

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition signed by citizens here in the province of Saskatchewan regarding an issue with the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation who announced that the 2003 premiums charged to farmers will increase by up to 52 per cent and further. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

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

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Lucky Lake, Macrorie, Birsay, and Beechy.

And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people in my constituency who are very concerned about the high cost of education tax on their 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 who have signed this petition are all from Wadena.

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I rise on behalf of citizens of Moose Jaw concerned about a lack of hemodialysis services. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Moose Jaw, and I'm proud to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me honour again to stand today to present a petition on behalf of producers in the Cypress Hills constituency. This petition refers to the Crown grazing lease renewals that has been such a controversial issue in my constituency. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the

current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by citizens of the community of Mendham.

I so present.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the astonishing 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 the necessary action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

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 farmers in my area, very concerned about the huge increase in crop insurance premiums. 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 Sask 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by residents of Estevan, Bienfait, Torquay, and Grenfell.

I so present. Thank you.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition again from citizens of rural Saskatchewan who are extremely concerned about the lack of access to adequate health care and emergency services. 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 the Five Hills Health District Region to provide better information to the citizens of Rockglen.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Rockglen, Fife Lake, and Lisieux.

I so present.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are worried about rural depopulation and small school closures. The petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its position on the isolated schools grants and have them reinstated for negative grant divisions; and further, stop the discrimination against the rural citizens by supplying a quality education central in their community.

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

This is signed, Mr. Speaker, by the good folks from Major, Macklin, and Compeer.

I so present.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today to present on behalf of citizens who continue to be concerned with the condition of Highway 22 between the junctions of Highway 6 and Junction 20. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 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 Earl Grey, Strasbourg, Moose Jaw, Markinch, Regina, and Southey.

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 crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers. 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from my home centre of Spiritwood and also Shell Lake.

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning the provision of adequate medical

services in Rockglen; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 27, 35, 36, 40, and 42.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 32 ask the government the following questions:

To the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: on what date was the final agreements to implement mega bingo adopted and who was the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming when this occurred; who sits on the board of Western Canada Lotteries Corporation as Saskatchewan's representatives and when were they appointed and by who; what is the provincial marketing organization; what is its mandate and organization structure?

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 32 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Industry and Resources: what is the total dollar amount, including monies invested in equity, working capital, loans and/or loan guarantees that the Government of Saskatchewan has invested into the OSB plant at Meadow Lake?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce three individuals seated in the east gallery. One of the people doesn't need a great deal of introduction to people here in Regina because he lives here in Regina. He's the senior manager with KPMG, and of course he served as the Deputy Chair of the Boundaries Commission. And as a result of the work of that Boundaries Commission, the two people that are seated with him now have become constituents because they live in the community of Kamsack. And I'm referring to Stu Pollon of course, here in Regina, and Mary and Harry Pollon who live in the community of Kamsack.

Mr. Speaker, they've contributed to the population of Saskatchewan and I want to indicate that six of their children live in the province of Saskatchewan. That's a great number. But, Mr. Speaker, seven also live outside the province of Saskatchewan. So I'm not indicating how large their family is, but I'm sure that people would recognize that total.

But a very special event is occurring this summer, Mr. Speaker, for the Pollons, their upcoming 60th wedding anniversary this August. And I'd like all members to join me in welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Harry Pollon and their son, Stu, to the legislature this afternoon.

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

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had to work hard to find this group, Mr. Speaker. They seem to be redirected to other members earlier and I would apologize to them for a mix-up that had occurred.

But I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, students from the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) Wascana Campus, English as a second language program. There are 15 adult students, Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Ron Mang.

I'm looking forward to being able to visit with them for a few moments after question period. And I'd ask all members to join with me in greeting the students from the English as a second language program at the SIAST Wascana Campus.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, two gentlemen seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Bill Baker and Mr. Gary Bosgood. That's Bill Baker, Mr. Speaker, the undertaker of Saskatchewan Roughrider fame and Gary Bosgood, recent recipient of the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in business and technology.

Bill and Gary are partners in many ventures, among them bringing clean coal technology and pilot projects to Saskatchewan. I hope all members will extend a warm welcome to these fine gentlemen.

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I would like to extend our welcome to the English as a second language participants that have attended the House this afternoon.

I understand Saskatchewan has developed an exceptionally good reputation as an ESL (English as a second language) training area. We have several institutions that participate in that program and we've welcomed students from around the world, and we're happy to welcome this group of students to the legislature today. And once again I'd like to extend our warmest welcome to them.

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

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### National Day of Mourning

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been 15 years since Nadine Hunt, who was then president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, asked me to introduce a private members' Bill to make April 28 a statutory Day of Mourning for people who are killed and injured on the job . . . for workers who are killed and injured on the job.

I was proud to do that, Mr. Speaker, and prouder still that this Assembly passed the Bill unanimously, making Saskatchewan the first jurisdiction in Canada to observe this day. Now it is recognized across the country, and today our flags fly at half-mast at the Legislative Building and government buildings across the province.

Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day the Minister of Labour will read 20 names into *Hansard*. These are the names of the 20 people who died in the province this last year due to work-related injury or illness. It's five fewer than last year, but unfortunately twenty more than any of us would want to accept.

Mr. Speaker, today is a day to remember all the people who have lost their lives in the building of our communities and our province and our nation. It's also a time to renew our commitment to ensuring the safety of workers.

Mr. Speaker, everyone involved in the workplace is responsible for identifying and controlling health and safety hazards in the workplace. And, Mr. Speaker, it is our roles as members of this Assembly to support workers' rights and safety through the legislative tools at our command. So on this Day of Mourning, let us recommit to keeping strong our occupational health and safety legislation, and all other laws that regulate conditions in the workplace. For the working people of this province, Mr. Speaker, we can do no less.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I join with the minister in recognizing a National Day of Mourning to remember workers who have died on the job, who were disabled or injured in the workplace, or have been afflicted by industrial illness.

Twenty people died in Saskatchewan last year due to work-related incidents. An unsettling fact of these incidents is that they were preventable. They were preventable and are preventable into the future. Across Canada about 800 to 1,000 employees lose their lives on the job each year.

The importance of workplace safety cannot be stressed enough, but education is the key — education of employers, education of employees, of workplace hazards, especially young employees who are starting their first jobs. We must not only set good examples as community leaders, but we must encourage safe workplaces through legislation. We must make efforts to improve health and safety standards across this province, and we must take steps to ensure that workers' compensation system is working for employees who need it the most.

(13:45)

Today is an appropriate time to renew our commitment to safety in the workplace, and I ask all members of this Legislative Assembly to join with me in promoting safe and healthy workplaces through our communities and through our province.

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

### In Motion Program

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with this government's commitment to healthy families and vibrant communities, we have a plan to make Saskatchewan the healthiest, most physically active province in Canada by our centennial year of 2005.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority began its In Motion program which, since its inception, has increased the level of physical activity amongst Saskatoon residents by 13 per cent.

Our plan is to build on the huge success of that program. Through an innovative partnership, we will build In Motion into a province-wide initiative. Our goal is to help Saskatchewan people increase their level of fitness by 10 per cent by 2005. This provincial partnership is unique in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and focuses on the promotion of good health and active living.

I'd particularly like to acknowledge the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority and their In Motion partners — the city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan, and Participaction.

And I'm extremely proud that John Lake School in my constituency was chosen as the site of the launch, as John Lake is one of the original In Motion schools. The dedicated people at John Lake strive to create a healthy, happy environment by students and staff walking 15 minutes each day. Last year the school's goal was to walk the equivalent kilometres to go around the world, a goal they surpassed. This year they are challenging staff and students to see how many times they can walk across Canada.

We can all learn from the examples of schools like John Lake and I wish our In Motion partners the best of success in their program.

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

#### 100th Birthday Celebration

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the legislature. Today I ask you to join me in wishing Mrs. Nettie Rolph a happy 100th birthday.

Nettie was born in Manitoba to farming parents and a family of nine brothers and sisters. Circumstances did not allow Nettie to go further than a grade 4 education but that didn't stop her from completing a stenographer's course and getting work as a stenographer with the man who would soon become her husband. She continued working at the same time as they raised their son, Newburn Jamieson Miller.

In 1942, Nettie joined the air force. As a sergeant stationed at Dafoe, she was an aircraft recognition instructor teaching hundreds of pilots, including her own son, how to distinguish aircraft between friend and foe in the air.

After her discharge, she lived the next 30 years in Vancouver and worked as a legal secretary, but she was never quite comfortable with the threat of earthquakes and returned to the security of Saskatchewan.

A friend is quoted to say:

Nettie has a very sharp and detailed memory for things past and carries on a wonderful conversation. She is in exceptionally good health for these years and plays a mean game of cribbage.

Happy birthday, Nettie, with warm wishes from everyone in the legislature.

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

#### National Volunteer Week

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the beginning of National Volunteer Week 2003. Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of volunteers in Canada. One reason for that, Mr. Speaker, may be that there's so much opportunity here we don't want to miss out, or it may be because we learn at a very early age that it's both a duty and a joy to work with our neighbours for the good of all.

Mr. Speaker, the work of our voluntary sector reflects who we are and the values that are important to us here in Saskatchewan. We have a vibrant voluntary sector which is a valued part of the social fabric of our province.

Because this government recognizes the invaluable contributions of our volunteers, we've established the Voluntary Sector Initiative to enhance the co-operative relationship between the public sector and the many components of the voluntary sector. This initiative will also serve to build capacity within Saskatchewan's voluntary sector and create awareness of the benefits of volunteerism.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's future is wide open and one of the reasons for that is the province's voluntary sector. Thank you.

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

#### Legislative Building

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I well recall my first visit to this building. It was on my first date with a beautiful lady who is now my wife. We climbed the dome to take a look at the city of Regina. It was obviously a long time ago.

I well recall the first time I came to this building as a new MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly). I was impressed. The flags were snapping in the wind. The pigeons were doing what they do best on the Premier's office windowsill.

I love the warmth of brass, Mr. Speaker. The outside front handrails are impressive. They've been touched and polished by the hands of hundreds of MLAs coming in to the building; by thousands of school children coming to learn about government. They've felt the rough hands of farmers wondering why their GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts were torn up. They've felt the caring hands of nurses wondering why they were being locked out or sent back to work. Those handrails hold a physical biography of this great province, Mr. Speaker.

Today I came again to this building. The flags were snapping in the wind. The pigeons were again on the Premier's window ledge. But all was not the same. Today the front of the legislature looks more like IPSCO's backlot, Mr. Speaker. Today those handrails are scratched and dented and marred. Cheap orange and blue plastic covers the warm brass. It is a shame. It is a disgrace. It distorts what this building is all about.

The responsibility for that degradation, Mr. Speaker, sits there in the Premier's chair — wee leadership, Mr. Speaker, wee leadership.

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

#### **Bursaries for Students in the Health Care Professions**

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is actively investing in people. Part of Saskatchewan Health's action plan includes more student bursaries. Mr. Speaker, our government is investing \$4 million on more than 500 health care professional bursaries. These bursaries will go to students in health care professions where there are or soon could be shortages. The bursaries are in exchange for an agreement to work in Saskatchewan after they graduate. This is real help that deals with retaining and recruiting health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, more than 200 bursaries will be targeted to Saskatchewan students studying nursing. Five will be offered to nurses in graduate studies who agree to teach at one of Saskatchewan's post-secondary educational institutions upon graduation. Fifty bursaries will be offered to students and residents studying medicine, 80 to those studying to be emergency medical technicians, and 60 to students in various other health science professions.

And there's more, Mr. Speaker. We're proud these bursaries will help tomorrow's health care workers today. The future is in fact wide open in Saskatchewan.

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

#### **Development of Feedlot Industry in Redvers Area**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday I had the opportunity to visit the community of Redvers where the co-op was organizing a meeting to try and develop a feedlot industry in our area.

Now I know that the members opposite love it when you say the word, co-op. Well this, Mr. Speaker, is a very, very capital, interested co-op. They believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is a need for everyone to make a profit. And they organized their co-op in that manner. And that's why they were putting on this seminar to try and get a new feedlot going in the area.

The Department of Agriculture was there, Mr. Speaker, with a presentation — and I have to say an excellent presentation — on the benefits of feeding cattle, Mr. Speaker, and one that the people in the community were very interested in. There was approximately 80 people there that were interested in the project. And a good number of them, Mr. Speaker, are prepared to invest their own money — not the government's money, Mr. Speaker — because these people also believe in making a profit, Mr. Speaker, not in simply making a donation.

So I'd like to congratulate the Redvers Co-op and the people that put on the seminar, Mr. Speaker. And hopefully they will be able to get a new feedlot operating. Thank you very much.

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

## **ORAL QUESTIONS**

### **Government Participation in Potato Industry**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

A full exposé of the NDP's (New Democratic Party) failed SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) venture by the Saskatchewan News Network this weekend provided a thorough account of events leading up to the ultimate collapse of the company and the loss of 28 million taxpayers' dollars by the NDP government. But it also accurately portrayed the depth of hurt, frustration, and betrayal felt by local people and communities most impacted by SPUDCO's failure. People lost their jobs. They lost their investments. They can't sell their homes and their businesses are struggling.

But instead of admitting their mistake, the NDP — and particularly the Minister of Agriculture — continues to turn the knife, claiming the potato industry . . . that these people and these communities are better off today than before the NDP got involved.

My question, Mr. Speaker: will the NDP admit finally that they not only failed at growing potatoes, but they also failed the people of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity — and I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to respond to his question — I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, to visit that area of the province, and had an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to meet with about a dozen people who are in the business today, Mr. Speaker, of growing diversification of agriculture in that part of the province, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say and quote a couple of things that I have before me, Mr. Speaker, that was provided for me last November by the Irrigation Crop Diversification Corporation that said this. They said that:

. . . everybody knows that the industry around (the) Lake Diefenbaker (area) is (not) dead . . . Harvest was a pain this year . . . (and its) yields were . . . (very) good, around 15 (million) tonnes per acre.

That's about \$20 million on 4,000 acres, Mr. Speaker. People in November said to us, and they say again today, that we have a thriving industry in potatoes — seed potatoes in particular in that area of the province, Mr. Speaker — and what we need to see, Mr. Speaker, a continued support of the irrigation industry and the potato industry in that part of the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister came to town he certainly didn't make his presence known to the people who were hurt by the

decisions made by his government. And that's why the article is here: "When the spud's a dud," or in the *The StarPhoenix* I think it was called "(Un)Lucky Lake."

Mr. Speaker, at a recent ratepayers meeting in Lucky Lake, members of the rural municipality expressed their frustration with the NDP government. In fact Reeve Bill Sheppard challenged the minister and the Premier to come and visit them. I don't think the minister has yet visited the reeve and his colleagues in Lucky Lake. He said, and I quote:

Tell us why you misrepresented things. Tell us why you cancelled the crop sharing agreement and left us holding the bag . . .

(The) misrepresentations began in 1996 and continue today.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister take up Mr. Sheppard's challenge? Will he and the Premier go and visit the people that were hurt by his decisions and will they explain the SPUDCO venture to these people and why the truth was hidden from them for six years?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I was in the Sask Party leader's backyard and I did meet with people, Mr. Speaker, there. And I did meet with the mayor of Outlook, Mr. Speaker; he was at that table. And I did meet with the reeve, Mr. Speaker, of Fertile Valley, Mr. Speaker. And I met with a number of the leaders who were involved in the REDAs (regional economic development authority) in the area.

And I have a list of all the people that I met with, Mr. Speaker, and every one of them to a T said this, Mr. Speaker: we want this meeting to be a discussion about how we grow the irrigation and the industry here. We do not want this to be a political exercise led by the Saskatchewan Party leader, Mr. Speaker, that will in fact undo the good work that many people there are doing today, because that's what's happened, Mr. Speaker.

And I have a . . . I say to the member opposite, I say to the member opposite from Outlook, do not work hard today at destroying the seed potato industry, Mr. Speaker. I know that you have a good friend in Mr. Harry Meyers, Mr. Speaker; I know that he's there. He did a wonderful job, Mr. Speaker, in making sure that you protected that industry in the last little while — or that investment, Mr. Speaker — because he was closely tied to the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. That's why you were there.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my first question I talked about the Minister of Agriculture still turning the knife into people's backs who were hurt by the NDP government. He continues to do it today — people who lost thousands of dollars; people whose livelihoods were destroyed; people who lost their personal savings because of the decisions made by him and his NDP government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister should be apologizing to those

people to their face instead of hiding from them.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, the minister claims to have letters of support, but he can't produce them. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation won't discuss the NDP's potato investment strategy with a newspaper reporter. He runs and hides.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP continue and the minister continues to claim that all is well despite the deep, deep level of betrayal felt by people in the potato industry, and particularly the people of the Lucky Lake region who have been most affected by the failure of SPUDCO.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP continue to ignore and misrepresent the level of hurt caused by SPUDCO and his government?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I quoted from a letter a minute ago from the irrigation corporation diversification corporation which I got in November, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to quote now from a letter that I got and I can continue to provide these if the member wants them. I can continue . . . I'm quoting now from an individual who comes here from Holland, Mr. Speaker, and he says this:

I am an immigrant from Holland.

We have great opportunities in Dutch land that we bring here to Saskatchewan, he says.

I (have) farmed in Saskatchewan for one year and the result . . . (has been) very positive. (And I ask you this, Mr. Minister.) I would . . . like to stay in this province and grow (an additional) 400 acres of seed potatoes in 2003 but I need a commitment for storage facilities . . .

Two or three more bins, Mr. Speaker, is what he says here.

And I say to the members opposite, you need to stop, Mr. Speaker, you need to stop putting down the potato industry in the Lucky Lake area, Mr. Speaker, because you have a group of producers out there today who are growing the industry. And if there's anybody who is misleading this House, the people of Saskatchewan, that's the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, that's doing that and destroying an industry there that we have millions of dollars of investment in today.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In spite of the mess that the NDP created with SPUDCO, despite the loss of 28 million taxpayers' dollars, there are people in Saskatchewan struggling to rebuild the potato industry that the NDP almost totally destroyed.

The credit doesn't go to the government. It doesn't go to the NDP but it goes to producers, to people of the industry and

local communities who have banded together to keep it alive, in spite of the NDP government, and, Mr. Speaker, in order to fight the NDP government. In fact there are more than 200 farmers and investors taking the NDP government to court over this failed SPUDCO venture which could drive the total cost of this misguided venture to \$70 million or more.

Mr. Speaker, why does the minister continue to insist that all is well in the potato industry in Lucky Lake when he knows full well that it isn't?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I know this much, Mr. Speaker. When I visited the . . . when I visited Outlook and visited the potato sheds, Mr. Speaker, I know this, that there are seven potato sheds, Mr. Speaker, in that area of the province of which we were responsible for building for producers in that area, Mr. Speaker. And six of them, Mr. Speaker, are plumb full — plumb full of potatoes, Mr. Speaker. And farmers in that area of the province say, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — And farmers in that area of the province, Mr. Speaker, say, we like these potato sheds because today they're full and they're adding to the industry and helping us with the irrigation, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the members opposite, we need to start talking about what the potato industry is doing in the Lucky Lake area today rather than putting it down on a regular basis which you're doing here today. There are \$28 million of potato sheds there, Mr. Speaker. Nobody's ran off with the money. The money's invested, Mr. Speaker, for those producers today. They're full of potatoes and they're building the industry, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — I'd just like to take a moment to remind the minister to always make all of his comments to the Chair.

### Mega Bingo

**Ms. Bakken:** — Mr. Speaker, on Friday the minister of Liquor and Gaming was forced to admit that the NDP government has lost more than \$6.2 million on mega bingo. The Saskatchewan Party has learned that the amount was close to \$2 million more than the \$6.2 million originally stated by the NDP.

Will the minister answer this question today? How many taxpayers' dollars has this NDP government really lost on mega bingo?

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

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to respond to that question. I want to pre-empt my answer by saying that both . . . And my officials have responded to requests for information about linked bingo. My officials provided the development and implementation costs that were requested at Crown Corporations Committee in March.

Since linked bingo became the subject of discussions in early April, my officials have been pulling together more information, Mr. Speaker. Just before Easter, they informed me that they were identifying costs in addition to those already asked for, Mr. Speaker, and supplied, and also costs for related projects.

I immediately asked my officials to confirm the complete cost of linked bingo and all related projects and provide a full accounting of these costs to me. They have now provided me with this information and I'm happy to provide it and table it here today.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister of Liquor and Gaming is now admitting that his NDP government lost nearly \$8 million on mega bingo — 8 million taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker.

That's money that could have been used to hire more nurses, policemen, for addiction services, or possibly to build a new sewage plant in North Battleford. But instead, Mr. Speaker, the NDP blew it on mega bingo without a business plan, without cabinet approval, with no ceiling on the expenses, and without any due diligence.

Mr. Speaker, who gave approval for this blatant abuse of 8 million taxpayers' dollars?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, cabinet approved a linked bingo game as part of a larger gaming strategy.

The various ministers responsible for SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority), Mr. Speaker, over the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Please. Please, members.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, the various ministers responsible for SLGA over the period of time during which linked bingo was approved, developed, implemented, and operated would have monitored SLGA's work.

This monitoring occurred through regular meetings and briefings, as well as updates provided to Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming board, the Chair of which is the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming, and another member from cabinet.

So the minister responsible for SLGA did not approve an upfront expenditure for this project because initially, Mr. Speaker, no — no — net budget impact was projected.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable that the minister of Liquor and Gaming today admits to the people of Saskatchewan that absolutely no ministerial approval was given to spend 8 million taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP is telling us they didn't tell us about all the losses in mega bingo. Why? Because we didn't ask the right questions. Just like SPUDCO. They didn't tell us all

the facts about SPUDCO because we didn't ask the right questions. And they didn't tell us about all the money lost in Retx because we didn't ask the right questions.

Mr. Speaker, here's a novel idea. The next time the NDP loses millions of taxpayers' dollars in one of its hare-brained schemes, why don't they just decide to tell the truth about it? Why don't they come clean?

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Why don't they come clean with the people of Saskatchewan? Because it is their money. Mr. Speaker, why was the minister trying to cover up the true amount of the losses on mega bingo? Why did he not release this report until now?

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

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated and I'll say it again, cabinet approved a linked bingo game as part of a larger gaming strategy. The SLGA board, Mr. Speaker, therefore the minister of the day, did approve a linked bingo budget expenditure for SLGA at the point when linked bingo game was not succeeding and the SLGA budget impact was identified.

Mr. Speaker, this occurred through the board's approval of the budget, the overall approval of SLGA's budget in 2001-2002 budget submission for government's overall budget process.

The minister responsible for SLGA ultimately approved SLGA's recommendation to cancel the game, and I believe that was prudent, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Mr. Speaker, we have heard that the minister actually did want to release this report a while ago but he was overruled by the Premier's office. I guess that's the same people who figured covering up the truth about SPUDCO for six years was a good idea and they only told the truth after they got caught. Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP only tells the truth when they get caught.

Will the minister confirm he wanted to release this report earlier but the Premier's office shut him down?

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

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, I regret that that hon. member would choose to attack me personally. I take my responsibilities very seriously, the oath that I've taken to be accountable for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. I've done that.

When I had determined, when I was notified that there were costs over and above what had been reported, I immediately asked my officials to ensure an accurate accounting. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the total, accurate accounting to this House, to the people of this province. And I've tabled that document, Mr. Speaker, and all the details are included in it.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we want to be very clear that we are not questioning the minister of Liquor and Gaming. We are questioning what happened at the Premier's office level.

It is our understanding that the minister of Liquor and Gaming wanted to do the right thing. He wanted to come clean on this whole issue and he was unduly influenced by others in the Premier's office.

The question is, to the minister of Liquor and Gaming: did you want to come clean with this and were you unduly influenced by others?

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

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, my report is tabled when I was satisfied that I had received all the details that my officials could muster up after reviewing this entire project that had extended from 1996 to 2001-2002.

I was given all the details. I wanted to make sure that it was absolutely accurate without coming in with any partial figures or partial truths to responsibilities, Mr. Speaker. When I was satisfied that document was ready for tabling, I tabled it, Mr. Speaker. What else can I say? It's here today in this House.

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

#### SaskTel Investments

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a pattern developing in the province of Saskatchewan that's very alarming to Saskatchewan taxpayers and that is, this government only tells the truth when it gets caught. When it gets caught wasting millions of dollars, then the government admits to the matter at hand.

Mr. Speaker, that was the case with SPUDCO. We're finding it to be the case with mega bingo, even in spite of the Premier's assurance after the SPUDCO probe that the standard would be higher, that this government would be more accountable, that the taxpayers could expect some answers.

Well last week we found out when the Crown corporation annual reports were tabled that taxpayers would not be getting information on investments this government had made on their behalf, and one of them involved the Georgia-based dot-com called Retx. Then at the end of the week, they had a change of heart and released some of the information. We need a little bit more, Mr. Speaker.

So the question to the Minister of SaskTel is this. SaskTel is saying Retx will continue to lose money in 2003 and 2004. Will the minister tell the people of Saskatchewan how much more money this government will allow Retx to lose on their behalf in the next year and a half?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have said before and I'll say again, Mr. Speaker, this is nothing more than an attack on our Crown corporations.



But let me answer the question specifically, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Retx, as the public was informed when we released the annual reports, Mr. Speaker, Retx saw an increase in revenues of 63 to 65 per cent — an increase in revenues. This is exactly what you want to see for a start-up company, Mr. Speaker. We disclose the value of our investment, Mr. Speaker. As it pertains to the exact amount of losses, we're not able to do that because of confidentiality because we're in a partnership. I was clear about that from the beginning; I'm clear about that today, Mr. Speaker.

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

(14:15)

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister was anything but clear about these investments. His own officials at SaskTel said quite clearly last week that the taxpayers would never get any information on companies like Retx. They had to change their story after questioning in this forum and by the media, Mr. Speaker.

But there are still several other investments that they have made on the part of taxpayers that they have not provided detailed answers for including, Mr. Speaker, another dot-com called agdealer.com, which the NDP invested still more money in last year. We're now up to \$8.1 million invested on the part of taxpayers.

Will the minister tell us what is the current value of that 8.1 million NDP investment and how much more will taxpayers expect to lose as a result of this investment?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the question, Mr. Speaker, we indicated that Ag Dealer was in the year 2002 rolled into DirectWest, Mr. Speaker. DirectWest is owned 100 per cent by Crown Investments Corporation, and they have provided full disclosure on that. As I've said before, if we own 100 per cent of the company, Mr. Speaker, we disclose as much as we can. If we own only part of it, we still disclose as much as we can but there are issues of confidentiality.

But let me say again, Mr. Speaker, about that Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, that Sask Party is on a daily basis attacking our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, the investments that they make. And they have one single agenda — it's to discredit them, Mr. Speaker. It's to discredit them so that they can sell them off, so they can privatize them.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, this minister and this NDP government needs no help in discrediting our Crown corporations in the province of Saskatchewan. The truth of the matter is that last week the minister's officials announced that due to out-of-province investments by the Crowns, the taxpayers took it on the chin for \$85 million. And so in this forum, in question period in the Legislative Assembly, you'd think it would be the right place for the minister to be held to an account for the investments he's authorized on behalf of

taxpayers. And that's what this is all about.

Agdealer.com is one of them — 8 million taxpayers' dollars invested in this over the last two years. His official was just outside the Legislative Assembly today providing some information on the nature of that investment including, I believe, the losses attributed to that agdealer.com a year ago. Will the minister just provide that information? How much money have taxpayers lost as a result of the investment and how much is it worth today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member will know, as I've said here, that Ag Dealer was rolled into DirectWest last year, Mr. Speaker. DirectWest, if he went through the annual reports, he will know that DirectWest has been profitable for some number of years, Mr. Speaker. They've been profitable.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say again that this is nothing more than a daily, daily attack. They can phrase it however they want, Mr. Speaker. This is nothing more than a daily attack on our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, so that they can discredit them, Mr. Speaker, so they can sell and privatize them.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, our Crowns provided dividends to the people of Saskatchewan some \$300 million. Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years what have they done? They have paid in dividends and benefits to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan 1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. And on a daily basis, they continue to discredit them.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you, shame on you, Sask Party.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the NDP have also made an investment in something called Business Watch International on behalf of the taxpayers of the province. They now own 93 per cent of Business Watch International. The amount invested, they say, was 2 million; the current value, less than 1 million.

Is that the total extent of the losses to taxpayers — 1.1 million? And what about operating losses for Business Watch International, another NDP investment?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what their financial statements would be if they had the Crown corporations under their control, Mr. Speaker. Their statement would be simple and it would be full disclosure, Mr. Speaker. It'd be absolute full disclosure. They would sell everything, Mr. Speaker. They would sell everything.

And you know what they'd do? They'd use the money to finance things so that they could buy their way back for years into the future, Mr. Speaker, as they did in the 1980s. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan can see through that. They can see through it. They know that the Crowns return dividends to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — 1.6 billion in the last 10 years.

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. I would just like once again to bring it to the members' attention that there were a couple of times during the question period that members just got a little carried away and started getting a little too personal, using direct phrases across to each other. And I want to bring that to members' attention. And try to keep that in mind for tomorrow.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask leave of the Assembly to make a statement of importance to all Saskatchewan.

Leave granted.

#### STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

##### National Day of Mourning

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all hon. members. Today is the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. Across Canada, almost three workers a day die on the job and more than 1 million workers are injured every year.

Today is a day to mourn, and a day to remember — a day to mourn all the people who have given their lives to the building of our communities, our province, and our nation.

Twenty Saskatchewan workers died last year as a result of injuries or illnesses sustained in the workplace. Many thousands more have been injured. Mr. Speaker, even one death on the job is too many.

Today our thoughts and prayers are with all family members who have suffered the death of a loved one at work. We can never turn back time and make it possible for those mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers to come home again. But we can work to prevent other families from having to endure such anguish by renewing our efforts to do everything humanly possible to reduce workplace injuries and deaths.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to rise as I read into the record the names of those 20 Saskatchewan workers who died on the job last year. And I also ask that all hon. members observe a moment of silence in their honour when we finish.

Harvey Dyck, Adam Gress, Leslie Godfrey, James Jones, Reinhold Petrowitsch, Ryan Haggard, Morley Gloeden, Matthew Wiebe, Brent Nagy, Jason Stern, Tanya Loewen, Calvin Johnner, John Prentice, Owen Jones, Richard Neiss, Kelly Argotow, Donald Mohagen, John Scott, Harold Aubin, and Robert Riddoch.

**The Assembly observed a moment of silence.**

**The Speaker:** — Thank you, members. Please be seated.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to respond to the minister's statement.

Leave granted.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in sending our deepest sympathies to the family of the 20 victims that died, just simply for going to work, in a workplace accident over the past year.

It's unacceptable and, Mr. Speaker, we must, in this legislature, do everything in our power to make the workplace as safe as possible, not only through workplace safety programs but through education, Mr. Speaker. One life is too many to lose in the workplace.

So on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to join with the members opposite in sending our deepest sympathies to the families affected over the past year.

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

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce, in the west gallery, three gentlemen who are key people in the Agrivision, a well-known organization that quite frankly is always positive about Saskatchewan, and thinking ahead and having a vision for our future.

So I would like to introduce Dr. Red Williams, Mr. Lionel La Belle, and Mr. Al Scholz and have all the members welcome them here today.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the member from Watrous in recognizing the three gentlemen in the west gallery: Mr. La Belle, certainly Mr. Scholz, and Dr. Red Williams.

Not only have they been instrumental in working on the Agrivision file which has been busy promoting agriculture across Saskatchewan as Agrivision has been doing, Dr. Red Williams also serves on my ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) committee as one of the key players and members and was part of the work that was done across Saskatchewan in tabling the final report.

We have, Mr. Speaker, three gentlemen who do a ton of work, much of it on a voluntary basis, in making Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan a better, stronger place to live. And I want to ask the entire Assembly to join with me in recognizing the good work that they do in helping agriculture and rural development in Saskatchewan.

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

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member for Saskatoon Southeast on her feet?

**Ms. Lorjé:** — Permission to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

**Ms. Lorjé:** — I thank the Assembly for allowing me to introduce these — once again — these three very esteemed individuals. As the newly minted Legislative Secretary looking at in-migration and immigration in this province, I would like to welcome Al Scholz, Red Williams, and Lionel La Belle here.

And I would like to inform all members that they are spearheading their second annual Innovation Conference in Saskatoon on June 5 and 6. And the conference is entitled, Double the Population. They intend to double the population of this great province by 50 per cent within 30 years. Now . . . by 100, I'm sorry.

Mr. Speaker, there is a poet that said:

. . . a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a heaven for?

Some people may say their goal is very ambitious. But you know what? Saskatchewan is a big slice of heaven and we have big ideas and big dreams here.

And I ask everyone to welcome Al Scholz, Red Williams, and Lionel La Belle.

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

(14:30)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table response to written question no. 149.

**The Speaker:** — Response to 149 has been tabled.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

#### Subvote (HI01)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Beside me on my left is the deputy minister, Harvey Brooks. On my right is assistant deputy minister, Barry Martin, responsible for operations. Immediately behind me is assistant deputy minister for corporate services, Don Wincherauk.

And to my right, two seats behind, is Fred Antunes who's the

director of operations, planning and business support. And then beside Don Wincherauk is Mike Makowsky. Mike is manager of transportation, trade and logistics. And Harold Hugg is next to Mike, sitting in the next aisle over there. Harold is manager of northern access, air and safety. And in the back row, directly behind me is Cathy Lynn Borbely, leader of the budget development group. Thank you.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to welcome the minister's officials and I'm sure they'll be very helpful in helping the minister to answer the questions that we have for him today.

Minister, I think what we will do today is I have a couple of questions and there is a number of my colleagues that have questions dealing with highways in their constituencies, so we will probably spend a good part of the day discussing specific questions as far as highways in these constituencies.

However, before I turn it over to my colleague from Shellbrook-Spiritwood, I do have a question as far as this government's policy as far as provincial highways within urban boundaries. A number of our major urban cities and also some of our smaller urban centres have provincial highways that go through parts of the city or through the town.

And what is the policy and how is that section of highway handled? It is quite often the highways also doubles as a street and that sort of thing. And I guess I would like clarification as to whose responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of those highways and what kind of cost-sharing structure do we have and so on — if the minister could just generally outline how those sections of highways are handled.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well I appreciate the question. We found over the years that there have been a number of arrangements. But by law every community over 1,000 people, the highways in the municipal boundaries — those over 1,000 — actually are to be owned by the community themselves.

We have over the years, as some of these communities have expanded, we've made arrangements as they've moved out onto the provincial highways to turn some of those over. That's usually done through negotiation. And where the rural cross-section is, very often we'll cover cost of maintenance.

And the thing is that in each of these cases, there is also some provincial highway that goes partway into the communities. It's supported by the Department of Highways. And in I'd say virtually every case, negotiations are ongoing as to what will be maintained by the department and what the cities are looking after.

And as they expand, we move back the areas that we're responsible for. And I think case in point would be Victoria Avenue which has expanded significantly, and we're in discussions and negotiations with the city of Regina around how that will be handled and who will be responsible.

So it's basically case by case, based on the law that communities over 1,000 are responsible for the highways within their jurisdiction, roadways in their jurisdiction.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to you and your officials today. I have a few questions for the department in regards to highways in my constituency.

The first question is regarding the Highway No. 3 from Glaslyn west to Fairholme. I understand that that portion of highway is going to be upgraded or there's going to be some work done on it. Can you explain to me just what is going to take place on that portion of highway?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The No. 3 between Glaslyn and Turtleford is all approved under the Prairie Grain Roads Program. This year we'll be doing to Fairholme. It'll be strengthening and paving, and eventually that whole road will be upgraded to a granular sealed pavement.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. When you say it's going to be upgraded and resurfaced, are you looking at widening the highway somewhat? Because that highway is fairly narrow as it sits right now and the shoulders are very, very soft.

And the reason I'm going down that is because last year there was two culverts changed on Highway No. 3 just west of Spiritwood and at that point in time those culverts were upgraded. And I'm just wondering if the department is looking at upgrading that highway to accommodate primary weights?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well currently that No. 3 is a thin membrane surface highway, and so we are needing to upgrade it substantially to be able to handle the kind of weights that are being expected now, which primary weight is the case. So the road will be upgraded.

In terms of widening, there will be sub-base and base added, and we expect — though I don't have the design plans here — we do expect that it will be widened somewhat to meet today's standards.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. To the minister, so by your answer that I just heard, you are looking at, at some period of time, upgrading that highway from the condition it is now to primary weights? Is that what your answer is?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — There's a couple of elements involved in this, one in terms of the building and the structure of the road itself. It's capable of handling the industrial primary weights but in doing that on the granular structure pavement, it will reduce your lifespan of that pavement. But there is also the possibility of putting thicker pavement on at some point.

And so there really is an overall question about, can we accommodate a shortened lifespan in the overall picture of our pavements in the province? So when we make the decision about whether or not it goes to primary weight rather than secondary weight, we've got structural issues. Can it handle that? Yes, by design it can but it does reduce the lifespan. And second question is, is there substantial activity, industrial activity, to meet the criteria that would make, that would lead us to a political decision which would say yes, you will put that to a primary weight?

So all of those factors would have to be put into the works in order to make the decision whether or not it will be classified as a primary weight highway.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. The reason for the question regarding primary weights, the North Central Transportation Committee under the leadership of Richard Porter, who has been working on this for some time, has been talking to a lot of people, truckers or whatever have you.

And the problem that truckers are running into in the transportation of, especially grain from Shellbrook to Spiritwood which is primary weights, once you get to Spiritwood, from Spiritwood to Glaslyn there is no primary weights there. So therefore they would have to take a lighter load to Glaslyn. And up until last year they could fill up their trucks with grain from Glaslyn and move to either North Battleford or to Lloydminster. Those elevators now have been closed down in Glaslyn so therefore there's no place to fill up their loads with grain. So it's causing a real problem, especially for the grain transportation system in that area. And that highway, which is Highway No. 3, transports a great deal of grain plus other product out of that area.

And basically what I'm wondering is, how long would it take to upgrade that highway to primary weights? If they upgraded the highway from Spiritwood to Glaslyn and if the changing of the culverts was something to do with changing that up to primary weights, it would definitely help that area. And what I'm saying is, this bit of highway that you're looking at now from Glaslyn to Turtleford, or Glaslyn to Fairholme, pardon me, and on the way to Turtleford, if you're looking at rebuilding that highway now, wouldn't it make sense to try and upgrade that so that primary weights on that portion of the highway could be granted in maybe a year or two years down the road?

(14:45)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well I thank you for your question, and just a note as I'm answering it, I really appreciate the work that Richard Porter and that ATPC (area transportation planning committee) is doing, and the other ATPCs in the province. They've been doing a tremendous job in terms of identifying the major areas within their particular area that need work, the roadways that need work.

There are a number of pieces to the transportation picture in Saskatchewan as we're trying to get the roads built to the right standards for the needs in every particular area. And when we look at that area we know that there is work going on in short-line rail development as well, a potential of more grain haul out of Spiritwood. And I know that there is conflict as well as the ATPCs struggle with the issue of how we best meet the grain haul needs. Do we need to go to primary weights? Is that where the solution is? Or are there other factors that need to be involved, that are involved in terms of how grain should best be hauled?

So we've got, in that particular area, in terms of the decision about how we build the road, we've got sensitivity to the short-line rail developments that are there and the possibility of work around a terminal at Spiritwood. We must be involved in

terms of the whole picture. We can't just say, well kick the road up to primary. It is quite significant additional cost and it may in fact not be what's needed in that particular area. We may find that we're meeting the needs there for grain haul from the . . . by building it up to a structural, granular structural pavement.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. I thank you for your answer. I guess what I'm looking at is because of the elevator's gone in Glaslyn now, where they're not going to be able to facilitate the truckers with grain, there's a great distance there that they'll only be able to haul just . . . or not primary weights.

Would it be out of the order if your department would grant, during certain periods of time in the year, say two or three months in the wintertime when the ground is frozen and the highway is frozen, plus in the summertime when it is dry, to allow primary weights to be added to that highway to allow the truckers to facilitate the produce coming out of that area and going west to North Battleford or to Lloydminster?

Also in that area there's a great amount of travelling of . . . or hauling of logs, I should say. And there again, without having the primary weights on that specific highway, it reduces the fact of the amount of product hauled out of there at one time. Could this be utilized on that highway in certain periods of time in the year?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well in terms of the log haul, most of the trucking companies that are hauling logs are operating within the trucking partnership in order to manage weights. And we've found that to be quite effective so far.

The other thing is that during winter months, the trucking is already allowed at 10 per cent above . . . yes, 10 per cent above primary in the winter months. So it's already accommodated for during those — is it three months? — yes, during the three months in the winter. And so the needs are being met during those periods.

And we're looking, as I said earlier, we're looking at what alternatives may come up in terms of short-line rail for grain haul, and also for the ATPCs and some of the other groups that are involved to try and come to a resolution about whether or not primary weights are the answer in terms of grain haul. Because that's not clear yet. You've got some that are saying yes and some are saying no.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess my final question on this portion of my constituency and that is: because there's primary weights from Prince Albert through Shellbrook right to Spiritwood already, the portion of highway from Shellbrook west to Glaslyn and then on to Turtleford, there is no primary weights as yet, would the minister commit to the fact that they are looking at upping at least from Spiritwood to Glaslyn primary weights on that highway? And if they are, how soon can they be put into primary weights? And if not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We are still engaged in consultations around, around weights and primary . . . or primary weight highway networks. Those consultations are ongoing. I'd like to be able to give you a timeline but we do not have a timeline,

deadline at this point. And we're really trying to pull together all of the significant factors.

So at this point, the ways that we have of enabling our . . . the trucking partnership for non-grain commodities, and we do have a number of trucking firms that are engaged in that . . . With grain haul, we have had central tire inflation programs. Wheat Pool was a primary taker on that one, using central tire inflation which reduced road damage.

And at this point, we'll continue with our consultations and try and get a comprehensive view of the development of primary weight system within the province as quickly as we're able to through this process of consultation.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and his officials. I imagine there's not much doubt when the member from Rosthern gets up that you wonder what particular highway we're going to be discussing.

We could discuss Highway 312 and some of the concerns there. We could discuss Highway 12, some of the concerns that are there. But I think today I'd like to spend most of the time dealing with Highway 11, and specifically with safety.

I know members in other parts of the province have highways that are fairly, fairly tender as far as handling heavy loads are concerned. That isn't a key issue in the situation on Highway 11. So I want to go through quite a number of the situations that exist there to find out what information the department uses in order to make its decision on how they're going to work and fix the highways.

So my first question . . . And we're going to start off with the community of Rosthern, and then we'll probably move to the Hague and Osler areas because once we're past Osler we basically have twinning taking place and that has been very good.

And I do have to, at this particular point, thank the NDP government for the twinning that's happened on both Highway 11 and Highway 12. I've been thankful enough that in one case I actually voted for a budget on that case. It's just to let you know how serious I take that particular stretch. It takes a lot to get me to support an NDP budget, but I have done it and that was the key issue that made that difference.

The intersection of Highway 11 and 312: and probably looking back 10 to 15 years — and I'm not sure in what blocks you have your information — I would like to know how many accidents have been recorded in that intersection and how many deaths.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the member, I'm sorry we do not have that information here in our briefing notes but we will get that as quickly as possible and get it to you.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank the minister for that commitment. And I was going to ask exactly the same question with reference to Highway 11 and the 6th Street access, Highway 11 and the 4th Street access, Highway 11 and the Hague entrance, and the two entrances into Osler. So if I'm going to be supplied that information, would like the same sort of thing.

The question I have coming out of that information would be: how big a part does that information play in the kind of solution that the department uses in deciding how they're going to do their dividing, how they're going to move past town?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I would say that that is the biggest single factor in determining what kind of work needs to be done at any given intersection, the analysis of risk for accident or death. And with that information then we look at the various designs that could be done in that particular area and try and get the design that would, according to the analysis, give us the safest intersections that we could possibly have in those areas. And that pertains to twinning or the way that the access is set to the highway.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And at this time I'd like to take some time to go through some of the situations that I've been aware of. I've lived in that particular community for approximately 30 years. I have unfortunately seen some half-dozen burnt corpses in vehicles from accidents that happened at various intersections or at different times. I know people in our community who have survived an accident and were wheelchair bound; people who've been badly facially scarred because of accidents that have been there. In almost every single accident at those intersections, I've known at least some of the people that were involved. The one key feature in all of those communities that needs to be taken care of are turning lanes.

We had two semi-trailer trucks at the intersection of 11 and 6th Street this summer in which a life was lost. Had there been a turning lane into town, when people coming from the south, that accident wouldn't have happened. Same intersection, couple of years ago, there were three people in a vehicle coming from Saskatoon waiting to make a left-hand turn into the town of Rosthern, were hit from the back by a semi.

(15:00)

Those intersections have a lot of those accidents. Almost all the deaths that were caused there would have been avoided had there been turning lanes. The twinning is fine and I'll say a little bit about that, more about that later on. But the fact that turning lanes haven't been put in there, that's been the situations that has existed there for years.

And I know there have been key hot spots in the province where accidents occur. We've had that one situation close to Gull Lake and thankfully the government has moved on that and I think most of those key critical areas have been removed.

The 312 from where the twinning ends till Rosthern, that particular section, those turning lanes have been one of the key critical areas. There have been other accidents at some of those intersections. Most of those — and if we look at the ones at highway intersection of 11 and 312 and 11 and 4th — have usually been where someone's gone through a stop sign. Now there's a limit to what you have to do. Unfortunately some people will go through stop signs. Department of Highways has done quite a good job at the highway of intersection . . . and 11. They've put up larger signs. They've put up lights. They've put up rumble strips. There really is nothing else you can do.

And if someone drives through one of those stop signs and is killed, you have to say, that's unfortunate but there's nothing about Highways where they can take responsibility. And as I've said, I'm very aware of those situations. And on those, like I said, I think Highways has done good job of trying to make people as aware as possible of those stop signs.

Twinning would probably not have saved any of those lives about going through stop signs because you still have to drive across lanes of traffic. And if you're going to drive across a lane of traffic on a single lane, you'll do the same thing on a twin situation. But I think the turning lanes are the critical ones.

Now I'm not sure what kind of a timeline Highways has for finishing that twinning. I know that's going to be a fairly expensive proposition. But it's also a very important proposition and I would hope that it's there in the very near future after you've taken care of things such as Gull Lake and a few other also dangerous areas.

And I'm not going to ask for us to be put ahead of other areas that cause a lot of deaths. I will however ask to be put ahead of other areas where we're discussing things as potholes and weight limits and all that — the lives are more important.

That takes me into the other part I want to discuss to some extent, and that is in the twinning situations. Each community has some very awkward situations for the twinning. You know, whether you're talking farms and odd curves or whatever at Osler, whether you're discussing some of the sloughs/lakes that are close to the Hague area, whether you're discussing what's called the Mennonite Youth Farm near Rosthern — a large seniors' complex is out there — how do you twin with that?

Now it's easy to go and give it to the engineers and say, twin something, because they'll be able to do it and it'll be a grandiose plan. There's no problem with that.

Now the part that I'm concerned about and want the minister to respond on, is when you're looking at a grandiose plan that the engineers may come up with — and it may be fine for people going, you know, between Saskatoon and Prince Albert in either direction — I think we need to look at the other situations and that is, what is this going to do for the life of the community? And I think we sometimes need to say, let's make the plan a little less grandiose and see if we can accommodate life within the community.

Now Osler is a fairly rapidly growing town, doesn't have a major business component at this point, probably will at some time. Hague has a major business component — whether you talk the major Ford dealership they have there, the Zak's building and lumber supply which has now gone interprovincial and has another office in Red Deer, we have some major things happening there. Rosthern, being quite a large community, and that community is sort of a hub section for whether you're talking about Batoche, whether you're talking about the Seager Wheeler Farm at Duck Lake, our own arts centres that we have in Rosthern. We need those accesses left there.

Now I believe that in the plans that are there right now that the 6th Street access to Rosthern is being closed. Now that's a main access into the community and, as I said, the arts and the

tourism is a big part of Rosthern. I knew that was part of the plan or one of the things that was out there. And I was hoping when the deputy minister took over, with his knowledge of the community I thought we had an in to sort of not make this twinning such a situation that it isolates the towns.

When I go from here to Saskatoon, all those communities along the way have a fairly easy access into town. And as a result, I have personally gone through every single town between here and Saskatoon a number of times, either just to see what the town was like if I had an extra 15, 20 minutes or to get into the town, drive down the back alleys, and look for old cars that I might want to restore. Now had that been a difficult transition to get into those towns, I probably wouldn't have taken the time.

And I'm worried about those three communities that are the next ones in line for the twinning. How much does Department of Highways take into consideration when they plan their twinning, is the life of those rural towns? And I'm thinking specifically of the 6th Street access into Rosthern; the Osler access, which is their main access right now which I believe is also destined for being closed. And I've been, you know, talked to by a number of the business people that do exist in Osler. They have some very definite concerns. I'd like to see what your answer is and would probably have some response to that.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I'd like to thank the member for what I think is a very, very balanced question and acknowledging a lot of the work that does go on.

I would have to say from my time now as minister that one of the things that I see and hear from the department staff, from the engineers, certainly is that in all considerations, safety is number one.

And you look at the kind of investments that we're making around safety — snow and winter ice removal were \$18.24 million; 15.73 million for pavement marking, for sign and guardrail rehabilitation, for mowing, for illumination; 4.89 million for transportation compliance; 2.74 million for six major safety projects; 36 safety improvement projects for 875,000. But just to know that it really is key.

And I know that sometimes when you get the first plan that's put forward, it can appear pretty grandiose. And I expect it's probably trying to take into account everybody's hopes and expectations — what's the best we could do here in this particular area?

The second thing I'm very pleased about with the work of the department is that they have bent over backwards time and time again in their consultations with the communities to try and accommodate what the needs are. At the same time, they're trying to project 30 to 50 years out to determine what kind of traffic flow we're going to have in a particular area at that time and to try and make sure that any change in design, which costs from a minimum of hundreds of thousands of dollars up to millions of dollars, that it's done right, it's done with safety as key, and finally it's done with the long-term expectations of need accommodated.

So what we have seen in particular with Rosthern has been the

initial design that was put out there with the intersection improvements, with twinning possibilities. Then there was consultation with the community and a mix of messages coming from the community about access from No. 6 and No. 12, how that could best be accommodated to serve the needs of the community, to help that community to continue to grow and be healthy and showcase its cultural and business assets. All of those things continue to go into the consultations.

I think one of the things that we know as well, with 312 coming into the highway there — it comes in currently at an angle — we know that between the No. 6 and that access that there is only a short distance. And so to try and accommodate all the current access points, just within the design framework, can't be accommodated if safety is still to be considered number one.

So we know that there is need for good access. And it's as you indicated, as the member indicated, just to draw people who are passing by for whatever their interests might be, we want to make sure that there is good access to the communities. We want to make sure it's safe. One of the things that we know needs to happen at the very least is 312 access needs to be put at 90 degrees. We know that that will make that particular access a lot safer. So in summary, safety truly is number one.

My experience with the department has been that they truly do bend over backwards to consult with the communities to try and accommodate the needs of those communities. And the deputy minister really does love his community of Rosthern and wants to see the best for there, as well as I know the member does.

(15:15)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And I've seen that design that's there and have looked at it fairly closely. And when you talk about 312 needing to be at right angles to Highway 11, that's correct. I believe though that the curvature that they use to accommodate that, basically . . . And the distance from the town limits to 312 is a matter of a couple of hundred yards.

And yet in that plan you have the speed limit of 312 going through town, then it is increased, and they said, well we have to have this big, loopy curve to accommodate that. Well when you come out of town why should you have to speed up for about 3, 4, 500 feet and then build a curve for that? Just leave the speed limit low and you don't have to have as big a loop to get that right angle in there.

There's a lot of fairly simple things that could be done to accommodate all of that, and that's when I used the word grandiose. And I think this is one of those things. There is definitely room between . . . to have that divided road, the part that would be on the east side, that would be the north travelling, to have that close enough to town to accommodate that.

And as I said earlier on, if you have to cross traffic flow, it doesn't make any difference whether your other lanes that you're going to access are 100 feet away or 100 yards away, you still have to stop at that stop sign and cross a flow of traffic. So to have it close to town I think would be good.

And I would ask the Department of Highways to make sure that

they try and reassess that because I think all of those towns that are growing communities are going to be cut out as far as the life of the community is concerned.

I will leave that particular topic at this particular point. I would quite willingly take about half an hour to an hour to do a substantial tirade on why this hasn't happened sooner, because as I've said I've seen the people that have been hurt, injured, and killed, and could say why didn't at least turning lanes be put in place years ago and those accidents wouldn't have happened. It would have saved lives in the tens if that would have happened. And I'm not sure what the cost is to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and all the other costs that are there, but strictly on a dollar figure I'm sure those turning lanes could have been put in place and it could have been saved in another way and another time through another arm of government.

But we may get back to that tirade another time later on this spring, because it's not like I don't want to give it.

But I do have two other areas that I want to get into fairly quickly this afternoon. And one is just asking the minister what the involvement is with the Department of Highways with implementing the toll snowmobile roads and enforcing those. And those are the trails beside the highways.

And I want to know what involvement is of the Department of Highways with that because in my area, and I'm thinking of 312 specifically, there are a lot of farmers living very close to that who have no interest in belonging to any organized clubs and there's a groomed trail. Are they allowed to use it if they're going to go visit the neighbour half a mile away or two miles away or four miles away? It seems that that's a toll situation.

And I'm going to let the minister explain Department of Highway's involvement in that and then we may take that a little further.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well with regard to the snowmobiles, the question would be more clearly asked of the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

However the snowmobile clubs in a particular area operate, groom those trails and they set their own fees for people who are travelling on them. And it really is under another . . . It's under The Snowmobile Act and the minister for SGI would be able to fill you in further on that.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And we will try and do that. I think the minister needs to realize that it would be . . . it's about as ludicrous as if someone planted some daisies beside a sidewalk and said well, I'm helping to take care of this sidewalk, therefore now you'll have to pay to walk on it even if you're just walking to see the next door neighbour. We would say that's bizarre. The people living in this area who have this situation there, it's just as bizarre.

I have one other area I want to get into quickly this afternoon and that is, it relates to some extent to the member's statement I made. And I know last Friday, I believe it was, the minister got into a little bit of an enthusiastic discussion with a skateboarder outside. And I'm wondering with regards to this junkyard that's

showing up outside, what the minister's involvement is with that, if there is any?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well in some jurisdictions around North America skateboarding actually is now being considered a means of transportation. But it doesn't really come under the Department of Highways and Transportation.

And I think, as the member opposite would indicate and probably most of us in this House would indicate, we don't want to see any junkyards anywhere. We don't want to see a building that is damaged. We do want our young people to be able to enjoy the beauty of this for many generations to come.

And I think in the desire to try and accommodate some of the needs to move the young people away from heritage parts of our building, we may have had a little bit too much activity in terms of putting things out there that might be structures for them. But that's going to be dealt with. And we do want to make sure that the building continues to be beautiful and is enhanced by anything that is done.

So though it is a means of transportation, it doesn't rightly come under our estimates but I would accommodate by giving you that answer anyway.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the minister's officials, welcome. I appreciate the opportunity to ask you a couple of questions today and they're mostly going to deal with the area around Kelvington.

The first question is Highway No. 38. It actually goes through the town of Kelvington up to Greenwater Park. And it had some work done on it last year. But it was in deplorable state a couple of years ago because when the tourism guide came out, instead of telling people to go to Greenwater Park down this highway, they actually told them to go to Melfort and come around and back from the North, which is not saying a lot about the highways in that area. It had a huge economic impact on the Kelvington area and it is still quite a concern.

The other thing that is quite a problem is Highway No. 38. Because it goes through the town of Kelvington, it means that the town itself is expected to pick up the costs of maintaining it. I'm wondering if this issue is being looked at at all by your department, because of course there's quite a burden to the people of Kelvington when they are actually carrying the responsibility of putting a highway right through the middle of their town.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Highway 38 north of Kelvington is a TMS (thin membrane surface) highway and it has not qualified under the Prairie Grain Roads Program for upgrade and so it will basically just, in terms of any scheduling for this year, it will just get routine maintenance for safety and that'll be about it for 38.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, I'm sure you recognize that because the town itself has to bear the cost of the maintenance through the town even though there's a considerable amount of traffic on it, it does put an unfair burden on to the town. Is that an issue that's being looked at by the department?



**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well as I'd mentioned earlier, and I don't have the exact population, but it's my understanding that Kelvington would fit into, at least according to the map, it would fit into the category where it's over 1,000 and would be responsible for their own maintenance.

That said, we do have, of course, highway interface with the communities all over the province and there are ongoing discussions with communities about maintenance, what the community is responsible for, what we will do as a department as well.

So basically under law, if a community is over 1,000 they are responsible for the roadways, associated roadways within the community boundaries.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. But you did open a small window of hope there for me, saying that there was ongoing discussions and negotiations with communities. Does that mean that the town can contact your department and request some aid in helping to maintain this highway?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well one of the things that, again, that I've found with the department is that we really try and accommodate where possible and to help out with communities. A lot of the people come from the communities around as well and want to do what they can.

But in terms of discussions it's kind of . . . Very often it's, is there something that we can do in a partnership? There's a bit of a trade-off that could happen. I mean there's no legislation at all that allows us basically to do this. There's no grant program. But just accommodations can be made just because we try and accommodate, and try and help where we can.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm not really hearing any real promise but I'm not hearing you say no. So I'm sure that when I give a copy of *Hansard* to the council that means that they'll be contacting your office, and appreciate it.

The other highway going in to Kelvington that's a major concern is Highway No. 49. They've asked for this to be considered a primary weight highway. It is the largest centre in a 35- or 40-mile radius and they've contacted your office a number of times, especially through the North East Transportation Planning Committee. I know that they've sent a number of letters in from various organizations and groups that are talking about the importance of the upgrade for this highway. Greenwater Park is one of the main areas that will be affected by Highway No. 49.

We know that the elimination of highways means that there's a lot of heavy-haul traffic that is going to be going on grid roads now. And the RMs (rural municipality) that are surrounding this area are feeling the effect of the heavy-haul traffic that's taking the grid roads because of the primary weight restriction on the highway.

The co-op itself has 25 to 40 trucks that are serviced at the cardlocks centre and there's going to be more of them if they actually build the proposed co-op there. Kelvington Transport tells me that they have 870 loads out of Kelvington every year and 450 loads into the town of Kelvington. And they are also

affected by the fact that there's lower weight restrictions.

(15:30)

The Wheat Pool has written to you, giving you the information that 1,270 trucks a year go into the Kelvington area. Right now the weight restriction is 35 tonne per load and if there was change to a primary weight road it could go up to 42 tonnes. And this would mean the number of loads would decline to about 1,050. This would be a considerable economic saving and again work toward the revitalization of some of these smaller communities.

So, Mr. Minister, is this highway one that is on the, at least in the planning stages to be changed to a primary weight load?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Highway 49 is currently a structural pavement and clearly has been identified by the area transportation planning committee as one of those that they would like to see a priority for primary weights as we're reviewing the weight structure of pavements around the province.

**Ms. Draude:** — Can you give us a better idea of what you mean when you're saying reviewing? What type of time frame are you looking at?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well as I indicated to one of the members earlier, we do not have a deadline drafted for the review. The consultations are going on. We're looking at a number of factors. We're looking at what rail possibilities there are.

You'll know that we already moved a number of highways that were 10-month primary weight highways to 12-month and we're still getting feedback on that. Generally people are pleased but there are those who are concerned about the lifespan of the roads when you do increase the weight.

So all of those things are going on in terms of the consultations and the review. But there is no timeline on it. We don't have a deadline on that at this point, so that's the best I can give you at this time.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. From what I understand is that there has been some progress made on moving some of these highways into primary weight areas. So I guess then I'm going to take that as a clue that I should start nagging more. You know, they say the squeaky wheel gets the grease so maybe I should be bringing it to the minister's attention every opportunity I have.

Mr. Minister, there's just two other issues that I want to discuss with you. One of them is the area of grass mowing along the ditches. I have a couple of constituents who sometimes do this contract work. Can you give me an idea, first of all, if the rates have changed this year for mowing, and when the tenders are going to go out?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The tender schedule has been approved for the mowing contracts but we don't have it available right now. But we'll undertake to get that to you just as quickly as we can.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I would imagine that means if there's been a change in the rental rates for various forms of equipment, that's been approved as well. If it has been, I would appreciate if I could get an update on the rental rates that are cost shared by your department as well.

The last issue that I wanted to discuss with you is companies that are actually very frustrated with the timelines it takes to get payment. In lots of cases companies will tell me that it's nothing to have to wait three or four months to receive a payment from your department.

Of course with the cost of carrying on a business, this puts a lot of burden on companies. I am aware of . . . I think it was last year we discussed, through a written question, companies that were actually suing the department.

I'm wondering right now if you can tell me how many . . . if the Department of Highways is involved in any lawsuits from different contractors across the province.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — A couple of things. First, I'll respond again to the mowing contracts that you were asking about. We don't set rates for equipment. The tenders are set out; the contractors bid on them; and by their bid, whatever they bid, that's what they are paid. So they might set their own price for a use of a particular piece of equipment. But the nature of the tender is that the contractor puts in a bid and if it's acceptable, then they would receive the contract.

Secondly, in terms of payment, we're very . . . try to be very diligent about paying at a minimum of every six weeks, based on work completed. Where completed, it is evaluated and then the payments go out. If there are disputes then, certainly if there's a dispute about what or how something should be paid, if it's before the courts, then there would be holdbacks until there is resolution of those disputes.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, can you tell me how many cases are involved in litigation at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — No, we can't give you that information at this time but if you'd like, we could get that number for you.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. The minister probably won't be overly surprised that the questions I have are on Highway 15 since that's been brought up by myself with petitions and other areas from the constituency of Watrous. It is undoubtedly the absolutely worst highway that I have.

My understanding is that the minister and/or his officials have met with the rural municipality of Mount Hope and there has been some type of agreement that's been reached to address the stretch of Highway 15 from the town of Semans, I believe, to Highway No. 20.

Can the minister give me an update on how that is going, what progress they hope to make, and, you know, when the project will be completed or even initiated? If he could give me some information on that, I would really appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well we do have a partnership agreement in place at this point. We negotiated over the past

year on that. And it's now on the scale of getting the funding in place to find out what we can do in terms of the stages of completing that road. But it will be upgraded. The agreement is in place and it's just a matter of getting the funding in place.

It's our intent to do a portion of the road this year and then to stage it as we're able to afford those upgrades.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister for that answer. When he was saying that it will be done in stages, I'm assuming over a course of more than one year but he can correct me if I'm wrong on that. Are we referring to any farther than from the town of Semans to Highway 20 or is he also including Highway 20 beyond the west?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The agreements that we have in place are with the local municipalities there. It is to run from Semans to No. 20, specifically. And when you go further north, we also have agreements in place over to No. 2, I believe.

And from 2 beyond, those agreements are not in place but we would have to work with the municipalities there. And once those agreements are in place then we would see movement.

(15:45)

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister. When you mention from Highway 20 to Highway 2 agreements, are those agreements also with the rural municipalities that are along that route?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The piece from 20 to 2 has had a combination actually of . . . Early section close to 20 was with, in conjunction with the municipalities. And the second sections, they are Prairie Grain Roads Program up to No. 20. And so it's through Prairie Grain Roads that we'll be completing that piece.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister. Going back to his initial answer when he said that, you know, they're waiting for funding to be in place, what funding was he referring to? Funding within his department or are they looking for funding elsewhere? Or what exactly was he referring to when he mentions they're waiting for the funding?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We have just over five and a half million for strategic rural partnerships and we have a number yet to come in, so it basically is within that internal budget within our department. It's to find out what we can do within this year, within the monies allocated for rural partnerships.

And so basically it's an internal matter. It's based on the number of agreements that are in and what can be handled at any given time.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Could the minister give some indication then when he would be aware of the number of agreements that were in place and would be in the position then to allocate the money within those projects that he has so that we would know when this project would be initiated?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Yes, we should know within about a month and be able to give you an answer on that. Just there are a number of them yet to come in, and then we have to set the

priorities.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I'm looking at a order in council dated February 25 of this year, wherein the order in council states that the head office of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation will be in Regina. I understand that prior to this the head office was in Melville.

I wonder, could you elaborate as to why the change?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The move of office was primarily an efficiency move. Functionally, the supports are here in Regina for the Grain Car Corporation and the move was an acknowledgement that the work was primarily being done here anyway. And with need for making our department and the Grain Car Corporation as effective and efficient as it could be, this seemed the right move.

**Mr. Hart:** — Minister, this move I would imagine would affect some employees in Melville. I guess the question is, how many employees were there in the head office in Melville? Has the move taken place and if so, when did that happen? And what has been done with those employees in Melville that were at the office in Melville; is there plans to look after those folks?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The action took place shortly following the passing of the OC (order in council) and there was one employee involved, a person who was doing some secretarial duties, and there was an office rental as well. The office rental was no longer needed of course. And so the one employee was laid off and the office is closed.

**Mr. Hart:** — The Grain Car Corporation, I believe they started with approximately . . . or with 1,000 grain hopper cars, if I recall correctly way back many years ago. How many cars does the Grain Car Corporation own today?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Yes, we don't have the exact number at our fingertips. Some of them are taken out of service due to damage. But we can get you that number in short order.

**Mr. Hart:** — In a question that would relate to the grain cars and the Grain Car Corporation, Minister, you are certainly aware that there is the Farmer Rail Car Coalition has an initiative to obtain ownership of the federal cars. If that group should be successful, what role do you see the Grain Car Corporation playing, if any? And further to that, would the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation make its cars available to that group?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We're quite hopeful that the Farmer Rail Car Coalition will be successful in getting the federal cars. Any feedback we've got recently has seemed quite positive. And in terms of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, certainly if the Farmer Rail Car Coalition is successful that would be a natural kind of negotiation to get into as to what we would do in terms of the cars that are still under our ownership.

One of the roles that I think the Grain Car Corporation has played very successfully has been an advisory role, certainly helping in a number of grain logistics projects, including advisory capacity with the Farmer Rail Car Coalition and support for those bids.

So at this point we have not defined a plan but certainly it would be looked at.

**Mr. Hart:** — Minister, do you foresee perhaps that the Grain Car Corporation would perhaps provide some services, whether they'd be more so over and above advisory, perhaps in the area of repairing grain cars and that sort of thing? Looking down the road, let's just assume for the moment that the Rail Car Coalition people did attain ownership of the federal cars. Is it your plan to have the Grain Car Corporation or some other arm of government or agency of your government play an active role with the Farmer Rail Car Coalition in maintenance and administration and those sorts of things?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — No, that's not an area that we're exploring.

**Mr. Hart:** — So do I take it from your answer that the answer is no, the Grain Car Corporation will not be playing a role? And does that also include to any other agency of your government, whether it be a Crown or some other department agency?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's our understanding that in terms of their planning, in terms of their discussion — the Farmer Rail Car Coalition's discussions — that that is an area that they are interested in and we think that that's a healthy area for them to explore.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress on Highways and Transportation as agreed and move to the Department of Learning.

(16:00)

### General Revenue Fund Learning Vote 5

#### Subvote (LR01)

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

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. On my right is the deputy minister of Learning, Dr. Craig Dotson. On my further right is Don Sangster, and Don is the executive director of school finance. Behind Don is Dr. Michael Littlewood, and Michael is the executive director of legislation and school administration. Next to Michael is Dr. Margaret Lipp, and Dr. Lipp is the executive director of Saskatchewan Learning. Behind us is Dr. Wayne McElree, and Dr. McElree is assistant deputy minister of Learning. Directly behind me is Gillian McCreary, and Gillian is the executive director of Saskatchewan Learning. And behind Wayne is Kevin Hoyt, and Kevin is the director of corporate services.

Behind the bar we have Dr. John Biss, and Dr. Biss is the executive director of university services. We have Glenda Eden, she is the manager of financial planning; Norma Knuth, manager of financial operations, Teachers' Superannuation Commission; Shirley Robertson, manager of pension benefits, Teachers' Superannuation Commission; Brady Salloum, executive director of student financial assistance; and Nelson

Wagner, executive director of facilities planning. And I think I've got everybody.

Before we start in to the questions I just have a few opening remarks to make about the department. Saskatchewan's \$1.2 billion investment in Learning this year is a double investment in our future. It's an investment in the future of individual learners and an investment in the future of our province. This kind of investment is one reason that in Saskatchewan our future is wide open. Building our future begins with kids, early childhood development is critical for future success. Our Kids First program expansion this year will enable it to serve 440 more families. In total more 920 families will receive early intervention and support.

This year's budget increased the foundation operating grants to our K to 12 schools by 3 per cent to 510 million. This sustains our high quality education system, a system that is focused on the needs of students. Our School<sup>PLUS</sup> initiative focuses the resources of seven government departments on meeting the needs of students in the school. School<sup>PLUS</sup> is a critically important initiative of the Government of Saskatchewan and I welcome the recent appointment of David Forbes, MLA for Saskatoon Idylwyld, as Legislative Secretary to oversee the implementation of School<sup>PLUS</sup>.

A strong economy and a civil society are built on an educated and productive population. We believe that one of the major roles of government is to improve the educational success and the well-being of every child and youth in Saskatchewan. With this budget we are increasing our support for partnerships between school boards and Aboriginal organizations, like the innovative partnerships in Meadow Lake, North Battleford, and Regina.

Saskatchewan people are innovators and they are comfortable using new technologies such as digital communication technologies. Our schools, our public libraries, and our post-secondary institutions have been leaders in providing digital resources, on-line access to information, and on-line courses.

The budget supports the continued innovative use of technology to expand the quality of learning, the quality of learning resources and access to them. Investing in digital technologies and e-learning across the sector is an investment in our future. The future prosperity and well-being of Saskatchewan and of Saskatchewan people depends on our having a highly trained and highly skilled workforce.

We are building on strengths such as our regional college system. Our regional colleges provide high quality university, technical, and other training opportunities in communities all across rural and northern Saskatchewan. SIAST continues to build on its solid track record in technical training.

Saskatchewan's innovative, industry-led apprenticeship system has more than 5,300 apprentices registered. This budget sustains our investment in skills training programs that are employment focused and responsive to the evolving needs of employers and workers.

Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of young people in

Western Canada enrolled full time in university. Our two universities continue to build on their successes as centres of excellence in research and innovation. The operating grant pool for the universities, federated colleges, and affiliated colleges is being increased by 3 per cent. Over and above that we are providing additional targeted funding for increased student intakes in medicine and the northern nursing education program. This will help us to ensure that we have the health professionals we need in communities around the province.

We are working with the University of Saskatchewan to continue feasibility studies for the construction of an academic health sciences complex, and we are working with the University of Regina to continue feasibility studies regarding a new laboratory building.

The budget also increases our financial support to students to enhance accessibility to high quality education and training programs. Saskatchewan was the first province to sign an agreement with the federal government to enhance benefits to students by simplifying the administrative process for student loans. This year the Canada-Saskatchewan Integrated Student Loans Program will provide more than \$134 million to assist about 17,000 students.

Learning is a Saskatchewan success story. Our focus on children and young people provides a strong foundation for learning, and our strong library system supports lifelong learning. Our post-secondary system helps people prepare for personal growth as well as for real jobs in the new economy.

And we continue to build for the future. One of the most visible signs of that growth is the splendid new Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to be officially opened in June — a source of pride for First Nations people, a source of pride for all of us, and a model of partnership.

Another is the Canadian Light Source, the synchrotron, which will begin operation in less than a year, the largest scientific project undertaken in Canada in 30 years — a magnet for scholars from around the world; a powerful tool for pure and applied research.

The structures and projects that display our growth are supported by Saskatchewan's real strength — its people.

Our investments in learning support a strong future, supported by strong communities, supported by well-educated and highly trained individuals. Our future is wide open.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And to the minister and to her officials, welcome. It's a great opportunity we have here today to discuss the spending priority of the government in the area of Learning, the second largest spending area for this government.

I've told a number of people over the last years that I'm the Saskatchewan Party critic for K to 12 Learning, not necessarily education but on the way we spend money. So I want to go on record as making sure people are aware that I'm not criticizing Learning ever because I do understand and realize, as much as everyone in this room, that education is the key to the future and we have to be working together to ensure that all our

students are ready to take over.

I am of course concerned that, with the words of the minister, the fact that we are still planning on the decline of over 30,000 students by the end of the decade. It's not something that is addressed directly. And even though education itself is not going to be changing this issue, the fact that we won't, we're not talking about growing a population means that we don't have a combination of departments working together where we can ensure that education is going to be a real priority to everyone.

I have a number of questions to discuss, not the least of which will be the new appointment for one of the MLAs for School<sup>PLUS</sup> on-line learning, the fact that we have 18 school divisions that don't get any money from the government and yet the minister has talked about covering the costs of the teachers' salaries, and how we can actually ensure that the people of the province know how this money is spent when we get that type of information going out across the province.

But to start today, I would like to ask the minister if there's any real changes in the foundation operating grant this year, in the way the formula was actually derived.

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — There were no major changes. This year there were some minor changes, but basically it was the same as always. And if there's any of the small changes you want to discuss, we can go through those.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, probably the one area that I would like to know if there's been any change is the isolated school factor, or the small schools grant. Can you give me an idea of what's happening in that area?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — There was no change in the approach to the calculation. We did increase the per-student money. So we put in an extra \$1 million into that process.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I have been receiving information from various school boards around the province as they set their rates or continue, or are working on setting their rates this year.

I am sure by the time we finish our Learning estimates in the next couple of months that we will know how many school boards will actually have to increase the mill rates and I am also somewhat concerned that changes in the assessment in the next couple of years are going to mean that there will be more school boards that will be in the zero grant category as well.

Madam Minister, before I get into anything real . . . into any of the particulars, I just want to ask about the high-school dropout rate. I've been at a number of functions lately where the statement was made that we have the lowest high-school dropout rate in Canada and yet we don't take into consideration the Native schools on reserves. Is there any work being done to look at the dropout rate in that area so that we can include those figures in the overall picture?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — This was a Statistics Canada survey conducted in 2000 — that's the one you're speaking about? — and it did survey youth 18 to 20 in all Canadian provinces. So

we believe it to be accurate but it did not include Aboriginal students, band school students.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess my question was, is there any work being done within the province to see if we can determine what the dropout rate is, using the numbers in our band schools as well? I'm concerned that this report talks about an analysis of what's happening to the people that are ages, that are older than the 20- to 22-year-old and see what's happening with them. The outcomes of the education system for both on-reserve and off is going to be of great importance to all of us as we try and grow this province.

So I understand that this report didn't talk about the on-reserve schools, but I'm wondering what the Department of Learning is doing to see what is happening there.

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — We are committed to finding solutions with our partners to how to track our students. And we used to track them from 9 to 12 and . . . or 10 to 12, grade 12s. We now have 90 per cent of our K to 9 students also included in our tracking and we are working towards having a tracking system that tracks all students in the province.

And we're working with the First Nations as well to deal with that, with some MOUs (memorandum of understanding) that we have recently signed to track Aboriginal students as well on the band schools.

So we've expanded our tracking system and we're working on implementing it fully across the province.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, we had an opportunity to speak a month ago and we talked about tracking students so I'm going to go into this area even though it isn't something I had planned on discussing at this time.

In order to track the students, we're going to have to have student identification numbers. And I believe you'd indicated, at that time, you had hoped the process would . . . or some type of system would be in place by September of this year. I didn't know . . . I was led to believe it was going to be for all students because of course children are moving from ages of kindergarten right to grade 12.

I'm wondering if you can give me the status of this tracking system and if all reserves are going to be involved in it, if it's going to be on a voluntary basis or how we were going to determine that all children are actually identified in the province.

(16:15)

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The student data system, the SDS is what we're talking about now. It is a system, a tracking system, that has been . . . Its conceptual design is complete and we have now, as I just said before, have included all K to 9 students in it, all across the province. And we have already done the 10 to 12s. They were already included. So we are moving to almost 90 per cent of our students are in the system and being tracked, including on the band schools.

This system is going to include things like the children that are

in the school, in all the schools that they're in. But I think you asked about some sort of identification of each student. I don't think we have that anticipated at the moment, like wristbands. But we do have enrolment information on all the children in K to 12 now, the 90 per cent of them across the province.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, thank you. I believe that the reason we were looking for student identification numbers is so we could track students that move from one school to another, specifically from the band to a city or a town and then back again. So that we are all aware that there are a couple of thousand of students — and I'm probably being conservative — within our school system that are considered hidden students, meaning they probably enrolled in school sometime in September and then moved and did not go back into the school system at some time. So without having this formal number and being able to say, where is this student at a certain time during the year, these students may be lost.

So I was hoping that when you said you had this student identification number available, it meant that there was actually a number, whether it was connected to their health number or social services number . . . I mean SIN (social insurance number) number, some way of identifying students.

And again, when I talked to a number of people over at DIAND (Department of Indian and Northern Development), they suggested that through the reserve they actually . . . there's numbers already in place. Maybe there was a chance to use numbers that were already given to individuals.

What process is your department on at this time when it comes to giving an actual student identification number to children in the school system?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The system as it's designed has assigned a Saskatchewan student number. We're also working on agreements with Health and with advice from Justice because there's privacy issues involved in linking with perhaps the SIN number or the health number. So we are working on those issues.

But we do have an assigned student number for the students we already are tracking now. So we can follow, as you were saying, them if they move from school to school. But there are other issues and we want to look at maybe simplifying the system by looking at some of the links we can make with the other departments, in particular Health.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, I imagine the new member that has been given a position of working with the School<sup>PLUS</sup> area is going to find that this is an area that's going to be of great importance to him because if we are actually going to integrate the different departments, we're going to have to find a way to ensure that the same number is used, whether it's in Health or Justice or Social Services.

So to start another number is probably not going to be an efficient use of time or money. So I was really hoping that we had to come up with some innovative idea of ensuring that we would have a system that worked right from the very beginning. But we'll discuss that when we get into the School<sup>PLUS</sup> area.

Madam Minister, I want to go into one specific area right now and I'm sure that you were thinking this is going to come up. But I'm talking about the Englefeld school issue and the fact that there is a number of, I believe, 122 appeals that are going to take place this year because of designation of school support.

I know with changes in legislation — I believe it was three years ago — we have one form that's used right across Saskatchewan when a property owner registers to pay their taxes, and I believe the copy of . . . There is one form that's used right across the whole province. If I'm wrong, I'm sure you'll correct me. But I believe this form says that someone has to indicate if they were a member of the religious faith that's been established in an area.

So I guess I'll stop there and ask you if this form is being used consistently right across Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — As far as we know, the form is being used consistently, and that form has been agreed to by both the Catholic and the separate . . . or Catholic and the public divisions of the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association).

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. The notice of appeal to a board of revision gives a number of places where someone can designate how they're going, why they're appealing against a certain issue. And one of them says, the preparation or content of the assessment rule. But nowhere on there does it say designation of school support.

Can you explain to me how they can determine that they are going to appeal this designation of school support when it's not part of the court of revision paper?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The courts have ruled that the board of revision does have the right to hear an appeal based on inaccuracies. I think that's what you were asking. So the court has ruled that the board of revision can hear this — can hear an appeal.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, can you tell me where the Department of Learning is on this issue? I know you understand that there is a court case . . . or this court of revision is going to take place and that the lawyers involved are being paid for by — the one side — by the SSTA. Is there any help from the Department of Learning? And where is the Department of Learning standing on this issue?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The Department of Learning is providing no help with the legal bills of individual parties. And we are not a party to the dispute and we are not taking sides. We just understand the law is clear and we will observe the developments.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, I know the autonomy of the school board is of utmost importance to your department as it is to our party and the way we are looking at education. Having parental choices and having the parents involved in making the decisions on what's happening to the students is key in making sure that the parents get the type of education that the children need as well.

But this issue is something that is going to . . . or has the potential of reaching beyond just the bounds of the two school divisions that are involved. It has the potential of going all the way to the Supreme Court, which I believe is something that nobody wants to have happen. Because with the changes in the legislation a few years ago, I don't believe this is going to happen any more where a school division is going to be able to start again.

So I think it's an issue that should be looked at in a way of saying how is this going to benefit the students? How's this going to benefit children? How's this going to benefit education?

Has your department been asked to give any input into it at all? And are you willing or prepared to talk to either side about this issue?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — We have not been asked, as far as we know, to participate in any type of advice or mediation or whatever between the parties.

But I just want to mention, to point out something that you did mention in that about changing the law. We clarified the forms to conform with the Constitution of Canada and the law. We didn't change the law.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Going on to the area, I noticed in the estimates that this year there's . . . the number of full-time equivalents is 528.2. And that is up somewhat, I'm not saying specifically, just up a little bit from last year.

Can you give me an idea, over the past numbers of years — and I don't know how far back you have information with you — what this number has doing? Has it been increasing? And I'm thinking specifically in the K to 12 area. And I know now that you keep . . . they're all combined, so it's difficult to break them down. But can you give me an idea of what the numbers of staff within the Department of Learning is doing? Is it going up or down?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The FTEs (full-time equivalents) have remained fairly steady over the last decade. But this year in fact we do appear, on vote 5, we have got 559 this year, down from 564 last year. So we have decreased our FTEs.

(16:30)

**Ms. Draude:** — I guess that looks different from the actual budget number then where we had 528 under the department estimated and 523 last year. If I look under . . . on page 91, estimated 2002-2003 was 523.2; 2003-2004 is 528.2. So there is an increase in that area?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — Same page, but you didn't finish the next line and add it in to get the totals that I just mentioned.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, over the last three years, we've had an average of between 4 and 5,000 students a year lost in this province. And that should . . . That means in every school division there has been a decrease in the amount of money that is given to them, if they are fortunate enough to

receive funds from the government, because the formula is based on the number of students in an area.

So school divisions have seen an actual decrease in the amount of money because of the enrolment figures declining. And yet, we do not see the same number decline, percentage of decline in the Department of Learning. Can you explain that?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The amount of money put into the schools has increased over the last . . . since '95 significantly every year, and each year there is a decreasing enrolment. But each year also, there is an increased cost to educate per student. And as well as the different programs that we're adding into the system to assist students with different needs.

So the system itself has increased its cost and we're spending more per student per year.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, the increased cost . . . the increased money that has been going into the school division is going by way of increased wages which are of course negotiated. And I'm not saying it's not necessary because we have to ensure we have high-quality teachers, and that they are . . . we have the professional people we need to educate our children, but that we still have less students in the province.

And it means that when it comes to the administration of those students, the numbers of . . . the percentage of people that are working to administrate those, the work for those children, should be going down as well if we're talking about numbers of people.

And that's basically what I was asking you about is, I don't see a 7.5 per cent decline in the number of people that are working in the Department of Learning over the last four years like I see the number decline in the student enrolment.

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — I just want to . . . I didn't hear really a question but I do want to say that when we talk about the increase in money going into teachers' salaries, the teachers are who deliver the programs.

And much the same as in Health, which is always my point of reference, the front-line workers, the human resources in both departments, are 70 to 80 per cent of the cost. The teachers touch the students. They're the ones who educate the students, who teach the students, who deliver the programs. So of course that's where our money's going to go.

And the cost of educating a student has risen. And the department has kept up with the different programs and administered those programs, and delivered the programs to the students, through the teachers, in a certainly responsible way, and has indicated our support for K to 12 and post-secondary education by putting \$1.2 billion into education.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, I'm discussing the number of people that are directly involved in your department, the ones that are administrating and managing the Department of Learning.

I'm not sure what . . . When I looked under FTE staff complement, I saw department had actually gone up, revolving

funds has gone down. Maybe you could explain to me first of all what the revolving fund is and then we can decide whether the actual help that's coming from the department for the children in this province is going up, or is it just . . . or is the administration part of keeping a government going, going up?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — I'll go to the question of the revolving funds FTE issue first. The wind-down of the learning resources distribution centre resulted in 7.5 FTEs being lost. The transfer of the . . . we had one transfer of the executive director to Corrections and Public Safety, and we transferred three employees from the Saskatchewan Communications Network, the SCN; so that resulted in a net loss of 5.5 FTEs. That's the revolving fund question.

Your question about corresponding student enrolments to staff numbers in the department, they cannot be explicitly linked. If we had a big increase in students, we would not see a corresponding increase in staff in the department. Staff in the department provide services, leadership, curriculum support — all the things that have to be done all the time anyways for the students that we do have in the system.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's exactly the kind of answer I needed to hear and it's probably the same answer that school boards right across this province are hearing when they get their budget and they see that their enrolment has gone down.

So they get less money from the department because you're saying, okay there's fewer students so you don't need as much money. But, correspondingly, their work has not gone down; they still have to light the buildings; they still have to heat the buildings; they still need support staff. They still need everything that is not recognized by your department when it comes to the amount of money you're getting.

On one hand I can understand how it has to work in the department, but it has to work out in the field as well. We have to ensure that school boards have the capability, or have the money to fund the education system.

So in our case when the 18 school divisions that get not one penny from this government, and the other school divisions — and so far I've seen at least nine that got a lot less money this year than last year, and a number of school divisions who have already reported that their mill rate is going up — means that the responsibility that they're trying to have for the children of this province is going further onto the taxpayers of this province.

It isn't affecting the Department of Learning because you're still continuing to give the high quality of service that the students expect across this province, that teachers expect, and parents expect. But I don't see that it's happening when it comes to going down the scale to the amount of money that's given to the people.

On budget day, when I heard the minister talk about the amount of money that was going to be given to K to 12 education and how the operating grant had gone up and everybody was supposed to be happy, at the end of the day people knew that it was in some cases covering the teachers' salaries, in most cases

not.

It did not at all cover support staff. It did not cover the increase in utilities. It did not cover the increase in insurance. It did not cover the increase in fuel. And it did not cover so many of the other things that is necessary to keep the school system going.

So I'm sure that we're going to have this discussion on other days as well. But I would like now to refer, before I let my colleague ask you a few questions about . . . I would ask him to help me out in asking these Learning questions, I want to talk to you for a moment about capital — the money that was given for capital this year.

I have a letter recently, in fact I just received it today, from you on capital funding and basically it shows that we have less than half of the money this year for capital funding than we had last year. And at the same time I'm in receipt of a letter from a number of school boards who asked for money to update their facilities, in some cases build new facilities to ensure again that they had the wherewithal to give the type of education that children are asking for in this province. And yet there is less than half of the money in the budget for K to 12. Can you tell me how this was arrived at in your budget process?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — We had choices to make when we put the budget together, and we chose to fully support and protect the foundation operating grant and add a huge increase into that. So the choices to be made, then we had to offset that with a balance, and where do we get the money from? And the capital was where we took it from, or where it suffered, and the foundation operating grant got the huge increase.

**Ms. Draude:** — Not too long ago I asked you, Madam Minister, if there was decisions made on how the money that is allocated into capital funding this year has been spent. And I was told that there was a number of projects that had been approved and that there would be a list of the rest of them coming forthwith.

Is the determination made for the public yet to tell us where the money for capital expenditures will be going this year?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — We've not finalized our list since the boards have not given us their priorities. All of them have not submitted their priorities so we haven't been able to finalize our process and give that list out. We anticipate that's about June we would be doing that.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, I would like to congratulate you, for the record today, on your recent appointment as Minister of Learning. I know that it's a big challenge. It's a large department, a lot of responsibility, a lot of money flowing through the department. And many demands on the department I'm sure have crossed your desk already.

But, Madam Minister, your appointment is only more recent than my own as critic and there's a lot of areas about post-secondary in particular that I need to learn about and be familiarized today, if it's possible.

Now we only have a few minutes remaining and I don't think



we're going to be able to broach anywhere near the number of questions I have. I notice the number of officials you have with you today. It's unfortunate that we only have an hour and I hope that you will be able to assure me that we'll have many more hours together in this House on the issue of post-secondary alone, let alone what my colleague would like to cover in terms of K to 12 education as well.

(16:45)

Madam Minister, I wanted to just sort of start with the post-secondary budgetary areas that we saw outlined in this year's document. But I am going to defer that for just a few moments and go back to the questions relating to SCN.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation was asked some questions in connection with the role of SCN in distance learning and educational opportunities. And I think that we need to get our understanding of what has happened in that area as clear as we possibly can this afternoon.

So I guess what's brought me to this point is your response to my colleague just a few minutes ago as it relates to the number of full-time equivalent positions and the revolving fund. And you made a comment about three people being transferred.

Now if I understood you correct, you were saying that there were three people transferred from SCN to the Department of Learning. But it seems to me that the number of FTEs went down, not up. So can you explain the incongruity of that?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The total of 5.5, you heard correct. It was minus 5.5. There was a plus three from the SCN but we wound down the learning resource distribution centre which had minus 7.5 FTEs, plus one for corrections and public safety.

So the total net result was minus 5.5 FTEs, but three do come from SCN on the plus side.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. To the minister through the Chair, I would like to pursue the SCN issue just a little. According to the budgetary documents, the transfer of distance education from the purview of SCN to the Department of Learning was going to reduce SCN's budget by approximately \$1.7 million.

Would the minister be able to delineate for me exactly where that transfer of monies which went into the Department of Education — or the Department of Learning, rather — where they show up in the Learning estimates this time?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — To the critic, on page 94 of the Learning estimates under training programs, that's where the line is — technology enhanced learning — that's where the SCN fits in, in to that 4.837 number for 2003-04.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, we talked about the three employees that were directly affected by the transfer of the distance learning to the Department of Learning. Were there other employees affected? Were there some employees that were actually laid off, lost their jobs as a result of this transfer? And if so, could you give us an indication how many and if there is any other collateral damage associated

with that transfer?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — To our knowledge there were no other job losses associated with the transfer.

**Mr. Elhard:** — To the minister, can I assume then from what information we have gleaned already that there are three people — only three people — associated with the delivery of distance education programs in the department?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — We used to have . . . We have four people in post-secondary, three SCN, and eight in K to 12, and they're all now in one branch. So we have 15 people there, which we used to have . . . where we used to have 12. But they're all in one branch in the department now.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. I was wondering if the minister would be prepared to explain the rationale for this decision.

The purpose of SCN, it seems to me over the longer period of its existence, has been to provide delivery of distance education to the province. And this particular move, although not completely unexpected I suppose in view of the expanding demands of distance education and the responsibility of the Department of Learning for that — I can understand why you might want to do that — but what was the rationale for doing this right now? And I guess the further question to that is this: was this move precipitated by a conscious decision in the Department of Learning, or was it something that was precipitated by a deliberate effort by SCN to remove itself from responsibility for distance education? Whose idea was it?

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — The move was a joint agreement between SCN and the Department of Learning to move some of the program responsibilities and resources for e-learning to the department. So it was a jointly discussed and arrived upon agreement.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:56.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

Hermanson .....	733
Draude .....	733
Gantefoer .....	733
Elhard .....	733
Stewart .....	733
Eagles .....	733
Huyghebaert .....	733
Dearborn .....	734
Hart .....	734
Allchurch .....	734

**READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**

Deputy Clerk .....	734
--------------------	-----

**NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

Bakken .....	734
Julé .....	734

**INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

Krawetz .....	734
Hamilton .....	734
Stewart .....	735
Elhard .....	735
Harpauer .....	742
Serby .....	742
Lorjé .....	743

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**National Day of Mourning**

Hagel .....	735
McMorris .....	735

**In Motion Program**

Junor .....	735
-------------	-----

**100th Birthday Celebration**

Gantefoer .....	736
-----------------	-----

**National Volunteer Week**

Hamilton .....	736
----------------	-----

**Legislative Building**

Heppner .....	736
---------------	-----

**Bursaries for Students in the Health Care Professions**

Trew .....	737
------------	-----

**Development of Feedlot Industry in Redvers Area**

D’Autremont .....	737
-------------------	-----

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

**Government Participation in Potato Industry**

Hermanson .....	737
Serby .....	737

**Mega Bingo**

Bakken .....	739
Osika .....	739

**SaskTel Investments**

Wall .....	740
Sonntag .....	740

**STATEMENT BY A MEMBER**

**National Day of Mourning**

Higgins .....	742
McMorris .....	742

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

Yates .....	743
The Speaker .....	743

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**General Revenue Fund — Highways and Transportation — Vote 16**

Wartman .....	743
Hart .....	743, 751

<b>Allchurch</b> .....	744
<b>Heppner</b> .....	745
<b>Draude</b> .....	748
<b>Harpauer</b> .....	750
<b>General Revenue Fund — Learning — Vote 5</b>	
<b>Junor</b> .....	751
<b>Draude</b> .....	752
<b>Elhard</b> .....	756