

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today to present a petition on behalf of people from my constituency who are concerned about education tax on property.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause a reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

The people that have signed this petition are from Spalding, Wadena, and Hendon.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again the issue of Crown grazing lease renewals has prompted a number of citizens from the area of Eastend, Frontier, and Claydon to sign a petition. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. Citizens of the Battlefords area concerned about the threatened closure of the historic and scenic old bridges have signed the following petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Minister of Highways preserve the old bridges between Battleford and North Battleford.

Your petitioners come from the town of Battleford and Glaslyn.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable and unacceptable lack of a hemodialysis unit in the city of Moose Jaw. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take necessary action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the city of Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people from my constituency very concerned about the condition of Highway 47 between Estevan and Boundary dam resort. And the prayer reads as follow:

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, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by residents of Estevan, Gladmar, and even Saskatoon realizes how bad it is.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the deplorable state of their highways. 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 Highways 13, 35, 18, 28, 6, 34 334, and 36 in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn, Leroy, Tribune, Estevan, and Lampman.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition from citizens of rural Saskatchewan that are extremely concerned about the lack of health care services out in the country. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the proper steps to cause adequate medical services, including a physician, be provided in Rockglen and to cause Five Hills Health Region to provide better information to the citizens of Rockglen.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Killdeer and Rockglen.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition with people concerned about the sharp increases in the crop insurance premiums. And the petition 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 increase and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

And this, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good people of Kindersley, Glidden, and even Saskatoon.

I so present.

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Central Butte and Riverhurst.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have yet another petition dealing with the concerns about the condition of Highway 22. 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 on Highway 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Southey and Swan River, Manitoba.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are very, very concerned with the 2003 premium increases to 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, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from Spiritwood, Leoville, Medstead, and Mildren.

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 papers nos. 13, 18, 19, 27, 35, 36, 40, 41, and 42.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Environment minister: what is your department's policy regarding the tendering process for tree seedlings for reforestation; and further to that, are these policies always followed?

Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of The Oil and Gas Industry Recognition Week Act.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, a person who will be a constituent of mine after the new boundaries here. He presently, and his family, live in the constituency of Regina Centre, but in the west gallery is Terry White and his son Nathan White who is working on a project around government, and with them is a special guest that we should all welcome to Saskatchewan from Berlin, Germany. Johanna Kuchling is an exchange student studying in grade 11 at Luther College here in Regina, and we welcome them and I ask all members to welcome them here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Legislative Assembly, two individuals seated in the western gallery, one Walter Logan and Tom Brown. Walter, I have the great honour and privilege as representing as his MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly). Walter was a long-time United Church minister at St. John's United, right in the heart of Regina-Elphinstone, and is still very active in the Regina presbytery and in the Regina Anti Poverty Ministry and in a great number of other projects. He gives me good counsel and good guidance. And it's a pleasure to see you here today, Walter.

And Tom, I understand, is from Kelowna, so I hope you enjoy the proceedings. Anyway, please welcome Walter and Tom.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all of my colleagues here as well — I don't know if he knew what I was going to do — but seated in the west gallery is a long-time, family friend of mine, and from our hometown actually, up in Goodsoil, Saskatchewan, Miles Nachbaur.

Miles worked here in the Legislative Building for a very brief period of time and is now employed in Regina at Dale's House. And I'd appreciate if everybody would give Miles a warm

welcome to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Enhancement of Disability Allowances

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to advancing the full citizenship of people with disabilities, and the provincial budget announcements this week reflect that commitment.

An additional \$1 million per year has been allocated in the provincial budget to improve the disability allowance for persons on social assistance. This will provide for a \$10 per month increase in the disability allowance. To address needs around accessibility and transportation, our government will invest \$1 million in capital projects to improve accessibility of government buildings, and will invest \$715,000 in new paratransit vehicles.

This week, Mr. Speaker, our minister of Social Services announced \$1.85 million in new funding for enhanced, individualized, employment supports to assist persons with disabilities to move from social assistance to employment — supports such as job training, mentoring, and coaching.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the highlights of a solid plan that provides a total of \$6 million in new funding to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities in Saskatchewan. It reflects this government's belief in an economy and a future that is wide open to everyone in our province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Volunteer Week

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this coming week, April 27 to May 3, is National Volunteer Week across Canada. And here in Saskatchewan we are well-known for our large and talented pool of volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, the first National Volunteer Week took place in 1943, and it's no surprise that 60 years later we are still saying a heartfelt thanks for a job well done to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who take time out of their busy lives to help . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Members, I wonder if the two members could just provide time for the member from Estevan so we could hear her statement in full. And I thank the members for their co-operation.

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Speaker, we are still saying a heartfelt thanks for a job well done to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who take time out of their busy lives to help out with whatever cause or event may need their assistance.

The two main objectives, Mr. Speaker, of National Volunteer Week are to raise awareness about the many important contributions that volunteers bring to our communities and also to thank all those past and present who have assisted various

businesses and organizations with their events throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, some facts about volunteering. One in four of us is involved in volunteer work. Volunteers come from all walks of life. The rates and numbers of hours spent in volunteering often increase with the levels of education. Young people volunteer to gain valuable work-related skills and level of participation is highest amongst those aged 35 to 54.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the envy of the rest of Canada when it comes to volunteering since we have one of the highest rates of volunteerism in the country. For those of us who have lived here for many years, this comes as no surprise since we've all been privileged at one time or another to experience first-hand just how generous and giving Saskatchewan people really are and to appreciate their many contributions that have resulted from their tireless efforts and hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in recognizing all volunteers during National Volunteer Week, and more importantly to give special thanks to all those Saskatchewan individuals who have volunteered over the years. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Small Business Loans Association

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The details of the Sask Party's hidden agenda remain murky and their definition of a mess is obviously based on self-reflection. But one of the things they have said loud and clear is that, as a government, the Sask Party would provide no support to small business. Their position is one of no help to no one no way, and every person for themselves, and the devil take the hindmost, Mr. Speaker. Well that's one approach, and we've seen the devastation caused in jurisdictions where that kind of simplistic right-wing ideology has been attempted, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government believes in investing in the future of this province and that is why we have a government-administered, community-run Small Business Loans Association, Mr. Speaker. Since the inception of the SBLA program, more than \$42.5 million have been loaned to over 8,000 businesses creating and maintaining over 18,000 jobs.

This year more than 3.5 million was loaned to almost 500 businesses, Mr. Speaker. This resulted in the creation or maintenance of over 1,100 jobs, primarily in rural communities, Mr. Speaker.

(10:15)

The Sask Party believes in a dog-eat-dog economy. We believe in supporting small business, helping to create jobs and new services that will result in strong communities with sustainable economies, Mr. Speaker.

With this government, the future for small business is wide open. We have a plan, Mr. Speaker, and it is working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lifetime Achievement Award to Spiritwood Man

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 14 here in Regina, Tourism Saskatchewan proudly celebrated the Tourism Awards of Excellence. At the event, a gentleman from Spiritwood, my hometown, was the winner of the Chairman's Lifetime Achievement Award.

This award was given for a person who has provided long-standing and exceptional service, has demonstrated leadership and integrity, has left a strong legacy, and has gained the respect of those in the tourism industry. The award recipient was Mr. Clarence Martodam of Spiritwood.

Mr. Speaker, this award to Mr. Martodam was a long time coming. Mr. Martodam's love of Spiritwood and enthusiasm for the success of everyone in this community is incredibly infectious. In fact, I would say that we all walk with a little bit more bounce in our step after running into him. Most people in the community know him as Mr. Ambassador of Spiritwood. On April 16 the Chamber of Commerce of Spiritwood helped celebrate this award with a supper put on in his honour.

Congratulations, Clarence. Your dedication and promotion to our community is indeed an inspiration to all.

I would ask all members of the Assembly today to help me say congratulations to Clarence Martodam on this special award and to his Lifetime Achievement Award that he won. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Implementation of School^{PLUS}

Ms. Jones: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to building for the future of this province, and that means investing to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people and building programs that support them.

In keeping with that commitment, Mr. Speaker, this NDP (New Democratic Party) government is implementing School^{PLUS}. The School^{PLUS} model was recommended by the Role of the School Task Force and recognizes that schools must have two primary functions — to educate children, developing the whole child intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically; and to serve as centres of the community for delivery of services to children, youth, and their families.

Mr. Speaker, School^{PLUS} is a priority for this government because it will help to ensure that all children and youth have access to the supports they need to take full advantage of Saskatchewan's quality education system.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that the MLA for Saskatoon Idylwyld has been appointed as Legislative Secretary to the Premier to oversee the implementation of School^{PLUS}. As a teacher he knows first-hand what an improvement community support makes in a child's education. He's also a great seatmate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all the members of this Assembly will join with me in supporting the implementation of School^{PLUS} as an investment in the future of this province's children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Broncos Win Anavet Cup

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is much excitement in Humboldt today. The Humboldt Broncos are on their way to the national junior hockey championship.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the Broncos earned this trip last evening by defeating the OCN (Opaskwayak Cree Nation) Blizzards 8 to 1 before a packed crowd at the Elgar Petersen Arena in Humboldt. The Broncos took the series four games to one, winning the Anavet Cup. The Humboldt Broncos now advance to the Royal Bank Cup junior A national tournament, May 3 to 11 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Speaker, Humboldt won the first two games of the series in The Pas and lost the third game on home ice in Humboldt. They came back in the fourth game soundly defeating the Blizzard 5 to 3, and they really poured it on in the fifth game with an 8 to 1 win. Humboldt outshot OCN in the fifth game 54 to 24.

Congratulations to the coaches, Bob Beatty and Dean Brockman, and to the players for a job well done and some superb entertainment. Good luck, Broncos, in the Royal Bank Cup tournament.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Legislative Committees

Mr. Van Mulligen: — You know, Mr. Speaker, besides question period there are other forums where members can raise questions.

Members will know there are at least two committees of this Assembly, the Crown Corporations Committee and the Public Accounts Committee, that provide members with opportunities to put questions directly to officials with the hands-on responsibility of running various agencies and corporations. Here members have opportunities to ask questions to which they may not know the answers, because it is a rule, Mr. Speaker, in question period — and at least I learned this in opposition — that you don't ask questions to which you don't already know the answers. If you don't already know the answer to your question you may get blindsided and embarrassed by an answer you weren't expecting.

The committees with their informal settings provide the opportunities for members to ask questions without fear of this embarrassment. Therefore I would commend to all members of the House these committees as a forum for them to ask questions, and especially to the member for Swift Current who criticized the government yesterday in Crown . . . in question period for some Crown undertaking in which the Crown had no involvement whatsoever.

In a manner of speaking, Mr. Speaker, he misled the House. I'm sure it was again inadvertent but surely embarrassing. Therefore I suggest to him, to avoid future embarrassment in question period don't hesitate to stop first by your local Crown Corporations Committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mega Bingo

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

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago the Saskatchewan Party revealed that Liquor and Gaming lost \$6.2 million on its failed mega bingo project. The Saskatchewan Party has now learned that the total losses on mega bingo were more than \$6.2 million. Will the minister please tell the people of Saskatchewan what was the total amount lost by the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming on mega bingo?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, when that issue was raised — and the figures that were indicated during the Crown Corporations meeting was in the vicinity of \$6.2 million, as the member will recall — when that issue was raised, I asked officials at SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) to immediately do a review of that and any related projects to this entire issue. And when that review is completed, I'll be happy to report back to the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, according to the information we have received, the total losses on mega bingo were about \$2 million more than the \$6.2 million the minister originally reported. Can the minister confirm this? Was the total lost on mega bingo more than \$6.2 million? Was it an additional \$2 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out when this issue was raised, the questions were raised about the projects, I did in fact immediately ask SLGA officials to review not only that particular project but any projects that were related to that particular exercise. Mr. Speaker, that was an attempt by SLGA and this government to assist some of the 1,500 charities and assist people in this community and the communities of this great province.

One thing that the member fails to recognize or acknowledge is the fact that SLGA, SLGA very . . . is very much committed to helping charities in communities — in the last three years, Mr. Speaker, contributing almost \$1 billion to the General Revenue Fund and to the people of this province and the communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the issue is that if this

government was accountable they would have spent . . . had \$6.2 million more to spend on charities than they have to give to charities.

Mr. Speaker, this government negligently spent more than \$6.2 million on mega bingo with no business plan, no cabinet approval, no ministerial approval, no due diligence, and with no ceiling. This is exactly what we asked the minister about a couple weeks ago: what was the ceiling on mega bingo?

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: who gave approval for this expenditure? Who gave approval to spend even more than \$6.2 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the government made this decision based on the best information it had available. It was part of a gaming strategy that asked SLGA, based on requests from the bingo industry, based on requests from charities . . . And by the way, Mr. Speaker, there are 1,500 charities that count on the proceeds of the bingo industry to help them provide important services to people across this province.

When that project failed, it was cancelled, Mr. Speaker. And as I indicated, I have asked officials to review all the details of that and any related project. When I have that total information I will happily supply that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this brings into question for the people of Saskatchewan: why would the minister assume that more than \$6.2 million was spent on mega bingo? Why would he ask if more had been spent?

Mr. Speaker, when will this review be done and when will the results be released to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence in the competency of the executives at the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority to thoroughly review, at my request, all the information related to this project. And I will be happy to present it — all the details — when it becomes available to me.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming ordered this review. Will the minister please tell the people of Saskatchewan when this review will be completed and when will he release the results?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, not unlike the Saskatchewan Party and the critics in the Saskatchewan Party, who share half-truths about the information they present to this House and the people of Saskatchewan, I will present all the details when they become available to me, and I will present them on the certainty that they are fact.

Mr. Speaker, here's another example of the Saskatchewan Party's motive to discredit Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority which contributes over \$300 million a year to the General Revenue Fund. The members opposite, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, is attempting to discredit SLGA with the motives that they have to privatize that organization, as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is this NDP government and this minister that are unaccountable and have caused all the mistrust within Liquor and Gaming for the people of Saskatchewan. It is because they have failed to be accountable and they have allowed misappropriation of funds and mispending to go on in the Liquor and Gaming department.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: when will this review be completed and when will the results be known by the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, let me point out once again that SLGA is an active participant in the business of gaming. As with any business, there are investment risks associated with those decisions. We are reviewing the details of that and any related projects to make sure that that information is accurately reported.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if there's any concern by members opposite with respect to any of the details or information, the Crown Corporations Committee, the Public Accounts Committee allows access, detailed access, and access to the officials that deal with any matters related to incidents such as the member is questioning.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 annual reports, Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming paid over \$400,000 to Wascana Gaming incorporated. Last week I submitted a written question asking what services were provided by Wascana Gaming and whether the work was tendered, and the government refused to answer this question.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP refusing to answer this question? What are they hiding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the matter is being reviewed. All the specific details will be released.

The Speaker: — Order, please, members. Order. I would like to be able to hear the response in total.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the review is being undertaken. All the answers will be supplied when they are received, to be totally accurate. And, Mr.

Speaker, once again I can't help but believe that the only purpose that this continues to be raised by the members opposite when they can raise it in other forums, is that they're trying to discredit, trying to discredit the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority which in the last three years has contributed almost 1 billion — \$1 billion — to the General Revenue Fund for health, education, highways, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, over \$400,000 were paid to Wascana Gaming, a company that has clear connections to the NDP, and this was after — may I repeat, after — the mega bingo scandal. The Saskatchewan Party wants to know what services did Wascana Gaming provide and were these contracts tendered. Mr. Speaker, will the minister answer these questions?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, this whole issue is under review at my request and when I have the answers to those questions I'll happily reveal them. Mr. Speaker, that's my intention, that's the reason I asked for the thorough review. It's not to try and elude whatever took place. We will provide the answers when I'm satisfied that they are all the answers to that project and any related projects involved in that mega bingo.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, again we have no answers from the minister of Liquor and Gaming. The people of Saskatchewan have a right to know how the dollars in Liquor and Gaming are spent.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister indicating that Wascana Gaming, the payments in 2000-2001, 2001-2002 are directly related to the mega bingo scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out previously, the Western Canada Lottery Corporation acted as the agent for SLGA in these matters.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I've asked for a review of the participation of that particular project and any related projects. And when that information is made thoroughly available to me, I'll be more than happy to present it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I'll ask one more time on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. Are the payments made to Wascana Gaming in year 2001 and 2002 directly related to the mega bingo scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, this was a major undertaking and a major project. That's one of the reasons that SLGA engaged the Western Canada Lottery Corporation — which I hope the member opposite is not trying to discredit, or any other legitimate business that that member may be trying to discredit

and starting . . . or at least alluding to the fact that only people . . . not everybody can be involved in a business to provide services to the people of this province. When I have that information it will be happily supplied, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Investment in Retx.com

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Mr. Wall: — It's okay, Mr. Speaker. It's okay; they can't help themselves.

Mr. Speaker, between May 2000 and March 2002, SaskTel gambled at least 24.7 million taxpayer dollars to buy 90 per cent of an Internet company in Atlanta, Georgia called Retx.com. And over that period of time the NDP has lost at least \$10 million on its Retx business gamble. Unfortunately for taxpayers, the NDP has now decided to hide Retx.com's financial results so it's impossible for taxpayers to find out where they really stand with this particular investment.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister come clean today? How much money, how much money has the NDP gambled in total on Retx.com in Atlanta, Georgia? And how much money has the NDP lost so far on its business gamble in Atlanta, Georgia?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, you had to know I was going to do this. I looked up two Hawaiian words, Mr. Speaker. It's called hewa and mihi, Mr. Speaker. They mean wrong, blunder, mistake, offence, apologize, confess, regret, repent.

Mr. Speaker, this member from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, this member has no credibility on this issue or any issue. Why should we or the people of Saskatchewan believe this member on this issue or any issue, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's very, very important to note that on the issue the minister's referring to, officials at the company that SaskTel has invested in has confirmed, Mr. Speaker, on two occasions that a subsidiary that they would also be vested in has invested in Honolulu.

And so there will be more answers needed on this one, Mr. Speaker. There are going to be a lot more answers from that minister and from officials who were also denying yesterday that they were involved in their Palm Springs cable TV company which — believe it or not, Mr. Speaker — is reported in SaskTel's annual report, Mr. Speaker, if you can believe it.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the minister is on Retx.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. Order, members. Order. The member has a strong voice but there's just a limit to

how much one person can holler out. So I would just ask all members on the government side, on the opposition side to allow the question to be put.

Mr. Wall: — We know that SaskTel has gambled at least 24.7 million on Retx.com in Atlanta, Georgia. It looks like they've lost over \$10 million. The question was simple. What is the status of the taxpayers' investment in this Atlanta-based dot-com?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I've not seen this for some time — where the member from the opposition from the Sask Party asks the questions yesterday and then starts to answer his own questions today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, at least that member, that member from Swift Current, at least he could . . . the least he could do would be to apologize to the officials at SaskTel that he so discredited yesterday, Mr. Speaker. At least to the officials he could do that, Mr. Speaker. Would he stand in his place and apologize to the officials, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, if there are any apologies due to anyone, it would be an apology needed by the NDP opposite for wasting \$85 million on out-of-province investments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — That's who should stand and apologize today in this legislature to the voters. And it won't make much difference, Mr. Speaker. The voters may even forgive him, but they will never re-elect a government with that kind of misplaced priorities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Never, Mr. Speaker. And part of the reason they won't re-elect him is that the minister will not answer questions. He didn't yesterday on Craig Wireless; he's not today on Retx.

The question's simple. The government has invested \$24 million in this dot-com in Georgia. Taxpayers have lost 10 million more. What is the status of the taxpayers' investment in this Atlanta-based dot-com?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I will again answer the question as I've done 100 times before, Mr. Speaker, and as I did yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, on all of these investments, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel and our Crown corporations over the last 10 years have returned to the people of Saskatchewan, to the taxpayers, \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker — 1.6 billion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Last year alone — last year alone —

\$300 million, Mr. Speaker.

And that member and those members from the Sask Party day after day pick out investments, Mr. Speaker, that are largely start-up — pick out investments that are largely start-up — that had been predicted to lose money in the first few years. I say, what portfolio can't they pick where there are investments in the last two or three years that haven't lost money?

Mr. Speaker, there isn't anybody in the public sector or private sector who, if they could, would not invest in Crown corporations if it were traded publicly, Mr. Speaker because it has returned huge dividends to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How much more money would the taxpayers be enjoying today — how much more — were it not for the squandering of \$28 million on SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), were it not for the squandering of 85 million-plus in one year alone on out-of-province investments by the Crown corporations?

And that is precisely the point. And that's why Saskatchewan people are responding to this party's plan to focus those Crowns on their market here; to focus them on their core function where they have success, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier set a standard a couple of months ago with his SPUDCO review on accountability. He said his government would be coming clean on these kinds of deals.

The question to the minister is simple: what is the status of the taxpayers' investment in the Atlanta-based dot-com, Retx.com?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question many times and I'm going to ask again for that member to answer this question: what does he and what do the Sask Party mean by core functions? What do they mean by core functions, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you exactly what they mean. It means that they can't compete in the lucrative markets like Saskatoon and Regina and maybe some of the larger urban centres.

What that Sask Party wants our Crowns to do is to provide services in rural Saskatchewan, areas that they largely represent, Mr. Speaker, provide services at the lowest, lowest possible rates, Mr. Speaker. They can't do it unless they make investments, Mr. Speaker, that can earn revenues from other places. They can't do it. It means privatization, that's what it means. It means privatization.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it was the Premier of this province, not more than two months ago, who told the people of Saskatchewan in the wake of the SPUDCO scandal, he told the people of the province that his government pledged to the taxpayers to be more accountable with their money, to let them know about what was happening with the NDP's investments.

And the last two days in this legislature, the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation has completely contradicted by his action the Premier's words.

So maybe this question is to the Premier. Does the Premier believe it acceptable, does he believe it acceptable that a minister of the Crown who has authorized the investment of 25 million taxpayer dollars in Georgia, the loss of another \$10 million, does he believe it acceptable for that minister to refuse to answer questions to the taxpayers of this province about that investment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, after the display that we saw in this Assembly yesterday by that member from the Sask Party from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, why should the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, believe anything that that member says, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I could read the quote from Grant Schmidt again, Mr. Speaker, but I think they know it fairly well, Mr. Speaker. The point is, Mr. Speaker, that that Sask Party opposite has one agenda. Their agenda is to discredit our Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, they would put borders up around Saskatchewan so that they don't allow them to invest outside, invest in companies that have potential to bring revenues back into the province. They don't want them to compete in the marketplaces here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They don't want them to survive, Mr. Speaker. That's their agenda. They want to sell them, as the member from Arm River says, when they get the best bang for the buck, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, this is the same minister that characterized the loss of \$28 million in SPUDCO as a success. So, Mr. Speaker, the loss of 85 million and up . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — Well they must be ecstatic, Mr. Speaker, that they managed to lose \$85 million on out-of-province investments, Mr. Speaker, in 2002.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in Janice MacKinnon's book, she highlights some of the reasons why she wanted to leave the government. She points to the wheeler-dealers on the government side that she couldn't abide any longer, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if that's the definition of a wheeler-dealer — somebody that would authorize the expenditure of the investment of taxpayers' money, \$25 million, incur \$10 million in losses on the part of the taxpayers, and then not answer a single question about it.

The question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, is this. The

minister's own annual report says the company will not be cash flow positive until 2004. How much more money will taxpayers lose on this risky dot-com investment they have made on behalf of taxpayers in Atlanta, Georgia?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ecstatic? Well I ask that member from Swift Current from the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, how ecstatic he was as the ministerial adviser to the minister of privatization when they lost, Mr. Speaker, \$2 million a day on interest alone, \$1 billion a year over 10 years, Mr. Speaker. He must have been ecstatic every single day that he worked in this building, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the point that I make again for the people of Saskatchewan — the point that I make again, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Saskatchewan — they can pick any number of investments, Mr. Speaker, any number of investments, where there were losses. Absolutely, they can do it. But they can go to the private sector and they can do that as well.

The point is that SaskTel and all of our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, as a result largely of deregulation in competition, have been forced to look to other marketplaces for sources of revenue. That's what they're doing and they've been hugely successful — \$1.6 billion, 300 million alone last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I ask leave to introduce guests, please.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues opposite and on our side as well. I appreciate the opportunity that you give me leave.

I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery today, Mr. Speaker, some guests that have just joined us: Rod Gopher, and Joe Gopher who is actually the acting chief at the Saulteaux First Nation. If we would please . . . if you would please join me in welcoming these guests to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Humboldt on her feet?

Ms. Julé: — Leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly and would

join with the minister in introducing and welcoming Rod and Joe Gopher to the Assembly today. And I understand that Chief Brian Moccasin is with us also.

Rod Gopher is a consultant on FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) and FAE (fetal alcohol effects), also of the Saulteaux First Nation. And we look forward to meeting with you a little bit later on and talking about your concerns.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to my colleagues in the legislature, it's a pleasure to introduce in the east gallery some fine young gentlemen who are no doubt visiting Regina from Caronport. And one of them is my nephew, Justin Wall, who's currently enrolled at Briercrest there in Caronport.

And he's joined, I know, by two colleagues from the school whose names escape me — although I met one of them and I apologize for that — but I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that all members would join me in welcoming Justin and his friends here from Caronport today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a written response to question no. 148.

The Speaker: — A response to question 148 has been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 19

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Crofford that **Bill No. 19 — The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand here today to speak on this legislation to . . .

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. And as I was saying, I'm very pleased today to stand to speak on this legislation to establish two new provincial honours, namely the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal and the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal, I think this is something that is long overdue in this province. In fact the minister has stated that this particular award has been requested by police forces in the province for some time now. And I just think it would be very interesting for us to know how much time has elapsed since these requests were being made. You know, we don't know if it was two years, whether it's been five years, or perhaps even ten years. And we all realize that this kind of legislation isn't that difficult to introduce. So I would just like to know how much time is involved between the initial request and this Bill being brought forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're all very aware of the government's commitment, of this NDP government's commitment to — or lack of commitment — to the police, provincial police forces. In the 1999 election, this NDP government promised to hire an additional 200 police officers, and of course we all know that that was a commitment that has not been kept.

Mr. Speaker, this Protective Services Medal is not limited to police officers. It also involves firefighters, emergency medical personnel, conservation officers, highway traffic compliance officers, correction personnel, customs and immigration officers, and members of the Canadian Forces are also eligible for this. And, Mr. Speaker, the professions that I have just mentioned are all very worthy as we all know. We all remember the terrorist attack of September 11 in the United States and, incidentally, this announcement of this Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal was made on the first anniversary of that devastating attack that we'll all have a . . . that has an indelible part in all of our minds forever.

We remember the firefighters and the police and their involvement in that event, Mr. Speaker. And I have family that are in the police force. I have a brother, a brother-in-law, and a nephew, and I also have many friends on the local police force and, you know, they are the brunt of much ridicule. We all know that the little jokes that they all are forced to put up with and, you know, but in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, they do a wonderful job and they just don't know what they are going to face on their next trip outside, and that is also the case with all the aforementioned professions.

And I think after the 9/11 attacks, we all have a greater appreciation for these people. And, you know, the volunteer fire departments and everything like that, I think that we should all hold them in very high esteem and, you know, the things, the community events they take part in, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I did a statement on this being volunteerism week and we all are associated with volunteer firefighters, and we remember their involvement in charitable events. The police are involved in torch runs for the mentally challenged and Cops for Cancer. We know of the police that go out and have their heads shaved and just to help with charities such as that.

Mr. Chair, like a lot of this . . . or, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, a lot

of this is . . . the details of this are in Regulations but it is my understanding that this award is for 25 years of exemplary service, but it can also be given out to anyone that is involved in situations — and I'll use 9/11 as an example — within the 25-year period. We also note that the Government of Canada has awards for RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), long-service, good-conduct medals, the police exemplary medal of Canada, as well as other similar medals for corrections and emergency medical services.

And these awards recognize 20 years of service or more which differentiates them from the award proposed in this legislation which will recognize 25 years of service.

This proposed legislation that deals directly with the Protective Service Medal also makes mention that it is distinctive in Canada because it includes such a wide range of protective services and, Mr. Speaker, that is something we support.

During her second reading speech, the minister also mentioned that because this was the first year of the award — since eligibility was effective as of January 1 this year — she expects that there will be a number of presentations, followed by one annually. And, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House certainly hope that those presentations will be spread out throughout the people deserving it throughout the province.

The Saskatchewan Centennial Medal, Mr. Speaker, this is a medal that will be awarded in honour of our province's 100th anniversary to citizens who have made exceptional contributions to the province. And at this time we just aren't sure who does qualify to receive this medal, Mr. Speaker. We know it is for exceptional contributions for this province. So in my view, and I'm sure I speak for all members on this side of the House, we feel that every member of this province, every citizen of this province, should receive a medal.

While it will be an honour to receive the Centennial Medal, it is a one-time award and in all honesty I'm a bit concerned, Mr. Speaker, with this medal. This medal seems to be close in criteria to the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and so that makes it somewhat . . . seem somewhat redundant, time-consuming, and maybe costly to maybe duplicate something that's already in place.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very concerned about the details of this — who is eligible, on what basis will it be handed out, how many participants? There are no details on this and of course this is very typical of this NDP government, they leave everything to regulations. And we all know that the devil is in the details, and this indicates to me once again that the NDP has not done its homework; and that in turn, Mr. Speaker, means a lack of clarity and confusion for the people and organizations that are at the other end of these regulations.

The nature behind this legislation is good, so I encourage the government members to do proper consultation in working out the specifics.

Mr. Chair, I know any person — Mr. Speaker, I keep saying, Mr. Chair — Mr. Speaker, I know any person who receives the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal and the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal will appreciate that this is an official honour

of the Crown and they will also appreciate the fact that they will be presented with this by the Lieutenant Governor or her designate.

(11:00)

Mr. Speaker, we are generally supportive of these amendments proposed in this Bill and any concerns we do have, we will do in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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

Bill No. 6

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 6 — The Podiatry Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today and to speak on Bill No. 6, the Bill respecting the profession of podiatry and making consequential amendments to The Medical Professional Act, 1981.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is important, and needed, and very much appreciated by practitioners of podiatry in Saskatchewan because it updates and modernizes their legislation and the whole framework for their governing council and the way they conduct themselves.

Currently the practice of podiatry is undertaken under the Saskatchewan Association of Chiropodists and this is now bringing that legislation into symmetry, if you like, with the new structures of independent councils and colleges in terms of self-regulating bodies.

Mr. Speaker, chiropodists and podiatrists in the province have been operating under some restraints and difficulties in that many times, working completely within their scopes of practice, they've been unable to call for needed tests or imaging procedures, etc., that would be very beneficial in the practise of their profession. And so, Mr. Speaker, this legislation does create the framework whereby they can, independent of other medical professionals, call for these needed services and operate in a much more professional and effective way.

There are a great deal of antiquated housekeeping items that are updated, as I mentioned, in this Bill, moving it to the practice of podiatry and updating the old chiropodist legislation that has been antiquated.

The association of podiatrists, we've communicated with them, and when the Bill was presented and when we adjourned it last we asked that we would have some time in order to communicate with the people that have been affected by this legislation. And I'm pleased to say that we've been in communication with the Saskatchewan association of podiatrists and they have indicated to us that they have been pressing the government for some time for this much needed legislation. And they are very pleased to see that finally the government has seen fit to bring forward this legislation.

They also indicated to us that while passage of the legislation is

certainly a very important part, they also are very much anxious that the government will commit to proclaiming the administrative sections, at least of this legislation, as early as possible so that they can actually begin the restructuring of their association in a timely fashion.

So I certainly would echo that concern and put it on the public record that we believe that this legislation is worthwhile and that the government should, at the earliest possible moment, proclaim those essential sections at least so that the association can move forward.

Mr. Speaker, it's our pleasure to support this piece of legislation and any detailed questions that we have we can certainly deal with in committee.

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

Bill No. 7

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 7 — The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 7, the Act to amend The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act, 1997 is largely a Bill that is of . . . I could refer to it as a housekeeping nature. There are one and a half pages of clauses and they refer primarily to deleting this phrase and inserting that sort of phrase. And they believe that what this will do will update their legislation and make it more appropriate for their profession.

Mr. Speaker, there are two main areas that are dealt with in this legislation that amends The Occupational Therapists Act and it deals with housekeeping amendments and it also deals with clarifying and strengthening the relationship between this health care profession and information that may be required from regional health authorities.

So when the government has moved to the regional health authorities, some of these housekeeping amendments were required in order to make the transition between the new designations of district health boards and regional authorities apply to various medical professions, and this is the case.

We have been in contact with the occupational therapists in the province and they support the housekeeping nature of this legislation and urge speedy passage of it. And therefore, we can ask any detailed questions in the committee.

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

Bill No. 14

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 14 — The Registered Nurses Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again it's a pleasure to speak on a Bill that has significant impact on a very critical component of our health care system, the registered nurses of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, over the years the registered nurses have expressed a very strong commitment not only to improving the quality of nurses graduating from an educational program and moving from a diploma-prepared profession to a degree-required profession, they also have made ongoing and very significant commitments to continuing education and continued improvement of the competencies to make sure that the people of Saskatchewan are served in a very appropriate way.

Mr. Speaker, there have been always some concerns expressed about saying why would the registered nursing profession want to improve their educational requirements, would want to improve their competencies on an ongoing basis. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it speaks volumes of the commitment that registered nurses have to the health care profession in Saskatchewan. And it is so important that we, as legislators in the province, do everything we can to encourage this ongoing commitment to education and skills development that the registered nurses of Saskatchewan have.

Mr. Speaker, there are those in the province that would say that as long as you can train someone to do the minimum requirements, that that's all we really need. And in essence that we will come to an attitude that I kind of worry about with this government with their reluctance to increase the number of funded education training seats in the province, that we're coming to a time where we say, well almost anybody can do these critical medical kinds of procedures.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the registered nurses of Saskatchewan have to be commended and need to be supported by their commitment to continuing education and improved standards of education in this province.

And rather than looking at the registered nurse profession as sort of an expense base, we should look at it in the much more broad way where we say the results, the medical outcomes, the evidence of what actually happens when we have degree-prepared people and people who have an ongoing commitment to improving their competencies, the results are so much superior to the cheapened-down alternative that I think that registered nurses need to be commended and encouraged to continue this direction that they have of expanding and increasing their competencies and their role and involvement in the health care system in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments to the legislation assist the Registered Nurses' Association to have an ongoing program of improving competencies, and an ongoing procedure for nurses to be involved and involving themselves in improving their skills through an ongoing program.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have certainly commended the Registered Nurses' Association. We've communicated with them about the details of this legislation to see that we wanted to make sure it was going to meet their needs, and making sure that they were satisfied that this legislation was giving them the

tools they needed to meet the high standards and the challenges of the health care profession that they have committed to.

Mr. Speaker, we're assured by the Registered Nurses' Association that this legislation meets those requirements, and therefore we will support this legislation and ask any detailed questions in committee.

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

Bill No. 10

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 10 — The Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to speak to this Bill. I don't think . . . A lot of us don't think about the 4-H Club where we don't get a warm feeling about the club we've been involved with. And I was a member for a number of years when I was younger.

And it's funny how things get indoctrinated in your mind, because I'll never forget the pledge where we pledge our heart to . . . or our head to clearer thinking, our heart to greater loyalty, our hands to larger service for our health, and our community, and our clubs.

And I was a member for a lot of years. Actually I even know the song. Our club had a song and I offered to sing it to our caucus. They wouldn't let me sing it. And I don't know if it was with all the clubs, but I know that song off by heart as well. It's really stuck with me. So at any rate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The members opposite seem to want me to sing it but I don't think they . . . You want to be careful what you wish for, Mr. Speaker, sometimes. But at any rate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, you haven't heard me sing.

I was a member for a number of years and I really appreciated what the 4-H Club did for me and it was . . . There were many skills that I learned that I used throughout my entire life, quite frankly, and I didn't have involvement for a number of years.

And of course I always take the opportunity whenever I can to talk about my own children, and all three of my daughters became members of the 4-H Club. They were in a different club in a different program than I was in because they all chose light horse and of course that wasn't something I could teach them, although I owned a horse. They needed training other than myself in teaching them about horse and horse riding skills. So it's something that I think is so important to the youth of Saskatchewan.

For the most part this Bill, Mr. Speaker, appears to be housekeeping in nature. The most significant change is a change to the board of trustees. I notice that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, who used to be quite a significant donator to the 4-H clubs, no longer is. They also were no longer attending the meetings so therefore they will be dropped from the board as a member. And I understand it's by request.

So it's not surprising to see that changes have to be made to this piece of legislation periodically, simply because the 4-H Club is Canada's longest running rural-based youth development organization.

And it's quite exciting, but it'll be celebrating its 90th anniversary in the year 2003. So I think that's quite a milestone and it says a lot for the organization — how well it's been run and the value that it has to not only our province but for the entire country.

Although the 4-H program originated for the purpose of improving agriculture and enriching rural life, it's expanded quite a great deal, Mr. Speaker, into other areas that will benefit all youth in the province, not just those that are from farm origin.

The Saskatchewan 4-H Council has listed four goals, Mr. Speaker, for its members and I would like to just state what those are.

And the first is to gain knowledge and skills in areas that are interesting and useful to them. The second is to develop leadership skills, health, lifestyles, decision-making skills, and self-confidence. The third is to learn how to work together. And the fourth is to understand and appreciate the natural environment.

And from my personal experience with the 4-H organization, both myself personally and my children later on, I think that the 4-H organization not only meets these goals but exceeds them by far. They do an exceptional job in working with our youth.

(11:15)

The Governor General, Adrienne Clarkson, once commented, and I would like to quote what her comments were:

The simple ideals of responsibilities, skillfulness and compassion towards others have been the . . . (cornerstone) of the Canadian 4-H community since its inception in 1913. Through the program's . . . (agriculture) competitions, cultural exchanges and public speaking events, young people from across the country are not only gaining essential skills to become the leaders of tomorrow, but they are also making friends and building memories that will last a lifetime.

And I think that's very well said, Mr. Speaker, because I know that that is indeed what the 4-H organization strives to do.

The focus of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, is really, truly on our youth. We feel that the youth of this province are so important, and I know on a personal level I cannot express enough how important I feel our youth are. We want to look at policies and things that we can do within our province that will help the development of our youth, that will help to educate our youth, and will help to brighten the futures for our youth.

The 4-H organization has been a major player for many, many years in shaping our youth and in teaching them valuable skills — skills that they can use for many years throughout their lives. And I have no doubt that the 4-H organization will continue to

do such a great job.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has said a number of times that our goal is to grow the province by 100,000 people in 10 years. And quite frankly it is a modest goal, Mr. Speaker, because it is only the average of other Canadian provinces.

If — when, I should say, Mr. Speaker — when we become government and we set that goal into motion and we do start to grow this province, it'll be . . . there will be a greater demand, quite frankly, for the 4-H organization. There will be a demand for them to expand their programs, there will be a demand for them to meet the needs of more and more youth within our province, and I have no doubt that they will meet those challenges and do an extremely good job of it, Mr. Speaker.

I think that that's an exciting prospect — a prospect of a youth organization needing to expand because of more youth within our province.

Unlike the NDP government which keeps on predicting gloom and doom for our province, who are planning for 35,000 less students by the end of the decade, unlike that government, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party's going to grow this province. And in growing this province, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have more youth. And we're going to have more youth that are going to need more programs. And that's exciting, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan Party finds that planning for a reduction of youth in our province is totally, absolutely unacceptable. We know that as our province grows we will have a stronger economy, we will have a brighter future for our youth, and we will be able to see more of our youth choosing to stay in our province because of that bright future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — It's quite sad, Mr. Speaker, that we've had a government that so long . . . that seems convinced that the province can't grow, that the economy can only grow if the government invests taxpayers' dollars to compete and to drive away, quite frankly, the private sector investment. And that they're so convinced that we can't grow, that there's going to be a population demand, that they plan for a reduction of the youth of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about the province's future, and our youth are absolutely a vital, key component to that bright future. As our youth increase, organizations that work with the youths . . . youth will become more and more critical and more and more important for our province.

Mr. Speaker, with a future Saskatchewan Party government we will rid the province of the NDP-mediocre gloom and doom attitude that the province cannot grow.

We will be supporting this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and we will have a few questions to ask when it goes into committee. I thank you.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Labour
Vote 20**

Subvote (LA01)

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's very good to be here this morning to answer questions that the opposition may have. And first I would like to introduce the people from the department that are here.

To my left is Christine Tanner, deputy minister of Labour. Directly behind myself is Jim Nicol, assistant deputy minister. Directly behind Christine is John Boyd, executive director of planning and policy division. Next, across the aisle from Jim is Sharon Ackerman, manager of budget and operations. And sitting directly behind Jim is Peter Federko, chief executive officer of the Workers' Compensation Board. And behind the board, kind of scattered amongst members, we have Allan Walker, executive director, occupational health and safety division; Corrine Bokitch, director, Status of Women office; and Eric Greene, director of labour standards.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, thank you to the minister and welcome her officials here today.

This is the first time we've had an opportunity to dive into the Labour estimates, but it's also the first time that I've been in charge of . . . or overseeing any one department as far as a critic so it's a bit of a learning experience as we go through it today for myself.

I have the globals here that I'll pass over right off the bat if you can give me some sort of an estimate and how long it will take to fill these out. This is a yearly event and that type of thing. So I'll pass those over right now.

But before I get into the budget or the estimates specifically, I would ask the minister, are there any new programs? What is the direction for the Department of Labour going forward? Are there new programs, new initiatives, that type of thing? So I'd just ask the minister that to begin with.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — For the members opposite, basically the Department of Labour, we are not looking at any brand new programs for this year, enhancing some of the current programs of course — the Ready for Work, working with young workers — enhancing and working on the programs that are established within the department. But there's no new major focus that we're addressing this year.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When I look at the estimates here in the budget book, in the first . . . and I'm just going to go through it really kind of line by line and get you to explain some of the differences from last year to this year's estimates, from the 2002-03 estimates to the 2003-04 estimates.

And the first one is a variance of \$110,000 increase under

administration. I would ask the minister, why the increase of 110,000 through administration?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, the member was asking about the administration line in the vote 20. What it is, is an adjustment in some of the accounting to better account for the staff that we have. And it also takes into account salary increment adjustments and also some dollars that were set aside for staff training were put into the administration line to do more central training for staff within the department.

Mr. McMorris: — Could the minister explain, maybe elaborate a little bit more on keeping track of staff? I know she certainly had mentioned about more training. I can understand that and increase in wages. But the first reason, I wasn't quite clear on and if she could maybe elaborate on that a little bit more please.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The minister's office is taken into account in the administration cost, also the deputy minister's office, the assistance deputy minister, human resources, administration, and information technology. Those were all put into one line, whereas before they had been accounted for in different lines, not all, but it's clearer for the administration costs within the department.

Mr. McMorris: — As we go down through the vote 20 of the estimates on Labour, we get to the labour support services and I see a variance of about 60, \$70,000 there. Could you please explain the difference there, an increase of roughly about 60 to \$70,000?

(11:30)

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Support services entails a number of projects and services that are provided throughout the department. But the main increase would be a communications person designated to the Status of Women office and the changes that were made a little less than a year ago. So that's where that new position shows up.

Mr. McMorris: — When I was looking at the staffing complement, there really is, I guess, there is a bit of an increase of staffing of about a half a person. Is that correct? And would that then be what you're explaining as far as the communications person for the Status of Women's office and it would fall under there? Is that how that all works together then?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Now I apologize to the member opposite for taking so long. I was listening to the page ask a question. Yes, the point four does have to do with the Status of Women office and the changes that were made a year ago.

Mr. McMorris: — The largest increase as we go through the votes is under labour standards, and it's an increase of \$193,000 with labour standards — an increase. We realized last year that . . . Last session we went through the whole changing of the legislation to include hog operations and labour standards in that area. When I look at the budget and its increase of 193,000, would that be where it's targeted to? Or what would the increase under labour standards of 193,000 be all about?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The member may

have done some calculations and when you look at the total increases to the Department of Labour budget, it ends up being \$412,000 was our total increase right across the board: 193,000 of that goes to salary increases and increments through contracts and negotiations; 182,000 went to the readjustments and changes within the Status of Women office.

And also there's an extra 37,000 that is in the labour standards division. What we are doing is looking at a type of program — we're going through some consultations currently — to try and have an effect on repeat offenders with offences as far as labour standards go. So we're looking at some way of accomplishing that, so that's really what the extra funds is designated towards.

Mr. McMorris: — So the majority of the increase in the department then is really increments and increasing in the staffing. And there is some portion of it going towards what you had just mentioned, a bit of a study.

I think I'd just . . . Unless there is something else the minister wants to say on that, I have a couple of questions on the Labour Relations Board. I see that the estimate has dropped down a slight bit — I think \$14,000 or \$15,000 — so that really is not much of a variance. But could you . . . I guess what I would like to hear from the minister is kind of an explanation on how the Labour Relations Board works, who's on the Labour Relations Board, and what is the mandate of the Labour Relations Board.

We certainly hear on this side of the House an awful lot about the Labour Relations Board, whether it's through some of the businesses that we've talked to and even some of the members of different unions that have been in front of the Labour Relations Board. So could I get you to give me kind of a broad-brush explanation on what the Labour Relations Board is all about, who makes it up, and what is their mandate?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, in regards to the questions concerning the Labour Relations Board and its composition, the board is really a quasi-judicial administrative tribunal that's independent of government. The board is composed of equal members of representatives from business and labour that we seek nominations from the various groups, whether it be labour groups or business groups — chamber of commerce is one that pops to mind right away. They put forward representatives and what we do is make a special attempt to be representative of all the industries and areas and various sectors throughout the province.

So there is a good cross-section of knowledge of industry and business throughout the province and a good base of knowledge from workers and working people throughout the province in various sectors, so that the board has a balance. The board members are appointed. Some of the terms alternate so that you don't have a total change of the board all in one swoop or all of the terms expiring all at once.

But the Labour Relations Board, as I say it's arm's length from government and it is established under and also administers The Trade Union Act.

Mr. McMorris: — I guess my other question then is the mandate of what . . . I mean, I realize that if there's a labour dispute, either business or labour can bring it in front of the

Labour Relations Board to be ruled on. What is the whole mandate? What are some of the issues that the Labour Relations Board would deal with? What is its mandate, I guess? Is it just strictly dispute resolution or what is the mandate of the Labour Relations Board?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The Labour Relations Board has, as I say, it is established under and administers a piece of legislation that we refer to as The Trade Union Act, so it has a variety of powers. It can certify trade unions, require persons to refrain from unfair labour practices, reinstate, compensate employees that have been discharged contrary to the Act. There's also provisions with technological change. Its boundaries are The Trade Union Act.

The number of applications that can go to the board can cover a wide range of issues, but it is empowered by The Trade Union Act and that's what it administers.

Mr. McMorris: — So if an employee or a business or whatever had a discrepancy with, you know, employee to business or vice versa, union to business owner, they would take the dispute to the Labour Relations Board and have the Labour Relations Board rule on whatever that dispute may be. In other words, they go in front of the Labour Relations Board.

I guess either party can initiate that process. And roughly how many disputes have been in front of the Labour Relations Board in the past year?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, when you get into a unionized workplace there is a collective agreement that would be in place. Collective agreements quite often have procedures built into the agreement that will address a grievance process, depending . . . it will have various time lines but there will be a grievance process that will be addressed within the agreement. Those steps would be gone through or dispute resolution would be established within the collective agreement. Those steps would be gone through before there would be an application to the board. But it is still within the bounds of The Trade Union Act that the board has any jurisdiction.

Mr. McMorris: — Could the minister then please give me like, just an example then, of a case that would go in front of the Labour Relations Board? I believe there's hoops to go through then to get to the Labour Relations Board, but just a generic case that would be heard by the Labour Relations Board. I mean, they have already gone through the dispute resolution and it hasn't been resolved. That's why they would carry on up to the Labour Relations Board.

Could you give me an example of a case that would be in front of the Labour Relations Board. And I don't want specifics at all — I'm not asking for that — but just the type of a case that the Labour Relations Board would be ruling on.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Just as an example: first collective agreements, reinstatements, monetary loss, certification orders, unfair labour practice applications, or duty and fair representation applications.

Mr. McMorris: — I would appreciate if I could see that list

that you just read off there. I have a couple of questions on that.

You were saying about certification. How does decertification . . . If a union, for example, the members of a union, of a particular union, wanted to decertify, would they then go in front of the Labour Relations Board and that's how that process would work? And if the majority, for example, 90 per cent of the employees in a certain business say that they want to decertify and they go in front of the Labour Relations Board, then the Labour Relations Board would allow them to decertify or maintain the certification that they are already in? Is that how the process works? Or would that be one of the examples too?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Yes. A decertification would be heard in front of the Labour Relations Board in basically the process that you laid out.

Mr. McMorris: — So roughly . . . I ask the question just kind of right at the end of another question. How many cases then would the Labour Relations Board hear in a year, for example? And I would be also very interested to hear how many cases regarding decertification the Labour Relations Board has heard in the past year and how many it has granted.

(11:45)

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — For the member opposite, in the year 2001-2002 there was a total of 336 cases heard before . . . or by the board. So that would cover the whole scope of the cases that they hear.

And preliminary numbers that I have, were 14 rescission note applications. Nine were granted, four dismissed, and one was withdrawn last year.

Mr. McMorris: — Could you just repeat that last number? You said 14 were heard by the Labour Relations Board as far as decertification — nine were granted, four dismissed? Okay.

I think I'll turn it over to my colleague from Kindersley to ask a few questions . . . some more generic questions on labour.

Mr. Dearborn: — . . . Mr. Chair, I thank . . . I'd like to begin by thanking the minister and her officials, and I hope she will have some leniency with me. This is my first participation in estimates and I have many questions to ask because it is somewhat new to me.

I wanted to start right from the budget on page 88. With regards to salaries, could you tell me how many people are employed by the department in full-time, three-quarter time, and half-time? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, the department has 176.3 FTEs, which is full-time equivalents, and that's how our staffing is calculated.

Now if you'd need more of a breakdown than that, we don't have the information on us right now but we can get it to you as soon as possible.

Mr. Dearborn: — Another generic question for the minister. Just under the administration again, supplier and other

payments. What would these payments be made for, what type of things? Could you just explain that to me? Thanks.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Really what this total is is anything that's not salary. So it can be contractual services, advertising, printing that was done by the department, travel, business expenses, supplies and services, equipment, and fixed assets. So it really is a miscellaneous kind of category.

Mr. Dearborn: — With regards to the labour support services and the information services particularly, could you just explain to me what that means? The information services, what type of services they provide? That would be helpful. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member from Kindersley, information services is really a number of areas that we deal with. One is the communications staff. The communications staff put together the brochures that we use, whether it's for occupational health and safety, prevention, that type of thing.

Also, this information services contains prevention services which does our occupational health and safety and our labour standards training. The educational portion is held there.

Also, the computer, the IT (information technology) that the department has not only within house, but what we're working on is to get our information and brochures on-line. So that's what's contained in the information services.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I have two questions following that. Could you elaborate a little bit on the dissemination of the information with regards to pamphlets and whatnot — how are those distributed, who receives them, what is the target audience?

And then the second aspect, which would be with regards to the IT side, the tech side. Is that done in-house for all the computer programming, Web-site design, and whatnot or is that contracted, and if it is contracted, to what extent? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To the member opposite, IT is done in-house. We have our own staff that do that in-house; it is two people. The Web server is not in the house; that is outside.

Now when you talk about . . . when you ask the question about brochures, the department puts out a wide range of brochures. It can range from technical bulletins that can be sent out whether it is something to do with hantavirus, occupational health and safety, mines regulations — I mean we just cover the whole areas of Saskatchewan's business and agricultural sectors. I mean we just cover everything. So there's a number of brochures that go out.

Occupational health and safety, there may be brochures explaining labour standards. There is a program that deals with young people entering the workforce, working safe, ready-for-work programs. There's also the farm safety council that puts out a variety of brochures and information that is focused in that area.

When these brochures are printed they would be sent to traditional users of this information where it could be accessed;

could be sent out to our offices throughout the province where you may access it there. Also upon request, you could request information if you wanted anything specific from the department. Quite often that will help . . . or happen. We also have a library of videos that can be accessed for teaching classes, training sessions, whether it's in the workplace, in the school, or wherever.

So there's quite a body of information and resource that we do produce and there's a variety of ways of accessing it. And we're working towards getting more on-line but not everything is available there, but we still have the traditional printed forms that are available.

And if there's anything that you're interested in, you can contact my office or the department and we'd gladly get you any information that you would require.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Minister. With regards to the pamphlets being printed and whatnot, would there be one specifically on sexual harassment in the workplace and how is that disseminated to . . . Again, an important issue which affects all working persons.

And further, just for contact to the department for my information, if a worker or employer wants to get in touch, I take it there's 1-800 numbers also to contact. Thank you for your nod on that.

On the other issue, I'd appreciate an answer.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To the member opposite, The Occupational Health and Safety Act within this province has since 1996 required that every workplace have a harassment policy.

Many will be done . . . You can appreciate that in a unionized workforce, there may be more information. Many are negotiated or referred to in collective agreements. But other workplaces are also required to have a policy and there are guides through the department that are available to help an employer establish a policy within that workplace.

If the guide isn't adequate, we also have officers that are more than willing to come out and work with any workplace to establish a policy for that workplace.

(12:00)

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, would those guidelines that would be set, would they be in concurrence with the own standards that our Public Service Commission sets for the workers directly of the Saskatchewan Government? Would it be the same information in those pamphlets and whatnot?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The policy that the department has is basic and what it does is establish the criteria for harassment policies. I mean a number of these, just kind of roughly, is that a policy will be developed in each workplace, and if there is an employee committee within the workplace that it be done in consultation with employees or the committee. And also that employees need to be aware that the policy is there. And also

there's a requirement that it be posted.

Now it is the basics that we have within our legislation and each employer and employee group will develop a policy that suits their workplace while maintaining the basics that are contained within the legislation.

Mr. Dearborn: — Two following questions with that with regards to the basics within that legislation. I would assume that the terminology of zero tolerance is put forward and that should be the standard that we're holding all businesses and places of employment accountable to.

And secondly, if the minister would be able to give me a cost of the monies spent by the department specifically with regards to reaching workplaces, around the information about promoting zero tolerance and sexual harassment policies in the workplace. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Now to the member opposite, I actually forgot a piece when we were talking about the basic criteria of the policy. And part of it is — and this is very important — is that there has to be a process of dealing with a complaint laid out within the policy. Not only can this be a very awkward and uncomfortable situation, but there has to be a clear process on how it is dealt with, who the harassment should be reported to. I mean there's a number of things that have to be taken into consideration. But that's actually a very important part of the policy.

When you had asked about costs that the department spends on this area specifically, officers may deal, or there may be inquiries, either through the phone or to an officer anywhere from 2 to 300. To give you an actual breakdown on that would be timely, or time-consuming, and I'm not sure how accurate it would be to break out specific issues that each officer dealt with. But we could get you a cost of the publications and brochures that are specific to this area and we will get that out for you.

Your comments about the zero tolerance, the department focuses more on prevention. So the terminology that we use is different. The zero tolerance term really deals to the acceptability of this issue and our whole focus is on prevention. So it's not a wording that we would use or terminology that we would use.

And our whole focus, I say again, is the design of the information we use. And the criteria of the policies that we use are all focused on prevention and preventing harassment wherever it may occur.

Mr. Dearborn: — I'd like to thank the minister for her answer. I'd like to turn now . . . I'm going to ask the minister, please, some general questions surrounding the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

The first question that I would ask is, when bids come in, what is the process for recognizing that the members making bids are unionized organizations?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) faded away as of December 2000, so I

don't know if there's any relevance to the question.

Mr. Dearborn: — Could the minister tell me what replaced the CCTA? I take it that there's a new organization. Maybe she could give me the name and acronym?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — When the CCTA ended as of December 2000, what happened was there was a series of tendering guidelines that the government established to guide the way tendering is done through the tendering agencies. Just roughly: fairness in awarding government contracts; a tendering process that will be open and transparent; a stable, viable construction industry throughout the province, including policies that ensure the attraction of young people into the industry — and I will hope that the members opposite will agree that that is very important, that we attract young people — and the assurance of qualified, certified workforce.

And also the retention of a skilled workforce within the province — this is a concern everywhere — jobs for Saskatchewan workers and businesses. And also there is a part here where we have to respect interprovincial mobility that happens in . . . under a variety of agreements. Safe working conditions, that's also one of the guidelines. Competitive wages to ensure a stable, qualified workforce within the province. Fiscal responsibility to provincial taxpayers; that's also one of the guidelines. Harmonious labour relations in the construction industry is a goal of these guidelines.

And also, high-quality work. That's one thing that we require within any government contracting. And employment equity initiatives, which is very important to be inclusive and include all members of our province and all members of our workforce, no matter where they are in this province. Those are important.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The member from Kindersley asked about the CCTA and we realize that it was disbanded in the year 2000. It was replaced by the construction industrial labour relations Act. But we still have a few questions on the CCTA.

The CCTA was put in place so that all government work would be done with unionized workers. Is that correct? Was that the intent of the CCTA? I realize it's not in place now, but I want to get the grasp of the whole intent of what the CCTA mandate was, what . . . It was to make all Crown work done through unionized contractors, is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I wasn't the minister of Labour at the time, so I am not going to answer questions on something that was brought into force and dissolved long before I was here. You may have your general attitudes as to what it . . . or what it did or didn't do. And I apologize; I'm not privy to those.

Mr. McMorris: — I find it interesting that the minister wouldn't know what the CCTA agreement was all about. It's only two years past, two and a half years past since it was dissolved.

I find it very interesting that the Minister of Labour would not have any knowledge of what the CCTA stood for, why it was put into place, and why it was dissolved. That's a simple question and I think it's only fair for the minister to answer that

question.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I guess on a more general note — I'm not going to speak specifically to a old piece of legislation — this government believes, much the same as many other governments, that when contracting is done with taxpayers' dollars, it should be . . . there should be requirements and criteria attached to it.

Mr. McMorris: — Well to the minister, I mean the CCTA was definitely that. It was for Crown work to be done by unionized contractors. It's as simple as that. That was the whole intent of it.

The reason these questions are coming up now — and I would have loved to have asked, or the Labour critic would have loved to have asked these questions in the year 2000 when the CCTA was still in place — but it was only in December 2002 when the minister finally came through and told us that the whole SPUDCO issue, and one of the reasons why it was shown as a government partnership with private industry, was to avoid the very CCTA that your government put into place.

So the question is, is not the . . . What would happen with the government if they knew a Crown bid was let out and it wasn't offered to a union contractor under the CCTA? What was the punishment in place in the year 2000 when Crown work was done by non-unionized workers? Was there any punishment? Was it ever kept track of?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — There again I say to the member opposite, I wasn't the minister of Labour then. I wasn't involved in the discussions on this piece of legislation. It's something that I think is irrelevant at this point in time.

(12:15)

Mr. McMorris: — I personally don't think it's irrelevant at this point in time. We finally found out about the SPUDCO issue, the \$28 million loss by your government, and one of the very main planks of why your government put that through as a government-private partnership was to avoid your very legislation, the CCTA.

Now I'm sorry that as the minister that . . . You weren't the minister then but certainly your department knew what the CCTA stood for and now knows that the department . . . the minister from P.A. (Prince Albert) Northcote who has apologized for misleading the public on that private-public partnership — the department knows that that agreement was in place.

What will the department be doing to correct the absolute misleading information that the minister put forward to avoid your own agreement?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, the CCTA was under the jurisdiction of the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation, so your question may be more appropriately addressed there or at Crown Corporations.

Mr. McMorris: — I had asked the minister earlier about some of the specific cases that would go in front of a Labour

Relations Board. Frankly, I would think this would be a classic case that would go in front of the Labour Relations Board. It would be an agreement that was put in place by your government, and also an agreement that was broke by your government. There are workers that were working on that site that were probably non-unionized workers, a pile of them. Should have they not been, by your very agreement, by law should they have not been unionized employees working on that construction site?

In light of all the information that we've received lately . . . You know, the investigation done by Ernst & Young specifically states that it was a misleading statement to say that it was a private-public partnership, and the reason it was stated that way was to avoid your own Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. Wouldn't this be a case that a Labour Relations Board should investigate because no doubt it was a Crown job and it was non-unionized contractors doing the construction work?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The Labour Relations Board, as we've discussed right at the beginning of this session of estimates, was that the Labour Relations Board is mandated . . . established under and bound by The Trade Union Act. And that's the piece of legislation that it deals with.

I can probably get you some information, give you a little better understanding, but this isn't something that would fall under their mandate.

Mr. McMorris: — Could the minister explain to me then, if a private company avoids the new Construction Industry Labour Relations Act — if they're double-breasting or whatever — what is the punishment; how is that all corrected then? How do you keep track of whether they're double-breasting or not? And who is the governing body that determines whether they are? Does that not go in front of the Labour Relations Board?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, if there was a concern with a company that was felt to be double-breasting, the appropriate paperwork would have to be done and an application would be put before the Labour Relations Board.

And they would make the decision under the CILRA (The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act) as to whether it was double-breasting or not.

Mr. McMorris: — So I don't . . . maybe I'm not getting this clear then. You're saying that if, under the new construction industrial labour relations Act, if a company wasn't following through with that Act, there'd be proper application put towards the Labour Relations Board, and the Labour Relations Board would hear that case, that the company was not following the Act in accordance to the Act.

And this labour relations Act replaced the CCTA, and what you're telling me is that the CCTA though had no relationship to the Labour Relations Board? In other words, if a company had bid on a government contract and did the work with non-unionized workers, that there was no penalty at all. In other words, the CCTA really meant absolutely nothing. Is that what you're saying?

Or if a company that bid on a government contract and was a non-unionized contractor, what was the punishment through the CCTA? Did it not go in front of the Labour Relations Board? You were saying before that it didn't.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, we're having . . . Where the problem is, is that the Labour Relations Board administers and is established under The Trade Union Act, which is an Act which regulates the processes that employer/employees follow in various workplaces, various situations. So that really is the essence of it. It is an employee-employer relationship. We're getting into some confusion over that.

I still say to the member opposite, your questions may be served better to a different minister.

Mr. McMorris: — We'll leave the Labour Relations Board out of it. If a contractor bid on a government job and it was found out that they were not using unionized workers — on a government job over the last five years — what was the punishment for that contractor or was there any punishment at all? Or did that . . . again, does the CCTA really mean anything?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, when you think of the Department of Labour, I would like to make some clarifications here. There's many things that the Department of Labour does. We administer a variety of Acts that cover occupational health and safety, the labour standards, prevention services — there's a variety of things.

We are not a tendering agency of government so this wouldn't be something that we were involved in. We don't tender for the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. McMorris: — I guess my question then would be who would be responsible for the five or eight or ten years that the CCTA was in place? Which department was responsible for overseeing the CCTA agreement? Because you know when it was changed, it was through the Department of Labour.

I remember when this Construction Industry Labour Relations Act came through, it was to replace the CCTA. Who was in charge of the CCTA when it was in place for government?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, it dealt with . . . the amendments that were changed in 2000 dealt with the double breasting of companies. It didn't deal at all with the CCTA or what was at that time, the CCTA.

Mr. McMorris: — We realize that . . . I mean it was kind of a, because we're going to dissolve the CCTA, here was a bit of a carrot and we'll introduce this Act which eliminated double breasting. Although they weren't exactly tied to CCTA and the new labour relations Act, it was kind of an offset. We're dissolving the CCTA but . . . That was the way it was talked about during the time, in the year 2000, and '99, 2001.

But you know when the CCTA was in place and we had questions regarding that, I believe we were asking the Minister of Labour questions on the CCTA. So the agreement fell, and

correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe it fell under the Department of Labour. Well the author of that agreement, was that not the Department of Labour?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To the member opposite, the CCTA was a policy that was in place negotiated by the tendering agencies to address issues at that time.

When the CCTA ended as of 2000, December 2000, the guidelines, government tendering guidelines were put in place. Those are still there and have been in use over the last couple of years.

The CILRA amendments that were made during 2000 addressed a double-breasting issue that had been happening in Saskatchewan and is allowed in no other province across this country. Our legislation was brought in line with legislation that is still in other parts of this country, right across.

The committee reported progress.

(12:30)

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, this being the weekend that many of the . . . your Ukrainian constituents will be celebrating the Easter holiday, I would ask members if they might just remember if they meet with some of these constituents on Sunday, that they might meet with the traditional greeting which says, Chrystos Voskres. Members, have a good weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:32.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
PRESENTING PETITIONS	
Draude	713
Elhard	713
Hillson	713
Stewart	713
Eagles	713
Bakken	713
Huyghebaert	713
Dearborn	713
Brkich	714
Hart	714
Allchurch	714
READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS	
Deputy Clerk	714
NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS	
Allchurch	714
Stewart	714
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS	
Nilson	714
McCall	714
Sonntag	714, 721
Julé	721
Wall	721
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Enhancement of Disability Allowances	
Prebble	715
National Volunteer Week	
Eagles	715
Small Business Loans Association	
Yates	715
Lifetime Achievement Award to Spiritwood Man	
Allchurch	716
Implementation of School^{PLUS}	
Jones	716
Humboldt Broncos Win Anavet Cup	
Julé	716
Legislative Committees	
Van Mulligen	716
ORAL QUESTIONS	
Mega Bingo	
Bakken	717
Osika	717
SaskTel Investment in Retx.com	
Wall	719
Sonntag	719
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Yates	721
The Speaker	721
GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 19 — The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2003	
Eagles	721
Bill No. 6 — The Podiatry Act	
Gantefoer	723
Bill No. 7 — The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act, 2003	
Gantefoer	723
Bill No. 14 — The Registered Nurses Amendment Act, 2003	
Gantefoer	724
Bill No. 10 — The Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation Amendment Act, 2003	
Harpauer	724

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund — Labour — Vote 20

Higgins	726
McMorris	726
Dearborn	728