

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous and deplorable condition of Highway 42. And the prayer reads:

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Tugaske and Elbow.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens who have grave concerns over the condition of Highway 47 South. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

And this is signed by residents of Estevan as well as the rural area surrounding Estevan, Mr. Speaker.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition of citizens who are concerned about second year premium hikes in crop insurance. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Spiritwood and Rabbit Lake.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make

the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury and loss of life, to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by many citizens from Tugaske, Eyebrow, Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise again today to present a petition from citizens concerned about the huge Saskatchewan Crop Insurance premium rates. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

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

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are very, very upset with the government's handling of our crop insurance. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Spiritwood and Duck Lake.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 12, 13, 18, 21, and no. 27.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, five students sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, that are visiting from Moose Jaw. Jasper Wills, Ken Hales, Brad Dodd, Danielle Trumbley, and Jason Trudel are here from Phoenix Academy in Moose Jaw. And accompanying the students are Laurie Crittenden and Jeff Lynnes.

Now the member from Regina Elphinstone would also like me

to pass along a special welcome to Jeff. They are friends from way back, he tells me.

So I'd like members in the House to please welcome the students and their teachers this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this legislature, a guest from the legislature of Manitoba, the Hon. Scott Smith, Minister of Transportation and Government Services and outstanding member of the outstanding NDP (New Democratic Party) Government of Manitoba.

I would ask all to join me in welcoming him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

86th Anniversary of Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, April 9, is the 86th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. It is also the day that Canadians across the country will be asked to remember as Vimy Ridge Day, following the passage of a federal private member's Bill in the Senate last week.

Mr. Speaker, on April 9, 1917, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Julian Byng and General Sir Arthur Currie, Canadian corps attacked German defences at Vimy Ridge, a German stronghold. In three days the Canadians overtook a key strategic defensive position that neither the British nor the French had been able to capture in three years.

It was the first Allied victory of World War I and it was also a major turning point for Canada. The fearless fighting of our troops earned our country a signature on the peace treaty and gave Canada a right to sit as an independent country at the League of Nations. In many ways, Mr. Speaker, that's why Vimy Ridge is often referred to as when Canada truly became a nation.

Mr. Speaker, what a terrible price was paid. We lost 10,000 Canadian soldiers . . . or 10,000 were wounded and nearly 4,000 had died. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of visiting Vimy Ridge. And the trenches are well preserved and the memorial is a proud testament to the bravery and loyalty of the thousands of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, to all those World War I veterans who fought so bravely for Canada's freedom, and so that we may ensure that those that come after us will never forget what price that freedom will cost, I ask all members of the House to join with me in honouring today, April 9, as the first official Vimy Ridge Day in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, today marks the 86th anniversary of an episode in our history that was both terrible and crucial. Mr. Speaker, 86 years ago today, during the course of the First

World War, Canadian soldiers began an attack that would see them accomplish what neither the French nor the British had been able to accomplish in the years before, and that was to capture a long, low, heavily fortified rise in France known as Vimy Ridge.

As with every battle in every war, we need to remember that the victory at Vimy Ridge was achieved at a terrible cost on both sides. Over the six days of fighting, Canadian troops suffered over 10,000 casualties of whom 3,600 were killed.

Mr. Speaker, the cost was high but for many the Battle of Vimy Ridge, fought and won by Canadians, marks a significant milestone in Canada's coming of age as a nation. It is sad, Mr. Speaker, that this milestone had to be such a bloody one. But there's no denying that the battle and the victory at Vimy Ridge was one of the defining moments in the history of this country.

Mr. Speaker, today there will be ceremonies across the country to pay tribute to soldiers who fought at Vimy Ridge. And, Mr. Speaker, this year will be especially poignant since Mr. Charles Reaper, the last surviving Canadian veteran of that battle, passed away last month at the age of 103.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, my grandfather's first battle was Vimy Ridge. Seventeen years later on that very day, my father was born. And, interestingly enough, so was . . . the grandfather of the member for Regina Coronation Park also fought at Vimy Ridge. So I'm especially proud to stand in this Assembly to honour those who fought and died there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cut Knife Bowlers Advance to National Masters Tournament

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have master bowlers from Cut Knife and Battlefords constituency advancing to nationals. The final two tournaments of the Masters bowling were held in Saskatoon on last weekend. The first two tournaments were held in November in Regina. The scores were taken from the best of the . . . three out of the four tournaments. There are two sides to the . . . of this bowling — a scratch, a tournament side, and a pin over average teaching side as well. A teaching women's team and a teaching men's team will be representing Saskatchewan at the National Masters bowling tournament in Ottawa in the end of June.

Mark Alexander and Lyle Ramsay from Cut Knife will be bowling in the men's teaching team. Len Anseth from Cut Knife will be bowling in the men's tournament division and Tracy Anseth from Cut Knife will be bowling in the ladies' division.

Please join me in wishing these bowlers good luck in the nationals in Ottawa in June.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Casino Moose Jaw Wins Award of Excellence

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr.

Speaker, here's a quiz for you. What city is the fastest growing tourist destination in Saskatchewan? Time's up, and I'm sure you had the answer on the tip of your tongue. It's Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker — the city of tunnels, the city of downtown murals, the city of the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa, the city with excellent shops, museums, and restaurants. Mr. Speaker, that was a giveaway question if there ever was one.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw North and I are proud to tell the Assembly that not only do we have a new tourist attraction; this attraction was named rookie of the year by Sask Tourism. At the recent Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence gala, the Moose Jaw casino was given this award, presented to, and I quote:

Saskatchewan tourism business, event or association that opened in the previous year and had an immediate impact on tourism activity.

Now how is this for immediate, Mr. Speaker? On opening day, Casino Moose Jaw attracted more than 3,000 visitors. Since then it's averaged 1,000 visitors a day. The casino offers gaming, entertainment, and it's very pleasing to the eye — keeping with our Moose Jaw theme — with 18 murals inside and two large exterior murals. It's connected to the mineral spa by a pedway.

This is an important part of our Moose Jaw downtown redevelopment and, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to pass along our congratulations to Casino Moose Jaw.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian University Curling Championship

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to talk about the continuing achievements of the Jolene McIvor rink from Davidson. The McIvor rink captured their second straight national University Curling Championship on behalf of the University of Saskatchewan.

The Asham Canadian University Curling Championship was held at the Caledonian Curling Club in Regina on March 26 to 30, 2003. If you remember last year I had the privilege of talking about the achievements of the McIvor rink in 2002 Canadian junior championships.

Well this year's foursome, including Jolene McIvor, Maegan Strueby, Allison Gerhardt, and Amanda Nahnybida, and coach René McIvor, went undefeated in the round robin, boasting a perfect six win, no loss record. They advanced to the final against a rink from the University of Western Ontario where they captured the title after a hard-fought, 10th end win.

The goal of the Canadian University Curling Championship is to have curling recognized as a Canadian interuniversity sport. When we look at the success of our Saskatchewan teams that all levels have achieved, people of Saskatchewan can be very proud of their remarkable efforts in 2003.

Jolene, daughter of Perry and Ronna McIvor from Davidson, is currently a fourth year student, majoring in sport and leisure management.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating the McIvor rink in their 2003 Canadian University Championship.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Signs of Spring

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, you will remember that the once and future member for Indian Head-Milestone, Mr. Scott, would encourage us at this time of the year with his announcement of the signs of approaching spring — the crocuses on the hillside, bluebirds building their nests, and so on. I miss those statements. In some small way though, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can fill the void.

Now bluebirds I don't know much about. Cranes on the other hand I am getting pretty familiar with because in and around my constituency of Regina Victoria, including the University of Regina, there are cranes all over the place, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — My colleagues around that university in Saskatoon tell me pretty much the same thing. Presently there are two cranes nesting around the new \$35 million twin tower student residence. There was a crane helping construct the now completed \$30 million SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) Building. Perhaps there will soon be a crane at the \$31 million Physical Activity Centre. Down on Broadway Avenue by the way, Mr. Speaker, you'll see another crane hovering over a new high-rise.

At the Saskatoon campus the cranes are around the \$173 million synchrotron; there's a \$13 million chemical engineering building extension, and the \$33 million College of Kinesiology has room for a crane to put its legs down.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, these are Saskatchewan signs of spring, signs of hope and activity, signs that in Saskatchewan the future is wide open for all of us, cranes included.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Progress of War in Iraq

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, historic pictures are being shown on television today from Iraq and from the capital of Iraq — Baghdad. The scenes show Iraqis pouring into the streets, rejoicing, celebrating, and beginning to feel the breath of fresh air that is freedom after living so many years under the murderous dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. An amazing episode was played out in Baghdad as Iraqis came to a town square and brought down a huge statue of Saddam Hussein. Iraqis then dragged the statue's head through the streets and pounded it with shoes.

Mr. Speaker, this conflict continues. Many have lost their lives in the efforts to free Iraq from Saddam Hussein's regime, and there are still many dangerous challenges ahead. It's my hope,

and I'm sure it's the hope of all my colleagues, that this war comes to a swift resolution and that our prayers and thoughts are with those who have lost a son or a daughter, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, and for all the children in this war.

We also pray that all of the troops return home safely to their concerned family and friends. Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that the freedoms Iraqis are now celebrating in Baghdad continue now and forever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mega Bingo

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, a couple of months ago the Premier held a news conference to fess up about SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), and he announced that his government would embark on a new era of ministerial responsibility and accountability. Well that era ended yesterday when the minister of Liquor and Gaming refused to answer the question, who was responsible for the NDP decision to lose \$6.2 million on bingo.

We know that the NDP's bingo scheme had no business plan. We know that it had no specific cabinet approval.

So what we need to know is, was it approved by the minister? Mr. Speaker, did the minister of Liquor and Gaming at the time approve the decision to risk \$6.2 million on bingo?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry that I haven't made myself clear to members of the opposition. There are members of the public that do understand how government works. Obviously that member doesn't and he never will know how government works on this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Cabinet approved a linked bingo game as part of a larger gaming strategy. And the various ministers responsible for SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) over the period of time during which linked bingo was approved, developed, implemented, and operated would have monitored SLGA's work. This monitoring, Mr. Speaker, occurred through regular meetings and briefings as well as updates provided to the SLGA's board which consists of the minister responsible and another cabinet minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we know that that minister is three monkeys in one — hear no evil, speak no evil, and see no evil. That's why I'm asking my questions to the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Now the Premier has tried to blow this off like it's no big deal. He said it's not important because it happened six years ago.

Well first of all, it happened three years ago. Secondly, the NDP lost \$6.2 million of taxpayers' money. And thirdly, we just found out about it.

Mr. Speaker, it only came out into the open when the Saskatchewan Party began to ask questions, just like SPUDCO. Mr. Speaker, isn't that the way with the NDP? They lose millions of dollars, nobody takes responsibility, they try to cover it up.

Mr. Speaker, we're just asking who was responsible for this decision. Did the minister of Liquor and Gaming at the time approve this expenditure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm certain that it will now be quite evident to everyone why the nominated candidate for the Sask Party in Melville says there's a lot of inexperience on that side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — The minister responsible for SLGA, Mr. Speaker, did not approve an upfront expenditure for this program because initially there was no net budget impact that was projected, Mr. Speaker. SLGA management would have authorized related development and implementation costs as a course of doing business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what does it say when the minister has been a minister for two years, has some experience, and can't answer the questions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, you could understand why we don't always believe the answers that were given by this government. It took them six years to confess and come clean on the SPUDCO affair. And even then the minister responsible didn't get fired. He still sits in cabinet.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we find out the NDP lost another \$6.2 million on bingo. They didn't have a business plan; they didn't have proper cabinet approval. The contract went to a firm with strong ties to the NDP. The minister won't tell us who made the decision, but we're supposed to just trust them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, nobody trusts this NDP government. Why won't they answer this one simple question — who approved the mega bingo scheme? Was it the minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, cabinet approved the implementation of this project. There was no net budget impact at the time that the minister allowed this to go ahead. I mean, there was no need to.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, they're questioning the process. Well I would like to table this advertisement by Western Canada

Lottery Corporation that had asked for tenders to become involved as agents on behalf of SLGA, Mr. Speaker. An RFP (request for proposal) ad was published in all newspapers in 1997 and was open to all bidders, whether they had existing software system or proposed to develop the software system under the RFP specifications.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition once again questioning the integrity of the Western Canada Lottery Foundation. Shame on you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, over a month ago officials of Liquor and Gaming promised to get information about the tendering process. I understand that the minister has tabled something today. Could the minister please explain what it is he has tabled?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well the tendering process, Mr. Speaker, in this case, was that the Western Canada Lottery Corporation — I'll try and speak slowly, all right — as SLGA's agent issued a request for proposal for software development. An RFP ad was published — one that I just tabled, Mr. Speaker — in newspapers in 1997 and was open to all bidders.

Western Canada Lottery Corporation received and evaluated the proposals as WCLC, the very corporation that the opposition is questioning the integrity of. WCLC presented SLGA with its evaluations, Mr. Speaker, of the proposals, which identified two potential suppliers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, we're not questioning Western Canada Lotteries. We're questioning this NDP government. We're questioning about a government that lost \$6 million, without a business plan and without cabinet approval. We're questioning a government that awarded \$1.2 million bingo contract to a company with strong NDP ties, and we want to ensure that the contract was tendered and that it was tendered fairly. And so far the minister has given us nothing to prove this.

Mr. Speaker, how were other Saskatchewan firms invited to bid on this contract? And will the minister please table any advertising inviting bidding . . . bids for this firm.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I hope I'm speaking the language of the House, but I will repeat it. The Western Canada Lottery Corporation, as SLGA's agent, issued a request for proposal. I tabled a copy of that document and it's available for all the members to look at.

The ad was published. There were a number of people that responded to WCLC, Mr. Speaker. WCLC made recommendations to SLGA. SLGA authorized WCLC to accept the lower cost proposal. And in this case it happened to be a Saskatchewan company, Mr. Speaker. Seems simple to me.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this is the same NDP government that lost \$28 million on SPUDCO and covered it up for six years. You can forgive us for being a little suspicious when they ask us to trust them.

Mr. Speaker, how many firms were invited to bid on this contract and did SLGA send out letters? Did they send out letters to other qualified Saskatchewan firms inviting them to bid? And if so, will the minister table those letters.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I guess newspapers, I understand, are distributed to the wide population. Those proposals, those requests for tenders were advertised in those newspapers. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how else to explain that. Everybody was invited to participate in that tendering process, and those that did were reviewed.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back to what these members opposite are trying to accuse this government of and SLGA of. The SLGA board, Mr. Speaker, and therefore the minister of the day, did approve a linked bingo budget expenditure for SLGA at the point when the linked bingo game was not succeeding and the SLGA budget impact was identified. This occurred through the board's approval — the board's approval — of SLGA's 2001-2002 budget submission for government's overall budget process. The minister responsible for SLGA at that time prudently recommended and cancelled the game.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated that the tendering process was handled for SLGA on their behalf by Western Canada Lottery Corporation. Could the minister please table any correspondence between Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming and Western Canada Lotteries outlining the terms of reference that they had to follow?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, Western Canada Lottery Corporation, as SLGA's agent, issued a request for proposals for software development.

And just in case they are not aware who the Western Canada Lottery Corporation is, Mr. Speaker, they take care of all our electronic gaming in this province, besides being responsible for 6/49s and the gaming industry in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker.

So why would you not go to someone who has the technical knowledge, who have . . . who were in fact involved in Alberta because they already had the linked bingo there, and who would you go to if not to technical people that knew what to do when you were going after this kind of a project? I don't understand the line of questioning, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this minister gets up in the House and somehow insinuates that I don't understand the answers to the question, and that he is tabling the tender.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — This is not a tender; this is an ad. It is not a tender.

The Speaker: — Order, please. The member may proceed.

Ms. Bakken: — It is an RFP; it is not a tender process. Would the minister like to table the correspondence between Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming and Western Canada Lotteries asking them to conduct this tender and what the terms of reference were?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, this had nothing to do with dollars. It was a request for a proposal from people that had some technical knowledge with respect to implementing the type of electronic gaming that we wanted to implement in this province.

The request for proposals were submitted from people that knew what they were talking about when they were developing software and what would be required for hardware and implementing that type of an electronic gaming in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Because this awarding of this contract has raised many questions in this legislature and in the minds of the people of Saskatchewan, will the minister do the right thing and table the correspondence between Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming and Western Canada corporation outlining the terms of agreement and who received the contract and why they received it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SLGA communicated its specifications for a linked bingo game to its agent, the Western Canada Lottery Corporation. Western Canada Lottery Corporation took SLGA's specifications and developed and issued a request for proposal for the initiative. That was the advertisement, Mr. Speaker. And there were responses to that and, based on the responses, Western Canada Lottery Corporation analyzed the proposals that were received and made recommendations to SLGA.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated that there were specifications around this tendering process. Will the minister please table the tendering process which includes the specifications that they gave to Western Canada Lottery in order to decide . . . that Western Canada Lottery could then decide on their behalf who was awarded the contract?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the Western Canada Lottery Corporation supplies our electronic gaming system to this

province. They know what's required for electronic gaming and how to link up various locations. That's why we went to those people, because they knew what technical requirements are needed and they submitted . . . they requested request for proposals based on the type of project that this province was venturing on.

Now an RFP that was published, that I tabled here, Mr. Speaker, was open to all bidders, whether they had existing software system or proposed to develop a software system. The Western Canada Lottery Corporation received and evaluated those proposals. They suggested . . . recommended those people that could carry out that particular requirement for this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this mega bingo . . . bingo project, mega bingo project — it is mega bingo — and it was initiated by this government. It was not initiated by Western Canada Lottery Corporation. Yet the minister stands in this House and says that Western Canada Lottery Corporation should know — just automatically know out of the blue sky — what the specifications of the bid should be.

Mr. Speaker, again I ask, will the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming table the recommendations that they gave to Western Canada Lottery in order for them to decide who should get the tender?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, linked bingo was an SLGA initiative. I think we've confirmed that. We've confirmed that cabinet approved proceeding in that direction — I believe we've confirmed that. SL . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. I'm finding it a little more and more difficult here to be able to hear the response. I invite the minister to continue.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, SLGA communicated its specifications for linked bingo to its agents, WCLC. They took SLGA's specifications and developed . . . they developed and issued an RFP for the initiative. Wascana Gaming did not have any role in developing the specs of the RFP. It was not . . . It was WCLC.

Now I hope that explains how the request for proposal is carried out, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition or that member could tell us how the nomination process works.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker. Wascana Gaming seems . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Wascana Gaming seems to have two major claims to fame. One is mega bingo and the other is providing voter ID (identification) software for NDP election campaigns.

Wascana Gaming got a \$1.2 million contract for a mega bingo scheme — without a business plan, without cabinet approval — and wound up losing \$6.2 million.

We would like the minister to answer exactly how was this contract awarded. So far the minister has given us no answers. Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister table the documents outlining the tendering process for mega bingo?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, try that again, Mr. Speaker. Just in case they didn't notice, the request for proposal issued by the Western Canada Lottery Corporation, Mr. Speaker, is dated *Leader-Post*, Regina, November 1997. I don't know what can be clearer, unless they are in fact questioning the integrity of the very people that were asked to act as agents on behalf of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

So it was not the authority in fact that was asking for proposals; it was the people that know what electronic gaming is all about, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how much fairer you could be in asking all bidders to submit in response to this request for proposal, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to want to answer how the \$1.2 million contract was awarded as part of the mega bingo, so I'll move on to the other part of the contract — the \$5 million hardware contract for mega bingo. Would the minister answer to the House how it was tendered?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the initial cost . . . The whole project was looked at as providing additional revenues to our bingo industry and to the charities that relied on the bingo industry. The total cost was \$6.2 million, Mr. Speaker. It involved the request for proposals for software, it included hardware, Mr. Speaker, and it included all the lines and the link-ups throughout the province, Mr. Speaker.

Nobody's trying to hide anything. The member has access to all the public accounts and the Crown corporations' accounts, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what . . . They still continue to question the process we used. I don't know how to explain any further how you get people to tender on projects that know what they're talking about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I ask the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: who received the \$5 million contract for the hardware system for mega bingo and how was it tendered?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, in 1997 this strategy was approved by cabinet, Mr. Speaker. This linked bingo was initially projected to be cost neutral to government. The game

was expected to pay for itself but when it became clear the game was not attracting new players overall, therefore, the costs needed to be covered. And the costs were incorporated into the SLGA budget, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say again, the cost of \$6 million is regrettable. No question. Any loss of public funds is regrettable. However SLGA is successfully managing gaming activity and regulation in a manner that contributes over \$300 million to all our needs in this province, including highways and health and education, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely incredible. It is absolutely not justifiable that the minister stands in this House and says to the people of Saskatchewan, well we're sorry that we lost \$5 million but we don't even know where the \$5 million went for the hardware.

I asked the minister twice: who received the contract for the \$5 million hardware that was put in for mega bingo and will he table the tendering contract?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the implementation of linked bingo was a costly exercise that involved software, hardware, and reliance upon probably a Crown corporation that does a great deal of good to this great province of ours, and that's to SaskTel.

And all these include costs of labour, Mr. Speaker, the hookups for lines. It was a very noble project to respond to the needs of our charities, Mr. Speaker — the needs of our charities that so desperately need what help they can get — and as part of the overall gaming strategy of this coalition government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, instead of answers today we have got more questions in the minds of the people in this legislature and across this province where \$6.2 million went; how it was awarded to those people. And the question in everyone's mind is what was this government doing to protect the charities in this province? They stand up in this House and say, we did this to protect charities, when in fact it cost them \$6.2 million. It is disgusting and it is a disgrace.

Will the minister stand in his place today and explain to the people of this province how his department justified the spending and who gave approval for it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, it was in response to people that relied on the gaming industry, Mr. Speaker, that prompted members on this side to look at how revenues for charities could be further raised.

You know, Mr. Speaker, these are things that concern me a little bit about people who believe that they're waiting to be in government. And I want to quote from my hometown paper, the

Melville *Advance*, Mr. Speaker, a comment from the wife of a candidate for that party. And this is what . . . And I quote, Mr. Speaker:

I will not be running because the SaskParty leader has personally attacked my family and slandered my husband. Elwin Hermanson has allowed the bullies in the SaskParty to overturn a fair and democratic election.

As a moderate conservative and member of CUPE I doubt that the SaskParty . . . brokers would allow me to win another fair nomination . . . (Mr. Speaker). One woman alone cannot force the Sask Party caucus to respect democracy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. Order, please. I would ask the members to come to order. Order. The members will come to order.

(14:15)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 15 — The Saskatchewan Insurance Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, The Saskatchewan Insurance Amendment Act, 2003 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 16 — The Coroners Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, The Coroners Amendment Act, 2003 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 17 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2003 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

The Speaker: — Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 54 and hope the members understand it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Response to question 54 has been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before presenting my remarks related directly to the second reading of the Bill before us, I would ask leave of the House in order to make introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to introduce to members of the Assembly some people who have come specifically because of their interest in the Act that is before us and who also take a very strong personal interest in child welfare within our province.

And I think all are located in the west gallery. I'll just ask them to identify themselves as I introduce them, Mr. Speaker. Representing the Yorkton Tribal Council from Keeseekoose First Nation, Chief Phil Quewezance and his wife Cheryl Quewezance.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Representing the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association, Mr. Kim Paproski.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Representing Métis Nation Community and Family Justice, Ms. Bonnie Start and Lynn LaRose.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And representing the Saskatchewan Youth in Care Network, Darlene Domshy, and representing the Regina section of Youth in Care Network, Nathan Payne.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2003 (continued)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the welcome that the members of the Assembly showed to these people of Saskatchewan who take great interest in this Act, and I'm very

pleased to rise to make remarks regarding the second reading of The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that every child in this great province has the right to grow up in a family where they're loved and nurtured, and where they can enjoy a sense of belonging and permanence. We believe that every child has the right to be protected from any form of abuse or neglect.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we know all too well that not all children grow up in safe and stable homes. Sometimes families go through periods of distress during which they may require help to safely care for their children. And we also know that in order to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth, we must sometimes remove them from their homes and parents. This is a truly unfortunate situation for everyone involved, but it is particularly distressing to children who, through no fault of their own, suddenly find themselves living in an unfamiliar environment surrounded by people who are strangers to them.

Clearly there are families who, for a variety of reasons, find it difficult to properly care for their children. We firmly believe that when this happens, Mr. Speaker, the needs of those children and families should not be met through the greatest extent possible outside of the child welfare system . . . or let me change that . . . that they should be met — let me correct that — that they should be met to the greatest extent possible outside of the child welfare system.

This belief and the desire to avoid, whenever possible, having children become formally involved in the child welfare system, were significant factors in our decision to redesign our child welfare system.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that government is simply not a good long-term parent. While we can provide for a child's basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, we cannot guarantee that we can meet the equally important but less tangible need for security, a sense of belonging, cultural identity, and continuity. Mr. Speaker, simply put, we cannot provide a child with roots, and these latter needs are critical factors in any healthy child's development.

We believe family is the primary influence in the growth and development of children, and that a child's needs are best met by family. However, when the child's parent or parents are, for a short time — or in some cases over the long term — not able or willing to meet these needs, then we must find other resources.

We strongly believe, Mr. Speaker, that we need to look to extended family and kinship networks to see whether they might be the resource we're looking for and, more importantly, whether kinship care is the resource that best meets the needs of the child. The government's role then becomes one of supporting the extended family who has taken on the parenting responsibility, and providing that support in the least intrusive way possible.

And before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment to clarify just what we mean by the term, kinship care. Kinship care supports the involvement of not only a child's parents, but a broad range of family members when planning for the child is being undertaken. This broader range of people could include

grandparents, aunts or uncles, a grown sibling, or any family member who has an interest in the safety and well-being of a particular child. In some cases it might include a person who is not a family member, but who is nevertheless someone who has developed a caring and positive relationship with a child — someone who is important to that child.

Kinship care also supports the placement of a child with a family member or other person who has an interest in the welfare of the child when, for the child's safety and well-being, he or she must be removed from the home.

Leading experts describe kinship care as the care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, step-parents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child. This definition is designed to be inclusive, and respectful of ties of affection and cultural values. It allows a child to grow to adulthood in a family with which he or she has a close connection. Put simply, kinship care is a safe haven with someone who cares about what happens to a child, not just today, but throughout the child's life.

During the extensive consultation process which preceded the introduction of our child welfare redesign, our partners, community representatives, and other stakeholders were very much supportive of the direction we were going with respect to kinship care. As a result, kinship care is the major component of my department's child welfare redesign.

The Child and Family Services Act as it currently exists contains many of the essential elements and principles to support a kinship care approach. The children's services model introduced last year strongly supports the introduction of kinship care as a placement priority. The model clearly articulates government's role as parent and profiles the responsibility of the minister to children in care.

Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing amendments to The Child and Family Services Act which go one step further. These amendments support the implementation of kinship care as a broad and comprehensive approach to providing for the care of children whose safety and well-being are at risk in their family home.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, these amendments provide my staff with a clear alternative to taking children into the care of the minister. These amendments will serve to ensure that when it is determined that a child is in need of protection, not only parents but family members with an interest in the child or others important to the child will have the opportunity to participate in the planning for that child.

And they will establish a clear direction of priorities in court orders by making preservation of family the first priority, wherever this is reasonably possible and where doing so does not place the child at risk; and making kinship care the option of choice in situations where risks to the child's safety and well-being dictate that he or she must be removed from the home; and then making state care of the child the option of last resort.

These amendments will also add an interpretation of the word custody, which clearly establishes that children in kinship care

arrangements are in the custody of the kinship caregiver and are not wards of the government.

The amendments will provide caregivers with the assurance that they have the freedom and the ability to make the day-to-day decisions and take the actions necessary to safely care for that child. As a result, Mr. Speaker, children in kinship care will enjoy a greater sense of security and belonging, I believe.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we must and will ensure that in each case the kinship placement is appropriate and does not in any way jeopardize the child's safety or well-being. To ensure the best interests of the child are protected, we have included a provision which requires that a home study must be filed with the court. The home study will outline the safety and adequacy of the caregiver's home.

The amendments I'm introducing today will reduce the need for permanent and long-term wardship orders and will provide children and families with a broader range of options for ensuring that children have permanent and stable families.

Mr. Speaker, taking a child or children into your home, whether for a short period of time or over the long term, can bring with it a variety of challenges. Children who have been abused or neglected have special needs as a result of that abuse or neglect. Families who care for these children, including extended families, have unique responsibilities and face problems and issues which can test even the most experienced parent. And no one would argue that it doesn't place a burden on a family's financial resources.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members of the House that we will not simply place children with an extended family member or others with a significant interest in a child and then abandon them to struggle with figuring out how they will care for and support the child or children.

As I stated a moment ago, the policy direction for these amendments already exists. Staff in my department are in the process of drafting comprehensive program standards and procedures to accompany these legislative amendments. We will include a broad range of views, particularly those of First Nations, as this work proceeds.

The financial and other supports that are required by caregivers who take a child or children of a relative into their home will be determined and the supports that are currently available will not be reduced. Staff from my department and from First Nations child and family service agencies will provide ongoing support and assistance as needed and requested to children and families involved in kinship placements.

Because we believe it is absolutely essential that those involved in developing kinship care resources and working to ensure that kinship placements work successfully in the best interest of the child, Mr. Speaker, we will be providing comprehensive training for staff. This includes staff working in the child protection program as well as those from First Nations child and family service agencies.

Personnel from Saskatchewan Justice and other counsel who represent my department in family court will also receive

training prior to the implementation of the amendments. In addition to the provisions I've identified, Mr. Speaker, the Act that I am introducing today contains several amendments which are of an administrative nature.

Well, Mr. Speaker, prior to drafting these amendments we engaged in numerous discussions and consultations with groups and agencies with an interest in the well-being of our province's children. The Children's Advocate, FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Foster Family Association have all indicated that they support the direction we are going with respect to kinship care.

Mr. Speaker, we believe there is no better or worthwhile investment than an investment in our children. One of the ways that we can make that investment for some children is to ensure that they grow up feeling connected to their family and their culture, that they grow up in a loving, supportive environment, in an environment where they feel they belong and where they can put down roots.

(14:30)

We further believe that the amendments to The Child and Family Services Act, which I am introducing today, will allow us to make that investment in some of our province's most vulnerable children.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to move second reading of The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2003.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise on this particular Bill as indeed, Mr. Speaker, children are our most precious resource. And, Mr. Speaker, that resource — those children — are best kept with their families. Family is the best unit suited, Mr. Speaker, in raising our children to be the people and the citizens of this province that we all wish them to be.

And, Mr. Speaker, a number of times I've accused this government of spending its time looking in its rear-view mirror. Well, Mr. Speaker, in looking in their rear-view mirror on this particular issue, they finally found a good issue, Mr. Speaker; one that is truly of value to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this move to provide kinship care within community services, Mr. Speaker, is returning to the old values that people held in this province, where the family and the extended family cared and provided for the best interest, Mr. Speaker, of the children of this province.

And I was very glad to see the minister say that the state made a very poor parent, and I agree wholeheartedly with the minister in that sense. For 30 years, Mr. Speaker, not just here in Saskatchewan but across the developed world, we have tried to make the state the parent, Mr. Speaker, for children that were in need and take the family out of that equation. Well, Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation brings the family back into the equation and I think that is a very positive move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues about this particular Bill, dealing with some of the questions as to its implementation, how it's going to work, Mr. Speaker, that we do need to have the minister clarify — such as he has talked about the review of the home situation, doing an evaluation. Mr. Speaker, I guess one of the questions on that issue would be what is the time frame involved in that kind of a review? You have a child in need, Mr. Speaker, how long will that review take?

The minister himself has said that the state does not make a good parent. So you need to move that child, Mr. Speaker, into the most stable and safe condition possible as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker. And so you need to ensure that that review process take the minimum time possible while still ensuring the safety of the child involved.

And we do have to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the safety of that child is of paramount importance, and that while family is important, the child is our first concern here. As soon as possible, Mr. Speaker, we need to move that child into — as the minister is calling it — kinship care, Mr. Speaker, but it's family, it's extended family; it could be friends.

You know, Mr. Speaker, more than 30 years ago — 50, 60, 100 years ago — we had a plan like that, Mr. Speaker, in place. It didn't involve the government, but it was called godparents. And parents chose someone — a family member, a neighbour, a friend in the community — if in time of need that they could not provide for their children, then the godparents had agreed to do so. So the parents were involved in that process of choosing the kin caregiver, Mr. Speaker, and I think we need to take a very serious look at having that as part of this whole process. That the parents as well be involved in it, Mr. Speaker, in helping to choose who that caregiver, since they're not able to, having them though be a part of that choice, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, that does return . . . it does keep community values in place. And it'll be very important in every community, Mr. Speaker — in the Aboriginal community and the greater community at large. There's no difference. It's all concern . . . We're all concerned with our children and we're all concerned with the family being a part of the . . . having the opportunities to raise that child, Mr. Speaker.

So while we do have some questions and concerns, overall we believe this is a positive step in the right direction. But we need to give the minister some chance to look at the review . . . excuse me, not the review but the questions that we will have. We need to give a chance to our critics, Mr. Speaker, to take a look at this legislation and make a determination on just how it's going to work, what the impacts are going to be, how the stakeholders are going to be affected, and how the children at the end of the day will be protected and given the best possible home so that they can grow up, Mr. Speaker, to be the citizens that we believe they all can be.

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

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 4 — The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the Assembly today to move second reading of Bill No. 4, an amendment to The SaskEnergy Act.

As members will know, The SaskEnergy Act is the governing legislation for SaskEnergy and its subsidiaries. It was my pleasure last year to introduce one of those subsidiaries — Saskatchewan First Call corporation.

Mr. Speaker, as members will know, Saskatchewan First Call is the first stop pipeline screening and location service developed by SaskEnergy and the Saskatchewan pipeline community. Through a toll-free number, Mr. Speaker, underground energy pipeline location and notification service is now provided to contractors planning to dig or excavate anywhere in the province.

All of these companies, including SaskEnergy, have their own pipeline location systems. However, in the past a digging company had to make a number of calls to ensure that all underground facilities were identified and clearly marked. Today, Mr. Speaker, with just a single phone call, Saskatchewan First Call issues pipeline locate notifications to all member companies.

As my esteemed colleagues will know, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan First Call was developed in response to a need expressed by the energy pipeline industry. Through this service, Mr. Speaker, we've helped make business easier and more cost effective for companies within the energy industry.

But more important than the convenience, Mr. Speaker, is public safety. That was the primary reason behind developing Saskatchewan First Call. While the initial mandate for Saskatchewan First Call was to provide service to the oil and gas pipeline industry, the success of any one-call service is its continued growth to other organizations with underground infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reason that today I am introducing the amendment to The SaskEnergy Act. The proposed amendment will allow SaskEnergy to expand the first call service outside the pipeline industry to other utilities, municipalities, and companies with underground facilities. SaskEnergy and its subsidiaries will be allowed to expand their safety services to, among other things, allow Saskatchewan First Call to operate as other one-call organizations in jurisdictions such as Alberta and British Columbia. Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendment will allow SaskEnergy and its subsidiaries to provide call screening and notification services, facility monitoring, maintenance and operating service, facility location services, training of the corporations' specialized skills.

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy and its pipeline subsidiary, TransGas, have more than 50 years expertise in this area. They maintain the largest buried pipeline system in the province. Together SaskEnergy and TransGas process more than 150,000 line locate requests annually.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment will strengthen the safety provisions already contained within The SaskEnergy Act.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, in many cases these third party organizations don't have the necessary resources to set up services such as real time facility monitoring. Under this amendment, these organizations can take advantage of SaskEnergy's existing applications, support team, and centralized operations staff.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me say that safety is a foundation for SaskEnergy and the entire pipeline community. By expanding the authority of SaskEnergy and its subsidiaries to provide these services to other third parties with underground infrastructure, we will further . . . we will be further enhancing safety for the public and digging community. I urge all hon. members to support this Bill.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 4, an amendment to The SaskEnergy Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to reply to the minister's Bill, Bill No. 4, An Act to amend The SaskEnergy Act, and it also, as the minister said, also includes The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Act and The Power Corporation Act.

On the face of it, it would make sense to have a first-call initiative take place, Mr. Speaker. It certainly would be beneficial to companies that are doing construction or digging that they have one, one place to call that would cover all the various concerns that they may have as far as telephone lines and natural gas and power lines and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker.

A number of concerns comes up of course whenever we hear about initiatives from this government concerning Crowns. There are private companies that do locating as far as lines and natural gas lines, and we're concerned that the government is just taking this step to push more private businesses out of the province and put more control and power into the hands of the Crowns and into the government.

Mr. Speaker, as we have seen since 1991 after the election of the new premier, Mr. Romanow, he gave the nod to the Crown corporations to expand its influence and investments in the province, to compete with the private sector in this province. And as we know, that has been a failure and it's been disruptive to the economy of Saskatchewan.

And it's really, in many cases, driven out private companies but also has really set up a red flag to other companies that may have been interested in investing in the province and kept that investment out of the province. As we see, over the years, there's quite a list of Crown corporation failures — anywhere from SPUDCO, Guyana, Channel Lake, the dot-coms, and other poor investments made by the Crown corporations.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen this government rely more and more on investments in . . . from the Crowns, we have seen the economy continue to be hurt, and the people of Saskatchewan has been very receptive to the Saskatchewan Party's Grow Saskatchewan plan.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, the Grow Saskatchewan plan is a

plan to grow the province by 10,000 people per year over 10 years. And the purpose of the plan is to not only have more people in the province but widen the tax base and grow the economy for the good of the Saskatchewan people.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal coalition has wanted to grow the size of government and not grow Saskatchewan. And we have seen the unfortunate results of that policy in place and the damage it's done to the productivity of this province, and to the future economic growth of this province.

Mr. Speaker, our critic for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), the member from Swift Current, will have many more questions and concerns and discussions about this. He will take this Bill to the people of Saskatchewan and ask for their input on this Bill.

Unless of course the government . . . the Premier gets the courage to call an election before that, and at that time the Saskatchewan opposition, the Saskatchewan Party will be more than happy to compare our Grow Saskatchewan plan to the plan of growing the bureaucracy and the size of government that the NDP-Liberal coalition has embarked on in the last number of years.

So this time I would like to move to adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

(14:45)

Bill No. 8 — The Youth Justice Administration Act

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Youth Justice Administration Act. This Act is necessary to enable the province to implement the new federal Youth Criminal Justice Act that replaces the former Young Offenders Act.

I want to say that we are pleased that the Young Offenders Act has been replaced. This new Youth Criminal Justice Act, or YCJA, represents a new approach to dealing with criminal behaviour in the youth population that reduces the reliance on custody for less serious offences but emphasizes holding youth more accountable for their actions. I also want to emphasize that the YCJA provides us with new tools for dealing with the most serious and violent offenders.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act introduces a number of new processes and sentences that entail changes to the current youth services practices and procedures. These are important changes that will have a lasting impact on Saskatchewan young people and communities throughout the province. The Act provides for me, as Minister of Corrections and Public Safety, to have responsibility for administering these programs under the Act.

The young offenders piece of . . . this particular young offenders piece is one of the key components of the new Department of Corrections and Public Safety that was created about a year ago. We did that as part of a government-wide restructuring that was aimed in part at providing for a more

consistent approach to dealing with criminal behaviour in the province.

With respect to the specifics of The Youth Justice Administration Act, the definition of a young person is simplified and it clarifies the age ranges for offences under provincial jurisdiction. Essentially, young people who are between the ages of 12 and 17 when they commit an offence will be classified as a young person.

Members will observe that a number of the sections in The Youth Justice Administration Act deal with establishing and increasing the authority to make the necessary regulations to administer the Act and establishes the minister's authority to set up and operate custodial . . . custody facilities.

The new federal legislation also give us new tools to deal with chronic repeat offenders and violent youth. Some of these new options include setting the age limit for presumption of adult sentences for the most serious offences, which has been lowered from 16 years of age to 14 years of age. As such, the youth justice courts are empowered to impose adult sentences in serious cases of serious, chronic, repeat, and violent offences. This provision eliminates the need for us to transfer a youth to adult court in order to receive an adult sentence.

It also provides us with the ability to use intensive rehabilitation custody and supervision orders targeted at violent youth. Less serious and first-time offenders will be held accountable through a range of community-based options that respect the needs of victims, communities, and youth.

To assist in the implementation of this Act, we are committed to supporting community infrastructure for extrajudicial sanctions and are planning to increase the provincial capacity by 10 per cent across the province. We are staffing another 15 work positions to work with the courts, community-based organizations, and to supervise youth in the community.

We believe the key to the new policies and programs is risk management and case management. This means support for victims, communities, and youth, using multidisciplinary and targeted approaches including a high-risk, violent young offender initiative which includes intensive supervision, custody, and treatment for these young people who pose significant threats to our communities.

We are also introducing an information system and a sentence management program to better communicate with the police in order to hold young offenders accountable.

In total \$3.7 million is being made available in redirected provincial and federal resources to establishing the programs that are needed.

I want to indicate, however, Mr. Speaker, that the provincial government remains concerned about the cost of this new federal legislation. When the Young Offenders Act was introduced in 1984, Canada provided 50 per cent of the costs. Today we estimate the federal share has fallen to about 17 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I want to say that very few people

were satisfied with the Young Offenders Act. This government was among the critics of that former Act.

Today the new Youth Criminal Justice Act provides us with a new approach. We believe the time has come to change the types of tools that we have to make . . . so that we can make a real difference in the lives of young offenders. To do that we need to respond and intervene more effectively before young offenders become serious, chronic, repeat offenders who present high risk to public safety.

We cannot afford the high social and other costs to all of us that come from reoffending — costs which are measured in terms of lost human potential and opportunities for all young people to become participating, productive citizens of Saskatchewan. We can help mitigate this potential loss through a targeted, get-tough approach with chronic, repeat, violent offenders and a renewed focus on alternative measures for less serious and first-time offenders. This Act, Mr. Speaker, will assist us in these efforts.

As such, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 8, The Youth Justice Administration Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to respond to the minister on Bill No. 8, the youth justice services amendment Act or an Act respecting youth justice services.

I was interested to hear him talk a little bit about the Young Offenders Act, the federal legislation and how it's changed — and how he was mentioning that it seems like nobody was very happy with that Act. And I know that's certainly one thing that I've heard over and over again. When you follow the system through and people have entered the system, the Young Offenders Act, especially youth and the Young Offenders Act, really it is a frustrating time for people that have been violated by young offenders. They can't seem to find any justice in the system. And the Young Offenders Act, now that it is being changed and giving the government more tools, is a good thing as long as those tools are used properly, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks a little bit about some of the tools and some of the changes in the definitions, definitions of a youth as far as when they can be tried or charged under adult Act, things like that which you know we would, I think for the most part, agree with.

It's interesting though that the Young Offenders Act and the whole province, I mean we've had a . . . We have a real dubious distinction in this province, and especially in the city of Regina, for car thefts. Now it certainly has been decreased significantly and you know we have to applaud the measures that have been taken and hopefully this Act will further enhance some of the programs that have been put in place because, you know, it's not a proud thing to have the distinction of being the car theft capital of North America.

And whether it's moving into other cities and other cities are having that problem, but it is . . . it certainly has been a problem. And now that the Young Offenders Act has been

changed federally, hopefully some of the tools — as the minister has talked about — will be used properly by this government to continue to reduce, for example, the chronic repeat offenders of car thefts and things like that.

It was interesting. Right near the end of his speech he mentioned about getting tough on chronic young offenders. Mr. Speaker, I remember debating that issue last year in this House with our critic of Justice talking about different ways that we needed to get tougher on young offenders. It's something that we have been saying and asking this government to do for a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

So we'll be seeing through this new piece of legislation if they really are going to be getting tougher on young offenders. We look forward to getting input on this piece of legislation, to see if it is going to impact the way the government and the minister says it will because I think there's a lot of stakeholders in this whole area that need to be contacted and input put into this new Act. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 5 — The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to outline for the Assembly the background and the main elements of these amendments to The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act.

There are two superannuation plans for teachers in Saskatchewan. All teachers who began teaching in the province since July 1980 belong to the Saskatchewan Teachers Retirement Plan, known as the STRP for short. This plan is governed through the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation which is responsible for determining the plan's terms and conditions.

The other plan is the Teachers' Superannuation Plan, sometimes known as the old plan. This plan is administered by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. Its terms and conditions are all subject to negotiation through provincial collective bargaining and are set out in detail in the statute we are dealing with today. The amendments included in the current Bill all arise from negotiations between the parties to the provincial collective bargaining agreement.

As members might recall, a new collective agreement was ratified last fall covering the period from September 1, 2002 until August 31, 2004. This new agreement incorporates provisions that require several changes in the pension legislation and also obligates the government to introduce the necessary legislative amendments at the earliest opportunity.

A number of the amendments are housekeeping in nature or are designed to simply address administrative issues that the commission had raised with the bargaining committees. There are four matters of a more substantive nature covered by the Bill and I will outline each of these individually.

First there is an amendment to the way in which pensions are

calculated for teachers who experience a period of long-term disability and who turn 65 without being able to return to teach. Under the current legislation, when these individuals turn 65 and begin to receive a pension, the amount of that pension is less than it would be if they had remained healthy and had been able to keep on teaching. It was agreed that it is unfair for these individuals to be financially disadvantaged solely on the basis of having a disability that prevented them from teaching.

Under the new provisions, the periods of disability for these teachers will be counted as contributory service, which means that their pensions will be calculated in the same way as if they had in fact kept teaching during their period of disability.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment also means that for some teachers in receipt of a disability allowance, it will be financially possible for them to retire on a regular pension instead of having to continue receiving a disability allowance until the age of 65. This ability to superannuate in the regular way, rather than having to continue on a disability allowance, can be psychologically important for some teachers.

The second main amendment deals with the purchase of periods of parenting leave for pension purposes. Under the current rules teachers in both the STRP and the Teachers' Superannuation Plan are able to purchase a total of only one year parenting leave. It has been noted that this restriction is now inconsistent with the provisions of The Labour Standards Act and it is being eliminated. For both of the pension plans, the government will provide the employer portion of the required contributions for the purchase of additional periods of leave as it currently does for the first year.

A third amendment will overcome an unintended consequence of the recent replacement of previous interprovincial reciprocal agreements with a new reciprocal agreement.

For a small number of Saskatchewan teachers who had transferred their pension service to another province under the old agreements and who now wish to return under the new agreement, the amendment will help to eliminate a potentially significant financial barrier to their doing so.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth and final major amendment to this Bill deals with the requirements for the contents of the annual report of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. The current legislation requires the annual report to include such personal details as the names of plan members who have died during the past year, the age of each member at superannuation or death, and the reason for superannuation of each member.

In consultation with the Department of Justice, the commission determined that these requirements are inconsistent with the principles of privacy in general and more specifically with the provisions of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Further, the inclusion of such personal information is not necessary for effective public reporting and accountability by the commission. The requirement for inclusion of these details in the annual report is being eliminated.

As I have indicated, Mr. Speaker, these amendments are all

required as a result of provisions that have been negotiated by the parties to the provincial collective bargaining agreement. Those negotiated changes all have the full support of both the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.

I am therefore pleased to move, Mr. Speaker, that Bill No. 5, An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act, be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this a very important piece of legislation to a large group of people in this province, namely the schoolteachers whose pensions this piece of legislation deals with, Mr. Speaker.

One of the issues that I'm sure interests the teachers to a great extent in dealing with their superannuation, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the unfunded liabilities now, which the teachers superannuation is a large, the major part of, Mr. Speaker, is at \$4 billion now. Four billion — that's billion with a B, Mr. Speaker. That's a huge amount of money, Mr. Speaker, and that has been going up every year, Mr. Speaker, the amount of unfunded pension there, since 1991.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the unfunded pension liabilities in this province in 1991 were \$2.7 billion with a B, Mr. Speaker, and now that has almost increased by 50 per cent under this government, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's one of the areas where the Teachers Superannuation Plan and Act should be dealing with, Mr. Speaker, in getting that increase in the unfunded portion and the debt, Mr. Speaker, under control and this government has failed to do so.

(15:00)

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are some issues in this plan, this piece of legislation, that the minister will need to explain when we get into the Committee of the Whole, such as what is involved in the administrative changes that are being proposed by this particular Bill? It talks about administrative changes but it really doesn't outline what they are, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure that the critic for this will want to get into that particular aspect of it, Mr. Speaker.

One of the provisions though allows for teachers to contribute to the pension plan while they're not actually teaching, Mr. Speaker, such as when they're off on maternity leave or if they are perhaps off on disability, Mr. Speaker. I guess one of the questions that I would have, since the province will continue or the school boards will continue to provide the employer's share of the contribution, will the employee also be contributing a like amount of money, Mr. Speaker? Will the employee be contributing as well as the employer, Mr. Speaker?

And I think that would only be fair. If the employer is putting their contributions in, well then the employee should be providing their share as well. Or if the employee wishes to make a partial contribution, Mr. Speaker, then the employer would do likewise, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another section of the amendments that are coming forward in this particular piece of legislation deal with teachers that have been a part of the superannuation, have transferred out to another jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, and for some reason are wishing to come back into the plan again. And I'm hoping that the minister will be able to clarify in Committee of the Whole what is the criteria, what are the avenues for that return? Is that teacher again teaching in Saskatchewan or is there some other reason why the particular teacher in question wishes to come back into the Saskatchewan teachers' superannuation? And if they do, what's the criteria for it?

I think those are some very important questions, Mr. Speaker, because as the minister pointed out that there's a serious financial cost to the teacher who wishes . . . who may wish to return. Well who bears that cost, Mr. Speaker? Why is there a costs there? What does it involve? And what are the reasons why that a teacher from another jurisdiction would be allowed to come into the Saskatchewan pension plan, the teachers' superannuation, Mr. Speaker?

So those are the kind of questions that we need to have clarified, Mr. Speaker, and some of the issues that need to be dealt with. And so, Mr. Speaker, to give the minister and my colleagues, the critics who will be involved in this, time to review the piece of legislation, see how it's going to impact the stakeholders, that being the teachers themselves, Mr. Speaker, and the government, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Community Resources and Employment Vote 36

Subvote (RE01)

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before we vote off the estimates here, I would like to introduce the officials who are here to assist me in responding to the inquiries from the critic opposite and other hon. members.

To my immediate right is deputy minister, Bonnie Durnford; seated right behind me is assistant deputy minister, Shelley Hoover; and to my immediate left, assistant deputy minister, Darrell Jones; and . . . where's Don . . . oh, to the right of the deputy minister is Don Allen, executive director, financial management. Behind the bar, Mr. Chair, are Larry Chaykowski, executive director of housing operations; Phil Walsh, executive director of income support; Marilyn Hedlund, the executive director of child and family services; Deborah Bryck the director of child care; Ken Cameron, director of children's services; Betty West, the acting executive director for community living division; and Jan Morgan, the acting director for Career and Employment Services.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I think, Mr. Chairman, the minister's just a little optimistic, expecting a

quick move through his department, the former Department of Social Services, now entitled Community Resources and Employment.

And, Mr. Minister, while there's a name change in your department, certainly there's . . . a lot of the responsibilities that the department continues to hold have . . . cause many questions to be raised in our eyes and certainly in the eyes of the public.

So for the next period of time, Mr. Chairman, and to the minister, we certainly want to indicate that we're pleased that your officials have joined you this afternoon; that we now have the opportunity, as this session begins to unfold, of actually getting into line-by-line and detailed discussion about the role and the responsibility of the Department of Community Resources and Employment. And it's taken me time to get that on my tongue. Social Services, I think, was just . . . or just was natural because it had been there for so long.

But having said that, Mr. Minister, unfortunately I'm going to have to give you a couple of bouquets today. Oh, I shouldn't say unfortunately. I think it's appropriate at times for members to — and opposition parties — to recognize when they feel the government's made some positive moves and come forward with . . . and come forward and actually begun to implement some of the ideas we've talked about over the past number of years.

And I think the minister will have to . . . would even acknowledge that yes, we have been in dialogue on a number of these issues.

The current piece of legislation that we just had in for second reading today, we've talked about that extensively, I think probably at least over the last three years; I know since the current member has been minister of this department, responsible for the department.

We've talked about the fact that . . . And as a member, as a critic, and certainly a number of my colleagues have felt strongly about this issue. Since I've been elected, I felt strongly about the issue of recognizing the importance of the family environment, the home environment, when it comes to young people in the province of Saskatchewan and especially when it comes to children.

Mr. Chairman, last night, I had the privilege of joining with a number of community leaders and teachers and parents and young people in listening to Reverend Dale Lang make a presentation in the community of Kipling. And over the next couple of days, he'll be meeting in a number of schools in the area that have invited Reverend Lang to come and speak to their students about bullying.

And when we talk about families, we talk about relationships, and the relationships we build in the home certainly show up in how we treat each other, whether it's in the schoolyard or no matter where. Whether it's on the playground or in the sports arena, these relationships that we build, first of all as parents and children and then as siblings, one to the other, are just manifested in many ways in the community around us.

And of course, we're all aware of the fact that Reverend Lang

very tragically lost their son in a shooting incident in Taber, Alberta about four years ago. And so, what was interesting in listening to Reverend Lang was just explaining the shock, first of all, that an incident of this nature could happen in their little community. Like he said, Taber, Alberta probably wouldn't be much different than Kipling, Saskatchewan — a little smaller than a community of Moose Jaw, for example.

And while we heard of these types of incidents in larger schools, mainly in the United States, we normally wouldn't think of that type of a situation or circumstance happening in our small communities and as Mr. Lang said, was the furthest thing from their minds when they were away shopping that day only to come home and hear the phone ringing as they're walking in the house and pick up the receiver and be asked to get over to the hospital immediately because their son had been shot at school. And a lot of that . . . And that arose because of a lot of pressures and pent-up anger that was building in the heart of a young person who I think even today still doesn't understand why he ended up doing what he did.

But you know, Mr. Minister, I think a lot of that can come back to the home relationship, the home environment. That young person came from a home where the parents had split and left and a lot of the anger and frustration was building in the home.

And when we talk about this current piece of legislation and we talk about abusive relations, home relationships, those abusive situations really impact a young child very seriously. And if there isn't a way of addressing that . . . And while the legislation is allowing for the department to find a kinship relationship versus just moving a child into a foster family relationship, I think, Mr. Minister . . . I believe, I firmly believe for the long period of time that we need to look at ways in which we can take advantage . . . I shouldn't use the word advantage but look at how we can build relationships with kinship members. And as the minister has indicated, it's not necessarily always a direct family member. It could be somebody who's a good, close personal friend that a child would identify with.

And I think, Mr. Minister, while we would like to see every home in our province be a home providing a loving and caring relationship, when that breaks down it's certainly pleasant to know and it's a good thing to know that there are family environments that we can work with so that child can . . . we can help build that child's character as we try to deal with that family situation.

So, Mr. Minister, while we'll get into the debate on that piece of legislation a lot more as we get into that legislation, I certainly want to compliment you and your department for having recognized that this is something that we need to move ahead on, something that the Child Advocate has in her report, a number of years ago where she . . . I think the report was entitled *Listen to Their Voices*. That is something, Mr. Minister, that we want to compliment you and we look forward to the debate as we get into that specific piece of legislation.

Mr. Minister, as well, the change of the name of your department to Community Resources and Employment from Social Services, here again, Mr. Minister, I will have to add that maybe it adds just a little different taste to how we look at the

department. I think we've talked about it in the past. My views at times, we need to start looking more at just providing care and look beyond that. There are circumstances in our province where there are individuals who are going to need care. They're going to need government supports. They just don't have all the abilities.

We see the family situations with disabilities or individuals with disabilities. But I think it's important to recognize that each and every person is a worthwhile individual and try to help build that character. And certainly many people on assistance through the years . . . There are many people that are quite capable and if given the right opportunities could certainly be employed and drawing on their own resources to provide for their personal care and for the care of their family.

(15:15)

So Mr. Minister, I guess before I would go any further, I'll just give you an opportunity to explain why you have decided at this time to change the name of your department from Social Services to Community Resources and Employment without me trying to put a lot of words in your mouth. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate the comments of the hon. member and the opportunity to draw some comment about the changing of the name of the department.

Before doing that, I do want to say as well that I appreciate the comments of the hon. member in regards to the kinship care Bill introduced earlier today and which he didn't have an opportunity to respond to, and I look forward to his comments on the record some time soon. But I do appreciate that this is not the forum for debate of that Bill, as the hon. member said, and that I was gratified, at the conclusion of the second reading of that Bill, that there was strong applause on both sides of the House.

Surely when we're dealing with the well-being of children, in particular the most vulnerable children of our society, that is not an issue which divides us by ideology — and that we can find common cause and move forward in a progressive kind of way. And I think that's what that's about.

Having said that, just to come directly to the question the member raises about why Community Resources and Employment, why that name? And I think . . . Perhaps if I can summarize it, Mr. Chair, in the same way that I have when asked by a number of people in the media — why change the name; Social Services has been the name of the department for 31 years, why Community Resources and Employment? — and my answer simply put is this, that in my judgment the name is finally catching up to the department.

The department has been going through a transition for some time that has been significantly affected by the decision to introduce the Building Independence program back in 1997-98. And that then was further enhanced with the reorganization a year ago to bring housing and Career and Employment Services under the same policy umbrella of the department — and therefore, Mr. Chair, giving us the ability, under the same policy framework, to provide services which support

Saskatchewan people in achieving their greatest level of independence, of ability to sustainably shape their own futures.

The original mandate of the Department of Social Services, that's captured in many ways in the income security and the child and family services portion of the department, and that continues to be a very important core mandate of the department. Also the community living division certainly is part of the core mandate.

But what we're recognizing is that there are many facets that contribute to the ability of an individual or a family to shape their own destiny. And part of it is trying to do the best we can with the public resources that were provided by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, to take those resources and use them in the most effective possible way for Saskatchewan citizens to move forward within the context of an environment in which we're living.

And to me one of the key facets in that environment in which we're living now is that there is a tightening of the labour market that is happening in Saskatchewan, across Canada, North America, largely driven by the retirement of the baby boomers which, on the one hand from the point of view of employers, is a challenge that they refer to as recruitment and retention. For those of us who see it important to assist our citizens who live outside the mainstream or on the edge of the mainstream of employment and other active participation of citizens in their province, to be able to become active participants.

And so it's bringing together those policy pieces under the same umbrella that I have referred to and recognizing that very much this is an initiative that is based on community values. Community-based organizations are very much a part of the delivery of the services of the Department of Community Resources and Employment, and that very much it is supports for people to be able to connect in meaningful ways to mainstream employment that is essential to give them the tools to get on with moving forward and eventually, to the best of their ability, for many to remove themselves from needs for public services in order to function as successful individuals or well-functioning families.

And I think the benefits, Mr. Chair, when I look at that, are twofold. On the . . . in terms of why we are here now in budget estimates, we look at the spending of the public dollar. There is an immediate benefit that we see in many ways as building . . . of the Building Independence program being introduced. We've seen the caseloads, the social assistance caseloads continuously dropping year after year after year after year, for eight consecutive years — lowest level in over a decade. But what's more important than that in many ways, Mr. Chair, is that as a result of that kind of holistic sort of strategy and support for labour market attachment for families with children, today in Saskatchewan there are more than 13,000 fewer kids growing up on welfare than just five years ago.

And so there's not only a benefit today, but just as importantly there is a benefit in the next generation. Because surely the . . . as children grow up, the aspirations that they will have for themselves, the goals they will set themselves, the possibilities that they will envisage for themselves, will be reflected in the

world that they see around them and what they see as normal and possible.

And so the degree to which we can assist parents to move out of the poverty circumstances or even more seriously the cycle of poverty, there is a benefit not only to them directly now but to those children who grow up in homes in which there are parents who are supporting that family effectively.

And so when you look at what are the supports that any family needs in order to become self determining, what do you need? You need employment. You need a place to live. You need transportation to be able to get around to participate in your society, some of the disability stuff. You need the ability to have your children cared for in a way that you feel confident when you're participating in education to improve your lot or to participate in the world of work. And you need, if you are a person with disabilities, the supports in order to function effectively as a citizen and supports that will help to make that move to employment in ways that we've not perhaps thought all that possible before.

And so when we look at the budget today that is before us in the Department of Community Resources and Employment, in many ways the changes in that budget and our new expenditures reflect the intentions of the Department of Community Resources and Employment to be a place for Saskatchewan people to find the resources to live as self-determining and in a sustainable way as possible.

So I appreciate very much the opportunity for the hon. member to state on the record for people who take an interest in these kinds of affairs in our department to understand why we've made that change in name. Thanks.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, before we actually move on, I'll just send across a copy of some global questions that we've been sending. We've been putting them in the mail but to make sure that they . . . rather than delaying, we may as well get them sent across right now so I'll send them with one of the Pages. Thank you.

Mr. Minister, we talk about employment and employment opportunities and I'd like to know what your department is actually doing to assist people in finding employment, what resources are used, what are workers doing when they sit down with a client.

I'm told, in some cases where clients have gone into an office and talked to a worker, they've been handed a list of some job opportunities that might be available and suggested they go and contact these offices before any assistance is given out.

And in some of those cases, Mr. Minister, I think one of the problems that may arise if they don't find a job right away, one of the concerns is at least getting some assistance until that job may kick in. Well you may say here's the job; go and start working there. If the person doesn't happen to be hired on, they still left having to deal with the issue of assistance.

So what specifically does the department do when a client comes to them, and assisting them, and I guess first of all in the immediate and then down the road because I think there would

be time periods too where we're probably looking at maybe encouraging a client to further their education or upgrade their education or take some training so that they can meet some of the specific opportunities out there.

And I'm wondering if, Mr. Minister, you could kind of let us know where the department's going, what they're doing to date, and how they're addressing this need.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Chair, I'll answer the question in two parts. And I think the question is being asked in the context of people who are coming to the Department of Community Resources and Employment who are unemployed and have low financial means. I think that's the context the question's being asked.

Oh, and by the way before I forget, I appreciate the global questions and will respond directly and save the price of the stamp. We don't have any objections to being frugal in the expenditure of the public purse.

Now, first of all then, if we, if the department has contact from a citizen of Saskatchewan who is without financial means and has . . . but has employment arrangements that are pending but just not available right now, then in that case what would happen is that the citizen would receive some short-term financial support just to tide them over until they're going to work.

But the more substantial question, I think, that you ask is, then if the contact is made seeking financial assistance by someone who is employable, then what is our system that supports that person making the connection to employment?

And the first thing that would happen is that the citizen would be scheduled to attend a Jobs First orientation which would in most cases be held at the local Career and Employment Services office. In the orientation the individual would receive information about their entitlements as a citizen, but more importantly, to enable that transition to employment, would become familiar with the services provided by the Career and Employment Services office; and including in that the potential for direct referral related to the skills or experience that person may have to employment opportunities that exist in the area, which is exactly what one of the things that Career and Employment Services offices do.

It is important to me that the Jobs First program as much as possible are held at the Career and Employment Services offices because in those offices, those 20 offices around Saskatchewan, we have in my judgment one of, if not the best resource in Canada when you combine the knowledge and the support of the people who are there with the technology that's available by way of information in connecting people to employment opportunities or employers to people who are looking for work — both ways.

So it is very important to me that it be held there so that if people were not previously familiar with that as an ongoing resource all around Saskatchewan no matter where they live, that they become familiar. It is also through the contact then with the Career and Employment Services offices of Community Resources and Employment that it is possible to

link an individual person to the world of employment in a number of different kinds of ways — through the bridging program; there is a wage subsidy program that we have; we have a self-employment program that is offered; and there is also the JobStart/Future Skills program.

So these, we're able to connect people to emerging employment opportunities that may have to do with growth of employment opportunities. Career and Employment Services offices do a lot of connection with employers who are seeking employees, and so they'll help to make that direct connection.

It will also be the office, Mr. Chair, through which Saskatchewan citizens will have contact with counsellors who will know what kinds of supports — including potentially a provincial training allowance for participation in educational activities, for upgrading of basic education — that these are the people who will know what's available from any level of government and will be in the best position to make referrals or to offer advice to individuals.

(15:30)

In concluding, Mr. Chair, I would say to the hon. member I had an opportunity to have that very conversation with one of his colleagues just the other day who was explaining to me a circumstance — I won't get into personal details but related to a constituent — and asked what's the best thing I can do?

And I said to the hon. member's colleague, the best thing you can do really is to refer your constituent to the closest Career and Employment Service office because there they'll find people who understand about the process of making decisions related to the world of work and your involvement in it so they can provide counselling, that kind of thing. But they're also the people who understand how to make the connections to the supports if you need them.

And so what we have through the current employment service offices are a range of supports which can be very, very helpful.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I just need a clarification. When you're talking Career and Employment Service offices, are these under your department . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They are, okay.

Mr. Minister, you've made the comment about the fact that if an individual comes to a worker and they're needing assistance, but they're maybe willing to work or maybe not willing to work but it looks like they're quite capable of working and a worker would suggest that there's a couple of job opportunities out here, that the worker would give them the ability to contact the employers to see if there possibly would be employment available, that till that employment kicked in, that individual would receive some assistance.

Now that was kind of the . . . what I heard you saying. But I know I've had people call me who have been told, well there's a job over here, you can go and apply for that job. And yet they didn't have any indication that any assistance would be available if the job didn't pan out.

The other circumstance that rises, arises, Mr. Minister, and I

guess that's why my colleagues and I run into it a little more, is in the rural communities most of the times you're dealing with a social worker who's travelling to your community and they may be available only one day of the week.

Now if it's a Monday or a Tuesday, early in the week, chances are that within a day or so, if that job opportunity is available in that community, that you may have the ability to actually go to work and start having some income coming in, although I think we must realize income may not be available till the first pay period which may be two weeks down the road. And so I'd like to know how that is addressed.

Secondly, if it so happens it's towards the end of the week that the worker happens to come to your community and you're given the opportunity or mention there's a job opportunity here, but the business closes down. Let's say it's a Thursday evening, you run on Friday morning, but the business closes down Friday afternoon, and whether or not you get the job you may not find out until the Monday or the Tuesday before you actually begin to work. You still have . . . are dealing with a situation where you may not have the financial resources to provide the food or maybe just some of the incidentals of housing needs that are there at the time.

And so I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, how exactly does your department or workers deal with a situation like that, so that a person isn't left out in the cold especially if they're coming at the last minute and found that their resources are really limited?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the hon. member's question and I want to in response refer to two things. One is the process proceeding from a call centre contact which would be the most likely form of contact that the person who is applying would make, and then also make reference to the transition employment allowance which was introduced in February of this year. And both of these are directly related to the kind of circumstances that the hon. member raises.

When someone inquires about financial assistance, then it would be typically through the call centre and it would be done by telephone. And if the person at that time indicates that . . . while they would likely indicate that they are awaiting employment opportunity, as you suggest possibly, or that there is an emergency need, which is the other possibility that you raised . . . the hon. member raises, Mr. Chair. The transition employment allowance can be activated right away and can, for example, cover the period of time until the first paycheque is received if there is employment that is already planned to be in place.

If the applicant indicates that he or she has an emergency need, then it is possible to activate payment as early as that day. Depending in some circumstances, it may not be in some cases possible to be precisely that day but communication would occur between the call centre and the local income security office and in most cases that would occur very quickly and it could possibly be the same day, but within a day or two would be typical.

And I think, Mr. Chair, it's those two things in combination that would respond. There is the possibility to make arrangement for emergency payments that would be done locally at the income

security office, or the transition employment allowance which would tide a person over until they got their first paycheque.

All of this, and the Career and Employment Services offices are under the framework of the Department of Community Resources and Employment.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, when you mention transition needs being available and have activated immediately and you talk about community services, if you're in the community though and you're making a call — and I take it all of these lines are 1-800 numbers so that there's no . . . you're not limited in your ability to call to seek assistance — but how does the transaction take place say, well I'll just use Kipling for an example? I'm just going to throw a community like Kipling, or it could be Nokomis.

You happen to be living out there and you're calling this 1-800 number and the call's coming out of Regina and you need the funding immediately, how does that money then . . . how is that money disbursed to meet the needs of that individual? Because they may not have an office that they could just access or go down and get the funds from.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, in response to the hon. member's question, if the — you'll know, the hon. member will know the geography a little bit better than I will know it — if the person was in Kipling, then the closest office would probably be Weyburn or Estevan? Which would it be? Weyburn.

So what could happen in that circumstance then is if the person was able to get to Weyburn, could go to the office there to pick up the cheque. The cheque . . . alternatively the cheque could be put in the mail, possibly the same day, probably the next day, if that was soon enough to meet the needs.

So arrangements would be made at that time, given the ability of the . . . the emergency of the circumstance and the ability of the Saskatchewan citizen to get to a point where the cheque could be provided to them.

Alternatively there would be a third alternative and that's that there could be arrangements made for a worker to bring the cheque to that location. But understandably that would be . . . there would probably be a period of time in order for that, for that to be done. I think it would be misleading to suggest that that could be done . . . that kind of an arrangement could be done on the same day. So the most likely, it would be a cheque put in the mail by the next business day or the cheque available at the closest office if the person is able to get to the office in order to pick it up.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess the circumstance we're talking about here, and I . . . You know you've explained about three different options.

Now if it happens to be an individual who has been employed and just finds themselves in a transition, and they're probably . . . are in a position where they do have a vehicle, they may be able to make the trip to Weyburn to pick up a cheque of that nature.

If it happens to be an individual however who does not have access to or does not have a vehicle and does not have the ability, and who possibly was waiting for some other source of income to arrive and finds themselves really cutting everything quite short when they come for seeking assistance — they're really in an emergency need — what specifically would your department do to ensure that there was resources available?

Especially let's say it's a Friday that the call comes in. Now you've got the weekend to deal with and there may not be a lot in the house at the time to meet a family's needs. And is there a way of dealing with either a financial institution or of giving assurances that this funding will arrive, that a person could at least go down to the local store, for example, and pick up some, just some basic needs to keep them over till the cheque arrived? Or what process is there available to address that circumstance?

(15:45)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The hon. member is certainly raising what I think is probably the most difficult-to-respond circumstance. And I know he raises it, understanding that where you get sort of the 5 o'clock Friday call and the office isn't open until Monday and the person isn't living in a community in which there is a Community Resources and Employment office. Under those circumstances it may be that the best that can be done would be for the payment to be . . . the emergency payment to be received by the individual on the following Monday in that circumstance.

There may be an exception to that and that's that the department can make arrangements for electronic transfers to a person's financial institution, their credit union or bank. But it takes several days to set that up.

However if this individual had previously had involvement with the department and had made that arrangement, then in that circumstance there could be an electronic transfer done immediately. And that would . . . so if the person, for example, had access to an instant teller, then that that may provide the solution.

So bottom line, Mr. Chair, is that the department will do the best that we possibly can to respond to the emergency needs. And in the worst-case scenario — where there had been no previous contact or there had been . . . there had been no previously established electronic transfer arrangement made; it's Friday at 5 o'clock; you're in a community that doesn't have an office — in all likelihood the reality is that we're not . . . we're just not in a position to be able to assist that individual until Monday.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, thank you. Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, I raise that and while I was talking of an emergency situation where a client may arrive . . . come to your office or make that call as a result of a real need, I'm also raising it on the basis of a letter that I sent to your office, I received just recently, about an appointment, a medical appointment that a couple were facing and had maybe requested . . .

Actually it had been acknowledged that they would need some resources to be able to attend this medical appointment. And the unfortunate result of the fact that the resources didn't arrive on

time was that the medical appointment had to be postponed and rescheduled for another day.

And the part that I don't understand there is that the worker acknowledged that that appointment was needed, that financial resources would be needed for the appointment to be met as it meant a drive from the rural area to an urban centre.

And when you look at . . . And I think, Mr. Minister, if you recall the case and it may not . . . may be difficult because you may have had a number of letters on all other issues, but in this specific case, circumstance, it was a couple that was actually needing to get some medical decisions and see a specialist so that they could apply for a disability pension.

And by foregoing and having to miss the appointment because the funding didn't arrive on time to guarantee that they'd be able to make their appointment, they had to cancel out and now the appointment is into May. It means that the department probably there while that . . . Well they're still probably going to have to provide some resources until the final acknowledgement is made of disability pension being available. Facts are, that's been delayed a period of time.

And I think, Mr. Minister, we need to certainly take a look at how we meet the requirements of individuals especially if we acknowledge that there is a need there, that we're going to be providing for that need, making sure those resources are available immediately and at that time so that appointments of this nature can certainly be met.

So I'm just putting that out and asking that we certainly take a look at making sure that this is met in the future.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you again, Mr. Chair. I do want to add to my previous response having to do with the availability of emergency financial supports. I appreciate the fact the officials reminded me of one other possibility that can be helpful in some cases, and that's that vouchers can be issued by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) to individuals.

So if in the circumstance again that the hon. member raises which, Friday at 5 — the one he described — and the office not open until Monday in another community and it's an emergency circumstance, the department can possibly make, if this seems to be a workable solution, make contact with the RCMP. And the RCMP can deliver a voucher that could be used for example at the local co-op or whatever. So there is an avenue that in emergency circumstances can assist.

On the particular case, the hon. member will appreciate, Mr. Chair, that I cannot and therefore will not . . . And I know that he's not asking me to discuss the particulars of an individual's case in public on the record. But I simply want to assure him that we will look very carefully at the communication that he sent.

And if he wants to add anything more by way of detail here after we move along to the next department's estimates which will probably be in about 8 or 10 minutes or so . . . While the officials are here, if he wanted to bring more detail to my attention, I'd be happy to do that and to follow up and look at the specific case.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. Certainly we'll look forward to getting you more information, and possibly there's even a response already on its way.

But the reason I raised it is because it was an issue that had been brought to our attention. And the comment that you made about even working through the RCMP, I think is something worthwhile noting so that when we're working with the department or with your office down the road that we look at some of the avenues and maybe throw out these suggestions that this is the way of addressing this need.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to get one further question in before we possibly move on to another department for today. And it's a question regarding a request we had made of the Child Advocate back in October, and regarding mental illness. And it deals with a situation that was brought to our attention where we had asked the Child Advocate to look at a particular circumstance and how we address it.

And I'd just like to point out in today's paper — you may have even noticed it, Mr. Minister — where Dr. John Conway, speaking to the media about a study he'd done regarding mental illness and the heavy toll it's taking in the province of Saskatchewan, his comments were:

There are people in Saskatchewan who are dying because their mental illness is left undiagnosed and untreated.

And he says:

. . . the province must provide more training for health professionals and more services for patients.

He mentioned about 60 per cent of the people in this province not getting help. Now when we're . . . We're not talking about training here in this department because I know that's another area, another department's responsibility. However, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, we realize and I think this article today points out the fact that there is a problem in our province regarding mental illness.

And back in October we raised the issue of a family who had come to our office requesting help as a result of actions their teenage son had taken and the problems, the strain on the family as a result of the mental imbalance that their teenage child was facing.

And we had asked the Child Advocate to actually do a review or at least to look into the circumstances and come up with some recommendations. And, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you are aware of where this is to date. I know when we met with the Child Advocate back in February, the advocate had indicated that her office certainly had been looking at it but needed more time.

What I'm wondering today, Mr. Minister, is if you've heard anything further in regards to this file. And certainly I'm not going to raise the names of individuals. I think it's appropriate we leave them out of the debate. But kind of a general question regarding the state of mental health and the review that's currently taking place in this province in regards to the question that was raised at that time.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I thank you, Mr. Chair. And looking at the clock, I think this will unfortunately be our final exchange before moving on to the Department of Corrections and Public Safety.

First of all, I do — in regards to the previous question — I do want to acknowledge a letter has been received and a response is in the process of being drafted as a matter of course and should be received shortly.

On the matter of the case the hon. member raises and then perhaps more to the point, more generally, the matter of treatment for mental illness for children and youth in our province and their needs, I have to say first of all, that our Department of Community Resources and Employment is not directly involved in the review or the handling of the case to which I think I know he is referring. So I'm just not able to provide an informed response.

I do know that the report referred to in the news today will be . . . will certainly go to the Department of Health and will be considered and responded to by Health, by the Department of Health.

And on the review, as in any review that the Children's Advocate does, we'll await the conclusion of the Children's Advocate and then pay very, very close attention to the advice that the Children's Advocate might have for our Department of Community Resources and Employment if possible.

So, Mr. Chair, with recognizing the hour of the day, I do want to say thanks to the hon. member for his questions, unless he wants to proceed to the vote. But I see by the look in his face, he's not quite ready yet but I think he's getting closer; I think he's getting closer, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that we've been able to begin an important deliberation on the range of services provided to the people of Saskatchewan through the Department of Community Resources and Employment. And I'll look forward to our next opportunity, coming soon, Mr. Chair, to a legislative channel somewhere near you.

And that having been said, I want to thank the officials for their assistance today and then move that we move our deliberation on the Committee of Finance to the Department of Corrections and Public Safety.

(16:00)

**General Revenue Fund
Corrections and Public Safety
Vote 73**

Subvote (CP01)

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I am joined today by our deputy minister, Neil Yeates. Seated behind me is the new assistant deputy minister of adult corrections, Terry Lang. Mae Boa is the executive director of

management services. As well we have Maureen Lloyd who is executive director of the young offenders program.

Behind the bar is Tom Young, who is the executive director of protection and emergency services, and Brian Krasium, manager of codes and standards compliance for the licensing inspections branch.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and welcome to the minister and the officials from Corrections and Public Safety.

Before we get into some questions I would like to send this over to the minister. It's a set of global questions and . . . so the minister can receive them in a timely fashion. I'd like to have it on record that they're sent over.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much. I appreciate receiving these and we'll endeavour to get timely answers to them.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to just start off with some budget questions.

And I notice in the budget the — I'm sure everybody has — the estimate for 2002-2003, 114 million, forecast 116 million. There's a \$2 million difference in that amount. And I notice from an OC (order in council) of 31 March that additional expenses of 7.975 million will be required for the appropriations, Corrections and Public Safety, for fiscal year ending 31 March, 2003.

My question to the minister is, there's a \$2 million between estimate and forecast, and this is about an 8 million difference. Will that be added to the forecast amount of 116 million? Or will that be added to the 114 million amount?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Last year at this time as we were getting into the discussion on the budget, we had indicated that this was a new department and it was receiving portions of its activity from other departments that were undertaking this. One of the largest pieces of that was the movement of the young offenders' programs into the new Department of Corrections and Public Safety.

Because that transfer happened in-year as opposed to at the start of a budget year, there was some additional cost. And what the larger number reflects is a recovery of some of those monies from the former Department of Social Services that have been moved over into Corrections and Public Safety.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I'm not quite following you 100 per cent on that. If there's 700 . . . or 7.9 million, if it was moved from corrections publics . . . or to Corrections and Public Safety from another department — and I haven't gone through the budget book to see where it's actually said that it's been transferred — and I'm . . . I would . . . if you're suggesting that it's moved over, there should be a line item somewhere in the budget document that says that it's transferred from this department to Corrections and Public Safety. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is indicated on the restatements. These estimates were restated. You can find that on page 136 of

the Estimates book.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Now I don't believe you answered my question initially of this 8 million, roughly \$8 million. Understanding that it may have been transferred from another department, will that not change your forecast expenditures for the year 2002-2003 by an amount of \$8 million? Or will it be added on to the 114 or 116?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It's actually included in the forecast for '02-03 and again, of course, because it's been received for '03-04. So it's not added on top of that; it's included in those numbers.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Minister, if it's in those letters, what did we need an OC for, at March 31, asking for another \$8 million expenditure?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Because it wasn't initially contained in the CPS (Corrections and Public Safety) budget last year, we needed a special warrant and an OC to execute that special warrant to move the resources from the one set of line items to the other. So to reflect the change, the transition from Social Services to CPS, we needed to do that by special warrant which of course required the OC that . . . of which you're speaking.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I must be missing something because in your forecast last year is 114 million and you're suggesting to me that it's included in the 114 million, and yet at the end of the year you ask for another 8 million. I mean, that doesn't compute.

At the start of last year, your estimate was \$114 million and you've said that it is included in that \$114 million. And yet the OC this March 31 . . . So there's something missing in this explanation.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think that the issue here is a confusion on the part of the member between what the blue book was last year, which said it would be 108; it has been restated here at the adjusted number. And the restatement of course is indicated in the Estimates book on that page 136 that we've spoken of.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I notice and you'll see, Mr. Chair, that the minister has stated that the young offenders program would be transferred. There's \$3.5 million dedicated to the young offenders program, 3.3-plus to the adult corrections.

But can the minister explain the 450,000 administration costs, and administration and central accommodations in central services at 170,000?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — These two numbers that the member refers to relate to one-time costs that are associated with the establishment of the department.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. I would like to ask the minister about budget rebasing and if he's familiar with budget rebasing or if his department is familiar with budget rebasing and if, in fact, they do budget rebasing?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Does the member . . . The question I

would have, is he asking about what is also known as zero-based budgeting, ZBB or is this . . . If he could be more specific in his question, perhaps I could be better prepared to answer it.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well I would gather from that that budget rebasing is not a common phrase then within your department. But budget rebasing is basically when a department overspends their allotted budget and asks for excess money, then the following year that becomes their base budget. That's what budget rebasing is. Rather than find out the reasons why there's an over budget or looking at ways within the budget of the rationale for it, rather than just arbitrarily say well that's now our base budget and we overspend again; next year that becomes a base budget and so on and so on. And I'm wondering if in fact that practice is used or if, with that explanation, if in fact that's been happening?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Because of the way that this department responds to other pressures, certainly in the adult and youth corrections, a lot of our expenditure drivers are external to us. We do work with a base; it is not always the case that last year's costs would be the absolute base we work from this year.

Last year what we saw was some additional costs as a result of increased pressures on the adult corrections with higher-than-anticipated numbers that required us to increase that. We have taken an appropriate forecast this year and the Treasury Board is in agreement with what we anticipate our budget will be.

I think we should understand that with this department though, there is always the potential because a lot of our cost drivers are external to us through the judiciary, that inmate counts, remand issues, sentence lengths are really beyond the cost control of this government and as such and this department, as such is difficult for us to always pinpoint exactly what that cost is going to be.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well the reason I asked the question, Mr. Chair, is basically it's like budget creep. And we understand inflationary costs and we understand external pressures. But when a department has overspent by x number of dollars and that becomes a base for next year, it doesn't really provide an explanation as to why this has happened.

And then there's the inflationary factor. And just looking at the budget in the schedule of expenditures, you could see that in addition to the estimate and the forecast, there's another couple of million dollars on, and that's why I call it budget creep or rebasing. Because if it's being rebased and then you add another for . . . another couple million for whatever, rather than look at why we went over in the past years. And that's why I brought this before you is to find out an explanation if, in fact, that's what we're doing or if there's another explanation for the increase of, well, 2 or \$4 million, whatever way you want to look at it, in the budget for this year.

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — There are two key issues in terms of the increase that we are looking at, and in fact they are around

the increase that we're looking at for public service payments, staffing costs. And the second is the increase that we see related to having higher-than-anticipated inmate counts. Those are the two issues that in this particular budget are driving that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — So I would gather from that, Mr. Chair, that if our incarceration numbers go down, we would see an appropriate drop in the expenditures from within the budget. Would that be correct?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The counts alone would not necessarily drive up or down the cost. Of course length of sentence has something to do with that.

But yes, if there was a decrease in the number of inmates or a shortened sentence time, that the counts are down in the facilities, that would require . . . would allow us to find some additional resources there. That's correct.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — But, Mr. Chair, did you not just previously say that the reason for the increase in cost was because increased people in the institution. And that's what caused the corresponding cost. But did I not just hear you say that the value is not going to change much whether there is more inmates or less inmates. Did you not just say that?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — No, actually I was agreeing with the member that in fact we would see likely a corresponding decrease if we see a decline in inmate counts.

But we need to understand it's not simply counts that drive it. Of course there are some inflationary pressures, and I think the member's identified that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, to the minister. I would like to now talk a little bit about . . . when we're talking about budgetary costs, I would like to . . . and I've heard and I'm sure we all have heard — factual or not, and this is why the question is coming — overtime costs at our four main facilities: the Regina, Saskatoon, and the two in P.A. (Prince Albert).

And I would like the minister to provide what the overtime costs have been for the last fiscal year in each one of those facilities.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We don't have that with us today but we can endeavour to provide that to you.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, I'd appreciate that and can I get a timeline on that?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I will provide it in a timely manner once we're able to compile it.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, a timely manner is next year, six months from now after session is over; can we put a date of 10 days on it?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — No, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, can we get a time from the minister to have these figures to me?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As soon as they're prepared, I'll make them available to the member.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, that's not really acceptable. Could I have a time from the minister as to when these would be available because this is very crucial to debate on the budget as to what these overtime costs are?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well in fact, Mr. Deputy Chair, that's not necessarily so. As the member would say, the costs that we anticipate for staffing are factored into the budget. For us to be able to pull it out will take some time. As we are able to do that, once we have been able to do that, we'll provide it to the member.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'd like to go on record as saying I totally disagree with that and I'd like a little bit more commitment from the minister because this is a factor of costs; it maybe is a factor of the additional costs in the facilities and I think it's only fair that we have a timely response to this.

So I would ask the minister again if he would provide a date that I could receive this, because to me there's some figures that I would like to see before we can enter into more debate on some of these budget figures.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I've said we don't have those figures with us. We'll endeavour to get them on a timely fashion. Once they're prepared I'll provide them to the member, but I'm not prepared to make a commitment to this House on a firm date that I'm not able to keep. That may be the way the members opposite act but that is not the way members on this side act. As the answer is available, I'll make it available to that member.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, I guess, Mr. Chair, we can sit here all summer but I think this is a very important issue. And I think it's very, very crucial that we have and understand what overtime costs are at these facilities.

And if the minister wants to sit there in his holier-than-thou attitude and say we'll do it in my good time, I don't think that's appropriate for the House. I think we should have some commitment on a time that we can have these figures. And I'm not suggesting in 24 hours; I realize you wouldn't have them. There's probably other questions I have, you won't have the figures here now. But to willy-nilly say whenever I'm ready to give them to you, I don't think is acceptable. I think we should have a time. If you want to say it's a month, fine, we'll make it a month. Two weeks is fine. But just leaving it wide open, I don't think that's acceptable, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I think I've answered this question. I want to say that I'm sure that the member opposite does not want me to be increasing the overtime worked by our officials in order to provide the answer to this question. We'll undertake to get the answer in an appropriate time; I would hope by the next time that we are able to review our estimates in this Assembly and I will endeavour to do that.

For us to pick, as the member opposite suggests, willy-nilly out of the air some kind of a date would be inappropriate. We need

to allow the officials time to gather the information. I'm not sure where he wants to go in terms of the questioning. I would welcome him to pursue whatever line of questioning he wants on this.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — The next time we meet, Mr. Chair, I will again raise this issue. If the minister does not have the figures for me by then we'll probably go through the same discussion once more. And if they're not provided at that time, like I say, we can sit here for months; it doesn't bother me at all.

Mr. Chair, my next question is based, possibly somewhat along the same line, is shift trading. What is the minister's policy on shift trading?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, shift trading is permitted.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, to what extent?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Policy permits for shift trading to allow workers to have a flexible work environment, although obviously we have a policy in place to ensure that it does not drive up overtime and that it has appropriate cost containment measures with that.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister, is shift trading permissible that would constitute 16-hour shifts?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — To what extent, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The maximum is two 16-hour shifts in a row.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, thank you. Two 16-hour shifts in a row. Could you, could the minister explain that? To me two 16-hour shifts in a row is 32 hours. I don't believe that's what you mean.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It would be one 16-hour shift followed by a rest period and then the next . . . the employee could have on the next day another 16 . . . two shifts equalling 16 hours.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — So as you just explained, there's a 16-hour shift followed by an 8-hour break followed by another 16-hour shift. Can the minister tell the House what the work week hour . . . hours per work week that the guards perform at the institution? Is it a 40-hour week? Is it 37?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It's thirty-seven and a third, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — So, Mr. Chair, reading into this, at two 16-hour shifts in a three-day period or three-and-a-half-day period, one could complete a week's work, in essence would fulfill your thirty-seven and a third hours, if you worked two 16-hour shifts at 32 hours and then the balance of it in another . . . after another 8-hour break. So in a period of three days, you could in essence finish your weekly work.

Is this condoned by the department? Is this a practice within the organization, that this actually happens? And if it is, to what

extent would this happen?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We have a policy to provide a flexible work scheme for the officers and the guards that are in the facilities. If that is the way that the officials want to structure their work week and as long as it doesn't provide a difficulty for management or security, we see no reason to prohibit it.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — One of the reasons I bring this forward and question the validity of 16-hour shifts is a 16-hour shift is a pretty difficult shift to work through, and especially if you're working a 16-hour shift, followed by 8 hours off, and another 16-hour shift. I'm sure the minister would agree that that could present some problems with such things as fatigue. And when you're in an institution, a corrections facility, if fatigue is an issue, it could have some very, very catastrophic implications.

(16:30)

And that's why I'm questioning as to what kind of a policy. Just to say we provide flexible hours, I think there has to be a little bit more management and supervision over it. Because if in fact this is happening, if in fact it could work like I'm suggesting, that has been brought to my attention, that in fact it could be providing some of the problems that exist within the correctional facilities. Because we have individuals there as guards or management, whoever is allowed to do this 16-hour shift — a week's work within three days — one would have to agree that this could provide an awful lot of stress on the individual doing it for whatever reason that he or she is doing it.

And that's why I'm questioning as to if it's condoned and if it's condoned, to that level by the department. And if it is condoned are we looking at . . . or are you looking at trying to abate some of that? Because I think any individual could look into this and say that could be creating some of the problems within the department. Is the minister and staff looking at this as an issue?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, as I've said, this is a practice which is permitted. The only stipulation we would put on it is that obviously it's not scheduled that way. This is a case where the corrections official would come and ask for this. If it does not affect on work performance, it's within the appropriate policy.

If the member has a specific concern that he wishes to bring to my attention, he can do so here or do so privately.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, it's not my concern; it's concerns of the people of the province, I believe when we look at what's happened in the recent past and try and get to why and how this could happen . . . I've not been privy to the report that the minister said he has received. I don't have a copy of it and I was wondering if the minister would provide me with a copy of that report.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I would certainly welcome the . . . this opportunity. I'm very particularly pleased that the member has raised this issue. I think this is a good opportunity for him to stand in this House and to offer his apology to the unionized workers in the facility who of course he blamed for the escapes a month ago. And he had suggested this was a result of them, as you will remember, watching TV and playing Game Boys.

Now today it appears that member is suggesting it is because they were shift trading. If there are any facts that back up the member's assertions, perhaps he could provide them to the members of this Assembly.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the rant from the minister but he'll also notice that I never accused anybody. I merely asked a question, and there's no reason that I'll get up in this House and apologize for asking a question for which I'm not getting answers.

Now will the minister table a copy of the report?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, the member is making again veiled assertions about what happened. I have explained publicly as to what the investigators have provided. If now he's casting aspersions at the investigators, perhaps he could put some basis of fact behind this or take it up outside so that the employees can deal with him directly.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I'm perfectly comfortable with asking the same questions outside, Mr. Chair. Will the minister table the report? He has said that he has received the report. Now I'm asking if he will table the report so we can have a look at what was discovered within the investigation at the facility as to what precipitated the escape.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, obviously for security reasons I'm not in a position to table the report in the Assembly. And if the member has questions, I'm prepared to do my best to answer them.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, it doesn't appear that the minister is answering questions. That's why I'd like to see the report. And every time I ask a specific question he gets on a rant about that I'm accusing somebody, and all I'm doing is I'm asking questions that I'm not getting answers to.

Now I'll give an example on this one. It was asked in a written question and I'll re-ask the question to the minister.

To the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety: were managers at the Regina correctional facility warned by guards as to the danger of holding inmates in the auditorium from which recent inmates escapes occurred?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, I would direct the member's attention to the *Votes and Proceedings* issue no. 16 for Tuesday, April 8, and he will note on the appendix I, questions and answers, that this question no. 50 was answered on Tuesday, April 8.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, that's the question. It was not answered on April 8 to what the question stated. And I will read the answer, if you wish, into the record. The answer to the question that I just asked, and here is the answer if you can believe it's an answer:

As a result of a shift briefing report on March 7, 2003, management was made aware that a vent situated above a door in the auditorium had been tampered with. However, the vent was replaced the week prior to the escape and was found not to be a contributing factor in reference to the

escape.

Well that's a very non-answer to the question, so I'm asking the question again. Were managers at Regina correctional facility warned by guards as to the dangers of holding inmates in the auditorium?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, my job gets much easier when the member asks the question and then reads the answer. I would encourage him to read the answer again into the record if he so chooses.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, it's not an answer to the question. Will the minister answer the question?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Question no. 50 has been asked; it has been answered.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, it's very, very clear that the minister has not answered the question. Now the minister can sit there and say this non-answer is an answer. The question is: did the guards . . . were the managers at the facility warned by the guards as to the dangers of holding inmates in the auditorium? That's a simple question. It has nothing to do with a vent; it has nothing to do with anything else.

Were managers at the facility warned by guards as to the danger of holding inmates in the auditorium? It's a simple question. Were they or were they not?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, let me say this. The answer is provided. It is provided fully. It is provided with detail. It is provided with a date in terms of the report that was provided to members.

Now that member across the way likes to cast grand aspersions. A week ago, two weeks ago he had suggested that guards at that facility were to blame because they were watching television or playing Game Boys. That was the assertion that member made in this House — not borne out by fact. Now today he is suggesting, now today he is suggesting it was shift trading that was a result of that — also not borne out by fact.

That member is casting some very broad aspersions against the public service of this province that I doubt are very much within the basis of the appropriate debate of this Assembly. And it doesn't matter how loud those sanctimonious hypocrites across the way get, Mr. Chair.

Let me tell you this, that it is helpful if they want to provide questions that are based on fact before simply smearing the good reputation of the public servants involved.

The Chair: — Order. Order. Hon. members, order.

I would ask hon. members to use temperate language and not get into personal attacks and references to calling others hypocrites and the like.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, I of course apologize for referring to the members' hypocrisy.

The Chair: — I've attempted to make sure that there is

warnings and I would indicate that would be the member's first warning.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's very interesting. When the minister appears to be absolutely stuck for an answer, he goes on a tirade about something and accuses people about something that is not factual.

And I wish to pose the question again to the minister. The question is very simple, and I don't . . . I'm not sure what the minister doesn't understand about estimates, where . . . Estimates, Mr. Chair, is where questions are asked and there's supposed to be answers provided. I will ask the minister a question again: were managers at the Regina correctional facility warned by guards as to the danger of holding inmates in the auditorium — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, this question has been asked; it has been answered.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, it has not been answered. And I would like the minister to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It may not have been answered to that member's satisfaction, but the question has been answered.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, the minister actually refuses to answer the question. I'm not sure what the reason is he's not answering the question. I would like an explanation as to why he will not answer the question because he is . . . he's answering a question that is totally, totally, totally nowhere near what the question is. It's like asking the time of day and somebody's telling you how to build a watch. It's got no relevance whatsoever to the question.

The question is pure and simple: were people advised? And the minister wishes to say, well there's a vent that was replaced. Well I may be missing something here, Mr. Chair, but what, what does the replacement of a vent have to do with whether the guards or the management was advised about the dangers of holding inmates in the auditorium? Now how can the minister sit there and answer that it's answered in because they replaced a vent?

I mean, this is . . . He talks about hypocrisy, Mr. Chair. Yet he stands up and talks about it like we're being hypocritical. But how do you explain that answer, where he's not giving an answer? So I'd like to have the minister explain how holding inmates in the auditorium, whether they were warned by managers or guards, what that has to do with a vent.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I don't know how to put this any simpler than we have in the written answers. On March 7, managers . . . Well, Mr. Chair, the members ask questions and then they yell from their seat to make noise. And if they want the answer, the answer has been provided many times.

On March 7, managers were advised there was a problem about the tampering with the vent. The vent was replaced and it was not a contributing factor in the escape. I don't know how to make it any simpler for the member opposite. That was the advice that was given. That was the action that was taken by management. And it seems to be appropriate.

If the member has other questions, I'd be willing to answer them. If he wants to ask this another seven or eight times, I'll answer it the same way.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, how was management made aware that the vent was tampered with?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I would draw the member's attention again to the *Votes and Proceedings*, answer to question no. 50. He will note the managers were made aware as it indicates in the one, two, three, four, five, sixth, seventh, and eighth words of the answer. They were made aware by a shift briefing report.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Now, Mr. Chair, back to the question. Who made the observation that precipitated this viewing of the vent?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chair, the staff on shift prepared the shift briefing report. So obviously it was the staff who were on shift at that point who indicated that the vent had been tampered with and made it aware to managers who had taken the action to have the vent replaced.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Chair, was it the same . . . Did, by chance, the same briefing report advise managers that holding inmates in the auditorium might not be a good idea?

(16:45)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It was not in the shift briefing report.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I don't know how we're going to get a question out, or an answer out of the minister. It's not . . . it's not in the shift report. Then I have to, I have to ask once again: were people, managers, warned about the dangers of holding inmates in the auditorium? And this pat answer is not acceptable. It's not an answer to the question.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well whether this answer is acceptable to the member or not is certainly an issue that he can take up. But let me say this. Certainly managers and staff are aware of the limitations in terms of many parts of the facility. We are aware of limitations in terms of the auditorium. I have said publicly that one of the issues that was clearly a contributing factor in this particular escape had to do with not having line of sight maintained where we have medium security and a higher risk of escape by inmates.

I'm not sure how I can put this any more simply for the members. Clearly members are aware of . . . staff members are aware of this, the limitations of this facility. Managers are aware of the limitations of this facility. Procedures have been updated to make sure that the escape risk is minimized. I trust that that satisfies the member's question.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, it never answered the question yet but I'm . . . The minister is going to sit there and not answer the question. With that in mind I'm wondering how many questions that he will even attempt to answer throughout estimates if his demeanour is going to be sitting there and say I've given answer. He can give an answer to every question that is asked from this side of the House and say, we've fixed the vent. It might have nothing to do with the question whatsoever.

How is the facility in Prince Albert doing? Well, we fixed the vent. It has absolutely nothing to do with it. But he can sit there in his pious manner and say, well we fixed the vent.

I think in estimates we're supposed to get some answers to questions. And for the minister to sit there and just say I've answered the question is not good enough to the people of Saskatchewan. I think they deserve some answers to some of these questions. And for the minister to just . . . Whatever I ask from now on, he can say — regarding April 8, whatever — we fixed the vent. Well I don't really think that that's an answer to the question. How much overtime does the facility spend each year for overtime? Well, we fixed the vent.

It just doesn't make sense, does it? Well that's the same as the answer to the question that I asked. We fixed the vent.

So for the minister to get up and start using, well we answered the question because the vent is fixed; he can use that for every question that I so ask. It just doesn't make sense, does it?

So, Mr. Speaker . . . or Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask one more question that's kind of pertaining to this, pertaining to this and that is — and the minister can rant away on it — does the department permit what is known as moonlighting by staff, or with staff holding full-time jobs outside of their full-time job at the facility? Does this happen? And if the minister would answer if this happens and if it is condoned by the department?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Any outside work undertaken by employees needs to be approved by our department and by the Public Service Commission.

I appreciate the questions that the member has asked, and in noting the time of day I'm going to suggest that . . . I will thank my officials for appearing. I'm going to move that we report progress.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:55.

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