

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan upset 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 citizens of St. Walburg, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — . . . Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to present a petition on behalf of citizens in the city of Humboldt and surrounding that area. They would like to see the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority maintained in the city of Humboldt. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Humboldt, from Melfort, and from Bruno.

I so present.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I too rise again and present petitions on behalf of people concerned about the shortcomings of the tobacco legislation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend the 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 these petitions this morning, Mr. Speaker, are from across Saskatchewan but mostly from our two major cities of Saskatoon and Regina. And I'm pleased to present on their

behalf.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province. The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Indian Head, Kendal, Montmartre, Sintaluta.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth another petition with concerns from constituents of mine and from out of the province that are concerned about the Besnard Lake situation. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from constituents of mine from Canwood and some out-of-province people, Mr. Speaker, from Broadus, Montana and Miles City, Montana.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Petition concerning the repeal of The Tobacco Control Act and the possession of tobacco by minors; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7, 11, 23, 157, 168, 169, and sessional paper no. 174.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today to be able to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly two guests who are seated in the west gallery. One of them will be known to many here, my ministerial assistant, Tyler Lloyd.

Seated with Tyler is Florence Linantud, who is a summer student working with our office. Florence was born in the Philippines and came to Canada when she was three years old. She's now completing her . . . into her fourth year of her electronics engineering degree with a computer science minor at

the University of Regina. She is a university ambassador helping first year students and will be working in my office over the summer.

I also need to just warn people that Florence has also been learning martial arts, Krav Maga, which I am told is an extremely healthy workout. So I ask all members to welcome her to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

StatsCanada Figures for June

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, well, well. The numbers are in. As the members opposite eat sour little green apples before question period and proclaim gloom and doom every day, reinforced by the Leader of the Opposition using only negative statistics and never acknowledging the positive, he certainly won't like today's news.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the good news is twofold. First, our good, objective friends at StatsCanada have released their June jobs report. And which way did the jobs go? They went up, way up. They went up by 12,800 new jobs in June over June last year, the largest increase in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker. We have the second lowest unemployment rate at 4.9 per cent and Regina had the lowest unemployment rate of any city in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Now remember last month, Mr. Speaker, after 11,000 new jobs in May, we cautioned that one month does not make a trend. Nor does two. But we will say that the results are very promising, Mr. Speaker, and it's looking very good for the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Girls Fastball Championships in Langbank

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community of Langbank will be alive this weekend with the calls of strike . . .

The Chair: — Order, please. Order. It's one thing for members to heckle their own member but during members statements I think we should be able to hear them all and I ask members to allow the statements to be made. And I recognize, once again, the member from Moosomin, and you may start over.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community of Langbank will be alive this weekend with the calls of strike one, ball high, you're safe, you're out, as the Langbank Lions Club hosts the 2002 Midget Provincial B Girls' Fastball Championships.

Beginning this evening, 10 midget girls' fastball teams from across the province will converge on Langbank and play will begin in a double knockout competition to determine the Provincial B Midget Girls' Fastball Champions for 2002. Mr.

Speaker, I want to wish all of the teams well as they participate in this year's tournament. I must however save my greatest show of support for the Stockholm Rural Thunder as our daughter, Stephanie, is one of the girls on that team.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Langbank Lions Club for their hard work and dedication to the community. Without their efforts Langbank would not be the site of this year's tournament. And a special good luck to all the teams. Play hard and have fun.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival

Mr. Forbes: — My humble gratitude, Mr. Speaker.

Hear ye, hear ye. It's once again time to be whisked away to the wonderful world of Shakespeare to experience some of his most famous — or infamous — characters at the Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival. Loyal to tradition, the Shakespearean tents have been raised along the beautiful banks of the South Saskatchewan River in Saskatoon in my constituency.

This year one of our favourite heroes, Hamlet, has returned to avenge his father's untimely death. From Hamlet we learned that when one tries to usurp the throne, sadly the perpetrators shall be knocked down by the rightful heirs. We also will remember one of our favourite quotes: there is something rotten in the state of . . . Saskatchewan? And yes, we all know it's not just the cheese. I think, dear people, it just may be on the other side of these . . . (inaudible) . . . Well I shall stop there and leave you in suspense.

For the second piece this year the organizers have chosen *The Alchemist*. Those not familiar with this play shall be warned that disguise and con artistry is not to be mistaken for what is real and good. It is an entertaining and complex piece of work that will have you laughing and pondering all the while.

Finally, the University of Saskatchewan drama department is presenting *Summer Stock*, which is a collection of two one-act plays including *Cut!* and *The Pushcart Peddlers*. Mr. Speaker, choose one, choose them all. They're all worth your pennies. The festival runs from now until August 18. Fare thee well, and thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lewis Hobson Inducted into Saskatchewan's Baseball Hall of Fame

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the city of Prince Albert and the district of Prince Albert has been blessed for many years with having citizens who have contributed greatly to Prince Albert society.

Mr. Speaker, one of Prince Albert's most notable citizens is being inducted into Saskatchewan's Baseball Hall of Fame on August 17, 2002 in North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, of course I'm referring to Lewis Hobson. Although Lew passed away last December 2001, he's still being remembered for his many outstanding accomplishments.

Lew Hobson, since moving to Prince Albert in 1961, has been involved with high school football, the Prince Albert Golf and Curling Club, minor baseball, with the Prince Albert Raiders, and chairman of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division.

But, Mr. Speaker, as instrumental as Lew was in many facets of Prince Albert sporting and educational world, on August 17 he's being remembered for his curve ball. Lou was discovered at a very early age that he could throw a baseball.

This talent eventually earned him a baseball scholarship in Arkansas. Unfortunately on a rainy evening, Lew slipped, fell, and permanently injured his throwing arm. Lew was unable to throw a fastball again.

Losing an opportunity to play in the majors, Lew turned his attention to education and amateur baseball in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert has lost a great sportsman, a fan, and Lew's induction is but a small tribute to a great man.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Lew Hobson.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Flatland Music Festival

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Flatland Music Festival returns this weekend to Regina's Victoria Park to put on a feast of rock, folk, soul, gospel, and country music, all cooked up by excellent Saskatchewan talent.

The Flatland Music Festival is the biggest celebration of Saskatchewan musical talent, with more than 35 acts scheduled to hit the stage. This year's festival is a great opportunity to discover the incredible talent originating in our province, in our province.

Performances this year include headliners Wide Mouth Mason, Greek Canadian band Arkadia, the funk/soul ensemble, Inshaalha, and folk singer, Passion Brandy Moore.

Mr. Speaker, for those unable to make it out live and in concert, I'm sure that they will be happy to know there is a live Web cast on-line at sask.cbc.ca or at flatlandmusicfestival.com.

The Web cast is a partnership between CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Recording Industry Association. In the past four years, the Web cast has drawn thousands of listeners from around the world, from Ecuador to Australia, all looking to check out Saskatchewan artists.

Mr. Speaker, the Flatland Music Festival is entering its seventh year and it consistently draws crowds in the tens of thousands and those who have attended know why. Flatland provides an excellent showcase for the thriving recording industry that calls this province home.

I encourage all members of the House to attend or tune in and see for themselves the rich talent our province has to offer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(10:15)

Souris Valley Theatre

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past Wednesday night the Souris Valley Theatre kicked off their 13th season of their outdoor theatre, with a delicious supper complete with saskatoon and rhubarb pie. This year the show *Calamity Jane* will run for two weeks after which *Cocktails for 200* will run.

Mr. Speaker, these presentations, sponsored by the Estevan Tourism, showcase Saskatchewan talent, some local talent, and attract audiences from all over the world. For the past years, these performances have taken place in a big tent, but the new building will be ready in time for the opening of *Cocktails for 200* on July 25.

The Estevan Downtown Association donated the roof and the lumber, and other materials needed to complete the building were donated by Ray and Doris Frehlick of Estevan and we express our gratitude to them.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Estevan Tourism and all those responsible for making this annual event a huge success. And I would invite everyone to take in these shows. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Centenary Affordable Housing Program Agreement

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, last week the provincial government and the federal government announced details of the new centenary affordable housing program agreement which has been signed with the federal government.

This agreement is an important step forward for our province and will allow us to make major progress in the provision of affordable housing for low- to modest-income residents. The centenary affordable housing program will respond to needs that the private market is unable to meet in areas such as inner city and mature neighbourhoods, northern communities, and urban centres with low vacancy rates.

Moreover it will support the strategic direction of the Department of Social Services by building independence and self-sufficiency among vulnerable segments of the population. It will also create significant employment opportunities across the province and Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will explore ways to encourage proposals containing an employment and skills training component. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Comment by Government House Leader

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry and Resources, the member from Prince Albert Northcote. Mr. Speaker, last evening, while I was engaged in debate on the amendment to The Highway Traffic Act, to give police greater powers to protect children from exploitation and abuse in the sex trade, the minister called out from his seat and

said that I was stupid.

Mr. Speaker, it was appalling to me and I believe to all members of this House that that minister would stoop to such unparliamentary language and behaviour during such important debate.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment deal . . .

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

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, this amendment deals with stopping the abuse, both sexual, physical, and verbal abuse that children involved in the sex trade are subject to. Yet that minister of the Crown chose to resort to verbal abuse himself.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Government House Leader is this. When he made his comment, was he calling the strengthening of The Highway Traffic Act to protect children in the sex trade stupid? Was he calling the amendment that has been agreed to by all parties in this legislature stupid? Or was he calling me as a woman stupid?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say to the member opposite that the amendment put forth on Bill 40 was part of a negotiation that took place between myself as the Government House Leader, and the Leader of the Opposition, or the leader of the House for the opposition, as it relates to the . . . this session, and what we're attempting to achieve before the session. It was an issue that was raised by that member to strengthen as she says, the Bill. We felt as a government that it was in fact a good initiative, and that it is a good initiative and for that reason we agreed to support the amendment to Bill 40 in the legislature, and so we have.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's always fair and it's always good to see the opposition with positive input, and I think that this has been an example where that has taken place. I want to say to the House that this is a place that's been referred to as a place of emotion and a place of very strong debate.

And I want to say to the members of the opposition that I very much support the amendment as do members of this government, and we will see that enacted into Bill 40 and it will strengthen the legislation. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader's comment last evening was acceptable . . . unacceptable rather. It was condescending and it was abusive. And I think that the Government House Leader today is skirting around the real issue.

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that the Government House Leader would think the protection of children exploited through the sex trade is stupid. I believe his comment was levelled at me personally.

Mr. Speaker, as you will recall, earlier in this session the Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier called a proposal put forward by our Agriculture critic, dumb. And now the

Minister of Industry and Government House Leader calls me stupid. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that it is purely a coincidence that both of these comments from male government members were levelled at female members of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Does the Premier condone this type of behaviour and these comments from his senior cabinet ministers?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is while I was not present in the House at that particular time last night, I understand that the minister stood in his place and apologized for his comments. I'm wondering therefore if members across the way would stand today and apologize for comments that I've heard as recently as yesterday from their benches?

Mr. Speaker, we have some very significant public policy issues to debate in this Chamber. Not the least among them, the sexual exploitation of children on our streets. And as the House Leader has just pointed out, we believed that the amendment proposed by the member was appropriate, strengthened the legislation, and was put into place.

That's what we should be about in this House. Today, Mr. Speaker, I think we should be talking about jobs in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ethanol Industry

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Earlier in this legislative session the NDP (New Democratic Party) announced its intention to use 100 million taxpayers' dollars to buy equity positions in four new ethanol plants in Saskatchewan.

The NDP also admitted that they were negotiating with American real estate company, Broe industries, to build the new ethanol plants, even though Broe has no experience in the ethanol business. And the NDP even went so far as to announce where they were going to put these new ethanol plants: in Shaunavon, in Belle Plaine, in Tisdale, and in Melville.

But now the NDP Party has learned . . . or the Saskatchewan Party has learned that the NDP has decided to scale back to two ethanol plants and possibly even only one. Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that the NDP is retreating from its plan to build four ethanol plants; and if so, which of those four communities has the NDP misled?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That . . . well if they will listen, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The minister may start over.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to members of the opposition if they're interested in listening, that the number of plants will be determined by the private sector.

There will be private sector proponents of ethanol development. There are communities who are working with private sector developers right now, and of course they have also indicated their intention to work with Crown Investments Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, this government has planned no plants. These will be done by the private sector. There may be agreements reached with Crown Investments Corporation. There may be no public sector funding to plants at all.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that member should be, I think, very supportive of the fact that an American company is very much interested in working with a potash company in his riding, about halfway between here and Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. I want that member to stand up and tell this House whether he supports that investment, whether he supports that development in his backyard, or whether he's just part of the negative Saskatchewan Party ongoing attack in terms of people who want to build this economy and grow this economy.

And while I'm on my feet, does he support the new 12,000 . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — True to form, nobody on the NDP side of this legislature is willing to answer even the most direct questions.

So let's try again: will the minister confirm that the government hired Meyers Norris Penny and another BC (British Columbia) based company to evaluate the expansion of the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan, and if so, will the minister table a copy of the consultant's report?

And will the minister tell the legislature how much these consulting firms were paid for the report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, here you are again. This is a opposition who can focus on nothing substantive. Mr. Speaker, this is an opposition who opposes every job creation initiative whether it by the private sector or whether it by a combination of public and private sector, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is they cannot stand success.

You know, Mr. Minister, the Leader of the Opposition yesterday in this House stands up and he says the numbers are in; there is numbers; we have numbers. And he's referring to the population between 15 and 65 which for one year decreased after 10 years of a 30,000 population increase. This member attacks one little component of it.

And do you want to know something? This morning Statistics Canada indicates that this June over last June there are 12,800 more people working in this province . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, they don't say a word

about jobs and job opportunities for Saskatchewan people. Shame on them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — That's another interesting non-answer from this minister.

It just so happens, Mr. Speaker, that in the 1999 election campaign this NDP government promised 30,000 new jobs by now. And the facts are, and the facts are that in June of 1999 there were 494,500 people employed in this province and right now there are 494,300 people in this province. In other words, not only didn't they create 30,000 new jobs — they managed to lose 200.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP refuses to answer questions about important government policy issues and when the NDP does manage an answer you can't trust that they are telling the truth.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has obtained a copy of a report . . .

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

Mr. Stewart: — This report that evaluates the potential for expanding the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan, this report was prepared by S&T Consultants of Delta, British Columbia and by Myers Norris Penny of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, has the minister taken the time to read this consultant's report and if so, does the report say that it is necessary for the NDP government to invest 100-million-taxpayers' dollars to own ethanol plants in order for the industry to expand in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member from Thunder Creek is angry. He's angry that an American company has indicated that they want to partner with another American company already working in his riding to build . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. I have to ask the member for Canora-Pelly and the member for Regina South to desist from conducting a debate of their own during a time when we've got members that have been given the floor and are doing their utmost to serve the constituents, their constituents, and the people of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And, Mr. Speaker, the member is angry and the reason he's angry is because the job numbers that were released by StatsCanada this morning don't fit into their political game plan, because they don't want to talk about the fact that we have got the third . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, and they want to shout me down, Mr. Speaker, because they don't want to hear good news.

The fact is, that this June is the third highest number of jobs in the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that after a difficult year in 2001, there are 12,800 more people working in this province than there were last June. And the fact is, Mr. Speaker, is that there's an opportunity in Belle Plaine, Saskatchewan for tens of millions of dollars in private sector investment to create jobs in the livestock industry in his backyard, and he doesn't like that either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been through the job numbers. I'm only going to do it once — this minister, this minister does it every time he's asked a question about ethanol.

Mr. Speaker, judging from the answers we're getting from the minister this morning, he either hasn't read the consultant's report, or he doesn't understand the consultant's report, or he's ignoring the consultant's report. Because, Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the report does it advise the government to invest 100 million taxpayers' dollars to own ethanol plants in order for the expansion of the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan. In fact, the consultant's advice is exactly the opposite.

On page 30 of the report, the consultants conclude:

That given the right business environment, the private sector would be willing to finance the construction of an 80-million litre ethanol plant.

Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP conclude that it was necessary to gamble 100 million taxpayers' dollars when the government's own consultants say private sector capital is available?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say to the member for Thunder Creek that yes, I have read the report. And I want to say to that member that I also understand the report. And I also know that the private sector is interested in investing in this province and I also know that we are going to have that private sector investment. And I also know that we're going to have local community investment. And I also know that we're going to have livestock industry tied to that investment.

And I also know that there's a good chance that one of those investments might be right in his backyard, but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, what he should be is very clear to the constituency he represents. Does he support jobs in his constituency, or does he not? The answer should be yes or it should be no, because I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, it can't be this foolishness where he stands up in this legislature every day and attempts to pick a hole to make a political argument for himself.

And I also, Mr. Speaker, want to ask the Leader of the Opposition, who was so eloquent in here yesterday when he said the numbers are in, whether he supports the new 12,800

jobs this June over last year, yes or no. Yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, the good news in the consultant's report, if the minister takes the time to read it, is that there is considerable experience and expertise in the design, construction, and operation of ethanol plants in North America. And the consultants recommend that Saskatchewan take advantage of that industry expertise.

But the NDP has decided to gamble 100 million taxpayers' dollars on an ethanol partnership with Broe industries, an American real estate company with absolutely no experience in the ethanol business.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP ignoring its own consultant's report by gambling 100 million taxpayers' dollars to build ethanol plants in partnership with a company with absolutely no experience in the ethanol industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to draw a little analogy. That member says that the Broe group of companies is not in a position to be able to develop an ethanol plant. And he says they have no experience, so nobody should choose them and nobody should trust them. Well I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly why nobody's going to choose those guys come the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — They've got no experience and nobody trusts them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Operation of Kitchen at Liquor Store

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming. Earlier this session, I asked written questions about the operation costs associated with the kitchen facility in the south Albert Street liquor board store. The government replied the cost to operate the kitchen annually is \$82,000, which includes expenses for a full-time kitchen manager of over \$40,000, cleaning services at 26,000, special event expenses of 7,000, groceries and supplies of 5,000, and more — an expense paid for by the taxpayers of this province, \$82,000 to operate a kitchen in a liquor board store.

To the minister, how can the NDP justify this expense?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I keep hearing the members opposite asking their questions of the NDP. This is an NDP coalition government, Mr. Speaker, that has a proud record. This is a proud record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — This is not the NDP Party over here, Mr. Speaker. It's a coalition Government of Saskatchewan that has done a great deal of good for this great province of ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member will continue.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — I'm very pleased to answer that member's question, Mr. Speaker, so I can assure the people of this province that once again the inaccuracies and inadequacies of the content of the questions that are being asked. I'm glad to clarify, Mr. Speaker, that the purpose of the kitchen was an enhancement to customer service. People can learn more about food and alcohol pairing.

But the important thing is, Mr. Speaker, that that member should recognize and the people of this province recognize the Liquor and Gaming Authority is in the retail business. It's not taxpayers' money from the General Revenue Fund that pays for that kitchen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Taxpayers paid \$82,000 to operate this kitchen and, according to media reports, the kitchen itself is a sight to behold.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. Order. I specifically asked the member from Moose Jaw North . . . Order. Order, order.

I would invite the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy to start over if she wishes.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, taxpayers paid \$82,000 to operate this kitchen. And according to media reports the kitchen itself is a sight to behold. It is awesome. It has a full line . . . it has a top-of-the-line range, a heavy-duty microwave oven, a refrigerator and freezer that is roomy and functional, and a high-end dishwasher. It is nicer and better equipped than most kitchens in most homes in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this kitchen was equipped with taxpayers' dollars by an NDP government that once promised to eliminate food banks in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, what was the total cost to install this equipment and equip this kitchen in the Liquor Board store?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm amazed that the members opposite obviously, or the member . . . I'm certain that they, some of them at least, and perhaps the member that's asking the questions, remembers the old days when we used to have to fill out little paper slips to get a bottle or to get some alcohol out of liquor stores.

We're into the 21st century, Mr. Speaker. This is an enhanced

customer service opportunity. And let me tell you something. Local restaurateurs use that facility to boast about their wares and their culinary prowess and that what attracts a lot of people. It allows them an opportunity to boast about why the people want to come back to Regina, want to come back to Saskatchewan, because we have these types of facilities available in the 21st century as a customer service in a responsible way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — The costs to the taxpayers associated with this kitchen are extremely high. The kitchen only operates about 64 hours a month and at this rate is about \$89 an hour to operate this kitchen. Taxpayers money is used to coordinate it, it is used for cleaning staff, it is used for groceries, it's used for people to go and buy groceries, it's even used for travel.

The SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) told the media and the minister agrees that the kitchen provided information and customer service. It's a good value. Well it's a good value for whom? Free food to those who frequent the liquor store and guess who pays? You and I do. The taxpayers of this province.

The members opposite can laugh about this — \$82,000 is a lot of money to a lot of people in this province. It's . . . \$20,000 is what some people make in this province. But this government laughs about it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, how can the NDP justify this and what is their priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious that these people are so full of doom and gloom they still live in the dark ages.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that that member would go on the attack against the restaurateurs of this great city — okay? — that have the opportunity to show their culinary prowess and invite people to come and taste.

Mr. Speaker, let's get the facts straight here. They're not listening. I want the people to know. The cost to operate this kitchen comes directly from profits made through the sale of liquor. The General Revenue Fund does not support SLGA.

Monthly wine seminars are held and participants pay between \$17 and \$26 per ticket. They are very popular and always sold out. Some of the comments from people that frequent, that go and visit . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Okay, so we are in the Dark Ages. Well it's

this government's in the Dark Ages. The people of this province . . . and it's a lack of respect for tax . . .

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, how many hard-earned taxpayers' dollars are wasted by this government not only on this, but many other issues.

And the members opposite talk about highways. Well I'll tell you the \$82,000 would go a lot further if it was spent on helping to repair some highways in this province, fixing some potholes, than it would to put it into a kitchen in a liquor board store. Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other priorities, one of which is there's been a safe house . . . they've been calling for a safe house in Regina for six years to help children — \$82,000 would go a long way to providing a safe house for the city of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why have fancy bells and whistles in the liquor board stores taken priority over basic needs of Saskatchewan people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, once again obviously the member opposite does not keep up to date with what this coalition government is doing. In the budget there is money to build a safe house. It's there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — And they still will not accept the fact that the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority is very responsible in ensuring that all the programs and the handling of liquor is done in a safe and responsible manner, but will not accept the fact that it's a retail business.

They go on the attack of the restaurateurs who have a facility that's not funded by the taxpayers, it's from the profits that come from a retail business. I don't know how much better to explain it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

The Speaker: — Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 69 — The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Amendment Act, 2002

Clause 1

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Today I'm joined by two officials at this point. Sitting to my right is Donald Koop, the vice-president of commercial services for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) and seated to my left is Doug Porter, the director of risk management services for SPMC.

I understand that we will be joined shortly behind the bar by Andrea Seale, who is the Crown counsel, legislative services, for Sask Justice.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and his official and coming officials.

This Bill, Bill No. 5, is substantially similar to Bill No. 29. Bill No. 29 was pulled and this one reintroduced. And I guess the question is: what was wrong with that one, what is so much better with this one? Why the playing around with different Bills?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much. This is a seemingly relatively straightforward Bill and a seemingly straightforward change. I want to tell the member and tell members of the Assembly that this is a Bill that's actually been worked on for many years now.

Where we are into issues that deal with title and professional roles and responsibilities, especially where we are dealing with a number of groups, it's important that we make sure that we have the language correct in the Bill.

The Bill, I believe, was initially prepared some months ago as we introduced it. And I ended up as the new minister of SPMC and we started dealing with the groups again. It was suggested by the . . . one of the groups that we were consulting with that it was preferable to change the Bill, to withdraw Bill 29, introduce this new Bill which does substantively the same thing — and to proceed in that direction.

So it is unfortunate that there was some confusion that we had introduced originally Bill 29, but Bill 69 does substantively the same thing but with language which is preferred by the technicians and technologists as well as by the architects.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. A statement was made that this has been a number of years in the coming and that to the change of ministers in charge, there was a bit of a hiatus that went on.

And then I believe the minister said there was some more discussion with groups that had some interest in it. And I would like for the minister to list the various groups that they did consult with because it's been our experience throughout this legislative period that there are pieces of legislation that do come to this House that have been very poorly researched and had very little input by the groups that have some special interest in it.

So I would like for the minister to list the groups that were . . . had some discussion with government on this particular Bill and whether all those groups are onside with the legislation as it

exists presently in Bill No. 69.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I want to report to the member that, given the relatively narrow scope of this Bill, the consultations did involve three different parties who are affected: the Saskatchewan Land Surveyors' Association, Saskatchewan Association of Architects, and of course, the association of science technologists and technicians.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I guess the other part of the question that I had and I'm going to repeat that one, is were all those groups . . . are all those groups now onside with Bill No. 69 as it's been presented to the House and that we're discussing today?

And as well, a general statement on what is the intent of this amended legislation?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I was of course remiss to mention to the member that all three groups are now in agreement with the wording of the Bill and do support it.

The Bill undertakes to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various professions that are involved. It recognizes that people involved in the applied science technology and technicians do indeed work from time to time in the area that has traditionally been dealt with by the architect solely. This provides both title protection for the technologists and technicians as well as making sure that the architects' profession is also maintaining support.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 3 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm pleased to be joined today by deputy minister Neil Yeates with the Department of Corrections and Public Safety. The assistant deputy minister, Don Head, is seated to my left. Behind me is Heather Murray, who is the senior standards and inspections officer with the department. And seated directly behind me is Darcy McGovern who is Crown counsel of legislative services for the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Amendments in section 28 take a fairly positive step in recognizing victims' rights. And I'll quote a line from section 28:

Victims must be involved in the decision to allow an inmate to be absent from a correctional facility.

I would like for the minister to elaborate on the extent of the

involvement that will be allowed to victims of crime.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, this section of the Act deals specifically with leaves which are authorized for non-medical purposes. Obviously medical leaves we would deal with somewhat differently.

But I want to advise the member and all members of this House that victims will be contacted before the leaves are granted; their advice will be sought. It will be weighed out against what corrections officials believe is the risk level.

And at that point, once those issues have been taken into account, a decision will be made as to whether to grant the leave.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. There would probably be numbers of situations where the victim is not able to be involved in making a comment on this, either possibly due to age or other kinds of circumstances. In what situations would the victim's family be given the opportunity to sort of take the victim's place in a statement on being absent?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — There are actually a number of different people who may be contacted in the case that the member has outlined. This is certainly anybody who has filed a victim impact statement and registered with victims services. In many cases it will be . . . also the police will be contacted, Social Services, and other agencies to make sure that there's been appropriate involvement.

Mr. Heppner: — Under what circumstances will the victim's family be allowed to be a part of that?

(11:00)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Given the nature of the offenders that we are dealing with in the system, in most cases the victim is still in a position to be contacted.

In the case that the victim is not able to be contacted, or in particular in a case if the victim is deceased, the victim's family would be contacted in these matters.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And, Mr. Chair, to the minister, does the department have a list of circumstances which would meet the criteria for request for absence to be made or is each request just sort of judged on its own merit?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, there are three areas that we would consider releasing an offender for. This is dealt with under, I understand, the federal Act that we have . . . are working under.

One is a humanitarian ground. For instance, if an offender wants to attend a funeral of a family member we would consider it at that point. Second is reintegration or socialization issues where we may want to have programming continued in the community as opposed to in the facility. Under those two cases there would be victim consideration. We would give consideration as to whether . . . what the victim's views are on this.

The third area where an offender may ask is medical. In this case, given the usual pressing need for this, it would likely . . . in fact we would not consider at that point the victim's release but the intent clearly in that is for the . . . for it to be a very short time away from the facility.

So those are the three circumstances. We do in fact have a policy outlining how we weigh out the risk. Unfortunately I don't have it here today. I can make it available to the member at a later point, though.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, you outlined three situations under which this absence could take place. One was a medical reason, one was that there was a particular event that the . . . that may wanted to be attended to. The third one dealt with sort of moving back into the community and different sorts of situations.

The other two would definitely have some time limits put on them based by what the event is or what the sickness happens to be, but the third one could take all kinds of time. And I'm wondering what kind of criteria the department has to, when we move to that other area which is fairly open-ended, to decide what length of time. Or are there maximum lengths of time that can't be exceeded regardless what the purpose is?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, in these particular socialization, reintegration issues, this type of a leave, often what these are are really day passes again and maybe the best way to phrase it, there may well be an overnight possibility to it. Often it is to allow the offender to participate in counselling programs or other things which are offered outside of the facility.

Now I'm advised by the officials that this is a very small number of people that we would authorize on this. Of the roughly 1,100 offenders that are in the jail, there may be 30 who would be considered for this type of a release or program.

Now the maximum amount of time that they would be allowed out on this kind of a leave would be 60 days. Now in that case that seems like a lot, but it would be in the case that they are participating in some kind of resident treatment program.

In the case where these leaves are given and there is an overnight, there is a regular reporting process required back to the police to ensure that they are participating and that they are meeting the terms that are necessary. In the case that they don't, they are then taken back into, into custody and taken back into the facility.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Sometime ago, Mr. Minister, we spent a number of hours discussing rehabilitative programs and we won't go into the specifics of those today. But part of the rehabilitative program is that individuals, if they want some remission, need to obey the rules of the facility and they need to participate in rehabilitative programs.

Now the question I have is — and a bit of an analogy that comes from a former life of mine where a student was asked to sit down and the student sat down and said, I'm still standing on the inside — what ability do people in a correctional facility have to look at an individual who has taken the program but

doing it simply to manipulate the system and then sort of say, well I took the program but on the inside I really haven't changed and I don't intend to, but I took the program so now I want the benefit for it.

What ability do you have within the system to make some subjective decisions on those kinds of issues?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Certainly I think all of us recognize it's very hard to anticipate in many of these cases what human nature will cause these individuals to do.

The sole participation in programming is not a sufficient criteria to warrant remission. There is obviously a monitoring to ensure that people are adapting their lifestyles to deal with this. This is not however a flawless process, and from time to time there are certainly going to be problems and be issues, and we will have to deal with those as it occurs.

But this is a case where there are a number of different factors which will be taken into account to deal with the remission of sentence. Certainly one of the benefits in this Act, which was initially presented by the Attorney General, is the fact that it now makes remission an earned benefit rather than an automatic.

So there will be undoubtedly situations we will run into where people will have decided to ignore their programming or for one reason or another not stick to the program that they should. We will need to deal with those as those cases arise.

But for the most part, we believe that this is a better system to work under and we will endeavour to make sure the resources are available within the system to deal with these individuals.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And the minister makes a correct statement, that when you deal with human nature nothing is ever definite and a for sure. And that leads me into my next question.

Society always has a bit of a concern for their security when people are let out — and justifiably so. And I think to some extent society has to take some risk because obviously, as we just finished discussing, human nature dictates that we can't make a perfect decision in every case.

Looking at where the program has been and where you hope this program is going to go, what assurance can you give to the public that they will be at least as safe as they were before, and hopefully more secure with this program?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, this is a very good question and certainly one that is of significant interest to us. We believe though that by moving to this new system that there will be a greater ability for us to keep high-risk offenders in the facility, and keep them in the programming that we believe is necessary for them.

If they are however deemed to be of a . . . the risk level is deemed to be moderate or little to the community, there will still be many checks and balances that need to be in place. This may include reporting to police, this may include other things. But certainly we will include the comments in the sense of what

the community believes.

I wanted to just say to the member that one of the things that I have certainly found in the brief time that I have been the new Minister of Corrections and Public Safety is that there are often competing interests within the community. And so this is a case where we have opted for a much broader perspective of the number of people that are involved and consulted, and we will continue on that in terms of . . . the terms of release rather than just a very narrow focus on community.

So it is a complicated matter. Certainly there is some risk — we believe it to be small — and certainly we will put the steps in place. But we do believe that forcing this change which will require offenders to earn remission is preferable to the system we currently operate under.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, in section 35 your notes indicate an interesting word, and that is when you're talking about the community correctional programs that most of those programs will be provided by the corrections staff — most. My question has two parts to it.

Who will be providing the remainder of the program that is not provided by corrections staff? And what percentage essentially is that going to be of the program?

(11:15)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, it is the intention of the department to increase our capacity internally to deal with this within the facilities and within the correctional service.

However, there are certainly programs where we may need to rely upon or find it better to rely upon the resources which are already in the community. This may include services offered by non-government organizations, be it alcohol and drug groups to work within the community, or be it health districts in terms of services like mental health where we may decide that that is a preferable group given their experience and the expertise that's needed to deal with things like sex offender behaviour issues.

So it will be a partnership that we're looking at, but we are certainly of a view that we want to increase our own capacity within the correctional service to provide that within.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And, Mr. Minister, I want to thank you for the time that you had this morning to go through some of those questions, and for your officials. I'm hoping that we'll meet again this spring in estimates because there's a few things that we started to discuss last time that I think need some further discussion. Particularly as you relate to some of the failures in some of the areas of the province, particularly the member from Cumberland, I'm sure he'll be interested to listen to that.

And so at this point, Mr. Chairman, that concludes the questions we have on this Bill.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, thank you. I wanted to thank again the opposition spokesman, the member for Rosthern, for his questions in both estimates and in this Bill. Certainly this has been a unique circumstance for us as we're

trying to pull together a new department here and I appreciate his understanding of that.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 25 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 53 — The Department of Economic Development Amendment Act, 2002

The Chair: — Whenever the minister is ready he can introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Today I'm joined by Bryon Burnett who is the assistant deputy minister of the Department of Industry and Resources.

Clause 1

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And through the minister, welcome to your official. And I just have a couple of quick questions. It's not a very complicated set of amendments that we're looking at, but I think for the record I wouldn't mind having a couple of questions answered if you don't mind.

We're mainly focusing here on information technology as the amendment is going and I wonder if, just as an overview response, if you could give me some idea of why these changes, in your view, you think are necessary?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, there are two main areas that this Bill deals with. One is a set of policy amendments that add a provision to allow the minister responsible for this Act to carry out the mandate for the Office of Information Technology, which was not initially included in the 1993 Act.

Part of this is it allows a government-wide perspective for it. So there's an ability to deal with the services of government-wide information technology usage and information management. The second main policy amendment is it allows the minister responsible to provide funding for these information technology initiatives which currently is not in the 1993 Act. There are then a couple of other small housekeeping amendments to deal largely with reorganization.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, minister. Referring now to the information technology, is this going to apply, will this apply to all departments? Is there still going to be some departments that won't be part of the IT (information technology) strategy? Will there be some agencies, in fact, that will still be doing their own IT work?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, this Act . . . these amendments will allow us to deal in a more coordinated fashion with different government departments. Individual government departments will still be responsible for their own information technology. Now they may do that in shared service arrangements, but this is not a case of we would be centralizing it.

What we will be centralizing, though, is the coordination of it so it allows us to set standards and to deal with, in particular, government on-line initiatives where we are trying to bring a standard out to individuals, a standard profile for the government.

So it increases the department's ability to do coordinating with individual departments but it will not mean that all of the various branches of information technology across government will be consolidated under the Department of Industry and Resources.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, wouldn't that be the appropriate way to go, that there be a central purchasing and a central control of IT? I guess where I am going with this, if you want to get all the governments on to the same page, and I see in the amendments there's an increased spending limit. Is that not contemplating acquiring and distributing IT both in coordination but in actual implementation?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The Act would provide the department with the ability to do cross-government procurement and set those standards. But individual government departments do have different needs and we need to be mindful of that. As well we need to understand that systems have developed that we need to adapt and to deal with.

If we were starting over from ground zero, moving from the old IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) Selectrics into an IT, information technology offering within government, we would probably do it differently. However government departments have evolved. This allows us to coordinate that without taking over central control and dictating it. We will still need to work cooperatively with the departments. This does allow us to set standards though.

On the question of the government on-line project and the amount of money available there, this again is an area where we are wanting to move more aggressively in terms of providing a government on-line service. Ultimately that will involve a large number of things. Certainly some departments are more advanced than others.

The Department of Finance now has the ability to file electronically certain tax forms — that's in place. Other departments have the ability to apply for licences. Some departments simply have a Web site. And so what this provides us with is an ability to work with these departments and better coordinate that.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If in fact you're going to try to do that kind of coordinating on behalf of other agencies and government departments, how does this affect the budgeting for each particular department? Are you going to accept the increased budgeting required that I assume is associated with the increase in spending limit that's being asked for?

In fact, how does that relate and which department will that budgeting be assigned to? The Act, the name of the Act is The Department of Economic Development Act and that's rather confusing because there really is no department now with Industry and Resources.

It becomes very confusing for anybody wanting to understand what you're trying to accomplish. And transparency of your actions I think is quite important in today's age where we're talking about information technology, which is supposed to make the transparency and accountability even more apparent to people.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, I should start by saying I am joined on my left by the chief information officer for the province, John Law, who is largely . . . well I guess, almost entirely responsible for this particular section.

One of the . . . To answer the member's question, there are two different questions here. One is the question of how the transparency will be reflected. Individual departments will continue to have an information technology budget. It will be reflected within the budget estimates and we will certainly have the ability on the floor of the legislature to question individual departments about what their procurement is or what their spending is.

There is, however, an enhancement through the government on-line project for us to bring together various departments through shared services and different initiatives to work across these departmental boundaries. This allows us to help bring together a set of clear procurement standards and information standards.

There are two other comments I want to offer to the member. First of all is that we are amending this Act. So it is not the Department of Economic Development Act, but rather the economic development Act. So we will . . . because names of departments change, the intention of the department, whether it's named Industry and Resources or formerly Energy and Mines, is to deal with economic development. One of these changes will deal with that.

The second issue I wanted to note is that there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done within information technology and information management. And we will need to deal with that probably in future years as we move forward with other legislation. This simply provides us with a coordinating ability now to begin work on that.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, in fact, under which budget item in next year's budget will we be seeing this particular increase in projected spending?

And under the IT aspect, whose budget will we be ask . . . be able to ask these questions?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It's my understanding that this will appear in the Department of Industry and Resources budget. That's our intention at this point is that there would be a . . . I anticipate a separate subvote for this under the department of . . . or under the Department of Industry and Resources. So we will have the ability to question this directly here. However, if members have questions about other departments' spending, that would certainly be followed within any of the critics and any of the votes that come before us.

(11:30)

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, I guess the obvious question then is: why is not the Minister of Industry and Resources initiating these amendments rather than yourself and through your department?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is actually a . . . jointly presented by myself, as the Minister Responsible for Information Technology, and the Minister of Industry and Resources. At this point the information technology office is housed within the Department of Industry and Resources, although it does have a separate reporting mechanism through to myself as the Minister Responsible for Information Technology.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the clarification. I think it's important for people to understand what the relationship is, and kind of the schematics of how it all works.

The next question I would have then would be: are you anticipating the need for increased staffing, increased employees in order to continue this . . . the coordination aspect of this plan, whether it's intergovernment, interdepartmental, or including agencies as well?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, at this point we're not anticipating an expansion of the information technology office itself. Certainly now that we have a new permanent head, a chief information officer for the province, there is that addition into the office.

But this is a case where we are looking at working with different departments to marshal the resources that are already in place. I think that we note there are some 400 people within government who work on information technology, and it is a case that we are wanting to better coordinate and better marshal the resources that are already in place, to make more effective use and a better coordinated program for the government.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, was there ever any thought or maybe a business plan investigation of trying to accomplish the same thing with outsourcing a lot of the either equipment or expertise needed for the IT program?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, this is indeed an area that we are interested in, is how we can make better use of private sector resources that are available and the expertise that is there. There is already a degree of partnering between different departments and private sector companies.

Again, our function in this particular office of information technology — and indeed in many of the government departments — is one of coordination of the resources. So it is not a case that we don't work with the private sector. Indeed it is something I'm interested in seeing if we can build more capacity within Saskatchewan's IT industry outside of government. And this is one of the things that, as we move forward, that I am hopeful that we will be able to do.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that's encouraging because the world of IT, as you and your officials are well aware, is moving so quickly that it's hard to focus on kind of two jobs at once — trying to direct the department and agencies and also keep up with the technology. So I'm pleased

to hear that and we'll be watching for how that's working out.

Just another quick question following that. As you're trying to coordinate the IT through the different agencies and departments, will this include the Crowns as well and coordinating some of that information?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, the short answer is yes, that we are looking for a government-wide response and our coordination. And that indeed is very much what Mr. Law's job will be. So it's not limited solely to the executive side of government. It will in fact, also involve coordination with the Crown sector.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Minister. I just have another question along the line of security or privacy. You know, we've had questions come up in this legislature about the distribution of information that wasn't necessarily should have been distributed, or that whole aspect of privacy and computers very often has people right on the edge of a nervous breakdown. They don't want to give any information because that information might be shared.

Can you give some assurance that in this particular IT program that we're going to go even further to secure the information — it's not going to be available right across the board — so that people will start to feel more comfortable and confident that the information that is on hand is going to be used for the specific, exact purpose and not shared inadvertently?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is very much our objective and it is something that we are going to need to clearly work on across government departments. Now different departments may have different security needs in terms of the type of information which is required.

Certainly I know from my other role as Minister of Corrections and Public Safety, there is a large amount of information there that we need to make sure is protected and tightly limited in terms of who has access to it. Certainly we know the Minister of Health has similar privacy concerns.

So we need to start thinking about how we deal with this across government. This is something that our office will work with other departments on. And it is something that we, through the . . . was it PricewaterhouseCoopers study that we are going to continue to take a look at also.

There are two sets of issues here that need to be weighed out. One is the type of information we're collecting and the second is the access and usage within government. I think that often we have focused in the past on simply information technology. And we have forgotten about information management.

It is our view that this new office and indeed the approach that we're looking at within IT is about capacity building within the private sector. It is about better coordination within government. It is also about making sure that we have a sound and reasonable information management policies and programs in place.

So I wish I could tell you today that this is . . . slap down a large piece of papers for you to tell you that that is what our policy is.

We need to work our way through it. It is very much a work in progress and we are going to work within our government, but also, I think, across other provinces to see what kind of standards can be set.

So very much the concerns are noted and I would say indeed are shared in terms of how we move forward in this area.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate those comments because I think the sharing with other jurisdictions is also quite important. I think the information becomes global, but then again you have to make sure that there is security and prioritization of who has access to these.

And when you use the word we're going to begin to begin to put this together, I hope that isn't what you meant. I assume up to this stage a lot of work has been done.

It's a moving target, and I would certainly concur that we have to keep moving in that direction, but building on what I hope you referred to, as something that is secure and not starting from square one.

So I would encourage you to certainly go in that direction. And I don't have any particular problems with the direction of trying to coordinate IT. And under the right conditions and fundamentals, I think the Act is going in the right direction.

I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, I just want to very briefly respond that this is very much a work in progress. Certainly the comment from the member opposite is well taken. What we are endeavouring to do is provide better coordination and a better standard of practice in terms of how we are dealing with information privacy.

I think all members of this House are certainly aware of the difficulty and the complexities as we try and manage these issues, but we are continuing to work with it. I should also note that the company that we are dealing with on these issues is Deloitte & Touche. I may have said PricewaterhouseCoopers but it is Deloitte & Touche.

And just in closing, I'd like to obviously thank the officials for the work that they're doing. I want to say personally I'm very excited about the fact that John Law is taking over as the chief information officer for the province. I think this is a very, very good opportunity for us to move forward. And I want to thank the member for his questions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 48 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation
Amendment Act, 2002**

Clause 1

The Chair: — I recognize the minister to introduce his

officials.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce this morning the president and CEO (chief executive officer) of SLGA, Ms. Sandra Morgan, seated to my left; Lisa Ann Wood, executive director of human relations; Faye Rafter is here with us, who is the manager of inspection services branch; and Fiona Cribb, who is the manager of policy and legislation.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials. I have several questions regarding Bill No. 48. It is a very extensive Bill and I think that time will tell if there are issues around it that we can't identify today. But upon studying the Bill and reading through it there are a few issues that jump out at us and that we would like to address to you this morning.

I guess of concern is that there are 36 some changes to the Bill — very lengthy and intensive changes. But one major concern is that the number of issues that are now going to be decided through regulation. And I wonder if you might comment, Mr. Minister, on why you are moving all these provisions from the Legislative Assembly and now putting them under regulation?

(11:45)

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, to the member for the question. A lot of these changes were as a result — and incorporation of these regulations — were as a result of the Wakeling report, based on the review that was done and his suggestion, that a lot of these issues be outlined in Regulations.

Now, here is what Justice Wakeling had said:

I do not think it is expected I should grant an amendment to section 133, but I do think the approach taken in The Public Service Act has many advantages. It leaves the nature of the guidelines to be established by regulation which provides the minister and cabinet with a broader discretion and permits changes to be made much more readily as circumstances may dictate.

And I believe, with respect to a lot of the permits and a lot of the regulations, they've always been there regulating permittees and permits. So there have not been any significant changes for any underhanded purposes other than to comply with what Mr. Justice Wakeling had suggested would allow for more flexibility in ensuring that if there was a need to tighten up or loosen up, if you wish, for the benefit of customers that use permits, permit holders, that it would be more flexible doing it through changes in regulations than having to revisit the legislation each time.

So that's primarily the purpose largely due to the report as Justice Wakeling had outlined, and the others have always been in regulations.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I guess the concern that we have on this side of the House and certainly the people of Saskatchewan I'm sure would have if they realized what was going on here is that now we are moving the decision making from the legislative body to being made

behind closed doors in regulations which is a function of the minister and cabinet.

And especially in light of last year's incident where it was brought forth that there were gifts being accepted by ministers of the Crown from liquor companies and now instead of changing the actions of the minister, we find that the rules are being changed and not only are the rules being changed, but they are being moved into regulations so they are out of the view of the people of the province. And I'd like you to comment on how you justify that.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Chairman, and I say with all due respect, it's almost as if the suggestion is being disrespectful to what the Hon. Chief Justice Wakeling had indicated that suggested be done.

I regret that the member feels that people see us as behind closed doors entering into some agreements to do underhanded and devious things. I want to point out that this particular Bill was primarily, first of all, to enhance the authority's accountability as a regulator and a lot of that as a result of some of the questions that were asked and the review that was done.

The other reason for this Bill . . . And, once again, reminding, Mr. Chairman, the member this is a retail business so it will improve the business and administrative practices related to liquor permits. Once again, it's not to take anything away from our customers, from the people of the province. It's to enhance their opportunities, their access to what they feel meets their needs and meets their expectations as well.

It also will enhance the authority's legislative basis for action in its role as distributor and regulator of the liquor and gaming industries in the province and support the authority's role in promoting the socially responsible use of liquor and gaming products. So the entire Act was revisited but not to make it detrimental or inaccessible for clients of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. That would be totally opposite to what any retail operation should be doing.

And once again, I want to underline that it's the responsible use of liquor and gaming products in this province that's underlined and reinforced, was reinforced, I believe, as a result of and the implementation of the recommendations of Mr. Wakeling.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Minister, what I was referring to was not talking about clients or the responsible use of alcohol by people in Saskatchewan. I was talking about the provision that was in legislation before that restricted acceptance of gifts by SLGA employees and by ministers of the Crown from accepting gifts from liquor companies.

And when ministers of the Crown were found to be in conflict of this and there was a review initiated, instead of tightening up the actions of the employees and the minister, we are now changing the rules, and we're not only changing the rules but we're removing them from the floor of the legislature.

So I think it is a serious concern and it is now being taken away from the view of the public. I did not refer in any way to the responsible use of alcohol by the people of the province when I was referring to this.

And, Mr. Minister, we were talking about under regulation is the extension of who is eligible for commercial liquor permits. And I wonder if you would comment on why you felt it necessary to extend those that are eligible for liquor permits.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, the purpose for easing that, if you wish, expanding the opportunities and making easier for commercial permit holders to change permits from a name or corporation instead of having to go through the entire process once again of reapplying, they would be recognized as one of the original permit holders. If they change from an individual to a corporation they would not have to go through the entire process once again, which was something that was welcomed by commercial permit holders.

The other reason for that was to allow more easier access for entities such as regional parks to apply for, under certain conditions and circumstances, a permit to allow them to participate in some activities that they may wish to include a permit for liquor.

Well I want to go back to this regulation thing again, because I don't want people to have the impression that this is something that's been changed or put into place to advantage anybody. It's just a matter . . . It's a following of what Mr. Justice Wakeling had insisted — not insisted, but recommended — that once again that he saw that section 133, with respect to gifts and so on, was too restrictive, that he suggested that it be included similar to what's under The Public Service Act because it has many advantages.

So it allows the nature and the guidelines to be established by regulation which provides the minister and cabinet a broader discretion and permits those kinds of changes. So it's, in effect, allows us now to prepare a strict code of conduct for all employees involved with the authority, which will be in place, which is being prepared, and again all based on and I believe a process that was well worthwhile, and by a very astute gentleman who look at all the aspects of participation by employees, responsibilities. And those recommendations have been taken very, very seriously and there will be a very strict code of conduct to address the concerns by having the regulations in place as well. If they need to be tightened up then it's much easier to do it when they're in regulation than if the whole Act has to be reopened in legislation again.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I guess we will agree to disagree on this issue because I believe that Judge Wakeling recommended that there be changes made, amendments made, but he certainly did not recommend that they be eliminated from the Act, and that they be out of scrutiny of the legislature. I do not believe that was what Judge Wakeling recommended.

And, Mr. Minister, while Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming claims that accepting these gifts in the past did not contravene guidelines set down by the authority, the guidelines themselves did not follow the legislation which stated expressly that accepting these gifts was illegal.

And so now what the government has chosen to do is to get rid of the regulation . . . or get rid of the legislation, move it into regulation, and they will be free to set the guidelines as they so

choose.

I do not believe that this is a correct action to be taken, and to move this decision making out of the view of the legislation . . . legislative process, and if there's a code of conduct in place that is acceptable and something that the people of Saskatchewan would condone, I see no reason why it should not be done in this Legislative Assembly, not in regulation.

But we'll move on from that, Mr. Minister. We were talking about permits. And, Mr. Minister, you indicated that this would enable entities such as the regional parks and so on to access permits more readily. And I'm wondering if you, when making this decision, took into consideration the impact it would have on existing businesses and groups that currently can receive permits, and what that impact might be.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, there is no direct impact. Some of these commercial organizations have to set up separate entities in order to apply for a commercial permit. In the case of the regional parks, what they would have had to do in the past was to set up a company — and I don't like the use of the word, but people use it as a slang — have to set up dummy companies in order to be legally entitled to make an application for a permit. So this will not have any significant impact on what's already been in place for commercial permit holders.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then you are giving assurance that this is not going to change the way things are carried out today, it's just going to make it more convenient for those and not . . . and so I will accept that explanation, Mr. Minister.

I'm wondering if this legislation in any way addresses the issue of choice where individuals or businesses or organizations can purchase their licence and purchase their liquor.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, no, the legislation does not address that.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Minister, can you tell me if this legislation in any way affects suppliers of casinos? I know it talks a lot about suppliers, but the ones that supply directly to casinos, does this impact them and does it impact their employees as well?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — What the Act will require and strengthen to some extent is the . . . right now suppliers and employees have to be registered. What this has done is extended it to include non-gaming entities such as laundry, for example, and objects and things that are not directly related to the gaming industry but are supplied to the facility. So it now extends the need or requirement for registration to that entity as well as the suppliers themselves and the employees.

(12:00)

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Could you explain to me exactly how you would go about doing that and what are the . . . or is there a form they fill out or what stipulation is there for them to meet the requirements?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, to the member. Yes, there

is an application form that would be submitted with all the necessary detail and background of an individual and/or if it's a corporation or company. And the due process is followed to do the background checks and follow up on any requirements that are stipulated in the legislation that people . . . the information that people would have to supply. And the authority would have to be satisfied that they've met all the criteria that's in legislation to allow them to become a registered entity within the current . . . under the liquor control Act.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. On several occasions throughout the Bill there's reference to good character and that good character is a prerequisite to obtaining licensing and being involved in the liquor and gaming industry in Saskatchewan.

Could you please tell us how SLGA would go about determining if someone had good character?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, the matter of good character is common in our language and in our . . . good character that's in our British common-law practices. That kind of language is universal — people of good character and the need for assessment to determine that good character with respect to any criminal background activity. Any perhaps financial stability would be another perhaps . . . not perhaps, but would be a requirement with respect to satisfying the quality for good character.

But it's in the common-law language of our country and similarly in this province. So it's part and parcel of ensuring that in situations or in responsibility areas that may be sensitive and involve financial dealings, and particularly with the gaming industry, you would appreciate the need for a requirement to ensure.

And I think the people would want us to be doing that to make sure that we had the . . . we did all the due diligence, if you wish, that may be required to ensure that people . . . we do have responsible people and accountable people that are employed and engaged in our efforts.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister . . .

The Deputy Chair: — Order, order. Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — With leave to introduce a guest, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask members of the legislature to recognize a visitor to our Chamber. I note behind the bar, Lorne Hepworth, a minister with the administration in the 1980s. I was fortunate enough to serve in the 1980s with Mr. Hepworth. He was minister I think of Education, Finance — if I'm right, Lorne? — and served with distinction in this legislature.

So I want to say, Lorne, welcome back and I hope you enjoy

your stay here as you watch today's proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 48 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002 (continued)

Clause 1

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Hepworth to the Legislative Assembly who is from my riding of Weyburn-Big Muddy and so I'd like to welcome him here as well.

Mr. Minister, I just have one more set of questions to ask you about, pertaining to the legislation and to the broader issue of horse racing in the province of Saskatchewan. And I was just referring to good character and that is one of the . . . and I believe it is the only reference that is made to the horse racing industry in Saskatchewan in the Bill, is about the good character provision.

And, Mr. Minister, as you I'm sure are aware, there is great concern about the whole horse racing industry in the province of Saskatchewan. I believe that various components of the horse racing industry have made representation to you, as they have to myself, and are very concerned about maintaining this heritage industry in our province.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering what provisions are being made by your department in order to enhance horse racing in Saskatchewan as opposed to what we see happening today, which is the decline of an industry that we have long valued in our province and which is a great tourism draw. It provides jobs for many people in this province.

What we've seen over the last several years is the continual decline in horse racing activity in the province. We've seen the loss of families that gave their life to the horse racing industry, that have left our province. And along with that we've lost the breeders the trainers, people that work at the track, those that provide accessory services. And also we've lost a lot of dollars because of the spin-offs that accompany that, that we have lost to the province.

And I'm wondering if you could comment on this industry to me.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we're concerned as well but this is not a phenomena only to Saskatchewan. I'm told, and I understand, that there is a decline generally across North America with respect to the choice of citizens for this type of entertainment.

And you're probably aware, the member probably is aware, Mr. Chairman, that there are other forms of gambling now that have attracted people as a different form of entertainment. Nevertheless, and once again, it's what people want.

And I know it's difficult. Nobody wants to see any kind of an

industry decline, but if it's an industry that demands the attention of the public as part of their choice, as to their choice for the entertainment that they would like to participate in, then we have no control over that.

Now the race tracks in other places that are continuing and are — and I believe the member, Mr. Chairman, would say — are being successful are only successful because they are supported by another part of a gaming industry and that's through VLT (video lottery terminal) programs.

And here in this province we have been working with the breeders associations and with the people that are involved in horse racing. The province gives the association \$1.4 million. And there is seasonal support from VLT revenues as well for that association.

Now there are different entities within that association. We've been working very, very hard. And yes, the officials from SLGA and myself have met with these people. We want to do whatever we can within a responsibility authority to assist, but we need to have the co-operation of everybody that's involved in that particular industry to come together. And we plan on once again bringing them together before the next season to see if we can't sort out, iron out, or address what those specific concerns, disagreements, direction that we might take, in order to ensure that we can continue that form of entertainment, as you say, for our tourists, for people of this province.

But once again, there needs to be the coming together of the different entities within the horse racing industry and we're prepared to do that. We're prepared to sit down with them and we will, as I said, before the next season. So we'll likely be meeting with these folks come this fall and perhaps throughout the winter, winter months to determine just exactly what we need to do to address the ills that are affecting the decline of that particular form of entertainment.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Well, Mr. Minister, there has been a steady decline of the horse racing industry and the families and the people that support it in this province. And if we wait another year there might not be enough people left here to get the industry up and running. We now have only 18 days of racing in this province and there has been a steady decline of the people that are left in the province to support the industry.

What the industry is asking is that they have control of the horse racing industry, that it not be given into the hands of exhibition parks. And they're asking for the money to be given directly to their association so that they can run the industry as a business and run it properly. They have given their life to this industry and to the passion of horse racing and they know the industry.

Mr. Minister, it is the same in any business. If you have people that are running it that are not familiar with it, have not been grown up in it, it is not their passion, they do not understand what makes the industry work. And the people that have horses and that belong to these associations for years are asking that the dollars be directed to them instead of being filtered through the exhibition association, and then they have to go to them and make a deal with them.

I would like your comments on this.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all I would like to just point out that . . . and I do believe that Mr. Doug Cressman is in . . . somehow related to the horse racing industry, so it's not that those people do not have an idea of how to operate in that kind of an atmosphere.

And, Mr. Chairman, to the member as well, when the choice of this type of entertainment from the public and only 3 per cent indicate that as a choice of entertainment, I would very much appreciate if the member . . . and I would welcome any suggestions or ideas as well from the member to see how we can, once again, re-install the interest. And if it's a matter of funding, then how do we, how do we access that funding?

And as you mention in the retail business, if you succeed it's as a result of the product that you offer. And if you're in the entertainment industry, which . . . let's face it, horse racing, gambling, whatever form it may take, is a form of entertainment. And if there are fewer people want to participate in horse racing and participate instead by going to movies or going to the casinos, how do you then change or insist that they change their choices.

So that's another issue that needs to be addressed. It's how do we enhance the product that we have to offer in any particular area that we need to attract customers in order to participate, in order to support and survive.

So what I have here, Mr. Chairman, and perhaps I'd like to pass . . . send this over to the member and that's a breakdown of the grants that go to each of the participating entities, the Queensbury Downs operators, and the total grants are involved, the adjusted grants, and so on. And I think that may . . . it will show that there is financial support, that that support has been there.

(12:15)

Now the authority does not set the number of days of racing, and I'm sure the member's aware of that. It's the exhibition associations. But that needs to be done as well. That's why I say it's so important for all of us involved in that business to get together and sit down and to come to a reasonable conclusion.

If it's a matter of, as the member pointed out, in the retail business, if it's a matter of coming to the conclusion that, hey folks, how do we do . . . what do we have to do in order to enhance our product so people will come back and want to buy it again, then we need to address that.

You know, as I pointed out and I don't want to be repetitive, but it is a matter of choice for people as to the type of entertainment they want to participate in. And again, as I mentioned earlier, generally across North America there has been a decline in interest in horse racing. So we're not an island unto ourselves. We're part and parcel of what's affecting the entire industry, not only here in Saskatchewan or Canada but in North America.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Well I think that the horse racing association would take great exception to what you are saying today — that somehow it's because there is

a lack of . . . there's been a lack of interest over the years for horse racing. They certainly do not feel that. They believe that their industry has been killed by the policies and the heavy-handedness of this government in interfering in their industry.

And, Mr. Minister, you made mention that the operators of the park and exhibition associations receive the funding. It's \$1.6 million that they receive from this government, and then they make the determination of what is going to happen with those dollars. Whether there's 18 days of racing, which there is this year, or whether there's 50, they still get the same amount of money. And the reason there isn't anyone at the tracks is because there's only three horses running around in one race.

So, Mr. Minister, this government has destroyed this industry in this province and do not . . . I do not believe it is appropriate to throw it on the backs of the people that have tried to keep this industry alive and have been met with roadblocks at every turn.

And, Mr. Minister, it's very clear that the reason that there is live horse racing at all in the province is because in order to have simulcast and telecast theatre you must have a certain number of days of live racing. And that is where the profit is coming to this government. And the horse race industry is but a sideline and something that they have to put up with in order to be able to have simulcast and telecast and receive the profits from that.

So, Mr. Minister, I know you have indicated that you would be open to meeting with the horse association — there's two or three of them in the province. And I would hope that you would give me a time and date, or a date — approximate date — when industry could look forward to that meeting in order to try and get this industry back on track.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, I believe that the letter that I sent over to the member will more specifically explain . . . I want to underline again, there's been some very serious allegations made here with respect to the lack of consideration by this coalition government for the horse racing industry. That is not true.

The money goes to the different associations, and there's more than one. We have the standardbreds, we have the thoroughbreds, we have the First Nations, we have the speed racing people. So there's not just one association. And there's a distribution of that money to those associations and to the exhibition park. So let's be clear that we have been . . . the authority has been doing everything possible to ensure that the distribution is fair.

As far as it comes to . . . as far as it goes with the simulcast telecasts, that is federally controlled. It has nothing to do with what we do as far as the authority is concerned. So I just want to make it clear, and again it's not a matter of creating roadblocks or barriers.

This is good, we see it as good. But once again if you do not have customers to participate in the entertainment that you provide, how is that industry going to support it? How are you going to support that industry? If you don't have people going to the movies and buying tickets how are you going to pay for

the reels and the equipment that runs the movie theatre? So it's all part and parcel, not different than a retail industry.

If your product has lost favour with customers because they've made other choices, then you do whatever you can to enhance your product or you recognize that by golly, perhaps there is another form of entertainment that we need to address or look at, or coordinate. I'm not sure what you do in this case.

But as I said, we're prepared and we will meet again, and it will not be the first time we've met, and it perhaps won't . . . well I'm sure it won't be the last. But we've had many meetings. Officials have had many meetings with the different entities. And there's more than one association, I want to underline that. And each of them have their own views.

What we need to do hopefully is bring everybody together, and we will accomplish a great deal more, I believe, in that fashion — as opposed to having opposing views. We need to go in the same direction and accept reality, that it's a matter of choice for people. We can't force folks to go to the racetrack. We can't do that. So we'll do whatever we can to make sure that we help the industry, but there's only so much that can be done. The industry needs to help itself as well, and we'll participate in that kind of a process.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Well, Mr. Minister, there certainly are problems, and there certainly are issues surrounding this, and there is a will by the horse association, whether it's thoroughbred or standard bred, to improve this industry. And, Mr. Minister, I would like to take you for your word that you will meet with these associations. I believe that Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming, yourself, and the association should all be in the room at one time and come to a decision that will be of benefit to the horse racing association in Saskatchewan, and therefore to all people in the province — especially in Regina and Saskatoon, which are presently where most of the horse racing still does occur.

And so, Mr. Minister, I would hope that you would initiate that meeting soon so that these problems do not arise next year. And I certainly hope that there are enough people that are still in Saskatchewan that are interested in making this happen when that meeting is convened. And so with that, I have no further questions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 24 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Clause 1

The Deputy Chair: — I'll invite the minister to introduce any new officials he may have had. Same officials.

Ms. Bakken: — Bill 77 is a translation of Bill 48, and so I have

no questions regarding this Bill.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we move on then, perhaps at this point I want to take the opportunity to sincerely thank the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy for the questions with respect to the contents of this legislation. And I believe we've had a good discourse and exchange, and recognizing concerns that the member has brought with respect to some of the changes and some of the issues that need to be dealt with. And I believe that's the type of discourse that we need to have in order to address the concerns on behalf of all the people of our province.

So I want to thank the member. I want to certainly thank the officials of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority who do work very, very diligently to ensure that we meet not only the demands but the needs of the customers of whether it's the Liquor Authority or Gaming, because it is a responsible form of entertainment that this coalition government wants to ensure prevails in this province.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 29 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Clause 1

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right I have Nigel Howard, who is the CEO of SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation), and Glenda Bruce is to my left; she is the chief financial officer of SOCO.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials.

The Bill No. 74, these amendments are very straightforward. There are about . . . if I counted right, about 40 words in the whole amendment to increase the borrowing by \$20 million.

Just a couple of questions just for the record, Mr. Minister. Is this going to increase the government debt or how is this going to be accounted for?

(12:30)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by the officials that there is a small increase in the debt. But as well, that will be covered off by assets. This is basically for the buildings, Innovation Place . . . in Innovation Place in Saskatoon and in the Regina Research Park. So basically it's capital that will be allocated to the buildings.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, if SOCO is being wound

down or moved over into the Crowns sector, why are we going through these amendments now? Why is this not being done through the Crown that will be taking over the assets or the operation of SOCO?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And to the member opposite, what this is really is an interim initiative as we are doing the transition between SOCO, between the corporation and the assets being moved to the Crown Investments Corporation.

And really what it's to do is, as it relates to Innovation Place in Saskatoon and the Research Park in Regina, allow for capital for business operations to be financed such as constructing tenant improvements, building improvements, and building maintenance projects.

So what we are is in a transition period as SOCO is moved and the assets are moved into Crown Investments Corporation.

Mr. Wakefield: — Just one more question. Well then will the . . . as the assets move over to Crown Investments, will also the asset debt, as you described it, move over there as well? Or will the government still be responsible entirely under their budget for that particular transition debt?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — All right. Mr. Chairman, we're just in the process of determining exactly where the Innovation Place and Research Park assets will land. And it . . . but the debt will follow the assets. If it's in Crown Investments Corporation in, say, CIC III (Crown Investments Corporation Industrial Interests Inc.) as an example, or if it's in an Innovation Place corporation within Crown Investments Corporation, that would all follow.

And I think what they'll be doing is looking for the simplest way to administer these assets, you know, in the most . . . I guess in the simplest way possible.

Mr. Wakefield: — Okay. Thank you, Minister. It'll be interesting to watch how this unfolds, how it gets transferred into Crowns, where it ends up, and we'll be watching very closely. I want to thank your officials for being here for such a short amendment. We have no further questions.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my officials and the member opposite for his questions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Clause 1

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce to my right Cheryl Hanson. To my left is John Boyd, executive director of policy and planning. Directly behind me is

Peter Federko, CEO of Workers' Compensation Board. And sitting beside Peter is Pat Parenteau, senior policy analyst from the Department of Labour.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd also like to welcome the minister and her officials here today. Bill 72, an Act to amend workers' compensation.

I would like to start out by asking the minister, considering how many reviews and studies that have been done . . . I understand there's been five reviews and studies done in the last few years. Mr. Dorsey has been a big part of at least two of them.

And the amendments today are fairly . . . well there's only a few amendments today considering the amount of study and amendments that have been recommended by Mr. Dorsey and other people in the different reviews.

I'd just like to start by asking the minister to kind of outline the process that her officials and department took to come to the conclusion only to implement these few amendments to the Act, and what is the timeline as far as implementing the other many recommendations that have been proposed. And ultimately, will the minister be implementing or have intentions of implementing the other amendments that have been proposed?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. When you look at the total report from the committee of review there was 48 recommendations: 29 of these recommendations have been or are being implemented through the change in board policy; 5 have been deferred pending implementation and evaluation of the other recommendations; and 14 recommendations are being implemented through amendments to the Act.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister. More specific points about the amendments, section 2(a.1) the removal of the definition of the Canada Pension Plan. What is the purpose of removing this definition from the Act?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Justice has made this recommendation because its handled in The Interpretation Act and it's no longer necessary.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Concerning the average weekly wage, could the minister define how the average weekly wage of the industrial composite is determined?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The average wage is calculated by Statistics Canada.

The Deputy Chair: — Order. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Jones: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, and thank you to the member opposite. I wish to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly some guests seated in the west gallery who are constituents of mine. We have with us Sam Sambasivam and

his wife Barbara, and their son Rupin who is down here to watch a football game tonight, and Barb and Sam's nephew Marshall.

And they're all with us and I hope that they're enjoying the proceedings this afternoon and I hope that we'll all welcome them warmly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Clause 1

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Just a clarification, Madam Minister. When we talk about the . . . Is the department using the statistics from all of Canada or just Saskatchewan to come up with the index or the . . .

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Saskatchewan.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Could the minister tell me the difference between the average weekly wage of the industrial composite as determined by StatsCanada and the average weekly wage of the Saskatchewan numbers for workers?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Statistics Canada does the calculation province by province, and does the calculations for Saskatchewan based on Saskatchewan statistics. If you're looking for a wider range of information, we don't have that with us.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. In section 30 the presumption where the worker found dead unless contrary is shown . . . Could you explain what kind of investigation is done and by whom when a worker is found dead on the job?

(12:45)

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — There are claims representatives that would go out to the accident site. They would do interviews with the employer, with other employees, seeking any information that may be pertinent to the investigation. They would also investigate the actual accident site.

The information brought back would be presented to a claims manager who would make the decision.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. I don't believe it's quite that cut and dried. But for an example if an employee died from a heart attack and . . . how is that determined whether that's work related or not? I mean it could be a pre-existing condition. It could be . . . the heart attack could have been caused by stress on the job. So how is something like a heart attack determined?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The member opposite, you're correct. I mean nothing is that cut and dried. When you're dealing with a situation that may involve a heart attack well then you would be interviewing more people and taking more information into

account — maybe a coroner's report or physicians' reports that would add to the information where your final decision would be made on the death.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Next question is concerning section 38.1, the maximum wage rate. Does the minister know what additional cost the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) will incur by raising the maximum wage rate from 48,000 to 51,900 effective 2003?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — When we look at the increments that the maximum wage will go up, it's just about impossible to give you a definite figure to go each step one at a time for a variety of reasons, because we don't know how many workers are going to be injured during that time, what their wage rate may be.

But as soon as this Bill is proclaimed and the three increases take effect, there will be an actuarial . . . there's an actuarial calculation done that measures, for the current claims, what the costs will be projected into the future for those three increments.

And being they're all three in the legislation at once, the cost for all three will be booked immediately. So that would be the \$33 million, the actuarial adjustment that will put those . . . cover those increases into the future. Being they're proclaimed, it has to be booked all at once.

Mr. Weekes: — So you couldn't give us an estimate of those costs today then for that year and the 2003, 2004, and 2005?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The costs aren't broken down. Being they're implemented and all three are proclaimed in the same piece of legislation, the cost isn't broken down.

We have the one-time \$33 million adjustment that will take place immediately upon proclamation and all three increases are contained within that amount.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. I have asked through a written question concerning the maximum wage rate for 1999, 2000, 2001 and you had said in the . . . your official said in the reply that it will not be retroactive.

I have talked to a number of stakeholders and they have said you have told them that it will be retroactive. So I just want to clarify that. It's a big difference in potential liability whether it is retroactive or not.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — A better term to use would be that it's retrospective — not retroactive. Anyone that's currently on compensation and may be at the maximum wage rate, once the increases . . . or the legislation is proclaimed, if their previous wage rate would have been at the max and they were entitled to more, then they will be moved up, but it's not retroactive.

Mr. Weekes: — Just a point of clarification: so they will not be receiving money for a claim in 1999 and 2000-2001. It'd just be the increase would be for the future years. Is that right? Thank you.

Earlier I asked a written question to the minister asking how

many ongoing claims currently exist that are on a long-term benefit or have been permanently disabled, and how many of these claims . . . benefits would be adjusted according to the new maximum wage rate effective January 1, 2003. And your answer was the specific number cannot be determined with certainty.

I'd like to ask the minister, could you tell me why this number of long-term claimants that would be affected by the maximum wage rate cannot be determined with certainty, considering more recent claims have not yet been determined to be long term, and the WCB must know how many permanently disabled claims it has on file? How many of these would be exceeding the current maximum wage rate?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I know we covered some of these questions in estimates and it can be very confusing. We talked . . . I think I gave you a number of approximately 300 during estimates and the exact number currently, at this time, is 340.

But also there is a number of current cases would be at 2,140 cases. But the difference is the 2,140 number. We don't know if any of those will be long-term cases. It may . . . they may only be on an earnings replacement . . . or a wage loss so that it's a short-term claim. Once they're better they go back to work and that's it. So it's ongoing and a rotating number all the time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. I'd like to move on to section 67.1, independence allowance. Why was the percentage used to determine independence allowance lowered from 10 per cent to 5 per cent?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — When you look at the recommendations, the independence allowance and the PFI (permanent functional impairment), the functional permanent impairment, are tied, both of those recommendations. So when the PFI was doubling — because the committee felt that the permanent functional impairment awards were too low and they were out of sync with other jurisdictions and the needs of workers — those, the PFI awards, were increased — in fact, doubled.

So with the doubling of the PFI, the independence allowance is calculated on a percentage of the PFI. Now the independence allowance was felt by the committee to be fair, that it adequately addressed the needs of claimants. So when the PFI was doubled but they felt the independence allowance was adequate the way it was to maintain the level of the independence allowance, the percentage was cut in half.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. To the minister through the Chair, these amendments for the most part seem to be housekeeping. We have no problem with a number of the areas. The survivor benefits, obviously, is just updating the law. The death benefits obviously make sense. Some of the other things, as I have mentioned, we had some questions and concerns about them.

But our concerns really go to the credibility and the accountability of WCB. As you know, the actuary was out by \$69 million last year and the actuary number is only as good as the information that is given to the actuary. And we feel that there is . . . well quite frankly in the past the proper information hasn't been given to the board and passed on to the actuary to give the proper numbers. And we have a big concern about

some of these amendments, about the cost of some of these amendments that will incur.

And the minister has said that there will be a part-time actuary employed. I feel that a part-time actuary isn't something that's necessary. I believe that proper numbers have to be given to the officials so that — as the saying, garbage in, garbage out — if the numbers aren't correct, the end result numbers will not be correct.

And I would just like to ask the minister what steps has she taken to make sure that WCB is properly administrated and the proper numbers are projected so that employees and employers feel confidence in the WCB and how it's being operated.

(13:00)

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Chair, I would like to actually thank the member opposite for his comments about the report, feeling that many of the recommendations were needed.

I'd also like to make a comment on the committee itself which is composed of representatives from both business and labour with a chairperson.

Their comments, when they gave the report to me in a meeting that we had, that they felt they had only made recommendations that were doable, that were needed, that in some cases were overdue being done. They had come to a consensus on this report because they felt they were needed and that was their way of putting forward a very good report.

So now in looking at it . . . And when you talk about the actuarial adjustment, it isn't in fact inadequate information. It's the timing of the information. The \$69 million was an actuarial adjustment that was done at the end of the year and came about as a result of a number of factors — loss of investment revenue, increase in some claims cost. So the adjustment is made at the end of the year.

There's been a variety of steps that have gone into tightening up the reporting system. There's more in-depth . . . or in detail information, financial information that goes to the board monthly, with an actuarial adjustment line attached to it. And with the arrangement we've made with the University of Regina and the actuary being available to the board, they are looking at more frequent actuarial adjustments and calculations being made throughout the year.

Now can it be done monthly? It may be too big of a job to be done monthly. It may be something that's done quarterly. When we look at companies the size of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), they I believe . . . or I'm told do two actuarial reviews a year.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. I'd just like to thank the minister and her officials, and look forward to estimates next week to continue questioning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I would like to thank the members opposite for their questions, their written questions, and the interest that they have showed in this.

And also I would like to thank the member from Redberry Lake for the petitions that he has filed on behalf of people in Saskatchewan looking for improvements and a fair and equitable workers' compensation system.

And I'd also like to thank my officials for being here today.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 19 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

The Deputy Chair: — I will invite the minister to introduce the new official that has joined her.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My officials remain the same, Cheryl Hanson and John Boyd. And joining us is Eric Greene, who is the executive director of labour services.

Clause 1

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I welcome the minister and her officials. There is a number of concerns that we've raised in this House already and the concerns are coming to us from the hog industry because they have a real fear that this particular piece of legislation will be viewed by both the investors and the developers as a reason not to invest or expand the hog industry in Saskatchewan. It seems like again we will be on an un-level playing field with our neighbouring provinces when it comes to competing for capital investment dollars.

And the reasons or considerations that we had hoped the government would take into consideration was that the hog producers of this province have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in our province. They've created thousands of direct and indirect jobs and they offer their employees good jobs with good pay and benefits, and they provide employment for our U of S (University of Saskatchewan) agriculture graduates in management roles.

It's an opportunity — and I particularly feel that in my own constituency with the number of hog barns I have close by — it's an opportunity for the rural residents to earn off-farm income without having to move away from the area and from their families. It's an opportunity for construction workers to find good jobs building the hog barns across the province, and we have a number in construction in my area. It's an opportunity for businesses in rural and urban Saskatchewan to gain more security by having customers in the hog industry to serve.

So with all of these benefits and opportunities I feel that they're being put at risk because the government isn't willing to sit down and talk with the industry about the appropriate employment rules for the industry. And yet the industry seems more than willing to have that consultation process take place. And that's what we find particularly unacceptable, was the lack of consultation process.

And so my first question would be: what was the impetus of this Bill other than the Premier's province . . . promise when he was campaigning in the NDP leadership?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — When you look at this issue over the past number of years, during '94-95 into '96, there was a review done on labour standards that was comprehensive over a year and a half, two years, I believe. And this issue was looked at then.

At that time the hog industry was fairly small in Saskatchewan. Since then, as you are well aware, it's grown, doubling or more over the last number of years. It has . . . the industry has changed.

The processes that are gone through has changed and over that period of time there has been more and more discussion — I've said this a number of times before — I can remember '98, late '97-98, articles being in *The Western Producer* talking about labour standards issues across the Prairie provinces in the hog industry and in other agricultural areas.

Also there has been discussions informally gone on which began in earnest before January of this year.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister for the answer, but I'd like to point out to her that pork production still involves breeding, farrowing, and growing of pigs. It's still not immune to the challenges of bad weather, power outages, poor road conditions, and the constant need to feed and care for live animals. So it still very much is an agricultural type industry and it still needs care 365 days of the year.

Is it the opinion of the minister that hog barn workers were being mistreated today and that they have been mistreated in the past decade, which is when her own government had initiatives in place to push for the expansion of this industry but hadn't until now seen the need for such legislation?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — We can go back quite a number of years. I think since 1947 traditional farming has maintained an exemption from labour standards, for a variety of reasons, number one being that it's an outdoor business. Livelihood would probably be a better word for it. It's seasonal, where you would have more hours and more intense hours of work in the spring during seeding, in the fall during harvest. You're susceptible to weather, drought — which we're going through right now — disease, a variety of other things.

The hog industry has evolved over the last number of years where it is done indoors. It is climate controlled. It is highly technical. You don't have the susceptibility to disease because of the controls that are in place and taken in the large operations where you have shower in/shower out, controlled conditions. It's really moved it away from the definition of traditional farming. That's one of the reasons that it's being looked at currently.

There's also a couple of other things. As a woman, when you look at the workforce in the commercial hog industry, they estimate that over half of it is women. Basic things such as maternity leave does not . . . are not covered. Those are things that are guaranteed under labour standards.

I don't believe we're picking on any industry. Sask Pork and many producers have told us in meetings and publicly and in the press in a variety of ways that they follow labour standards and exceed them in many instances. That's great. That's good to hear.

But to provide consistent workplace conditions across the province is, I think, a plus for the industry. When you look at the retention of workers in rural Saskatchewan, to guarantee consistent workplace standards is a plus. I think it will help in their recruitment and retention of workers which is important in the hog industry when you look at . . . I just read an article not that long ago about training workers for hog barns can run, when you're including hard and soft costs, anywhere from 6,000 up to 48,000 to train new workers for these industries.

So everything that we can do to retain workers in these industries is a plus and will help.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister. I think she failed to answer the question. The question was: are the hog barn workers being mistreated today and have they been mistreated in the past decade and is that the reason why this move has been made?

Because there's a number of workplaces where even are . . . a majority are women and yet they're not under The Labour Standards Act. I was just told recently — and I wasn't even aware of this — but teachers are not under The Labour Standards Act, teachers. And there the majority of those are women.

So why, all of a sudden, was this particular industry targeted?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well I will keep repeating it. It wasn't all of a sudden and nor do I believe that workers across the board were mistreated.

Are standards consistent? No, they aren't. Are they in a majority? I believe they are. But to have consistent right across the industry, which is an industrial, highly technical industry . . . These people are well-trained. It's technical barns that they work in, they're climate-controlled, there's a variety of other issues that go on when you talk about a pork technician. These workers deserve to have consistent workplace conditions just like any other industrial workplace in the province.

(13:15)

Ms. Harpauer: — I would like to ask the minister if she's aware — and I do know some of this firsthand — that there are employers in the sector right now that provide benefits far in excess of The Labour Standards Act — and she did mention that in the answer to her last question — in exchange, basically, for flexibility regarding issues such as hours and stat holidays.

I know in the barns closest to me, one of them, which my girlfriend works in, she very much appreciates the benefit package that she has available to her.

And is the minister aware that now that the barns may have to follow, or will have to follow the strict letter of this Act, those extended benefits could be in jeopardy of disappearing because

the flexibility is now gone and they may . . . if they have to hire one more employee to cover a few of the extended hours they may drop the benefit packages.

And I know in talking to people that I know in the industry, if I ask them which would you rather have, would you rather have your benefit packages or the . . . you know, to be under The Labour Standards Act, it was resounding. They wanted to secure their benefit packages; it was extremely important to them and worth their while. And they didn't feel that they were being mistreated at all in the workplace.

So is the minister aware that this could possibly be as a direct result of this piece of legislation?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, one thing that I would like to make very clear, labour standards is your basic minimum standards in any workplace. Whether it's a hospital that runs 24/7 or a long-term care home that runs 24/7, labour standards applies. It's your very basic minimum hours, or workplace conditions. If an employer is above that, that's great.

And I'm sure in a very competitive industry such as commercial hog industry, it is a very competitive industry and they are looking to maintain and retain workers that they have. Loyalty to companies and expertise in this field is sought after. If they have very good benefit packages, if their wages are high, that is great.

And we have been told over and over again that the industry is above, meets or exceeds labour standards. And if that's the case, then this Bill will have no effect on those employers whatsoever.

Ms. Harpauer: — Can the minister point out for us today a single operation that is not meeting The Labour Standards Act that will now be put under The Labour Standards Act?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I would not stand here in the Legislative Assembly and point a finger at an employer and say you're not doing this right or not doing that right. That's just not the way this would be done.

Once the Bill is proclaimed, labour standards officers will go out and visit the 18 employers, large hog production employers in the province, to have a more thorough discussion on what exactly this covers and where adjustments may be made.

There is a great deal of flexibility within labour standards. I know the member from Cannington commented the other day in second reading about this little piece of paper that he wasn't quite sure what the details were behind it.

One of the reasons is that labour standards covers every industry in the province and labour standards officers will go out and visit the employers that are affected and will have further discussions once it is proclaimed.

Ms. Harpauer: — Can the minister name the number of operations that will now come under the jurisdiction of this Act that weren't prior? The number of operations — I'm not asking her to name them then — just how many operations will come under this Act that have not been . . . that have not met the

requirements prior to this Act coming into place?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Through the consultations that have gone on since January, there will be approximately 18 that will be covered by this legislation.

Ms. Harpauer: — Let's try the question again because obviously you have no idea what I asked. I said you do not have to name the facilities that are now coming under the regulations of the Act. But of the 18 that will now come under the regulations of the Act, without naming any of them, how many of those were not already in compliance of the regulations of the Act?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The three areas that are discussed most often in people that we have talked to is stat holidays, maternity leave, and overtime are probably the three main areas that have not been consistently applied throughout the industry.

We have no access to go in and audit someone who is not covered by labour standards. So until the Bill is passed then we will have a better look at it.

Ms. Harpauer: — Perhaps the minister's answer demonstrates how the consultation process has been flawed. There's a consultation going on with these barns. Perhaps she would then know the answer, or if there's any thought process going on in this whole thing, any research done, any thought into the repercussions. I think those are questions she should have been able to answer.

How many complaints of unfair labour practices have been filed against the 18 facilities by individual employees?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — We seem to be dealing with a misconception here. I mean the standards aren't being put in place because of complaints. We don't do things because they're . . . initially because of complaints.

There has been complaints filed, but being hog barn workers are not covered by Labour Standards, there hasn't been a great number that have been . . . I mean we run about 15, I think. What we're looking at is an industry that has changed, that is growing, and has consistent standards of . . . it is becoming very highly technical and industrialized. And it will be treated the same as any other industry within the province.

Ms. Harpauer: — By the minister's answer, I have to assume then because everything . . . we have lobby groups coming to the government and to the opposition all the time. And so therefore I have to believe that we're back to my original question is the reason why it's being done is solely for political reasons and the fact that the Premier made a promise when he was on his leadership campaign.

The Minister of Labour throughout this whole so-called process has shown no respect for the hog producers of this province or their employees, quite frankly. In November she announced the Labour Standards would apply to the hog production in this province. And she didn't announce this change at a meeting with the producers, she did it at the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Convention. And the hog industry found out about it when they read it in the newspaper the next day.

And the other interesting thing is I know from dealing with the agriculture portfolio, that the Premier was quite upset when he found out that there was a federal government announcement when he read it in the newspaper. And he said this is no way to run a country.

Well this is no way to run a province, this is absolutely ridiculous. It's an industry that has invested millions and millions of dollars in our province and this is how they find out changes in their industry which is being driven by a Minister of Labour rather than the industry and what it needs. Because she just identified that there isn't a great need for this in the industry.

Did she then recognize her mistake? No, actually when the Sask Pork and the office tried to get in contact with her, it took her a few months to reply. And I have a copy of the letter that she has in reply.

(13:30)

So the consultation process is completely flawed. The way that it was dealt with seems completely flawed. The minister announced the changes was going to happen at the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) convention in . . . of last year.

And then she hired a former NDP ministerial assistant to talk to the industry — Mr. Halpenny is my understanding. This former assistant told the industry he was the best person for the job because he knew nothing about the labour standards and nothing about hog production.

And this former assistant went out and met with some industry people. Even in the short time he spent with them, he didn't consult with them. He told the producers that the legislative changes were going to happen and his job was to determine who should be included in the legislation. And the total interview time that the producers are telling me that they had was about 30 hours altogether.

So then after this somewhat feeble attempt, there haven't been, to my understanding, any more meetings or follow-ups. So questions on this consultation process: can the minister explain the makeup of the committee that supposedly represented employers and employees of the hog industry?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — There was representatives from Sask Pork, a small, a large producer. There was also representatives . . . a person from GSU (Grain Services Union) that represented employees and had dealt with labour standards. There was also a farmer whose daughter worked for one of the barns. And there was also an employee out of one of the barns.

Ms. Harpauer: — Can you tell us which one actually worked in a hog barn when they went onto the consultation committee?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The employee representative was from Bear Hills Pork.

Ms. Harpauer: — Which representative would that be?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The employee representative.

Ms. Harpauer: — Is her name a secret?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I actually don't see the relevance of naming someone's name, who I have no way of protecting her for repercussions in her workplace.

Ms. Harpauer: — Her workplace should be more than happy with the work that she's doing if this is what they want. How many times did the committee meet and on what dates?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — There was meetings on . . . the first one was held . . . the more specific meeting was held on April 25, 2002. The next one was held May 1, 2002, with a request for any written submissions to be sent in to the department by May 8 of the same year.

Ms. Harpauer: — I find it extremely odd that the minister is so protective of this committee considering that letters have been sent to the hog producers, to the hog barn owners, listing the employees, listing the committee members. I'm not too sure why she figures all of a sudden that these committee members are in jeopardy of being publicly known as to who they are.

What kind of process did the minister put in place to perhaps get three employee representatives that actually worked in hog barns, because only one of the three does?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I'm not being protective of the committee, but I guess I fail to see the relevance of the actual names.

Ms. Harpauer: — Could the minister please answer the question, which was what process or how much effort was put into putting three employees — hog barn employees — on the committee when only one of the three is an actual hog barn employee?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — What we were looking for when we were setting up this committee, and I will assure the member opposite that a great deal of effort went into this, besides the consultations that the consultant had done with employees and employers in the first round, the second round we were looking for people who had an understanding of labour standards, its implications on the industry, plus had an understanding of the hog industry within the province.

And when you start talking to individual employees many are unwilling to come forward and offer suggestions and put themselves in the limelight so to speak. So it was a difficult process that took a little while.

Ms. Harpauer: — What knowledge of the hog industry does Brian Barnes have?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Brian Barnes operates a farm and his daughter has worked in the industry. He is also very familiar with the area of hog operations.

Ms. Harpauer: — Can this minister give us the dates of the consultation meetings that were held with Sask Pork which is representative of the . . . (inaudible) . . . industry?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Can I get some clarification, are you

looking for the number of times that I met with Sask Pork or that the committee or the consultant met with Sask Pork?

Ms. Harpauer: — I'm looking for the dates and the number of times that the consultation committee met with Sask Pork since the consultation process began.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I'm still not totally clear what you want. The consultant met with a variety of individuals, over 80 individuals, during the first part of the year. This included producers that belonged to Sask Pork and Sask Pork itself. And I don't have definite dates on all those meetings in one page here, so I can get the information to you though.

I met with Sask Pork on a number of occasions. Also, the meetings on April 25 and May 1 included representatives from Sask Pork.

Ms. Harpauer: — The industry, the investors and the producers in the industry, have been quite shocked by the lack of consultation process. We've looked at every other NDP initiative where there is a consultation process taken and it seems far more lengthy, far more extensive, far more thorough.

We need to look no farther than the ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) committee that you know did a study; the ethanol industry which you know took — what? — almost two years from the time of announcement to study it. And yet this consultation process has been pushed through in a few very short months. It's been viewed as being inadequately done.

The Agriculture minister had said actually the ACRE committee has put together a subcommittee to study the effects of The Labour Standards Act and other labour laws in our province on different sectors in agriculture and in rural Saskatchewan. The Agriculture minister had implied that nothing would be done until that report was completed.

This piece of legislation is being pushed forward without the report being completed. And quite frankly this is being viewed as the thin edge of the wedge in agriculture in our province, in an industry that has been identified time and time again, needs to have massive investment dollars brought into that industry. And there doesn't seem to be any thought as to the repercussions of this.

It seems so very simple when you word it that this isn't changing anything. But it does change the perception. And I've worked very hard on the Agriculture Committee that just held a number of hearings on changing The Farm Land Security Act, and we heard time and time again perhaps the Act wasn't such an inhibitor to the province, but the perception was — it was huge.

And that's our fear for this Act as well, that the perception of what it's going to do is huge. And if it deters investment dollars, the province as a whole is going to pay the price for this. So therefore I have no more questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I'd like to thank the member opposite for her concerns. And I know the issue of perception is a big one,

and it's something that we deal with in many areas. And I believe — when I have talked to any of the media and any of the producers — I believe that having consistent standards, encouraging young people to stay and work in rural Saskatchewan, that the hog industry has great potential for the province of Saskatchewan as a whole, not just rural Saskatchewan. I believe inclusion under labour standards will give consistent standards that will be a plus for the industry.

I would like to thank the member opposite for her questions and thank the officials for being here today.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill on division.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 69 — The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 69 now be 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. 3 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3 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. 53 — The Department of Economic Development Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill No. 53 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. 48 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48 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. 77 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2002 (No. 2)/Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard

Hon. Mr. Osika: — 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. 74 — The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 74 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. 72 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill No. 72 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. 70 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill No. 70 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.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — I wish everyone a pleasant weekend and the House will reconvene on Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 13:53.