, if you wish, could be better equipped or better organized to deal with specific issues, right from the protection of sources of water right to the point of the drinking tap — turning on the drinking tap and ensuring all along the way that there were various responsibility areas that needed to be adhered to, and again with the bottom line being quality, good, safe drinking water for all the people in the province.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Chairman, what did the conservation and development authorities, what input did they give you and information? Did they tell you that they would sooner be under Environment or would sooner remain under Sask Water?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — The conservation and development folks will be moving intact so there is no threat of reducing numbers, and I'm not sure if that's what the member is concerned, Mr. Chairman. But there was no ongoing or lengthy consultation in that respect, but the determination as to how, once again, qualified people, dedicated people within the corporation and within the organization could best be utilized to meet the needs that were being determined through this long-term water strategy.

It's not unlike we have a lot of good people in a lot of places and when it comes to a time of determining — not unlike restructuring — where can we best use people that we already have to our best advantage to meet the needs of people that we're responsible for. So with some . . . There were some discussions but no lengthy deliberations. It was a matter of determining people with certain qualifications, where they might best be used.

And I think that's probably a responsible approach to take, not unlike restructuring within . . . within our Department of Government Relations, which now identifies specific areas dealing with our responsibilities to and for our municipalities, both SARM and SUMA and towns and villages.

So it's . . . again, it's a long-term water strategy. So within that strategy is how can we strategically utilize the best people we have — and we have a lot of them — and their talents to meet our objectives in this particular issue for the long term.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You also have some very good people in the C&Ds (conservation and development authorities) and since they deal basically with drainage of water, the ones I talked to felt they should stay under Sask Water Corporation rather than the Environment even though Sask Water had been underfunding them for many years, same as they had been for irrigation.

But they still felt they should still feel under Sask Water — the ones I talked to anyway. So I was just wondering if any of the presidents of the C&D associations or the actual president, if you've talked to him and what his thoughts were on it.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — The C&D people will be with the Watershed Authority, and again that's the Bill that will be dealt with later. But once again . . . And I'm sure, Mr. Chairman, the member will agree with me, that regardless of the determination and the very best efforts to address a long-term objective, there will be some that may agree or rather, some that will disagree with the direction being taken.

At the end of the day the decisions that are made, as they are in this venerable institution, are made in what's believed to be the best interests to meet long-term objectives and meet responsibilities to those that we're responsible to.

However, Mr. Chairman, as the member recognizes as well, for some reason or another we don't always get 100 per cent approval. So hopefully we do have the approval of the majority or support of the majority in our efforts to address what is very, very important to issues that are facing our province with respect to our most important and most valuable resource, and that's our water.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You also . . . There was a letter from the Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan — there was concern with this Bill.

Have you been talking to them? I think you have the same letter. And I've met with them and their concern was that you will be providing competition to them with your engineers out there with the towns.

They provide a very excellent service now in the consulting engineering end of it and their concern was in the letter addressed to you was that there could be some engineers firms losing workers. And we already have an outpouring of workers leaving this province with the private firm. Have you met with them since then and tried to address their concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to answer that question for the member. As a matter of fact I have. I had the privilege of meeting with them on June 24. And we discussed those very issues that the member raises.

I do want to assure the member that during our discussions it was more of a discussion about partnerships as opposed to competition. And as a result it may very well turn into more opportunities, I believe, for the professional engineers. And our meeting was very, very amenable. And I look forward to working with that fine group of people and addressing those needs of our communities.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just going through some of the Bill here, at the front here, on part VI . . . or no, I'll go division 2 — I'll get that later — "Provision of Services," you have "Exclusive power to provide water, works." You want to explain that part of the Bill a little more?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, could I clarify? Was that part VI of the Bill?

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Chairman, it was under part V, division 2, "Provision of Services," under 39, "Exclusive power to provide water, works" and the "Power to amend agreements." Those are just two of the items there.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, forgive me for taking a little bit of time. We had to chase that down a little bit.

I understand that that provision in the legislation has been there since 1984. That's not new. And again it empowers the corporation to go ahead and do as they feel necessary, whether there's some construction needed for whatever reason — safety or otherwise — or making sure there's adequate water supplies. So that right was there since 1984 and it's a carry-over. So it remains, and for the purposes that I've mentioned, not for anything other than if there's a need to go ahead and do something that's going to benefit people or protect them, then that authority remains in legislation.

(18:15)

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now with this Bill, I take it you'll also be . . . the intent of Sask Water is to provide more water pipelines to towns if that's possible, to expand that end of it, to turn it to more of a money-making corporation? Is

that the intent of this Bill?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, the corporation will operate as a commercial entity might. And where there's an arrangement with communities to . . . for services, then it will be dealt with as a commercial entity.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Does Sask Water intend to build more water pipelines throughout the province to supply towns if they're willing to purchase the water?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, where communities are desirous of having regionalized systems, and where a good business case might be made to move into that type of project, then by all means the opportunity . . . that sort of opportunity would be explored. But again, keeping in mind not as an intent to compete but as a commercial entity.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm also in . . . respecting water and sewage I suppose in the sewage plants would you be looking to build and operate them? Same as the water plants, would you . . . Let's say a town of 5,000 people, whatever, they could basically hire you to build their plant and then you would run it. You would provide the safety, the water sampling, and they would have absolutely no liability. You would be basically providing . . . Would you provide that whole service package for them if they wanted?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, once again, it would be if the communities would choose to have Sask Water do that, yes. And once again, it would be under a contractual arrangement that would be both . . . be amenable to both partners or both people working together on that kind of a project.

So by all means, if the communities feel that Sask Water is the partner they want to do business with, then it would be on . . . again, on a commercial basis.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank the officials. I think that's the questions I have on this Bill that have been posed to me by different groups that will be affected by it. And I hope when I pass the answers back to them, I hope they will be satisfied with them. So that's all the questions I have on this Bill at this particular time.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. member for the questions posed with respect to this Bill. Once again, part of our responsibility to ensure that that legislation has been scrutinized, and I want to thank the member for the questions that he's asked this afternoon. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 52 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

#### **Bill No. 67 — The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act**

**The Chair:** — I recognize the minister whenever he's ready to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just

to my immediate right is Terry Scott, who's the deputy minister for Saskatchewan Environment. To my left is Michael McDougall, general counsel for the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. Directly behind me is Bryan Ireland who's the director of regional operations for the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. And of course to my further left, next to Bryan, of course is Mr. Dave Phillips, the assistant deputy minister of operations with Saskatchewan Environment.

### Clause 1

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials.

Mr. Minister, we have a number of Bills before us this afternoon that are the NDP's direct response to the North Battleford water crisis. And as I've had it explained to me, this Bill is something that the NDP have crafted in hope that it will alleviate some of the difficulties that were experienced prior to North Battleford and subsequent to it, to North Battleford.

The disturbing thing about this, Mr. Minister, is that even with a cabinet decision item that very, very clearly warned the NDP that this kind of crisis that we experienced in North Battleford was a possibility, there was no attempt whatsoever to be proactive. And not necessarily just proactive in terms of avoiding the kind of situation that we saw in North Battleford but proactive in terms of addressing an infrastructure in this province that through neglect has been deteriorating very, very badly.

So perhaps with that in mind, Mr. Minister, you could give me what you think are some of the highlights of this particular Act and how the government sees it as being able to address some of the issues this province has had to experience over the last 10 years.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. I just want to point out that the watershed management will certainly look at the involvement of all the environment and social . . . socio-economic aspects. It'll certainly talk about watershed planning, groundwater management, protecting aquifers from depletion, encouraging conservation of wetlands, promoting sustainable economic development through the wise use of water and all, you know, the land resources, and to help resolve disputes over the use and diversion of water. So in summary, the Watershed Authority will manage the supply allocations of water in the province, and protect water at the source. That's the primary focus.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I understand that bits and pieces of various departments and agencies were brought together in the drafting of this Act. Some of those include Sask Water, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, and Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation. Could you briefly describe which of the areas formerly administered by those departments and agencies are now included in this Act. And could you also address the issue of funding. How is the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority to be funded?

I understand that when the government depleted the surplus from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, that while the

bulk of that money was transferred to the General Revenue Fund, some of it was going to be used to fund other agencies such as the Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation. Will any of that money be used to fund the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. Just to point out that the new Watershed Authority will be created by combining the existing watershed management responsibilities and associated staff of Sask Water, the Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, and of course Saskatchewan Environment.

There will be no overall increase in the cost to government, and the existing budget for the watershed management activities from the three previously involved agencies will be redirected to fund the new organization.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, there are some people who feel that the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has almost invasive powers now in this province in many areas that this Act addresses. Has there been discussion with the federal government, and how have you managed to develop this Act in a way that it will work alongside of Fisheries and Oceans and in a way that we won't see conflict with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

(18:30)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you for the question. There's no question about it that DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) is going to be an active part of the solution. As you know, that DFO hasn't had a presence in the province for a number of years. Last year they've basically gone through the process of staffing up and we have developed a protocol with them to be part of the solutions that we're trying to afford with this whole Watershed Authority. They obviously are involved with fish habitat, to protect fish habitat.

So there is some collaboration that is necessary. And although we feel that we're adequate to address some of the challenges with fish habitat, certainly at this stage of the game we accept that DFO certainly has a role to play and we're trying to work with them to provide some good solutions overall.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, could you indicate whether there are any changes in penalties with the new Act? I'm assuming that there were penalty sections in some of the other Acts that you have borrowed from in order to develop the watershed corporation Act. Could you indicate as to what those changes might be and what the penalties under this Act are?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. What we'll do is we'll send you a copy of the penalties associated with the authority. And the penalties have not increased in terms of the monetary value, but they certainly increased in terms of the comprehensiveness. So there isn't a whole pile of new rules and regulation. There's certainly some additions to the process, but this is not meant to increase in a monetary form the amount of penalties that will be part of this Act. So we'll send you a copy of that.

And I can assure people that the increase in the amount of rules and regulations are there to protect the water. This is not an exercise to increase the fine costs and certainly that's something that we think is very important to go forward.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, this Act indicates that Crown corporation personnel may enter on to any land for a number of different purposes. When they do this and they are acting on behalf of the corporation, what is their legal status, Mr. Minister? Are they then immune to any kind of or from any kind of legal recourse on the part of owners of property that they may be going onto?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Certainly one of the things that the Act does, it certainly affords the authority for people working for the authority to go and inspect certain places. Those issues are clearly pointed out in section 90 and section 49. And there is certainly a process where we would act, reasonable to look at, at a potential violation of the authority and the intent of the authority. Like for example, instead of taking 100 pieces of equipment in there, one is necessary. That's fine.

But certainly I think the authority will have the provision to allow officers of the authority to enter on private property as long as they have a common sense process in terms of not having to bring in a whole pile of equipment and that they are there to protect the water at source.

So those Acts . . . or those regs are clearly pointed out in section 49 and section 90.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I would just like to pass on to you an observation that was made to me at the SUMA regional meeting in Hudson Bay. The group from I guess all of northeast Saskatchewan at that meeting were very concerned about the Act in terms of it perhaps being a little too complex and perhaps in some ways very difficult to adhere to.

Now I know in the second reading speech the former minister indicated that the hope was that it would eliminate any conflicting priorities, reduce duplication, and increase efficiency. And I think I would just pass on to you, Mr. Minister, that there are some people who are concerned that that may not have been accomplished.

The question is — I notice that this Act is to come into effect on proclamation — when does your government intend to proclaim this Act?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Certainly we want to basically have some of the Acts in place as quickly as possible.

We plan on proclaiming the Act by this fall and it's something that we feel is necessary to begin the process of implementing our water strategy.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Chair, I have no further questions.

**The Chair:** — Members, this is a fairly lengthy Bill. Is leave granted to deal with it by part?

Leave granted.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 166 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To my left of course, we have Bob Ruggles, and Bob Ruggles is assistant deputy minister for Saskatchewan Environment. Directly behind me is Lian Schwann, and Lian is the Crown counsel with environmental responsibilities at Saskatchewan Justice. Next to Lian, we have Scott Robinson, environmental planner with Saskatchewan Environment. And once again, we have the old faithful, Terry Scott, deputy minister of Saskatchewan Environment.

#### **Clause 1**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, this Act once again is another piece of legislation that was introduced directly as a result of the experience in North Battleford. Now I think on reflection, at the end of session, this will be considered probably one of the most important pieces of legislation to go through the House this session because this potentially can impact the way that municipalities govern themselves, the way that they provide services to their residents, and I think to a large degree will have some impact on their autonomy, as well, in the sense that there are some relatively onerous requirements being placed on them.

Now with this Bill having been introduced so late in session, the one comment that I get a lot from communities is that they didn't have — and haven't had — much of an opportunity to be able to review it, to be able to fully understand it, and understand what the implications of having to meet the requirements will be.

So my question to you, Mr. Minister, is what type of consultation did you and your department do prior to the drafting of this legislation?

(18:45)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I'll just point out that this changes to EMPA (Environmental Management Protection Act) primarily because of the water issue. What we wanted to do was, while we were dealing with the water issues, to do some minor improvements of the operation of the Act. There has been no policy direction change associated with this, but certainly the focus has been on water.

And I'll point out one of the challenges we had in trying to do timely consultation, and we done it as best we could. But the consultation was basically hampered somewhat, although we did go through a very quick process, a very thorough process as well, primarily because of the schedule of events.

As you know, Justice Laing brought down his, his final report and we, of course, had to respond to that. And there was a whole pile of work being done prior to that. And so if you look at that coming down at the end of April, I believe, we had May and June — two months — to get all the legislation in place and the rules and regulations, to go through all that process.

So there was a very tough time constraint. And as a result of that, we wish we had more time to do more thorough consultations. And of course we did the very best we can.

And again, I want to point out that the whole issue is being driven by water, and the design and changes here are to improve the operation of the Act. But there's no policy direction change associated with that.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the requirements is that community reporting is going to be more stringent. Could you describe what the expectations now will be of communities with respect to their reporting to the department? And could you also indicate why it is that the department determined that their own report, the state of drinking water quality report, would be an annual report instead of perhaps a quarterly report?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I think what we want to do is to point out that in terms of compliance, we monitor the water systems of the province often. There's no question that what we want to do is we want to make sure that public safety or the public's health is certainly paramount in terms of the concern to us.

Prosecution is not the intended object here. What we are trying to point out is that absolutely everybody has a role to play. So we would say that on an annual basis, the people that operate water and sewer systems in the province must make a report to their citizens. I think that's only fair that that be done so the citizens have, you know, a sense of comfort that their water systems are being operated properly.

And certainly a state of the nation kind of a water report should be coming here to the Assembly to really begin to see and continue having a visual object here that we can look at and see if we're making improvements.

So I think there is a number of very solid opportunities for people to assess their own local drinking water and to also look at the province as a whole. And that I think compliance is certainly what we're trying to achieve and a quarterly report would be . . . would just be not be feasible primarily because of the volumes.

Certainly as capacity is built, perhaps there is quicker ways of getting things done. But at this stage of the game we feel that a quarterly or annual report is probably the best, the most pragmatic, way to go. And the compliance with the water tests are done on a regular basis.

So given those two factors we feel that the quarterly report might be too cumbersome on the whole system.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, once again referring to the penalties section, this Act has some

very serious penalties, including fines of up to \$1 million or three years of incarceration. Could you indicate how that differs from the previous Act, if it does differ from the previous Act, and how this compares with other jurisdictions?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I would point out that the fines are . . . haven't been changed. They have been the same as the old Act had them at. And certainly I think in terms of the comparison with the other provinces, I think we're probably comparable. There is no significant difference from other provinces.

And of course the whole intent here is to make sure that people are working in concert with us in terms of water safety, and so the change in the . . . or the amount of fines is not changed from the old Act and it's comparable with the rest of the provinces as well.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, one of Justice Laing's harshest criticisms of the NDP in his report was that a lot of what happened in North Battleford happened because the NDP were in a virtual state of paralysis as a result of turf wars between departments, agencies, infighting in cabinet. And I guess, Mr. Minister, we've had two substantial Acts here this afternoon that even with the best of intentions still won't accomplish what they're intended to accomplish if those issues aren't addressed.

Can you tell me how it is that the government intends to address some of those more political issues internal to cabinet and to government?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Certainly I think one of the things, the intention that we have when we introduced our water strategy, to make sure that it's effective is of course a . . . three components of that being the improved rules and regulations, the Watershed Authority, and certainly the CSIP (Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program) program in which we would help a number of communities establish safe water systems. And that's \$170 million over a five-year program. So that three-pronged approach is very important that people be told about on a constant basis.

I would point out that Environment's playing a very strong role. We're seeing efficiency in the rules and regulations. We're seeing it being housed in one department. We're seeing protection at source being a part of Environment's overall effort. So I'm thinking . . . I believe that many people out there will certainly be assured that when it comes to environmental protection, Saskatchewan Environment is well positioned to do a very good job.

But what I would point out as well is that this is a partnership mode. The communities have to do their water testing; they have to follow the processes and the protocol. So this is by far a very effective way of settling the issue. But we must constantly remind people to be diligent and be part of the partnership process to ensure safe water for all Saskatchewan people.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I think given the dramatic impact that this Act and the previous Act that we discussed will have on municipalities and the provision of safe drinking water in this province, we certainly

will have a lot of individuals, communities, groups, monitoring the implementation of the Act and with an eye to the effectiveness and the fairness of what's contained in this Act.

And my question, Mr. Minister, is once again we've got an Act here that comes into effect on proclamation — when does your government intend to proclaim the Act?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — In the fall.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 85 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 65 — The Forest Resources Management  
Amendment Act, 2002**

**The Chair:** — I would invite the minister to introduce his officials when he's ready.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Chairman, just joining us, we have Earl Bourlon, forestry policy analyst at the forest ecosystems branch with Saskatchewan Environment; and of course we have next to Earl, Lian; and of course to my left, we have Bob Ruggles; and of course to my right, Terry Scott.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials here tonight. I have a few questions regarding Bill No. 65, The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act.

But before I go into that, I just want to bring the minister and his officials up to par, that later on under "New Clause after Clause 32 of the printed Bill" I would like to propose an amendment at that time. And I know that the Clerk has just passed on a copy of the proposed House amendments for the minister and his delegates to read. And I hope that the minister and delegates will look at this amendment with some seriousness because in this Bill, after reading it many times and getting some opinions, there doesn't seem to be any appeal process that's in this Bill. And I find that somewhat strange that this Bill would not have an appeal process of some sort to deal with other people.

I just want to also bring the minister and his delegates up to par in regards to my comments yesterday in regards to this Bill. And under some of the information that I got from people I've been talking to, there was a lack of some concerned areas. And some of the concerned areas was the practice surrounding the imposing of administrative penalties, is that the minister delegates his authority to the local Saskatchewan Environment office who are also charged on a day-to-day basis with directing forestry activities in the area.

And another concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is where local forestry officials determined that a licensee has committed an offence; they will investigate the allegation, accept submissions from the licensee, and will therefore either accept the submission or levy a penalty in accordance with the regulation.

(19:00)

There is no appeal process in place, other than by the way of the judicial review which initially only deals with questions of law and did the minister have the jurisdiction to impose a penalty.

Essentially, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government is asking trust us, we will not abuse your authority.

But there are others however who would say that while an appeal process will rarely occur, the right to an appeal to a court is the best safeguard, that none of this is required. This type of law appears to be a trend with government.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's just look at the Bill that was just passed by the hon. member from Carrot River, The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002 which was introduced the first week of June and just passed, where appeals from decisions of the minister are allowed only on questions of law. In existing Act, an appeal to the court is allowed on all matters.

And this trend does not seem to be based on assessment that the court process does not work or it's too expensive or it takes too long. Instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rationale seems to be that because they are doing this in Alberta and British Columbia, we should also be doing it here.

So that poses the question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister and his officials. Why did the department neglect to put an appeal process into this Bill?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for your information and your question. I would point out that in the overall scheme of things, in terms of looking at the whole process to appeal, I'll point out that companies seem to have accepted the Act as it is being proposed. And these are relatively small penalties, they are not huge penalties. And so far we haven't had any major problems that would identify that, this being a problem. And there's about, maybe from the administrative perspective, I would say about 80 over a three-year period that have been assessed.

And there's also a judicial review simply because a statutory appeal remedy isn't set out in the Act doesn't mean that the aggrieved parties don't have access to the courts. A person can bring their matter before the courts and the court has the power to set aside ministerial actions or decisions where the minister has exceeded his jurisdiction or the proper process hasn't been followed. So that's . . . currently that option is available.

So while I appreciate what your point might be, I would also say that we haven't had no advanced copy of the amendment and certainly the process there is also available. So we can't accept the amendment as part of this Act, but I would point out for your information that there is certainly these processes for people to follow if they feel that they haven't got the option to appeal.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think in fairness, Mr. Minister, in regards to the amendment to the . . . or the proposed House amendment is the fact that this Bill was introduced not that long ago. And by the

time the information got out to the suppliers or to the people involved in regards to this Bill, and by the time the information came back, which they had time to read up on it and find where there is some loopholes or some deficiencies in the Bill. That's why I think the process is somewhat done in a haste.

And that's why just today that we got together to draw up this amendment because there is some deficiencies in this Bill, and that deals with the appeal process.

I know it's short term coming, but you've mentioned that there's only a few, or very few people have had this problem. But wouldn't it be in a safeguard position to put something of an appeal process into the Bill now, while it can be still done?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. Just for the record, it should be noted that we can't add the amendment now; there wasn't due time. But I would point out that we have been working with the industry since last fall, and a judicial review certainly allows the process for people out there that may have . . . feel they have a case. That option has always been there.

So I would point out that the review is there, the consultation with the companies has been last fall, and the amendment certainly hasn't been timely since . . . (inaudible) . . . lost the opportunity. So you factor those three considerations, and that's why we feel the Bill as it is now addresses some of the challenges that you may have on the appeal front, to make sure that it's effective and it's fair.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With that I'll go on to asking questions regarding section 17 where it's talking about the harvest of trees. And it points out any person may, without a licence, harvest a reasonable number of trees for his own personal use if the trees are harvested for the purpose of being used as Christmas trees.

What happens, Mr. Minister, if a person goes out and cuts — and it happens many times — a load of Christmas trees and takes them to a city or a village or whatever and sells them? Do they need a licence or a permit to do this still, or is this not what's supposed to be?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — I think one of the most important things to know is that if somebody's out there harvesting forest products and making it a business and certainly making profit on it, that they would be expected to find a . . . or that there would be a fee attached to it.

One of the things when we talk about Christmas trees is families, of course, as you know have been harvesting Christmas trees for years and this provision certainly allows them to continue.

What we want to do is again make sure that those businesses that are making profits from the sale of trees, if they're Christmas trees, then of course they'd have a permit or a fee to pay.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the trees, as you know, there are families that go out and cut a Christmas tree and one person will say, well while

you're out there cut me a Christmas tree and the next one, well cut me a Christmas tree. And pretty soon they've got 10 or 12 trees on their truck when they come back.

Is there a number that you would put down as being a number of trees that would be for sale or is it wide open?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Just for the record, I'll explain to the member that I have a fairly large family — there's 24 of us in the family — and every year they appoint me to be the tree searcher and harvester. So I take my Volkswagen and load them all up.

No, and in all seriousness, there is a reasonable expectation that people would use common sense and reason.

If it's for a family, it's for a family of four or five people and they all go out and harvest each one for their homes . . . Like this is not about trying to dissuade that. What we want to do is make sure those folks that are out there harvesting Christmas trees are using that . . . those trees for personal and family use and that they're not using it for profit. And that's the most important point here.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Chair. Thank you for that answer. I also have a large family, and I was at that time delegated to cut Christmas trees.

I'd like to move on to section 78, and 30(1). And it states there:

The minister may assess a penalty in the amount prescribed in the regulations against any licensee if the licensee:

And then you go down to:

(f) grazes livestock in contravention of the terms of a licence or an approved plan.

And I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, what do you mean by this?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much for the question. The purpose of this is to have some administrative penalties available to folks that may be exceeding their permit or may not be permitted in that area.

It's intended to avoid criminal charges. It's more of a administrative penalty option. And of course those penalties will be defined as we go down the path to try and rectify the problem. And we don't suspect that will take long.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Chair. You've stated that if they're over their limit they'll be penalized. Does that mean . . . Does this have something to do with the forest fringe land? I know that you don't want to go there and neither do I but — I know one of your members is winking — but has this got something to do with the forest fringe land, with the permit system, where cattle grazing is allowed and if they go over their numbers they will be penalized?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — It's only applicable in provincial forest lands.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — But is not the forest fringe land provincial lands also?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — The answer would be no, they have to be designated as provincial forest lands.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Designated forest lands. But is not forest fringe land, which is that area of land between forestry and farm land, it is called designated land also and it is forestry fringe land. Now would that part of the land be affected by this Act?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I would point out that the forest fringe land that you're talking about is also administered by other government agencies, and in this case Ag and Food are also involved here.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — So then, Mr. Minister . . . or thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Deputy Chair. So what you're saying, Mr. Minister, that forest fringe land, designated forest fringe land is not part of the area that falls under this Act?

(19:15)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I'll just clarify that it is only applicable on provincial forest land. And of course the forest fringe area is not considered forest land so it is . . . again there is some other conflicting uses and there's another . . . Ag and Food is also involved.

So I think the grazing authorization on the forest . . . or provincial forest land, it simply points out that no person shall graze livestock in a provincial forest without a forest product permit or a term supply licence issued pursuant to section 9. So that basically talks about the provincial forest land.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So then, Mr. Minister, you're saying that the forest fringe land, which you know what I'm talking about, is not part of the provincial land?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — I'm advised that the forest fringe land that you're speaking about is not part of the provincial forest land designation.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. At that time I don't have any more questions regarding the Bill, and I'll let it go on.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 36 inclusive agreed to.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you. At this time, Mr. Speaker . . . or Deputy Speaker, I'd like to propose a House amendment:

Amend the printed Bill by adding the following Clause after Clause 32:

“ **New Sections 94.1 to 94.3**

**32.1 The following sections are added after section 94:**

**‘Appeal to Queen’s Bench**

**94.1** Any person aggrieved by an order made

pursuant to this Act or the regulations may appeal to a judge of Her Majesty’s Court of Queen’s Bench for Saskatchewan at any time within 30 days after the date of the order.

**‘Appeal to Court of Appeal**

**94.2** Any person who:

(a) is a party to an appeal pursuant to section 94.1; and

(b) is aggrieved by a decision of the judge of Her Majesty’s Court of Queen’s Bench for Saskatchewan pursuant to section 94.1;

may appeal to the Court of Appeal at any time within 30 days after the date of the decision.

**‘Appeal does not stay order, etc.**

**94.3** The taking of an appeal pursuant to section 94.1 or 94.2 does not stay the operation of the order with respect to which the appeal is taken, unless a judge of the court to which the appeal is taken orders otherwise’.”

Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Chairman, I would point out that we just got the amendment less than 15 minutes ago. We haven't had time to have adequate scrutiny of the amendment. We feel that that's very important in terms of the ability to be given the time to look at all these amendments. And primarily because of the time constraint, because of the other processes that are available that doesn't compromise what the intent here is, that I'll be voting against the amendment.

Amendment negated on division.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

**The Chair:** — Does the minister have any new officials he'd like to introduce?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again to my immediate right we have the deputy minister, Terry Scott; to my left we have Bob Ruggles. Directly behind me we have Lian Schwann; and joining me is also Conrad Olson, the provincial wildlife habitat specialist with Saskatchewan Environment.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, once again welcome, and welcome to your officials.

Mr. Minister, could you briefly describe the process for identifying and acquiring wildlife habitat land and who is involved in the consultation and decision making?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question.

And I'll just point out that the process of looking at the wildlife habitat value is it's Crown land that's important to wildlife, and generally, we consult with the lessee. There is generally no consultation with neighbours, so the primary consultation with this process is with the lessees.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I've had a number of individuals ask me just exactly how much wildlife habitat land we have in the province, where is it located. And I'm curious, Mr. Minister, is there a directory, a list, a map? Is there any type of information that people can access in order to get some sense of just how much wildlife habitat land there is in the province, where it is, and how might they go about doing that, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. There's 3.4 million acres of natural upland and natural wetland in the agricultural area that will certainly encompass The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act and its purpose.

And that information is available on a Web site through Saskatchewan Justice. But there are maps available and — you know, I believe there are maps available — and we will certainly get that information to you.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, one of the concerns that the steering committee to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund had, after the government transferred the surplus from the fund to the General Revenue Fund, was that that fund has been used to purchase some of the habitat land over the years. And they were wondering if that would perhaps compromise the schedule of acquisitions that they had laid out over the next period of time.

And could you tell me, Mr. Minister, is there going to be any change in terms of how much habitat land is purchased or acquired in the foreseeable future because of the loss of the surplus to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — I would point out, you know as it relates to this Act, no it doesn't have any effect from this particular Act and I just . . . to separate and to answer the question as quickly as I can here.

In the future it is anticipated at least 800,000 will be allocated towards wildlife habitat purchases annually from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, as I understand it, and given that we are discussing an Act here with respect to habitat land, as I understand it the surplus from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund was actually used in some instances to pay taxes on land already acquired and perhaps even some of the land being discussed in this particular Act. Will there still be the ability to be able to pay those taxes? And could you perhaps clarify the whole issue of payment of taxes on wildlife habitat land.

(19:30)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Again to point out that the question that you have really is not part of the Act that we're proposing here.

There is the connection in the sense that it is wildlife habitat, but there are two separate Acts that we're dealing with here. But as usual being fair, we'll provide you with the answer as quick as we can here.

The Fish and Wildlife Development funds pay a grant in lieu of taxes. This is made possible by utilizing interest incurred on the \$2 million in the municipal habitat conservation fund and revenues collected from haying permits on fish and wildlife development lands. Despite that money being spent, that still allows us to, in the future, anticipate spending \$800,000 towards wildlife habitat purchases annually from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister and I would like to thank his officials. They have been extremely helpful and professional and I certainly appreciate their patience. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

### THIRD READINGS

#### Bill No. 35 — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Amendment Act, 2002

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

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

#### Bill No. 36 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2002

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

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

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

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

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

#### Bill No. 66 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2002

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

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

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

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

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

**Bill No. 45 — The Local Government Election  
Amendment Act, 2002**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Bill No. 75 — The Cities Act**

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Bill No. 76 — The Cities Consequential Amendment Act,  
2002/Loi de 2002 apportant des modifications  
corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Cities Act**

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

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

**Bill No. 68 — The Saskatchewan Water Corporation Act**

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

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

**Bill No. 67 — The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act**

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

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

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

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

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

**Bill No. 65 — The Forest Resources Management  
Amendment Act, 2002**

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Monsieur le président, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

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

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

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

(19:45)

**ROYAL ASSENT**

At 19:51 Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

Bill No. 34 - The Education Amendment Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Bill No. 46 - The Registered Music Teachers Act, 2002

Bill No. 30 - The Liquor Consumption Tax Amendment Act, 2002

Bill No. 58 - The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2002

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

Bill No. 35 - The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Amendment Act, 2002

Bill No. 36 - The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 78 - The Members of the Legislative Assembly Benefits Act  
 Bill No. 66 - The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 52 - The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 45 - The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 54 - The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 55 - The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 56 - The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 75 - The Cities Act  
 Bill No. 76 - The Cities Consequential Amendment Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 apportant des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Cities Act  
 Bill No. 68 - The Saskatchewan Water Corporation Act  
 Bill No. 67 - The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act  
 Bill No. 71 - The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 65 - The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2002  
 Bill No. 47 - The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2002

**Her Honour:** — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

Bill No. 80 - The Appropriation Act, 2002 (No. 3)

**Her Honour:** — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 19:55.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

#### Subvote (HI01)

**The Deputy Chair:** — I'll invite the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce Harvey Brooks, who is on my left. Harvey is deputy minister of Highways and Transportation. On my right is Barry Martin, who is the assistant deputy minister for operations. Right behind me is Don Wincherauk. Don is the assistant deputy minister, corporate services. And beside Don on his right is Fred Antunes, director of operations, planning, and business support. Next to Don Wincherauk, on this side, is Carl Neggers, assistant deputy minister for policy and planning. Stella Madsen, next to Carl, is manager of sustainable infrastructure. And in the back row, Cathy Lynn Borbely, leader of budget development.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. A good evening through you to the minister and to his officials this evening. We have a number of questions we want to pursue, a

number of areas that we hope to develop with the minister and his officials. And we're looking forward to an informative and lengthy event tonight.

To start though, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I would like to turn the questioning over to the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member from Rosetown-Biggar.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I assure the minister and his officials that I will be fairly brief. I just wanted to ask a few questions pertinent to the Rosetown-Biggar constituency when I had the opportunity to do that. And as I . . . The minister is certainly aware of the highways in my riding because I know he does have family that lives in that area.

I wondered if the minister could just give me an update on the construction on Highway 342 — what will be accomplished this year, and whether the project is still on budget, and what future plans are in store in future years for Highway 342?

(20:00)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — With regard to Highway 342 and the construction there, this is one of the highways where we're in a partnership agreement with the RM. They are constructing it for us.

For this year we're looking at about \$650,000 of investment, and 500,000 for next year, which should complete the work on 342.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — I just wonder if the minister then could explain what phase of the work will be completed this year and what phase of the work is . . . will remain next year?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Because of the nature of the partnership agreement, we can't give you a real clear level of kilometre . . . kilometre detail. But we can say that this year it's anticipated that surfacing will be completed; next year, grading and paving.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then the other highway that is a major concern in the Rosetown-Biggar constituency is Highway 44, which serves communities of Elrose, Dinsmore, and it goes on to Macrorie, then across Gardiner dam to that new terminal east of Gardiner dam. I'm sure the minister knows of that, that that highway is in bad repair in many sections. It serves an increasing need with the terminal being on the east side of Gardiner dam.

What prospects can I assure my constituents . . . What are the prospects for the highway that I can assure my constituents that that highway will improve in its condition?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Within your constituency there will be no more than routine maintenance on 44. On the other side of the dam from Davidson to 219, there will be . . . there is work going on with the RMs there, they're managing the roadway over there.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you. I'm not sure that's the news that my constituents wanted to hear. That's not encouraging.

Highway 7 east of Rosetown was . . . there was a short portion of the highway twinned. It was paid for, I believe, primarily or maybe entirely by CN (Canadian National) Rail to accommodate the grain terminals on the east side of Rosetown. Could the minister report on whether or not that short stretch is accommodating the large amount of truck traffic that's handled? What is the impact of turning prior to the divided stretch where there is another seed processing plant?

There was some concern expressed to me prior to the construction project that the section of twinned highway was not quite long enough and should have bit a bit longer to accommodate the increased truck traffic in a highway that is fairly heavily travelled at any rate.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The recognition is that CN built what was ordered by Transport Canada and we're not willing to build any further. I think also the monitoring of that area would tell us that along No. 7 all of the rest of the intersections will be handled by normal intersection treatment and the volumes at those turnoffs don't justify twinning at all in that area.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Minister. The other . . . the last specific highway question is not a highway in my riding, but it is Highway 7 coming out of Saskatoon and it has been twinned, I think, for about 10 kilometres out of the city of Saskatoon. I was looking at the highway traffic numbers out of Saskatoon, it's high in every direction. The traffic is increasing in the Saskatoon area with the two potash mines on the west side of Saskatoon serviced by Highway 7. The first one of course is serviced by the twinning but the second one isn't. Is there any thought to extending the twinning any farther west on Highway 7 to accommodate increased traffic?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — In terms of our long-range planning it would not be out of scope for the upcoming five years. I think it's very important to note the emphasis that we have put on twinning No. 1 and No. 16, that those are part of the national highway system and that's got our priority. And if the federal government starts funding the national highway system that enables us to change our priorities. Right now it's not on scope for at least five years for further twinning on 7.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Again, probably not the answer some of my constituents would have liked to have heard. The final area that I want to touch on is the issue of additional fees that are charged for hauling primary weight loads on secondary highways. It's an issue that's been around for a long time. It's an issue that certainly affects the devastated potato growing area of the Rosetown-Biggar constituency where it is impractical to load light loads and increase that load weight once you reach a primary highway.

The potatoes, for the most part, are exported out of the province. Under the current regulations the extra penalty or the fee or the tariff — I'm not sure what the correct terminology is — but whatever that tariff is called is charged on a per kilometre basis, not until the load reaches a primary highway, but until that load leaves the province of Saskatchewan.

That has been a prohibitive cost for the potato industry, and I have been informed that other industries and haulers throughout

Saskatchewan are impacted very negatively. It's not certainly a practice that encourages rural revitalization. It's an issue that I have raised before.

I wonder if the minister could inform me as to whether or not that policy will be changed so that the tariff will only be charged on the kilometres reached to . . . travelled to reach a primary highway, which seems far more fair for one thing. Because I mean one load may be a short distance from the Alberta or Montana or Manitoba boundary, where another load in the middle of the province may have to travel several hundred kilometres.

There's no rhyme or reason to this tariff being charged on a load, an overweight load, for secondary highways on its trip out of the province versus the trip to a primary highway.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — This program was developed a number of years ago basically to give producers in those areas access to heavier weights. And certainly in discussion with producers and discussion with our transportation partners, there's a recognition that the policies need to be reviewed.

And in recognition of that we've been working on a review, but we're also working with the area transportation planning committees, taking advice from them. We're meeting with producers. We have been meeting with them over the past year and seeking their advice as we're conducting review. And we're also waiting for the ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) transportation subcommittee report.

But all of that will be fed into the review that we're in process with and we'll be bringing forward recommendations on dealing with primary weights and doing . . . making the necessary changes to enable producers and to make it as fair a system as possible and to also make sure that we're caring for the roads as fully as we can.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well I thank the minister, but the industries involved I guess would like to have something a little more clear in the way of an answer, particularly since this issue was raised a couple of years ago. It was identified as a problem quite some time ago. Obviously industries like the potato industry don't want to have to wait another two years and still not have an answer.

Perhaps just to make it really clear to the minister how unfair this is, a load of potatoes at Lucky Lake would pay this tariff not only the 100 or so kilometres, or less than 100 kilometres to Highway 4, but they pay it on the stretch from . . . on Highway 4 from Kyle to Swift Current, from Swift Current to the Alberta border, which is another 2 or 300 kilometres of additional tariff they have to pay to ship this load which is not overweight on the primary highways, only overweight on a short stretch of secondary highway to reach No. 4.

If that same industry was say located at Maple Creek, they would only have to pay the penalty for, you know, 50 kilometres or so until they got to the Alberta border, even if they use Highway 21 for just a few miles.

So I'm sure the minister sees the blatant unfairness of this policy and I would ask if he could give me some hope that I

could take back to constituents of mine that are terribly concerned about this problem, that it will be resolved in the very near future, and will not be left hanging over their heads for months and perhaps even years to come.

(20:15)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We have, of course, met with producers from your constituency and the area around there. We recognize, very clearly, how important this matter is, how important it is, not only in that area but throughout the province in terms of rural development.

And we, as I say, we've got a number of discussions that are going on out there and we, in those discussions, we recognize how important timeliness is on this and the best decision that can be made in a timely manner as possible will be made and will be conveyed very quickly to all producers involved.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — I want to thank the minister for answering some specific questions regarding the riding of Rosetown-Biggar, and I will turn the questioning over to my colleague, the member from Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Following up on the line of questioning that was just presented to the minister, I would like to refer to a letter that was sent to the Minister of Highways and Transportation and to the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, from a gentleman by the name of Neil Thompson, based out of Riverhurst.

And in the letter we received from this gentleman, he reminded us that he had had a meeting with the ministers on January 30 at which time the Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association brought some issues of similar concern to those raised by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

And he was looking to us for support for his position, and to this day, I have not been made aware of whether or not the issues that were raised at that particular meeting were addressed.

If I just could quote, Mr. Chairman, a brief paragraph from the brief that was presented to the ministers at that particular meeting, I would like to read that into the record right now.

Now that the construction of Highway # 19 from Chaplin to Central Butte, and Highway # 42 from Central Butte to Riverhurst is completed, and according to a letter dated January 11, 1999 from Ted Stobbs . . . stating that this highway system will be built to primary weight standard, we propose the Transportation Partnership Agreements and the permits associated with it, remain in place, but the costs of these permits be abolished. By cutting the permit costs, this would allow rural economic development to flourish. This proposal could be accomplished by the government's stroke of a pen, without incurring any major expense.

The question for the minister tonight is: have you addressed this particular issue specifically and directly, or is it part of the overall review?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Yes, the meeting was held with seed potato growers and potato growers. And it was actually a very interesting meeting to hear the tremendous success that they're having in their industry in that area of the province, and we were pleased to see that. And as I said earlier, we are looking forward to giving them what support we are able through the development of our transportation partnership programs. And that's why it's under review.

The specific questions that you're referring to and the questions that were raised in that meeting, we informed them at the time, and we'll inform you as well, member, that they are in the review and are a definite part of that, and the consideration of our desire to support the agricultural growth and industry in this province is very important.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that the importance of this type of a review and accommodating some of the requests that have been made available to the minister and to those of us in opposition are significant to the extent that in this particular brief you may recall the author indicated that they had entrepreneurs from Alberta that were looking at establishing a feedlot industry in the immediate area of Outlook but that the cost of permits for transportation purposes would affect his bottom line by about \$150,000 per year, which was a significant sum by anybody's estimation and enough to bring a complete halt to that proposal. I think that the province can ill afford those kinds of losses.

Another individual from the Moose Jaw area was talking about establishing a 10,000 head feedlot in that same area. And Outlook, as you are probably well aware, presents almost a perfect location for that type of operation because of its access to irrigation and additional feed and those types of complementary enterprises. But if the Highways policies remain in place and continue to negatively impact decisions of those types, we aren't going to see the rural revitalization that is so desperately needed in this province.

And it's a role that I think the Department of Highways and Transportation would like to complement and be part of producing as opposed to being an obstacle to that type of success. So I would encourage the minister to move that process of review ahead as quickly as possible and see what accommodations can be made for just these types of ventures.

I know that there have been other similar issues raised with members of the official opposition and no doubt with the minister in other areas as well, but this Outlook area seems particularly and specifically hard hit by the current policies that are binding the government operations.

I want to move if I may briefly, and the minister will forgive me, I hope, if I move from area to area fairly quickly and maybe even disjointedly from time to time, because there are so many different subject matters that I want to raise tonight. And frankly we have eight or ten people who want to participate in this question period as well.

So, Mr. Minister, I'd like to go to the construction projects listing 2002-2003 which your department put out and made available to me. And as I was looking through here, something caught my eye. And it has a summary of the road activity

planned by the department for this current year. It lists every project that the department plans to undertake in terms of major highway and bridge improvements.

And without going into a lot of detail of what these projects include, I notice that the heading it says:

There will be over \$124 million invested in 114 major highway and bridge improvements . . . (in the current year).

And then at the bottom it says:

An additional \$129 million will be spent on smaller highway and bridge improvements, routine surface maintenance and other traffic safety activities like mowing, signing, pavement striping and transport compliance. This also provides for the operation of our 13 ferries and 18 northern airports.

It sounds like a fairly complete listing, Mr. Minister, but if I add those two figures together I come up with a total of \$253 million instead of the \$300 million that were budgeted. What and where can we account for the balance of \$47.3 million?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The figures which you quoted did not include figures for accommodation, for operational services; did not include the revolving fund for equipment replacement, administration, engineering services, some of the regional services. And basically, it's . . . the rest of those funds come through in terms of this overall administration component.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through the chairman to the minister, are you suggesting then that the department requires approximately 15 per cent or a little more of its budget to achieve administrative activities?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, I can provide significantly more detail, but it's not just 15 per cent you know, not casually 15 per cent for administration. There are items like in terms of accommodation, that's cost for our buildings, SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) costs, engineering services. We have engineers who are on salary who are working continually and their work is not charged directly to a particular project.

But I'm quite happy to provide you with a more detailed breakdown. But it is . . . that amount is accounted for in that side of our operations.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, if I was to look at this listing of 114 major highway and bridge improvements, and look at the costs associated with it, what figures are ascribable to engineering and equipment usage and all the rest of those kinds of things that go into building roads?

I assume that there would be salaries associated with this in terms of engineering services, maybe project management or construction management, the equipment costs and so forth. So when you have a project here that it says you're going to do 160 kilometres of grading on 16 projects on 12 highways, and gave me a dollar figure for that, what would that dollar figure include, if in fact you're holding \$47 million back for

administrative and other types of expenses?

(20:30)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — So if you look at the breakdown in terms of those costs, the largest payments that are made are to the contractor. They're payments for sand, gravel, they're payments for purchase of property, for movement of lines — power lines, telephone, etc. There is direct engineering costs, which would be the costs of surveying. There are direct costs as well that are charged to that project that are for soil sampling and that side of the engineering work.

But on the other side of it is a project manager who might be working on two or three projects at one time and that would be charged to the department's administrative side.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I simply have to indicate that I'm somewhat confused by the way the bookkeeping happens on those types of projects because you've said that the \$47 million we talked about, not being referenced in this particular edition on the construction projects pamphlet, is partially made up of wages. And yet, I guess when I looked at the budget from this spring and added up the salaries as indicated in this particular document, they accounted for \$60 million.

So I'm wondering, now where does the difference between the 47 million come from and the possible \$60 million for salaries, the figure that I lifted right out of the budgetary documents from this spring?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I understand there can be some confusion in that, but the way that the budgeting is done for the estimates, you've got that 60 million overall figure that you referred to for salaries. And I think if you look, the \$47 million that you're referring to in the earlier document, as I indicated, there would be, say, a \$9 million cheque right away for SPMC. You've got, as I indicated as well, you've got the cost for revolving fund for replacement of equipment. So that \$47 million of course is not all salary.

But when we're doing the estimates we're accounting for the whole thing under salaries. That's for all the salaries, be in that 60 million.

**Mr. Elhard:** — So the partial amount attributed to salaries, out of the \$47 million we talked about earlier, is reflected in the \$60 million that are indicated as amounts going to salaries in the budget documents?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Yes. Yes.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Going further with this construction projects document, I want to turn to page 4 where it talks about Centenary Fund projects. There are five projects listed in this particular document and they don't total a whole lot of length in terms of kilometres. Would you please enlighten us as to why these projects qualify for centenary funding versus other projects of a more significant impact?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — In putting the request forward for centenary funding, some of the criteria that were involved were

. . . particularly with no. 6, we're looking at a major north/south corridor that we want to have there both for commercial reasons and for tourism.

You'll notice on the other ones that tourism will be a key factor to help build that. And so when we're selecting particular projects, it was to help build the province, emphasize tourism, and bring people in for centennial year as well.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, is that the decision taken within the department alone or do you have some other input, some other source for making those requests and decisions?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, the fundamental principles in the Centenary Capital Fund were projects that would advance the government's strategic priorities and projects needed to clearly demonstrate a provincial interest in terms of employment, the economy, the environment, cultural development, and/or other social benefits.

Primary criteria for allocating the Centenary Capital Fund were: projects must exist on the department's future initiatives list, projects must have a significant content of physical infrastructure, and projects must be for public infrastructure.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Moving to another specific project, if I may.

Back on January 14 I, as well as the existing or then member for Kindersley and the former minister of Highways, attended the Highway 51 action committee tour in the Kerrobert area — between Kerrobert and Major and the Alberta border. And they had a very, very positive response to this tour from local people, local business people, community leaders.

There was a fairly large crowd that attended that particular tour. They hired a big bus and loaded us all on it. We took a drive down Highway 51 and looked with some dismay, I think, at significantly deteriorating conditions as we went west. The road was very, very narrow, very rough. There were potentials for serious accidents just judging by the traffic that we met while we were on that bus heading west.

And I think that after the tour nobody could have mistaken the need for some significant attention to that stretch of road.

I was fortunate enough to be able to speak to the assembled community leaders after the tour, and between myself and the member for Kindersley at that time, you know we acknowledged publicly the need for some significant improvements there.

And the previous minister of Highways indicated that she could see that there was a definite need as well and that she would talk to you, Mr. Minister, about that particular section of road. I believe, if I remember correctly, her comments at the public meeting were that it was not possible for her to commit to action on behalf of the government but that certainly Highway 51 would be one of those highways that would make the list of to-do projects.

Now I was looking with some expectation at that happening this year with the introduction of the Highways budget for the year

2002-2003, but having gone through this construction projects list, I can't find Highway 51 anywhere.

Now I understand that there is some expectation of work out there if it isn't already underway. So would the minister and his officials give us an understanding of what has happened or what will happen?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, yes. To the member, I was able to watch the video, though I couldn't attend that, and I was kind of amused when I heard the member say that it takes him 10 minutes just to say his name. But it was a very informative video and I met with folks from the Highway 51 committee and had a good informative meeting with them.

During the past year we stockpiled approximately 26,000 tonnes of gravel in preparation for a partnership agreement. That's about \$300,000 worth. The department has committed \$500,000 to start rebuilding a 7.1-kilometre section from the Alberta border, and it's my understanding the agreement is signed and that that work is probably underway as we speak.

**Mr. Elhard:** — I know the members of the local community there were so desperately in need of attention in terms of the impact that they wanted to have on that particular project that they were prepared to commit financing to that stretch of road. Is that, Mr. Minister, the single most important factor in the willingness of the department to get that project underway?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think one of the really tremendous things that's been happening not just under my time in this department but earlier on for the previous minister and others have worked at building partnerships with many of the RMs in order to meet some of the needs.

The reality is that we have thin membrane surface highways around this province, many of them which need a great deal of work. And in working out the partnerships, we're also able to set up alternate routes so that when we fix those TMS (thin membrane surface) roads, they stay fixed as dust-free, mud-free surfaces. And there's been a tremendous development in the level of co-operation with the RMs.

And so when that co-operation is available, it enables us to do more work and to spread the work more broadly across the province. We are able, through the strategic grow roads partnership program, to put significant dollars into this, and when the RMs co-operate it enables us to use these funds more broadly.

These RMs I think have really . . . The RMs in the area there have indicated that this is an important piece for them. It helps in the development of their economy. And so with those kind of indications, we were able to bring money from the partnership fund to help get this work done because we realize how important it is to have safe, good roads in this province.

And I would just say that I commend the municipalities who have come forward and said look, it's important to us, it's important to you; when we work together, we can do a lot more. And I tell you, there's been some tremendous work in this province with the RMs and it's something we should all be able to celebrate.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I couldn't agree with you more that, you know, co-operation is what is going to help us achieve many of the urgent and pressing priorities of rural Saskatchewan.

The project you talked about on Highway 51, however, is rather short. Will that 7 or so kilometres of road work that you've talked about, will that effectively reach the most dangerous part of that road?

When you come into Saskatchewan from the Alberta border, there's a fairly straight stretch for a few kilometres, but after that you find yourself along a very kind of tortuous and winding narrow road, the scene of which was where several deaths have been recorded in the last few years.

I think if there's any part of that road that really needs attention it is probably that winding, narrow, and curvy, hilly stretch in that particular brief interlude there.

(20:45)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I'm very happy to report to the member that that curvy, windy road is covered by the 7.1 kilometres. It was the area that was highlighted by the RMs and as I say, working in co-operation with them we're trying to hear what those needs are and respond as effectively as we can.

And just to further elucidate on this, in 2001-02 the department worked with 51 different partners on 32 initiatives that addressed 550 kilometres of low volume highway at a cost of about \$6.1 million. In 2002-03 we are committed to 25 initiatives with 45 different partners to address another 550 kilometres of low volume highways.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, I'm glad to hear that that particular part of the road was the first part that was addressed by your construction initiative there because, as I said, it was a deadly stretch of road and had taken several lives in the last few years.

The opportunity that we had to visit that particular stretch really put the fear in a number of the passengers on the bus because as we were approaching it, we were met by a loaded highway tractor pulling a four-wheel drive on a flat deck that was mounted with a large snow blade; I would suggest probably at least a 12- and maybe a 14-foot blade.

When we got out and measured the width of the pavement at that point, it was only a 19-foot surface. So most of the surface was being taken up by that truck with its load of tractor and blade, and there wasn't much room for those of us on the bus to get by. And I understand why the local people would have been so concerned, given the conditions and the narrowness of that particular stretch of road.

Mr. Minister, since the Highway 51 project is underway but didn't show up in the construction list here, how was that accomplished? What happened? How did that get underway?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — One of the things that our budgeting has provided is some level of flexibility. And I need to say that one of the members of the tour on Highway 51 was our former

minister of Highways and Transportation, the member for Saskatoon Nutana who came back and gave a very good, solid report on what she had experienced and seen there, and encouraged us to move forward with co-operation plans.

In terms of the way that it's budgeted, the \$6.5 million that is in the strategic rural roads program enables us to have some flexibility. So those pieces that we know about ahead of time, that are agreed upon, can be incorporated into the budget document that you see.

But we're also allowing some flexibility for our regional offices to work with the rural municipalities to come to agreements, and it's accounted for overall in terms of the funds for that . . . from that \$6.5 million.

So it's just allowing some flexibility so that we can develop these partnerships, and so that we can take action as soon as agreements are signed.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. You probably know this after being heavily lobbied by the former minister of Highways for that project, that that 19-foot width that that particular stretch of road wasn't even up to the standards of 1952 when that road was built. The standard width was 22 feet, and at 19 feet it was substantially under that, let alone the current standard. Today I believe a road of that type would be somewhere in the range of 28 feet.

So I think that probably is representative of a number of highways in our province that have similarly difficult and poor conditions for travellers in this province.

I think the people of the Major and Kerrobert area will be especially grateful that the department moved on that area of need.

Are you prepared to commit to continued improvements on that road, and if so what would the timetable be?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — A couple of things to the member. First of all the note of the width of the highway and how the thin membrane surface highways break down is very significant.

I was actually shocked when I was up to the wildlife warning system project at Harris. And there'd been a fatality there just a few days earlier on, and the highway had been diverted . . . traffic had been diverted from Highway No. 7 on to a TMS right by the Harris golf course.

And it was only diverted for three hours, and at the end of three hours, that TMS was beaten. There were holes in it; there were chunks of pavement off to the side on what had been a good piece of TMS giving access to their little park there.

So the awareness that any kind of heavy traffic can beat those roads down very quickly and make the repairs and the work that's been done almost non-existent in very short order, that's just a fact that we deal with in terms of these roads.

But in terms of your question about the longer term plan for

Highway No. 51, again we work very closely with the RMs in that area and it will be . . . the work will be . . . We anticipate the agreement in principle is there and we anticipate confirming that agreement and continuing the work on to the junction with 317. And from that point on, the RMs are still trying to determine what they would like to see done in there. But we are continuing to work with them and try and fill the needs.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister and his officials, I'm glad you brought up the name of Harris. We're going to move from Highway 51 to the community of Harris because I just received a note from an individual in the Harris area that is quite concerned about Highways department sign policy.

And maybe before we get into the specifics of this particular issue, would you tell us, Mr. Minister, what the department's official policy is regarding signs along highways, whether they're primary or secondary highways? Is there a sign corridor policy and how does the department determine which signs are acceptable and may remain in their positions and which ones will be removed on the insistence of the department?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — There may be some need for clarification but I'll just try and paint the picture that within the urban area itself, the community does have control over what kind of signing. And I think an example you'll be familiar with is along Belle Plaine where the community itself has jurisdiction over those signs. You see a number of commercial signs in that area. And that is for the jurisdiction of the urban . . . of the community.

For the signs within the Highways jurisdiction — and there are standards that we have there — but for the signs within that jurisdiction, those follow a national standard.

And one other piece, I think it's important to note, is that we have an increased budget for enhanced signage programming this year and we're also looking at reviewing the policy around tourism signing and we hope to have some enhanced sign projects over the coming years.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. I can understand where a small urban or a larger urban community would have full jurisdiction over the signage within their boundaries. And in the Belle Plaine example, I think we're looking at signs primarily on the north side of the highway which is within the town limits. But what about the land on the south side of the highway there where I don't recall seeing any signs at all?

Another example I might be more familiar with. I believe it's in the Craik or Davidson area along Highway 11 where there is an extended group of rather large signs that may or may not be within the town boundaries. I know for a fact, having just driven No. 1 from Alberta back to Regina, that there are a significant number of commercial signs along the south side of Highway No. 1 just prior to reaching the community of Piapot. There is also a similar sign corridor along the highway for the community of Tompkins, and I also believe there is one for the community of Gull Lake.

Now these are rather extensive lengths of signs and they're not

within the community boundaries per se. And they are right on the edge of the Department of Highways right-of-way. Would the minister please tell me how that's accomplished.

(21:00)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think the member may be referring to a particular sign corridor. And I think if you look when you go by Belle Plaine, you'll see that on the south side that there are signs there as well. That's because even though it's not developed it's within the corporate limits of the community; I think the same along No. 11.

But if you're referring to sign corridors, there are agreements that are struck between the urban community who would apply to the RMs and to particular landowners for permission to be able to develop a sign corridor. And then in agreement with the department they can do that. They can set up a sign corridor but it has to be at least a half a kilometre distance from the community itself. And the urban community would set the standards and say who could and could not have signs within that corridor.

But that's basically the way that it's done. It's by agreement and the urban community is charged with managing those signs.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, in those kinds of agreements would there be a minimum setback requirement for that type of signage? Is there . . . like I understand that the Highways department has a right-of-way that they measure from and they determine what is acceptable within that right-of-way and what isn't. Nothing of any permanence generally is allowed to be built within that right-of-way. So are there exceptions made for that type of signage given the conditions that prevail otherwise for Department of Highways right-of-ways . . . rights-of-way?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, the signing policy would be that they cannot be within the Department of Highways right-of-way. The signs are also limited in terms of their spacing so that one is not blocking others. There is a certain distance depending on the, on the size of the signs.

But the signs cannot generally be put within the Department of Highways right-of-way.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, can you tell me how far that right-of-way extends?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I have to acknowledge that there are a variety of different highways that we have, so I'll give you the general so that you'll have it that, generally, for our major two-lane highways, it would be about 200 feet wide of right-of-way. And on any one side, you go from the centre line out about 100 feet would be the general rule for our right-of-ways.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, if I, if I may, I'd like to read a little bit of this letter that came to us about signage. And this letter indicates that they feel that there's a double standard, frankly, in terms of signage requirements.

2 businesses (involved) in a community venture berry farm had a sign on their fence (approx 300 metres from the main

highway — across the train tracks & the old highway) (in the community of Harris).

A farmer . . . The second example was:

a farmer advertising game meats available at the town's grocery store had signs on round bales sitting in his field — well off the highway — (and) across a fence.

(Now) Hiway's department official has told both businesses that they have to move these signs as they are too close to the highway. These signs are outside (on the far side) of the designated highway corridor — so how can they be to close??

Local people feel this is another attempt to try and stifle small business in rural . . . (Saskatchewan).

I'm reading verbatim. I'm not saying that personally.

Businesses like Cargill & Wheatpool have elevators with signs on them closer to the highway than these signs — why aren't they subject to . . . (these rules)? Businesses right in the town of Vanscoy & Delisle also on highway 7 . . . are situated right on the hiway and they have signs?

Why the double standard? The same situation exists at Rosetown where businesses are right on the highway & regularly display signage.

Mr. Minister, I think you've addressed some of that in your earlier response to questions that I posed. But here we have a situation where we have basically non-permanent signs, signs that are attached to round bales that are going to be probably picked up and moved out of the field, and as far as these people are concerned they're outside of the Highways corridor. Why would somebody from the department insist that these signs be removed?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, there's significant detail in that, and it's to a particular situation. I think in terms of our general signage policy, you know, we've outlined that and if you would like a written response to that we'd be happy to take the particular issue into account, deal with that, and give you a written response to that and respond to your correspondent as well.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, I would appreciate that effort on behalf of yourself and the department because I think this kind of goes to the heart of the ability of very small, new businesses attracting clients and customers to their businesses. And they probably can't afford maybe the signs that would ordinarily qualify for acceptance in a sign corridor or maybe there's no sign corridor agreement in that given community.

I'm not sure what the circumstances are in that particular instance, but I do know that these kinds of informal signs pop up frequently around the province and they're often outside of the right-of-way that exists for department approval and/or permission. So I would appreciate any response you could give that might give some encouragement to these particular cases.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to indicate now that there are

several members of the official opposition that would like to participate in the questions in Highways estimates tonight, and for that purpose I would like to turn the next few minutes over to my colleague from Weyburn.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I have a few questions about the highways in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy. And first of all, I'd like to ask you about Highway No. 13 by Trossachs, between Weyburn and Trossachs, that was scheduled for resurface . . . or for surfacing structure last year, and as I'm sure you are aware, a very inadequate job was done. The highway is in as bad or worse condition that it was before it started, this project was started. The project was . . . \$1.7 million was the estimated cost.

My question is: first of all when will this highway be repaired, and who will bear the cost of this repair?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think it's important to note that we recognize that highway is not performing as it should have been and the contractor was responsible for planing bore most of the responsibility for re-planing that seal coat that was put on there, for taking that off.

Another seal coat was put on this year and we found that there was an electrical charge in the gravel that was rejecting the seal coat, and another seal coat we anticipate will be put on next week. And the contractor is adding a chemical to that so that it will adhere to the gravel in the surface.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you please break down then who is paying the cost for repairing this road, what that cost is, and exactly how much is being borne by the contractor and how much is being borne by the taxpayers?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We won't have those figures until the job is completed, but we will — I'll try that again — we'll provide that in a written reply.

**Ms. Bakken:** — I guess just for the taxpayers' information, Mr. Minister, was this — I don't know what the word, mismanagement or however this failed to be done properly — was this responsibility, was this because of the contractor not doing a proper job, or was it the responsibility of the department, or who took responsibility for this?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The responsibility is primarily with the contractor, but it's somewhat shared and the department carries some of the responsibility for that. But proportionately, the contractor is carrying more of the responsibility.

**Ms. Bakken:** — And, Mr. Minister, how is it that the department is responsible for this? Where did the breakdown occur?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — For the seal coat itself, the contractor is primarily responsible. And the department would pick up some of the load because the electrically charged gravel is something that was not anticipated at all and so we just . . . it's one of those anticipated things . . . unanticipated pieces that happens, and so we pick up some of the responsibility for that.

But for the workmanship itself, that is not the department

problem, that was the contractor problem.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess not being an engineer myself, just for interest sake, how would this happen that gravel, inappropriate gravel, would be used for a project that would not meet the criteria required to be satisfactory?

(21:15)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, this would be an occurrence that would happen very, very rarely. And usually the gravel, the aggregate, could be used for a variety of different purposes and there would be no problem even if it was electrically charged.

But in the rare cases when it happens, you just have to cover the costs of it. And it hasn't happened for years. This is the first time in years, and it just reacted with that seal coat because of the electrical charge.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there a test that should be performed prior to the gravel being used or is there any way of knowing this could happen?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Yes, there is a test for this and they're of course testing the area to find out why the seal coat didn't operate properly. But as with all testing, there is significant cost in that. And the reality is that this is a very, very rare occurrence. It just doesn't happen very often. But there is a test that can be done to see if the gravel is charged.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I guess in light of the fact that this project cost \$1.7 million, and in all the additional work now that has had to be performed, some of which is going to be borne by the taxpayers of this province, I would like to know does it make sense to do the test rather than take the chance of this happening in regard to cost?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's our understanding that other jurisdictions are not doing this testing either. And again, it's because of the rarity of these occurrences.

If there were more occurrences the department would determine that it would be a necessary test to do regularly. But because of the rarity and costs involved in testing as well, and the fact that no other jurisdiction or at least our neighbouring jurisdictions are not doing it, it's just determined that even given the costs in this case — and if there were another case at some point — doing the regular testing really wouldn't be justified at this point. But if it was a regular kind of an occurrence and the odds were high of running into that, the department would say yes we should do it more often.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you indicate for the people of Trossachs area when this project will be completed, when the resurfacing will be finished?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — If the weather holds we expect to do it next week. The contractor would come back to do the second coat starting on Monday.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I'll look forward to getting a breakdown of the costs when this project is

completed so . . . (inaudible) . . . Thank you.

Another highway in the constituency or the same highway but further west is No. 13 by Ogema. Could you indicate when this project will be started and exactly . . . there's been some conflicting stories of whether it's going to be east of Ogema or west of Ogema, and what the actual distance is going to be, and when the project will be underway?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Two parts to the answer. I'll give you the first part while they're looking for the second. First part is that there are actually two projects, so that might be why they are getting some conflicting timelines.

The first project is from on the east side of Ogema and that piece there is a resurfacing being done by Carmacks. On the west side, there's the TMS is being upgraded to a granular pavement. And we'll get the timeline on that for you in just a moment.

The first project on the east side of Ogema is, the cost is \$1,582,979; that is . . . should be underway now and should be completed by mid-August.

On the west side of Ogema to Horizon, the paving project should begin mid to late August and should continue until the end of the season. And the cost on that is \$2.77 million.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So these projects will be started and they will be completed in their entirety this year?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — That is the project plan barring unforeseen circumstances.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And what is the total kilometres that will be — both east and west — that will be in this . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's approximately 42 kilometres.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd now like to ask you some questions about Highway No. 6 by Minton. This, of course, as you are, I'm sure, you are aware is a very hot issue in that area because this project was started last year. The people of the area believed that the project would be finished last year. It has not been finished. And I, as well as many members of that area, have called various people within the department and in the Minister's office to try and find out what is happening here.

The last information I received is that there was no decision made yet whether the part of the highway north of Minton was going to be completed this year. It is now gravel. It is being bladed, and the people of the area are very upset about this. It's creating dust. In the winter it was a maze of potholes. It is unsafe for buses and ambulance and just the general economic activity of the area. And so if you could please tell me what is going to happen north of Minton and how soon?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well I'm happy to report that this contract will be tendered. It'll be in the paper this Saturday and it will be let mid-July. A dust-free surface will be provided this summer, and we should see good progress in construction and

the project should be completed by late fall.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Mr. Minister, so on the letter received from your department, it indicated that there was a question about whether it would be surfacing or an interim seal. Which are you indicating that will be taking place?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The surfacing will be done.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And the highway now that is . . . the proposal that is for south of Minton, will this be started this year and will it be completed in its entirety?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — A contractor will be moving over from No. 8 very soon. It will be graded and a seal put on for this year.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So it will not be completed this year is what you're telling me, that the final pavement will not be completed till when? Is that what you're telling me?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Paving and grading contracts are always separate and the paving contract will be for next year.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess this is one of the major concerns that I'm hearing from people in my area and throughout the province, is that when these projects are put forward people believe that they are going to be completed in their entirety in the year that they are announced. And so people are concerned about that and I don't blame them.

I was with the understanding as well when this was announced for Minton area that last year the project would be completed and the one announced for this year would be completed within that year.

Mr. Minister, I have another couple questions. One is about signage, and there's concern in my constituency about the lack of signage especially for some of the smaller areas. People travelling from Regina to Weyburn do not know how to access, for instance, Radville. And there's been considerable number of articles in their paper and so on about the detriment to economic development in their area because people can't even find them.

What is criteria . . . how do people in these communities go about accessing proper signage from the department?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Recognizing the importance of our communities, our desire for encouraging rural development, we're . . . we have a review of our signage policies underway currently.

And the communities that are interested in changes in signing it's advised that they would communicate with the department and let them know what their concerns are and the kind of signage that they would be looking for.

That will be a part of the review and we see that there is need for very clear policies so that all the communities will have a good understanding and so that communities aren't missed. We don't want communities like Radville to be missed and so that's why we're engaged in the review at this point.

(21:30)

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess what I would like to know is when these communities contact your office or your department, can they be assured that they are going to get a direct answer and a direct agenda; how they get from A to B?

They seem frustrated. They phone and they're . . . and, you know, they're put off or they're led somewhere else or phone someone else. What they want to know is how do they access signage?

I'm not clear myself of where I would phone if I wanted to get signage for my constituency because I have tried it and it hasn't worked.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Given our concerns around signage — and I think it really is important to note that there is a branch within the department — contacting the department . . . anybody who's inquiring about signage in a community should be directed to that branch that knows what the current regulations are and is engaged also in the review process.

But in the meantime, we also have put significant dollars into an enhanced sign rehabilitation program, \$150,000. And into our annual sign replacement program, \$950,000 plus inflation. So that by the end of '02-03, we'll have an incremental \$2 million investment in sign replacement throughout the province.

So we're working at upgrading our signing, making sure that we're listening to what the concerns of the communities are, and the direct access is to the department through to the sign branch.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Mr. Minister, would you be so kind as to give us the number that people can . . . communities can call to access the signage branch in the department?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well first of all to the member, I have to commend this department on how well equipped and prepared they are coming here, even with the phone list. The person's name is Dawn Schmidt. Dawn is a sign standards analyst. The number is 787-4754. Okay.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I'm sure that this . . . is it Ms. or Mr. Dawn, I'm not . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Ms.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Ms. will be receiving several calls in the next few days, I'm sure, now that her number's out.

One more question about signs, Mr. Minister, is there any criteria . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Order. I'm having a bit of difficulty hearing the member asking the question and the minister answering the question. So if the din could be lowered a little bit it would be greatly appreciated. Would the member for Regina Dewdney please come to order? Thank you.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is there any criteria

surrounding the number of signs — no parking signs — that are put within a town? On one stretch of highway I believe the stretch is only about . . . it wouldn't be any more than a mile, and how many signs would be reasonable to put up indicating that no parking is allowed along the highway?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, really within the community they could put up whatever they want but we do . . . would try and negotiate with them around the signage that they will be putting along the highway. But within their jurisdiction they could put up whatever number of signs they chose to.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. These signs were put up by the Department of Highway and . . . pardon me, in the community of Avonlea. And I believe it's about a mile, it might be a little bit more. It's from the junction of the highway to the railroad track.

And I counted them. I believe there's 40-some signs, including the no parking signs. There's at least a dozen no parking signs directly across from each other and then with the stop signs and indication of what highway they're on, there's 40-some signs. It's like running the gauntlet.

I'm just wondering what your . . . what the rationale would possibly be for putting up that many signs.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The signing in that particular case was negotiated with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and the community, and the department. And it had to do with effective enforcement.

There were parking problems along those corridors by the intersection. People were pulling in there and parking and it was also damaging the edges of the roadway.

So the determination was made, you might have had one truck turning in and to have one sign wasn't effective enough; there needed to be another one.

But all this was negotiated. It was due to specific parking problems that they were encountering in that area. And the number of signs, location of signs, was negotiated with the RCMP, and with the community, and the department working together.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would suggest if you have the opportunity or some of your officials, that if you looked at the situation I believe that you might want to review it and put some second thought into it. Well it's overdone, and I would say there's more of a safety problem now than there probably was before, if that was the concern.

One last question, Mr. Minister. In my constituency there have been a lot of accidents that have been the direct result of the condition of the highway. And there's been many cases of individuals writing to yourself and the former minister of Highways because of damage to vehicles and so on and asking for reimbursement. And in some cases I'm happy to say that people have been reimbursed for the damages caused to their vehicles, but in other cases they have not or they have been partially reimbursed.

How do you justify the double standard of reimbursing some when the damage was caused by no fault of their own but because of the highway condition, and in other cases they have not been reimbursed in total?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Basically the request for payment . . . or the complaints are launched on a case by case basis and each case is looked at in terms of the potential for avoidance by the complainant.

The department officials look at the situation and would go to the site to see what the problems were as they were doing their analysis. And according to the levels of potential avoidance, according to what is determined to be our fault after the analysis, looking at the complaint in detail, and looking at the situation, then the department would pay according to that.

There is also an appeal process for people who disagree with the analysis the department has done and people are able to follow up on that. And that's the process that we use.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, the other day I got into, had the opportunity after discussing a few questions before the House Leader so rudely interrupted us and decided that it was time to adjourn the House . . . I'd like to complete some of the questions that I had at that time and the questions relate to highway construction down in the southeast corner in the Moosomin area, Mr. Minister.

But first of all, I want to talk a little bit about 48 and construction. I believe there's supposed to be some construction beginning from the Manitoba border through to No. 8 under the — what was it? — it's the regional transportation authority came up with a recommendation. The RMs and towns have . . . are somewhat involved. They put together a plan to work with the department. And I believe there's also some federal money as a result of grains funds.

And so I'd like to know, Mr. Minister — the contract's been let — when construction is going to be started. And then also what I'd like to know, what the long-term plans are to complete No. 48 through to Highway . . . actually right through to Kipling. And we look to No. 9 and then to Kipling.

I think, Mr. Minister, I don't know if your department has taken a traffic count or whether or not they've even sat down and assessed what the potential for tourism traffic on Highway 48 from Virden, Manitoba through to pick up the Moose Mountain Provincial Park. And in some cases actually if that highway was completed right through up to No. 48 at Kipling. I would think, Mr. Minister, it may alleviate some of the traffic even on No. 1.

So first of all can you give me an update on construction from the Manitoba border to No. 8, and then what's the long-term goal and objectives or projections as far as completing the construction of 48 if there's any thought has been . . . gone into that in view of the recommendations of the southeast transportation authority.

(21:45)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, the section of 48 between the Manitoba border and No. 8 will be graded this year

and it'll be paved next year. That's under the Prairie Grain Roads Program.

The section over to Wawota and the piece over to Kipling are not within the three-year projections now under Prairie Grain Roads Program but there are still some projects to be approved, some room for improvement of projects. These are on the list of projects to be looked at under that program and could still yet be approved within that three-year framework. But they are not there at this point.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. The reason I ask that is not only because it's part of the constituency and a number of concerns — and actually the member from Cannington now has some of that in his constituency — but also we just happen to live on one of the grid roads that an agreement has been reached with the RM for heavy traffic.

And the grid roads right around our area have taken a fair bit of a beating in some cases, especially just east of Kipling, as a result of trying to move the heavy traffic. And there is . . . It's surprising how much heavy traffic is on there. We probably didn't realize how much traffic was going on, travelling 48 through to Highway No. 9.

So I think, I hope, Mr. Minister, that you can give serious consideration to working and that the prairie grains program will continue and we can take advantage of that in using that to complete that project.

On Highway No. 8, south of Fairlight, are there any plans . . . I know you're doing some work. While you're completing the grading and the pavement between 48 and No. 1, are you — and you're doing some work on No. 8 further south, I think in the Redvers area, I'm not exactly sure — are there any plans to continue on to complete that project or that highway upgrade in the near too distant future?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — First of all, just with regard to your reflection on the heavy traffic in your immediate area, we were a little buffaloes by that heavy traffic in your area as well. We hear that it's crushing at times and we're working on trying to alleviate that problem for you.

Secondly, with regard to No. 8, there is . . . that section between Maryfield and Redvers is not yet approved under the Prairie Grain Roads Program, but it too might yet receive approval under that program. But it's not there within the three-year projection at this point.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, on 48 from Wawota west to No. 9, the grade on that . . . Well it's not the grade. It's the dust-free surface actually is in very poor condition and many places where it's broken out, they've been trying to patch it. And I'm wondering what plans the department has when they reach that, if there's a matter of resurfacing that or ripping it up and actually putting a better dust-free surface on that section of road and levelling it out. Or in a situation of a road of that nature whether it just so happens — this is Wawota to No. 9 — but in similar cases, what does the department do to address that and to bring them up to standards again?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — That particular piece of road is really

wearing like a thin membrane surface highway so we'll just do the regular maintenance for the time being. But it's the kind of road that would be . . . because it's got a very good grade on it, it's the kind of road that would be a very good candidate for the Terracem project that Pavement Scientific International is doing.

So I think when the time comes we would certainly look at using that process to rebuild that particular piece of road.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, moving over to Highway 47, you've got some construction now coming north of Stoughton, and if I read it correctly — and just correct me if I'm wrong — I understand now there was a contract let to actually grade the 47 from about 20 miles north of Stoughton right through starting at that intersection up through to Corning. And I believe there's some more grading supposed to be completed to Highway 48 this year.

And I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, if that's correct, if the grading has started on that, what work is being done. Although unfortunately it's been fairly wet in that area and it may have slowed that down. I really don't like to talk of wet being unfortunate when I think of areas of the province that really would love to have some moisture right now.

But the question has been asked and I . . . just going through the project summary that you sent out, it seemed to me that's what I was reading, but if I'm wrong, correct me. Because I know I've indicated to people that you are doing work there and I want to make sure that I've got my facts correct on that.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — This year the grading to gravel standard will be to about 14 kilometres south of Highway 48. And there is one more. That next piece is yet to be let and that should be let for next year. And so it will be upgraded to and graded up to gravel standard by next year sometime.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, when you say gravel standard, is that with dust-free surface anticipated in the near future?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Not in the near future, no.

**Mr. Toth:** — What about No. 47 between No. 1 and Highway 48? That road is really rough and it's road that, I think, anyone . . . if you've got a fairly new vehicle, I would suggest you don't even travel on that road. I know I've had a lot of complaints.

Unfortunately a number of people live on that piece of highway, and while the Department of Highways has tried to patch it and every once in a while they run a patrol over it, due to how poor the condition of the road is, it doesn't take very long to punch holes back into it.

And I'm wondering what the plans are for 47 between Highway 48 and No. 1.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — At the present time we're negotiating with RMs in the area to actually bring 616 into the highway system because it is a better road. It's parallel to 47. And 47 then would go to municipal road, is . . . yes, to municipal road.

**Mr. Toth:** — Unfortunately, Mr. Minister, that's just going to be another gravel surface, right?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — You're right for the short term. But it would be anticipated that that would be surfaced in the future.

**Mr. Toth:** — And, Mr. Minister, that would go for . . . When you, you mentioned . . . or the 47 south of 48, you said that was going to be brought up to a gravel standard and you indicated not in the near future. But there's a lot of traffic on there, especially with Louis Dreyfus right at that intersection, and traffic north/south and a lot of grain traffic on that, on that road. And when you've just got a gravel surface, you know what it does to windshields and the problems. And no matter how . . . While the speed limits are such . . . but travelling down these, these gravel roads doesn't necessarily mean that people are always complying with that speed limit and the gravel that flies up.

So you're looking at 47, as well, being surfaced from 48 down through to that intersection just at the Ocean Man Reserve where you started construction eventually?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think it's really important to take a look at the big picture here, which is what we are compelled to do. And though it's desirable, particularly for people who live in every particular area, to have their roads paved and surfaced, the cost is prohibitive.

And to quote the member from Cypress Hills, building good quality highways and not being concerned about trying to get every road, the quantity done, that's essential in terms of our overall planning. We have to make sure that we've got good, good roads that will handle the loads. And so working to a gravel standard, they're grading to a gravel standard. We'll make sure that the kind of traffic that is moving over that road can be handled.

But we also have to be very, very sure that we are making those roads which are the key corridors for the economy, for tourism, and really to help build our province that those roads are priorities. And I've indicated earlier that we work very, very closely with our area transportation planning committees to help the people from those areas, to hear from them which are the vital roads so that when in our determination, it's not just a central office that's doing the planning. But we're hearing from those people the roads that are essential.

And so when I say that, you know, in time it may be surfaced, that's accurate — in time, it may be surfaced. But in terms of the priorities, we have to be very careful to be good stewards of the resources we have, to make sure that the roads we have that are key in this province get the priority and are built to a standard that will handle the kind of traffic that is necessary in order to build our . . . and build and maintain our economies.

(22:00)

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. A moment ago you talked about discussion with the RM of Elcapo I believe it is on 616. The thing is what I found and certainly when we, when I travelled over to Grenfell, I'd just as soon travel on a gravel road versus the dust-free surfaces because of

the poor condition of those roads.

But at the same time if we're looking down the road at putting, turning, actually making some of these roads dust free, while that grid is an excellent grid and a lot of work has been done on it, my concern is that that grid would not have had the same compaction that you would put into . . . And you talked about quality of your grades and what's the important factor in a dust-free surface and in longevity is having a good grade underneath it.

And my concern is that a road like 616, eventually if they, if the opinion was that we need to dust free this . . . surface this road, that you may not have, while you have a good grade, you may not have the type of grade that would really hold up on, with a dust-free surface on it or a paving surface on it.

So I think we need to — before we just jump and look at some of the good grades that are out there, pick, transfer them to the highway system — we need to take a careful look as at in the long-term where you're going to have your dust free and make sure that you do have grades that will certainly hold up under paving surfaces.

A couple of questions regarding No. 1. Mr. Minister is there any construction plan for No. 1 east of — okay, we've now got to Wolseley — are you planning any further construction of the twinning on No. 1 East this summer, or are you looking at just completing the western portion and getting that under your belt and out of the way? What's the plans for the No. 1 twinning?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We intend to do another grading contract from Wolseley working east, and it will be carried over into next year as well.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one final question that I have for this evening has to do with communities and some of the concerns they have when twinning does take place.

And I believe your office just received, or the department received a letter from the community of Grenfell in regards to the suggestion that's already been made to them that their main street which comes and enters, the highway enters, or main street comes right off the highway, that that may be eliminated and a service road put in and then traffic then has to get off east and west.

And I guess the question I'm asking, Mr. Minister, is what policy does your department follow in following up on these concerns, and sitting down with communities, and kind of hashing out how we address these types of concerns?

It would seem to me as I look at that road and visualize a second twin highway going by, and I'm anticipating there it will be on the south side, that there really shouldn't be a problem — you'll have your turnoff lanes anyway and just leaving that intersection as is at the main junction.

But, Mr. Minister, could you inform me what process your department follows in talking to communities to try and address all the concerns prior to construction by those communities so it saves a hassle down the road?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — One of the things that I've been very impressed with since I've been minister is the amount of work that the department actually does working with communities to discuss options. And during this past week department officials have been out to Grenfell discussing.

There are four different options that they're looking at right now, that we'll pay attention to the commercial needs of the community, but we also have to be very careful in terms of the safety aspects in the construction of those access roads.

So all of that is in the mix. And I have to say again that I am very impressed with the diligence of the department in going out and working with the communities, listening to what those needs are, and trying to address those. And they're in that process right now with Grenfell.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, I appreciate hearing that because I think the more work that is done prior to a lot of the concerns that will end up at your feet and my feet can certainly be eliminated. And I want to encourage the department just to continue the dialogue.

And hopefully by taking this advance time we can address those concerns and come up with what is a workable solution as we move forward in the completion of the twinning.

Because I know, even just on the weekend, the traffic flow on that No. 1 Highway, and just even trying to get on at Whitewood was really interesting at times. Because of the amount of traffic flowing through there it was amazing to see.

So I want to thank you and your department for the work you have been doing. And I think, as my colleague has indicated, we've indicated in the past, I think we certainly need to go beyond just a one-year planning and always we need to start looking a little further long term so that you've got a kind of a goal in mind. And I think . . . I compliment you for having strived and actually getting to that point where you're looking three and four years down the road. So it just makes it a lot simpler rather than hopscotching here and there on a one-year basis. So thank you, Mr. Minister, and your officials.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening to the minister and his officials. Mr. Minister, in previous sessions of the legislature I have brought to the attention of the Minister of Highways at the time, the need to complete Highway 368. Highway 368 stretches from Highway 5 and goes through Lake Lenore and ends up at St. Brieux.

St. Brieux of course is the home of Bourgault Industries. Part of that highway has been done. There was a great deal of lobbying to get that highway resurfaced about five years ago I guess it was, five, six years ago and there was some response on the part of your government. So there was a portion of it that was resurfaced.

I just reinforce, Mr. Minister, that there is a high number of employees that travel between the Humboldt area and from that area, that use that highway to go through to Bourgault and also some of them actually make their way to Annaheim where Doepker Industries is. But they use Highway 368.

Now to my knowledge from the information sheet that you have distributed to all MLAs regarding which highways would be fixed, resurfaced, repaired, there is no indication to me that there is any work going to be done to finish that resurfacing of 368 between Lake Lenore and St. Brieux.

So I'm wondering whether, you know, what kind of considerations your department has made in basically, I guess, deciding not to complete the surfacing of that. And I would love to stand here right now and hear that I'm wrong and that you will be doing something with that because it really and truly is a highway that's used a great deal. And because of the high staffing of Bourgault Industries the highway is needed. It's certainly travelled a lot.

And I also want to just reiterate that five or six years ago when I did talk with the deputy Highways' minister about the way highways were prioritized as far as their need for repair and so on, it was important to look at the cost-benefit analysis at that factor, and at the time I don't think that was being taken into consideration. And after that conversation, I think it was one of the criteria that was used to determine which highway should be fixed.

As you well know, Bourgault Industries as well as Doepker do contribute a great deal of financial benefit to our economy, and it seems to me that this stretch of highway should be fixed to ensure that there is a safe passage and a good passage for traffic — not only of employees but trucking and so on that takes place going through there.

I'd ask the minister to please respond.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Always something good. One of the wonderful things that's going on is all the discussions with our area transportation planning committees and our RMs in terms of the kind of needs that there are in the communities. And of course the whole issue of what kind of economic activity is going on in an area, the kind of development that might be happening in an area, is also very important when we're looking at what kind of investment to make in the infrastructure.

In this particular case, the stretch of highway is a thin membrane surface highway, and one of the things that we have found some great successes in working with the RMs is to find alternate heavy haul routes to keep the heavy traffic off of the TMS roads. And discussions are going on with the RMs about alternate roads for the heavy haul and then when the maintenance is done on the TMS, we can bring it up to a standard that is acceptable for the light traffic, the transportation to the points of industry in the area.

In terms of upgrading that particular piece to structural pavement, granular pavement, that's not in the plan for the next few years. And the analysis will continue to go on and so will the discussions with our area transportation planning committees to make sure that we're getting the right priorities for each area; and we'll continue to work with the RMs to make sure that those TMS which are important for light-duty traffic are preserved and alternate routes are used for heavy haul where they can be.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the area

transportation planning committee that is responsible for that area, have these people advised you that they believe that it's not important to upgrade that stretch of road between Lake Lenore and St. Brieux?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — That particular area transportation planning committee is one of the newer ones and we have not yet received their report in terms of the priorities on the roads in the area.

But as I say the discussions have gone on. We've received input from a variety of sources about the needs not only in that area but other areas about what the priority roads should be. And of course we're responsible for that big picture of making sure that we get the funds into those roads which are primary to the development of this province.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, is it possible to get the name of the members of that area transportation planning committee tonight? Do you have them or one of your officials have them with you?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — No, but we can get that to you in mail tomorrow.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I take it then that if the area transportation committee has just recently been formed and that they have not been advising the department on where stretches of roads need to be upgraded, and you know, why and how and so on, then I take it the determination has come from the department.

And I'm not sure but I'd like to know whether or not you have had advice from the RMs regarding the roads in that area or what is your source of information basically?

(22:15)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Though the report is not in from that particular ATPC (area transportation planning committee), we have had ongoing discussions with them. They've given significant input as to the value of roads in the area.

I think, for the member's knowledge, the work that has gone on in terms of the Anaheim access, the partnership that we have there is an indication of how important we see industry and support for industry in the province.

And what we don't have yet from the ATPC is the overall plan for their area, but we have had significant discussions with the RMs in that area. They have pointed out very clearly how important they see this road to the area and certainly that puts it into our priority listing even though we have not yet received the full report from the ATPC.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That response sounded good but it was a bit vague as far as . . . you know, you mentioned that you've had input from them. I'm not sure who the them is exactly, because I think you're referring to the members of the area transportation committee but you said they're just newly formed so I'm not sure how you had input from them prior to their formation. Could you explain that, please.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, they are one of our newer area transportation planning committees, but they've been around as an area transportation planning committee for the length of period that I've been a minister they've been there, which has been significant now. I guess we're looking at seven, eight months. But it takes a significant period of time for them to put together all of the information for their area in order to draft their report.

In the meantime, the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister have met with the RMs, have met with the community of St. Brieux, have met with significant players in the area and discussed with them what the needs are — with the RMs, with industry, with the community. And we have had significant information, though not the final report, from the area transportation planning committee over this past seven, eight months, and in their earliest formation.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd just like to move our dialogue over to the condition of Highway No. 20 south of Humboldt. There is an area of that highway that is being repaired. And I can tell you that it was with a great deal of joy that I saw that happening, and it's actually the area I believe the closest to No. 11, from No. 11 and then it goes northward a bit.

But there is also — still rather — an area just south of Humboldt for a number of miles that is in terrible, terrible shape. Now I'm wondering whether or not there is any plans by your department to be completely repairing that whole area, which would be south of Humboldt, to meet up with the part, the significant part that you've already repaired?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's just an older piece of highway that will come up in the regular maintenance schedule for resurfacing. I don't have a time frame on that, but it's recognition that it is an old piece of highway that will need resurfacing soon.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I recognize that too. And I know there are priorities and I do sympathize with you when, you know, your department has to make these decisions with a certain budget.

But it appears to me, and in fact I know, that that highway is used again a great deal and it's really getting . . . I'll tell you, you know, it's a rock-and-roll ride when you're on that one all the way. And it presents, I believe, a significant danger to travellers because it's really getting very, very potted and the shoulders of the highway are broken off and it's really in a mess. So I would just encourage you to give consideration to that highway.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to just draw your attention to, I guess, the decision to have the St. Louis bridge moved from its existing location, I guess, a mile over or something like that. I understand that the decision has been finalized and that bridge is not going to go through St. Louis any more. When it's rebuilt, it's going to be in another location just east of St. Louis.

Now I've had a number of people in that community and some of the surrounding communities talk to me about the detriment this is going to be if that bridge is moved; to their businesses, to

tourism in the area because, Mr. Minister, St. Louis is a significant historical site. There are sites around there that I think we have a great deal owing to the area and that community has worked so very hard to continue its success.

And it just seems that the people there are having a hard time accepting the fact that the reasons that your department has given for moving the location of the bridge, they're finding those hard to swallow, I guess. They were told that some of the ground underneath the existing bridge, for instance, is not stable. Well, you know, that's . . . they claim that's not true. There's just the same strength there to uphold a bridge as there would be a mile and a half or two miles over.

And would certainly like your . . . they'd like me to ask your department to once again reconsider this decision. It's going to mean the downfall of that community if they don't have the highway going through. And it's really very sad to see that happen when we're trying to restore rural Saskatchewan and give it every opportunity to thrive.

So I'm just going to ask your department to really reconsider whether it's absolutely necessary to have this bridge moved over. And I'm just going to leave you with that, Mr. Minister. It's a plea on my behalf. I'm advocating for the citizens of St. Louis.

But I also would like you to tell me this evening, if you can, just when it is that the bridge is going to be built? I understood that part of this money, I think, would be coming from the federal government as well as provincial government. I'd like to know about that also. But first of all, I'd like to know when the bridge will be built?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's always difficult to be very clear and explicit around a situation that is going to be hard on a community, but I have to say that there has been extensive work done around this issue of the bridge. There have been consultations with communities all throughout the area. The department has done extensive engineering work and, really, the decision is made that it must be moved to the new location and the work will begin on that next fall. And there are no federal dollars involved in it. They are provincial dollars.

That's just the determination after all of the research, and I can tell you that the work that's been done on that has been extensive.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I have a few questions dealing with Highways and a couple of special situations in my constituency. The first highway that I'd like to deal with is Highway 15.

The east central transportation planning authority, they had a study done and of course recommendations as to future improvements to highways and that sort of thing. And Highway 15 was identified as a highway that, in their opinion, they felt that it should be upgraded to a primary highway. And there are a number of concerns in the area and commercial enterprises that are hoping that this will happen within the foreseeable future.

There is a group of entrepreneurs in the Kelliher area that are

actively pursuing and will be building a screening pelleting plant in Kelliher. And they feel it's essential to have primary highway services. I'm just wondering where Highway 15 fits in the overall grand scheme of provincial upgrades to the highway system?

(22:30)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think it's important to note that we have determined this is one of the very important corridors in the province. There's been a significant amount of work done on that corridor already, upgrading it to a structural pavement.

And I can say that the section around Fenwood was done, and in the past three years that completes the section right up to Raymore. A section from Raymore over to Semans was completed and the section from Nokomis east towards . . . or pardon me, west towards No. 2, there's a section that is done and the next section is underway currently.

So recognizing the importance of Highway 15, we are . . . it is on schedule. We are working ahead on it and we'll see this completed in the years ahead.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would like to turn my attention now to work that your department is having done on Highway 22. I believe it's about 10 kilometres between the communities of Dysart and Cupar. The work is in progress as we speak, Mr. Minister, and I certainly have no questions with that particular section of work.

However it was brought to my attention that there is a short section of Highway 22 on the east end from the village of Lipton to the junction of 35 that is not part of any future improvements, and everything else from Cupar up to Lipton will, after the completion of this project, will have been rebuilt within the last two or three years.

And the concern that was raised is that two kilometres from Lipton to the junction could present some problems with weight restrictions and so on. And I was just wondering if those two kilometres, if they're going to be looked at or how will that fit when it comes springtime and there's need to put road restrictions on the highways?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — These are projects that are using the Terracem material and I'm happy to say that the smaller section to the east is also going to be included. They will be done this year.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure the residents of that area will be very pleased to hear that.

There's one other concern dealing with Highway 22 and that is from Junction No. 6 at Southey west to approximately 5 kilometres to the site of the Pioneer Grain's new grain handling facility. Pioneer Grain has invested some approximately \$14 million and they are on a secondary highway. And they have asked me to raise the issue with you and it would . . . and not only the grain company, but the farm producers in the area feel that it is essential to have that chunk of highway improved so that they can deliver their grain in a timely fashion and on highways that are capable of handling these trucking

requirements, Mr. Minister.

And I was wondering what your plans are for that section?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you for bringing that forward. I had the opportunity to go out to Southey the other day — we were out there with the Premier — we did an opening of a brand new crosswalk that's going to make it a lot safer for the children and the people in the community out there.

And while we were out in Southey we took the opportunity, the assistant deputy minister drove me along this road, out to the elevator. And though there are no current plans for upgrading that road, there are discussions that have gone on and will continue to go on in terms of whether or not that's going to be upgraded. And I expect it'll be on the scope relatively soon.

But I think it's very important — and we made this point a number of times in talking with groups and individuals who are planning economic development projects, whether it be an elevator, whether it be a feedlot, no matter what it is — that when they're looking at location, they need to be looking at the kind of corridors that are available; that they shouldn't be off building in the back forty because that's the cheapest place to buy land. They need to be looking at the infrastructure that is available, and that includes primary weight highways. Because there is no guarantee that we can always build to wherever somebody decides they want to put their particular project.

But in this case I'm happy to say that there are discussions going on. We believe that will be in the scope soon. But I think it is important to get that message out, that people when they are looking at the projects that they are doing, need to be aware of the infrastructure that's in place and try and build accordingly. And I think that would overall provide a better development strategy for our province.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure the grain company looked at all the factors involved including highways, you know, because of the grain moves over road . . . over our highways and municipal roads to get to the elevator and then from that point it's put on rail cars and moved by rail. And I think it was more an issue of being able to locate the length of car spot that's required and those sorts of things. And I understand that their choices were limited in that with regards to those factors.

I'm glad you mentioned that you were out in Southey very recently and I understand that you were there to open a new crosswalk across Highway 66 . . . No. 6, sorry, in the town of Southey.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, how does the height that those signs that were placed across the crosswalks compare to the heights that, say, power lines that cross provincial highways? It seems to me there's a fair bit of difference there. And how does the height of those signs compare to power lines that go across highways?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — They are significantly lower than the power lines and that's very important because we're dealing with safety here, and the safety that we're concerned about is stopping the flow of traffic when there are people needing to

use that corridor and so they need to be in the driver's sight line. And so they're significantly lower than what power lines are.

And recognizing the kind of traffic that moves over that particular highway, when there are over-height loads, these signs are designed so that they can be turned and give access to those loads if they need to pass through that particular area.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's precisely the problem with those signs, Mr. Minister. I have had a number of calls to my office asking that the issue of the height of the signs be raised with your department. There has been a number of instances where truck traffic has had considerable problems manoeuvring that crossing.

As a matter of fact, I've been told that some of the equipment that's being manufactured in Edmonton and is trucked down to the co-op upgrader has a extremely difficult problem in negotiating them signs. In fact they have to stop all traffic and move on a 45-degree angle to get through that sign area.

And I really think that your department should look at the height of those signs. I realize safety is a factor, but I think it's a real bottleneck. I am told, and I certainly can't verify that, but that particular crossing is one of the lowest areas all along Highway No. 6. And it's a real bottleneck.

Farm machinery dealers tell me that they have great difficulty moving their equipment underneath those signs and people feel that it's quite a nuisance. And I would urge you to have your department officials look at raising those signs. I would talk to your local people, your local Department of Highways people in the Southey area. I'm sure they have a pretty good idea of how high those signs should be raised, Mr. Minister. And I would urge you to do that.

I would like to now turn my attention very briefly to another area in my constituency and that is the area of . . . in Craven. That's the 641 grid road that comes down into Craven. It's been a problem for a long, long time. That road is virtually sliding off the side of the hill. Your department has been monitoring that since, I believe, 1978. The village of Craven and the RM of Longlaketon have corresponded and contacted your department on a number of times asking for some assistance.

This type of problem is way beyond their financial capability of rectifying it. And to this point in time, Mr. Minister, really there is no satisfactory answer has been received from your department. And I would urge you to look at this again. I was wondering if in the last year or so that you've had and your department has any new ideas as how to overcome this problem of the road slumping or virtually sliding off the side of the hill?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — First of all, just to close the discussion around Southey, I think it's important to know that with crosswalk signs there are standards that have to be followed which includes, as I mentioned earlier, the sight lines.

It's also important to note that the community of Southey petitioned the Premier, petitioned our office, to get crosswalk signs put in there for safety.

One of the hazards of having a community with a highway running through it is that you're going to have those kind of slowdowns when you've got oversized traffic coming through. But the issue there was safety for the people in the community, and so that's why it was designed so that it could handle overloads.

It wasn't designed so they could just go whipping through there, but it was designed so that they could . . . the signs could be shifted to allow those oversized loads to go through. But the main thing that we were doing here is responding to the community's request for crosswalks for safety for the children and the walkers within that community. So that is the response.

Those signs are at the safety standard levels so that they meet all the standards. And it is possible to get oversized loads through, not necessarily as convenient as just being able to whiz right through. But that's the reason for it, that they have to be built to certain standards to be safe and effective. If they weren't, somebody's going to be liable for that.

Secondly, you were asking with regard to the community of Craven and the roadway through there. And it's important to note that that is a very, very active slide area right through there; important to note that there are houses in the community built right along that slide area as well. And there is no clear technical fix in that kind of a situation.

We could spend millions of dollars to move the housing out of there, to attempt to stabilize that and it still might not be as effective in that kind of an active slide area. So the best that we can see is to do as little to disturb that area as possible, to continue to do fill when we need to on that road and to patch accordingly. But it's a very, very unstable situation there.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll deal with the Craven situation first, and then I guess we'll go back to the Southey crosswalks. I realize that that's a very unstable situation in Craven with that slump on 641. It has been suggested by municipal government, both the village and the RM, that perhaps that road should be rerouted and brought down into the valley on the west side of Craven, which would be quite a considerable expense to the RM.

Now I think if the partnership situation would arise where perhaps your department, the village, and the RM could partner in assuming the additional cost of rerouting that route, I think it would solve everyone's problems because, as I understand it, that unstable portion, there really isn't anything that can be done, and I think probably the long-term fix would be to reroute the route.

And I understand and I'm told that there is increasing amount of traffic on that road on a daily basis. There are more and more people on acreages to the north of Craven that are working in Regina and elsewhere that use that road, school buses are using that road, and it is becoming an increasingly unsafe situation.

And I would urge your department to work with the village and the RM to perhaps look at an alternate route for that road because, as I said, for the RM to do it on its own, or the village, it's just beyond their financial capability. And I would hope that perhaps that could be put in future planning, Mr. Minister.

Now getting back to the Southey crosswalk, I understand that the town council had requested quite some time ago that a crosswalk be installed. I also understand that after a recent bus tour last summer that that crosswalk was fast-tracked because I'm told that some occupants of the bus had a fairly close call crossing the highway, and I'm told that's one of the reasons why that crosswalk was fast-tracked, Mr. Minister.

However, nonetheless I'm sure the residents of Southey are happy to have the crosswalk. Now I guess the question is, are the signs as high as they possibly can be and still be in accordance with safety regulations, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It is clearly my understanding that these signs were built to the standards for crosswalk signs within the province.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I realize the hour's getting late and there's some impatience in the room, but I want to make the point, Mr. Chairman, that the Highways estimates have not seen their full complement of time to date. We were cut short on several occasions earlier in this session and we're going to make up for it tonight.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Elhard:** — So thank you very much for the opportunity to do that.

At the last occasion of our meeting, I asked the minister for a copy of the globals, the questions that we ask each department, and I want to thank him for making them available.

I'm looking through the front page under general departmental agency report and it talks about the number of employees under the auspices or the jurisdiction of the Department of Highways and Transportation. And it talks about in-scope permanent, in-scope temporary and casual, out-scope, out-scope temporary and casual, and so forth. It lists each of those categories by number and the salary that is payable in each of those categories. But it gets down to other with a number of zero but a salary of \$10,540,818.

That seems like a lot of money for zero employees. Would the minister care to explain that particular figure, please.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The department staff at this point are saying that they would like to get the detail on that to you at a later date. There's not . . . not there in the collective memory at this moment but they will get it to you.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, I think the minister probably is trying to avoid some embarrassing information and that's why he wants to make it available to us after we're out of the House and unable to ask questions.

We'll move on to another area that arises from the globals. There's two pages of names — about 25 names per page — of terminations of permanent employees. And while I assume that termination is a word that's used to describe any reason for leaving the employment of the department, whether it's resignation or whatever, I guess the question I'd like to ask the minister is: if you have a senior member of the department or

somebody from the minister's office and they choose to leave for one reason or the other, is there any severance allowance made for those employees?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — If an employee just chooses to leave the employ, there is no severance at all. If they're involuntarily terminated in some way, then they are . . . we would just follow common law in terms of payment and severance.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. To the minister through the chairman, looking further in the globals, we have 25 pages with 25 names on each page of terminations of non-permanent employees.

Now I'm not going to do the math that quickly in my head because I'm used to using a calculator, but that's a substantial number of individuals. And given the fact that the department has about 1,300 employees in total, I think that's a fairly high percentage.

What percentage of turnover or change in employment personnel is an acceptable standard for the Department of Highways and Transportation?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Those would be accounted for in seasonal labour, term employees, and student employees.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So the other half of the list, if we have 625 that are terminated for one reason or the other, the other half are considered permanent employees of the department?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It would be accounted for by terms . . . term employees who are not terminated and permanent staff and also students who would be on longer term employ, perhaps the co-op program.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through the chairman to the minister, I asked in written questions earlier this year about the amount of money spent on advertising campaigns, both for this fiscal year . . . budgeted for this fiscal year and spent in the year previous. They were the two campaigns, we're building better roads, and I can't recall the name of the other one just off the top of my head.

But the total, if I recall, came to about \$428,000 for the one year and about \$403,000 for the second year of those two campaigns. That represents well over \$800,000 for advertising purposes. Mr. Minister, would you explain for me please the value of spending that kind of money on advertising for a department that requires no advertising at all?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — As an open, accountable, and responsible government we believe that it's important to be accountable to those people who are helping pay for fixing the highways and who are travelling on the highways.

Our campaign, We're Fixing the Roads, and Building Better Highways advertising campaigns over the last couple of years have been very important in terms of communicating to the people of this province not only what we are doing and the kind of funding that we're putting into building the infrastructure of this province, but it was very, very important also to let the

commuting public know what roads were being fixed, and when, and that's all part of the project in keeping them informed about the work that's going on.

Tremendous value — we get a lot of positive feedback around the communications that is going on. It also, I mean, just by the way, it's very important as well that this goes out into, not just our major newspapers, but it goes out into local papers as well, just to let people know what is happening out there, where their dollars are being spent, and how effective that is. And again, the feedback that we've got from that has been very, very positive. People have appreciated knowing what is being done, where it's being done, and when it's being done in terms of our fixing the roads and building better highways.

(23:00)

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through the chairman to the minister, with the success of that advertising program then, would you consider at some point delineating your three-year plan as to the projects you would hope to accomplish in the future?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — There is significant discussion, planning, working with RMs, and ATPCs, working with a variety of different bodies to plan for the future. And those plans, as you've seen with Prairie Grain Roads Program, are on a three-year time frame. There are some that are extended out significantly beyond that.

But it's important that in terms of announcing plans and programs that we have had finalization with all, in terms of our discussions, with all of the partners involved, the funding partners. We've got to make sure that we've got finalization in terms of environmental side of the planning as well. But I think of particular importance is that we have all of the commitments in place by funding partners, which includes the federal government, some of the RMs, before any projects are announced.

And so a lot of that planning work goes on. We're looking at alternatives. We're laying out the longer range goals and plans, we're setting corridors, and really categorizing what our highways are, what our funds are in terms of rail as well. So we're trying to make sure that we've got very clear alternatives for our long-range plans and we are doing three years and beyond in that planning.

But in terms of any kind of announcables, in terms of making those plans concrete, we must have the partnerships with all bodies involved firmed up before we can do that.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, there are so many areas of interest and question that I have available to me tonight that I'm not sure where to start. We wanted to talk about issues of safety. I've asked written questions of the department on that particular area, and maybe that's someplace we should go right now for just a few minutes.

I know the department takes the issue of safety very seriously. That particular cause has been spoken about eloquently by yourself and by other members of the department from time to

time.

And as you well know, there was a number of mishaps over the years involving Highways department workers. We've had rear-end collisions on the highways involving maintenance equipment. And we had a tragedy in the north central area of the province, the Highways worker that was killed; and more recently somebody just in my own constituency.

And so I'd like to address the issue of safety. Would the minister care to explain to us what kind of soul-searching goes on in the department? What kind of response comes out of the department when we have the kinds of tragedies occur that I just indicated happened most recently?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — First before I answer your last question, I would like to return to your first question in the globals where you were asking about the zero employees and the \$10 million figure. And that is all accounted for in supplementary payments such as overtime, temporary performance of higher duties. These are included in other and are fully accounted for there.

Okay, with regard to the kind of tragedies that we recently encountered. The first line in terms of response is that everything possible is done by department staff, by people close to the person to care for family, people who are co-workers, and try and make sure that just in terms of the grief and the pain that people are going through that there are there . . . folks there who can help them through that.

But overall I think what is important is that we want to do whatever we can to avoid those kind of tragedies, and there is significant time, energy, thought, and money goes into occupational health and safety initiatives. And we try and make sure that recognizing that safety is key for . . . from our perspective for the travelling public and for highway workers.

You've probably been aware, as I suspect most have, of the Orange Zone safety project that's out, for the Share the Road campaigns regarding semi-trailers and trucks, and trying to help the travelling public be aware of what some of those concerns are.

Within the department itself, we've invested over \$1 million on improved safety measures related to on-road work. You'll note the new vests that we received this year. They're more, much more highly visible and that's vitally important when you have people working out in the traffic.

The department is continually working with occupational health and safety people to develop training programs for workers so that they'll know the issues that they need to deal with out on the roads and in their workplace. And along with rigorous training, the department is continually examining and looking for new ways to try and help make our workplace and our highways safer both for our workers and for the travelling public.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, thank you through you to the minister for the response. As tragic as the incident south of Gull Lake was just recently, there has been brought to my office a complaint, anonymously, about occupational health and safety

moving in there with such determination and with such force that the project has been handicapped, frankly. And I'm wondering what level of attention, what level of response is appropriate in those kinds of situations.

I've been told that department personnel are required to spend a couple of hours each morning reviewing safety measures and projects are significantly slowed as a result of those types of incidents. Is that, is that necessary? Is that appropriate? Is that the best way to deal with these kinds of difficult circumstances?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's probably important to note that when a death, a tragic incident like this occurs, that the RCMP and the occupational health and safety shut down the operation to investigate and clearly get a handle on what happened. The other thing that I think, it's very important . . . and support the staff in making sure that all members who are working out in the . . . all department members who are working out on the roads get adequate safety training to make sure that they know what the rules are when they're out there working.

But in terms of . . . I think you might find that it's a significant exaggeration if it's being reported to you that they're shutting down for two hours every morning to go over safety procedures. I think there's conscientiousness and a heightened conscientiousness in direct . . . directly after an incident like that, but I think it's very important that safety procedures be emphasized. We don't want other incidents like this happening.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Maybe you could comment on one other element of the anonymous complaint that was directed to me. And I want to know if it's common practice, if it's understood by the department that this is an acceptable level of interest in a situation like this.

I'm told that occupational health and safety sent seven people to the job site to make sure that everything was running according to expected standards. Is that possible at all? And if not, would you indicate for me what would be an acceptable presence by occupational health and safety?

(23:15)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The Department of Labour would have sent out one person for occupational health and safety and they would do investigation along with the RCMP. From our department's occupational health and safety, two people would have been sent out for an internal investigation, and along with those two people would be the supervisors of the project, but they're on the project most of the time anyway. So those are the numbers that we have with regard to that.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In keeping with the safety theme, I have with me here a copy of an e-mail that was sent to a Pamela Bishop of your department. And it comes from a gentleman by the name of Brad Harris and he's commenting about an incident that occurred to him as he was travelling on Highway 45 between Outlook and Delisle on the day of June 3 of this year at 11:20 a.m.

He approached a construction zone and was following instructions and did what he felt he was expected to do given the direction of the flagman on that particular project. And I'm

just going to quote from this e-mail. He said:

I proceeded to follow his instructions because I should be able to trust their judgment. However I thought their judgment was very poor in this case and I then began to drive on the ditch slope.

I think you probably have seen this e-mail or somebody in your department has. And I don't want to read the whole thing but suffice to say that this individual was asked to detour around a piece of equipment that was working in the only open lane, and when he was directed to the shoulder of the road felt that the slope was precariously sharp and was actually fearful of a potential rollover. And he said:

I was very disappointed and very appalled with your department that workers would force drivers into a perilous position such as that. Had an accident occurred I could almost guarantee you that your department would be facing a serious lawsuit.

I guess the thing that disturbed me about this particular e-mail was the driver's assertion that he was asked to do something that he was clearly uncomfortable doing and felt that was unsafe to do. Would this flag person have been a member of the Department of Highways staff or would it more than likely have been an employee of a contractor?

And if it's a department staff person, what kind of effort would be made to inform that individual about this type of situation and the potential for accident and mishap that could occur?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I don't have the details to that particular situation but we can get you a summary of the reply. But I think it was probably department flag person that was involved. They are given training for their duties, and they would have also been given instructions during that time frame by the supervisor of that particular project.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would the employee be held responsible for any difficulty that might have arisen from that particular situation? If there had been a mishap, if there had been a loss of control, if there had been a rollover, would the employee be held accountable for that?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's important to let you know that we can't really comment on the detail of that particular incident. But I think to just say in general that our employees are in situations that would be like that, would be acting on behalf of the department, and the department would be responsible for the work that they were doing and the way they were doing their work.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The time has come I guess to change subjects. We only have a few more to go through tonight and we want to cover as many as possible.

Mr. Minister, the last time we visited here, I raised the subject of the Farm Rail Car Coalition and we danced around that a little bit. I asked some kind of broad, general questions, and your responses were appropriate to the nature of the questions — broad and general.

And I think that at the time you, through your department, offered to provide us with a full technical briefing. And because of scheduling it wasn't possible to accomplish the technical briefing that had been contemplated. However I did have an opportunity to sit down with Mr. Harrison and one of the employees of your department, Bernie Churko. And we talked fairly candidly about the Farm Rail Car Coalition.

So while I got some fairly good technical information and some good background, there are a number of sort of philosophical and maybe pragmatic issues that are better asked within the political forum. And I'd like to return to that this evening, if we may in the time that's left to us.

I need to go back to the question I originally asked concerning the funding that the department had given to the Farm Rail Car Coalition. If I understood the response correctly, it was indicated to us that the Department of Highways had committed \$250,000 to the Farm Rail Car Coalition as of 1996. It was money that was determined to go to the coalition in the 1996 budget.

I guess what I didn't confirm with the minister was whether that was paid in a lump sum or whether it was paid in instalments over the subsequent five years.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The funding was, in '96, the conditional grant funding approved was 244,521. In 1996-97 there were three periods, three grant periods: October, 90,000-plus; January, 15,000-plus; May, 22,000-plus, for a total of 127,342.91.

In '97-98 there were three periods, and I'll just give you the total for that year. If you want more detail we can give you that — 24,561. In '98-99 a total of 10,307; '99-2000, 47,842.31. And along with the additional \$25,000 grant that was given in December of 2000-2001, the total for that 2000-2001 year was 59,468.25. For a total amount of the conditional grant, 244,521 and \$25,000 grant in funding to assist with administrative costs for a total amount of 269,521.47.

**Mr. Elhard:** — I'm sorry, I missed the last figure. Could you repeat that, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — 269,521.47.

**Mr. Elhard:** — The money that was paid out to the Farm Rail Car Coalition over that five-year period, Mr. Minister, as was indicated by the response given to this question earlier, went to a variety of areas. Would you be good enough to specify precisely what those areas were? Who or what were the recipients of the money in terms of lobbying or consulting fees or those types of activities that were covered by this expenditure?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — That funding was provided to the Farm Rail Car Coalition and you would need to speak with them if you want detail as to how that was used.

**Mr. Elhard:** — So am I to believe, Mr. Minister, that that amount of money was given to the Farm Rail Car Coalition without any, any statements of payment or any, any indication of how the money was disbursed?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The funds were put out, as I indicated in the earlier comment about giving you the schedule of dollars that were turned over to them, were given out with reports coming back. And those reports would indicate the kind of work that had been done, whether it was technical work or whether it was preparing their bid process, whether it was working with other technical bodies like the Sultran. The work that they did primarily was really trying to prepare the way for a successful bid.

And I think I indicated that . . . and in fact you know the materials we . . . if you need or desire more specifics, we can get those materials for you, provide them for you.

In general the process was that they would report back when they had need of further funds to move ahead the process of having a successful bid.

I think the other thing that is important to note is that in this time period — and I think I indicated this last time we were talking about this subject — that in that time period one of the things that was happened was that they were successful in getting the federal government not to sell those to the railroads, which the government intended. And that has already had a significant return to the producers over these past few years.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, am I to understand, given what you've just said, that money was given to the FRCC (Farm Rail Car Coalition) without explanation as to how it would spent, but after it was spent there was some attempt to provide you with information as to where the monies went?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Actually you would be correct in understanding both of those, that they gave an overall direction of where they were going to go, that they gave a plan for what their immediate future was, and that they reported back after they had spent and named what requests were there for the next phase of their work.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, what kind of detail would have been required in the request for funding, or in the justification for money spent to satisfy the Department of Highways and Transportation?

(23:30)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I understand that you're asking for detail of what justified the payments as those requests came in. And as I indicated earlier, I don't have that level of detail here with me, but you can either get that from FRCC or we will provide that for you. We can . . . I mean we've got the documentation available.

But if there's any implication at all that it was just lightly transferred over with, well here you go, you take this money and do it. Absolutely not. There is criteria involved. I am convinced having worked with the department now for over seven months that it would not be lightly done. It would be well considered. And we'll be prepared to provide that material for you.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that assurance. Can you also assure me though that audited statements might be

available, completely audited by a reputable auditing agency?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think what is essential and what is key in this is to . . . is to get the larger picture and to put that in front of you — that this project is about making sure that producers get the best possible return that they can get and that producers have some say at the table in terms of car allocation, etc. That's what's behind it and we've already seen some return to producers because of the work that we've . . . that has been done.

I think it's also important to note that audited statements will be available. I think it's also important to note that there were many other partners that were involved in this: Western Diversification to the tune of some \$365,000; Canadian Wheat Board, \$20,000; Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council, 4,813; and member contributions of almost \$140,000. But audited statements will be available. But I think — I mean, if you, if you want to get tied up around the little numbers — that audited statements can be made available down the road.

But presently, what . . . what we're involved in here is an issue of trying to make sure that producers get an opportunity to have some say in this and that they get the best return possible.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I don't think that we have a problem with the, you know, with the project. I suppose we're more troubled by the process and that's where the questions are originating, frankly.

The Farm Rail Car Coalition has an idea. They're working on it. After the explanation we were given by Sinclair Harrison and Bernie Churko, I understand the technical merits of the proposal and so forth. But there is an issue of policy here that has never been explained, has never been justified, and I think it's incumbent on the department and you as minister, frankly, to justify this whole process for us.

Since 1996, the department, through Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, has been making expenditures on behalf of a coalition, a loose knit coalition of individuals and organizations. And we have not had audited statements of any kind as yet and I think that that speaks to some, if not impropriety, certainly some rather casual approaches to accounting.

And the other thing I think that needs to be discussed in this . . . in this venue tonight is the very foundation of policy that the government has decided to act upon. Where did this policy come from? What is the policy statement for the Department of Highways and Transportation in this regard?

We are talking about taxpayers' money here, frankly. And whether we're careless with a little bit or a lot is not the issue. The issue is how careful must we be with taxpayers' money to account for every nickel of it and to justify it according to generally accepted principles and standards.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member opposite, I think it's important to note that this investment that we have made of \$269,000-plus has, in the seven years that that has been invested, the return can be estimated at about 1 or \$2 per tonne on an estimated 30 million tonnes per year. That investment has

returned significantly to the taxpayers of this province, to the producers of this province already.

Secondly it's important to note that 250,000 of that money is . . . or 244,000, whatever the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . thank you, that is a loan. If the Farm Rail Car Coalition is successful in its bid, that money will be repaid.

I think that you're right in terms of the need for full accountability and we have called on the Farm Rail Car Coalition to give us the audited statements of their work. As I say, overall in terms of the policy it's vitally important from our perspective that we enable competition in this industry.

And we've heard from the potash corporations how important it has been for them to have a place at that table to be able to encourage competition and get the best prices possible. And this allows — if they are successful in this bid — this allows a third party to have a place at the table to gain the benefits of competition and to have those benefits returned to the producers. So from that perspective we see it as a very worthwhile investment.

In terms of the return to taxpayers, as I've indicated, we can estimate that on the 1 or \$2 per tonne, 30 million tonnes per year over the seven-year period. And the detailed audited statement when we receive that from Farm Rail Car Coalition, we can make that available.

In terms of the incremental funding, discussions were ongoing with Farm Rail Car Coalition in terms of how the monies were being spent in terms of consultations and in terms of the work that was being done in order to prepare for the bid. Those figures will be made available. There will be an audited statement on where those monies were spent and that too will be made available when that audited statement is in our hands.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. I have your assurance that we will have audited statements available. I take from your assurance that there are none at this time. And I'm wondering why that would have been allowed to happen within your department. When you're making this kind of money available, even though it's small potatoes compared to the overall benefit, as you have suggested, it is public money and it does require that very precise and direct oversight.

And I think, from what you've indicated tonight, that oversight has not been available on this project. And I think that, on behalf of the taxpayers of this province, I must protest that lack of oversight and require of your ministry and of your department that you ask the Farm Rail Car Coalition for audited statements immediately — not at their convenience, but immediately.

I also understand that the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation has provided technical assistance to the Farm Rail Car Coalition since its inception. I'm wondering if there are other types of in-kind services that the department is providing to the coalition at this time.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I can assure the member, as I did earlier on, that the department is not lackadaisical in its operations and that we have seen draft audited statements and

we have had ongoing working relationship with the FRCC over this period, from '96 until the current time.

I think it's very, very important to recognize the benefit, as compared to the investment, as well. And I think any implication of irresponsibility will be well refuted with the audited statement, and certainly will be well refuted with the results of a successful bid.

Secondly, you asked about in-kind support. And there has been in-kind support in developing the proposal and in terms of the current decision to provide an additional . . . up to an additional \$450,000. We are accounting in that in-kind and technical support for the Farm Rail Car Coalition as well. And we think that that's been a real benefit both for the Farm Rail Car Coalition and for ongoing understanding of the department through this period.

(23:45)

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, through the chairman, would you be able to tell me if there will be any wages paid out of the \$450,000 the department intends to advance to the FRCC? And if so, to whom will they be paid?

And secondarily, can you tell me where we would find the offices of the Farm Rail Car Coalition?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — At this point the only salaries that we are aware of that will be paid out of any of the grant monies from any of the partners would be the salary for Sinclair Harrison who is the president — I believe is the title — of FRCC and one part-time support staff who works with him.

Other funding that would be going out would be for technical consultants, and also for legal advice and for preparation of the bid.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, through you, my appreciation to the minister. Just carrying this issue one step further. You know one of the things that we've talked about is the benefit that this proposal will allow farmers. The benefits will accrue generally to farmers. And while I might be able to accept that assertion on face value, I think that governments are going to be much more cautious about making these kinds of commitments without a pretty thorough policy and analysis review.

And I guess the question I would pose to the minister now is this: has the proposal by the Farm Rail Car Coalition been submitted to a full policy analysis within the department by policy specialists and analysts within the department or within the farm . . . the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, and/or has it been looked at and has it been reviewed by any other department?

I would consider the Department of Finance one of the more logical departments to look at this very kind of question because it could ultimately involve a substantial commitment from the province or it might have a very significant impact on the economy of the province. So I would assume that these kinds of very clear policy analysis would have been accomplished.

Can the minister confirm or deny that?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I can confirm that clear policy analysis has happened through the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. The request was brought forward through them to Finance, the Treasury Board, and a cabinet decision item was taken on that. And with the analysis a decision was made to go ahead and provide this funding for the Farm Rail Car Coalition on an incremental basis.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, through the Chairman to the minister. In view of the analysis that you have indicated was undertaken and achieved, was there any further consideration given by the department or by the government generally to involve itself further with this proposal if financing became a problem at any time?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We did very careful analysis of the situation, considered all the possibilities on this front, and advised the Farm Rail Car Coalition that their proposal would have to be . . . their proposal and their purchase would have to be self-sustaining by the Farm Rail Car Coalition.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In your view, is that the position held by other government departments and/or agencies? Would a similar view be held by the Crown Investments Corporation?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — In terms of other departments, to the best of my knowledge, which is fairly good, there is no difference in understanding or policy.

With regard to the Crown Investments Corporation, you would have to ask them that. I have no sense . . . we're not privy, really, to the directions that they will take in terms of their investments until they bring those forward. And we have seen nothing on that front.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, could you tell me how money from the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation is forwarded to the Farm Rail Car Coalition?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The Treasury Board has given permission to the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation to give the grant of up to \$450,000. And for detail on that, you'll have to ask the Grain Car Corporation through the Crown corporations.

**Mr. Elhard:** — I think I would assume from your answer, Mr. Minister, that it won't be a cheque directed or made payable to the FRCC. There might be some other way of getting the money to them?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think that's a fairly safe assumption. There won't be one big cheque for \$450,000 cut. As we indicated earlier there will be in kind technical work and support work by the Grain Car Corporation, and there will be incremental cheques as they meet the conditions that are set out.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I have reason to believe . . . I have information that the cabinet at one time authorized or that there exists authorization for negotiations to proceed to purchase all or part of CP (Canadian

Pacific) Rail.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if the Farm Rail Car Coalition proposal fits in with that authorization?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Basically that's the first I've heard of it. There has been no discussion at the cabinet table during my time there and there is nothing in the direction or planning of FRCC that has been brought forward that has anything related to that involved at all.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, the FRCC proposal talks about OmniTRAX as being the corporate partner in their plans for the future. And I know that OmniTRAX has been involved in substantial short-line activity in this province.

I'm wondering if you can give us any indication of what other possible roles OmniTRAX is expecting to or hoping to play as part of the transportation system in the province of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — As you were probably made aware at the briefing there, a number of partners; the FRCC as your words indicated earlier, is a relatively open coalition and the OmniTRAX participation in that, as a technical part of their . . . of the FRCC planning and operation, is a very important role.

OmniTRAX, as a short-line rail operator in the province, is playing a substantial and important role in the province. But in terms of what their corporate plans might be, we're not privy to those either.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, in view of the potential — or the need I guess, not just the potential, the reality — for significant repairs to many of the cars that the FRCC is hoping to purchase, it would appear to make sense that those repairs be done here in Saskatchewan. And with OmniTRAX's expertise as a rail operator, they would make the most logical partner in that effort.

Would you agree that they would potentially be the benefactor of this particular arrangement?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I don't think that we can really speculate on who all might be involved in potential of repairing those cars. I mean, there's a world out there with all kinds of people who might bid.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, I want to thank you and your officials for tolerating this marathon tonight. It could have gone longer by agreement but I told the Deputy House Leader on the government side that we'd quit at midnight.

And I want to express my appreciation once again for your attendance here and for dealing with the issues as directly as you have. Thank you very much.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 00:01.