

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
April 29, 1993

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order, the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7), they are hereby read and received:

Of citizens of the province humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Monday ask the government the following question:

Because of the highly controversial nature and the varying public opinions throughout the province, will the government allow a free vote on Bill 38, an Act to amend the Human Rights Code, in order to allow members of the Legislative Assembly the opportunity to register their vote based upon personal principles and convictions in concert with the wishes of the constituents they represent?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have two groups of students to introduce this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, they are all from Moose Jaw, and they are all seated in the west gallery, the gallery closest to Moose Jaw.

There are 46 students in total, about half-and-half I believe, a grade 3 and 4 class from Alexander School, and their teacher, Mr. Keith Silversides. And, Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to visit these students in their classroom and had a delightful time, and so now I'm very happy to be welcoming them here to the Legislative Assembly.

And the other group is from King Edward School, with their teacher Aleen Tanner. And I am particularly happy to be introducing this group from King Edward School because just a few short years ago I too graduated from King Edward School.

So welcome to all the students and I look forward to meeting you right after question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This sounds a bit like Moose Jaw day, but I would like to introduce as well a group of visiting students from Moose Jaw. These are from Central Collegiate and they are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

I see the teacher, Brian Swanson, who is also a city councillor in the city of Moose Jaw, accompanied with it looks to me like six members of the government club at Central Collegiate in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, this is a special group in that these are young people who in their own time take noon hours on a regular basis to come together and talk politics. And so it's especially with special pride that I introduce these young people to the legislature.

I'd also ask that members take a very close look because it could very well be that somewhere down the road one of these young people will be in fact taking a seat in the legislature, although I hope it's not too soon, Mr. Speaker, if it's in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to welcome them. I look forward to meeting for photos and a visit immediately following question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 39 grade 8 students seated in your gallery, which is the closest gallery to the city of Saskatoon. They attend Caroline Robins School, which is in my constituency in Saskatoon, and they're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Balon and Mr. Colson, and chaperons, George Grant, Jackie Douville, Myron Sosnowski, and Mrs. Penner.

And they're going to be touring some of the interesting sites here in Regina as well as this building, and I'll be meeting with them for photos and also refreshments. And I'd like all members to join with me in welcoming the students to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Moose Jaw Palliser in welcoming Councillor Swanson and his group here to the legislature today. As the member for Moose Jaw said, this is a regular occurrence and I'm very proud to say that two members of Mr. Swanson's class are members of my constituency. In fact, they're both neighbours of mine very shortly, and I know their parents very well.

And I just say, welcome to the legislature and welcome to your interest in politics. We're a lot better than most people make us out to be, so live and learn. Thank you for coming today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Workers' Compensation Legislation

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and has to do with the workers' compensation legislation

introduced into the House yesterday.

Mr. Minister, we all recognize the need to protect workers and to ensure that they are fairly compensated for injuries incurred on the job. But it is also equally important to ensure that there are jobs for those people in this province. And the business community has to have a competitive environment which allows it to maintain and create jobs. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce estimates that these changes may cost businesses in this province as much as \$200 million a year.

Mr. Minister, giving your government's dismal job-creation record and the fact that our province is struggling to pull out of a recession, how can you justify placing that type of additional burden on Saskatchewan businesses at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member's question, I couldn't justify that, nor will we be doing that. Nor am I confident the member's information is up to date. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce had access to a report, an actuary report done last November on what was understood to be the Muir report. I have since then provided to the chamber of commerce — and I'll table it in the House actually when question period is over for the benefit of the member — a study done by Price Waterhouse. The lead person on the team was Don Rosten who's a senior managing partner for Price Waterhouse in Saskatchewan.

His estimate was that the legislation which I tabled yesterday would increase the assessment by about 10 per cent. Ten per cent will still leave us second lowest in Canada, something I think most business persons will accept if somewhat begrudgingly. So I think the member's information is out of date actually.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your government says these changes will cost about \$20 million a year. The government also said that they were going to create 2,000 new jobs last year, and we all saw how that turned out. You've set a new job target of 7,000 jobs in the previous year and again this year; those are yet to be borne out.

The fact is, Mr. Minister, no one really knows how much these changes will cost. The Price Waterhouse calculations are based on one set of assumptions. The chamber's calculations are based on another set of assumptions. Either one could be true, because the legislation is so open for interpretation it's impossible to tell how much this will cost.

Mr. Minister, you've already been driving businesses out of the province by piling up tax after tax after tax on top of these latest tax increases. How can you justify introducing this new mystery tax, an expense that no one can even estimate the cost of it yet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The member leaves me somewhat mystified. On one hand he says it's impossible to know what the cost is. On the other hand he's quite sure it's 200 per cent.

The member may want to wait until Committee of the Whole. I will be here on that Bill. I'll be here with the officials and we will explain to them how the figure was arrived at.

I think when the members hear the explanation as to how the costing was arrived at, they will be satisfied, as I think this chamber of commerce is now satisfied that the earlier study was based on a false set of assumptions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I didn't say it was going to cost \$200 million; the chamber said it's going to cost \$200 million. Price Waterhouse says they don't know what it's going to cost. It's you, Mr. Minister, that's unclear on this. Once again, Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't have any real answers so he just goes on to say, trust me; I know what I'm doing.

Mr. Minister, how can we trust you when your government never tells the truth? The Minister of Health doesn't know the truth about hospital closures. The minister of SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) doesn't tell the truth about hiring NDP (New Democratic Party) hacks. The minister of Gaming doesn't tell the truth about tendering. The Premier doesn't tell the truth about anything.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I ask the member to not use inflammatory words of the nature that he is using in question period. It adds nothing to the question period at all.

Order, order. I'd ask the member to please put his question.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, could you tell us what the cost to businesses in this province will be, of your changes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well the member will find Committee of the Whole to be a refreshing change in that event. Because you will find when you get to the Committee of the Whole in the Bill that in fact this Bill was developed in concert with as good as advice as we could get, which was the senior managing partner in Price Waterhouse.

The Bill was developed with him. He understands the assumptions and we costed it very carefully. So the member is in for a real treat when we get to Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, I don't think the business community in this province can afford any more treats from you. Mr. Minister, how many more, how many more jobs will be lost in this province, do you estimate, as a result of the changes you're proposing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The answer is . . . the answer fairly clearly is none. Mr. Speaker, we will still have, even with the 10 per cent increase, we will still be second lowest in Canada, second only to the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, the business people in this province are more than capable of competing with an assessment that low.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, this legislation, as proposed, the chamber of commerce says will cost an additional \$200 million, the same as a payroll tax on Saskatchewan businesses. Add this to the increased sales taxes, increased fuel taxes, increased income taxes, increased utility bills since your government took office — all of which the Premier promised he wouldn't do. He promised no new taxes — and you say that this is a strategy to create new jobs in this province.

Mr. Minister, prior to the last election the Premier said taxes are the silent killer of jobs. Higher taxes do not create jobs. Higher taxes take jobs out of the economy. Now as usual the NDP has another version of the truth that says higher taxes do create jobs. Mr. Minister, could you please explain this new-found economic theory that says piling up cost after cost after cost on Saskatchewan business is somehow going to create additional jobs in this province.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It's not a new-found economic theory. In fact it's contained in the document of my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, *Partnership for Renewal*. That document clearly states that if we are going to succeed in this area, if we're going to survive, we need everybody working together — management, employees, and government.

Everybody should be pulling on the oars and going in the same direction and that's what this is about — redressing an injustice which I think everybody agrees has been an injustice in the past, the operation of this WCB (Workers' Compensation Board).

We're redressing that, we're doing so at a very reasonable cost, and when we get beyond some of these injustices we will truly be able to work as partners and survive and thrive. So if the member wants to see a more complete explanation, look at the document *Partnership for Renewal* which my colleague issued a few months ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskEnergy President

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard of patronage in SEDCO at the highest levels.

Mr. Speaker, I want to bring the attention to the Minister of SaskEnergy. My question, Mr. Minister, is this, and it has to do with NDP patronage at the highest levels. Very simply put, Mr. Minister, can you confirm that long-time NDP supporters and super-bureaucrats David Dombowsky and John Sadler have been short-listed for the position of president of SaskEnergy?

And it's my sincere wish, for the good of the province, that this information is not true, Mr. Minister. Can you confirm this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. There has been no active search to replace the president of SaskEnergy, and therefore there would be no short-listing at this point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gaming Commission Appointment

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, consumers in this province have bought a product that has been sold by false and misleading advertising. Mr. Speaker, people bought the product based on those claims. Now it seems with each passing day we see another example of just how false and misleading this advertising was.

My question is to the minister responsible for Gaming. The NDP government advertised to the electorate that when they got in power there would be no more patronage, no more political appointments, no more unadvertised placements of personal staffs on boards, commissions, departments, or Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, can you confirm for this Assembly that another NDP political aide has been appointed to the office of the Gaming Commission; and can you confirm that Lisa Thomson, who currently works in Executive Council, has been given the communications position at the Gaming Commission? Can you confirm that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that Lisa Thomson has been hired as the communications officer at the Gaming Commission. I would want to indicate that she is well qualified for this position after having worked in the print media. She has worked as a part of the Executive Council communications staff. I think she is well qualified to handle this job and we're looking forward to her performance in the Gaming Commission. I think she'll do a very good job for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, you have already appointed the top bagman for the New Democratic Party to the top position of the Gaming Commission and now you are appointing another political aide into the same office. The Gaming Commission seems to have become another dumping ground for your political hacks.

Mr. Minister, could you tell this Assembly if the position that was filled was advertised. If so, when, for how long, and how many people applied for that position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me correct the member opposite. To my knowledge Lisa Thomson has never acted as a ministerial aide in this administration. I want to say to the member opposite that not unlike Mr. Nystuen, she was hired because of her qualifications and her ability to handle the job.

I want to say to the member opposite as well that I know she will be doing a very capable job for the Gaming Commission and I look forward to working with her in that capacity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, could you tell this Assembly if the position that was filled was advertised. If so, when, for how long, and how many people applied for that position. This is the second time I'm asking you.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I could say to the member opposite that I'm not aware of whether or not the position was tendered or whether it was advertised. I will check with the chief executive officer of the Gaming Commission whose job it is to look after the administrative details, and I will report to the member as soon as I've found that information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, this is just another very lengthy list of patronage appointments that you have been . . . made in direct violation to the pledge you made to the voters, Mr. Minister. They elected you on false and misleading advertising and people are now saying that you have . . . they want to take their product back.

Can you tell us how many people, Mr. Minister, under the guise of restructuring, how many people have been fired from the Gaming Commission, Liquor Commission, and how many positions have been or will be refilled?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be more than happy to answer these questions in estimates. As the member will know, I don't carry that type of detailed information to the House, with respect to the number of employees that have been released due to

restructuring.

But let me say this to the member opposite. Unlike the former administration, we will operate with a lean and an efficient administration. And that is why we are consolidating the Gaming Commission and the Liquor Licensing board.

And I want to say to the member opposite that it is our intention to balance this budget and that means a lean administration. And I want to say with respect to misleading — this government has been open and straightforward and will continue to be with tendering and with other issues.

I want to say that the track record that that member brings along, with respect to the projected deficits and the \$800 million mistake that they make in one year with respect to deficit budgeting, will not happen under this administration. We intend to be fair, and to be open, and to be honest with the people of Saskatchewan, unlike the former . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, could you tell this Assembly if the position that was filled was advertised? If so, when, for how long, and how many people applied for that position? That, Mr. Minister, is the question.

You took notice of the question only because you did not want to tell this Assembly that the issue was in fact not done. You did not advertise for that position, and that's why you say to this Assembly, I'll give . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. We cannot allow the question period . . . The minister took notice of that particular question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No. Next question.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, would you repeat to this Assembly the statement that you made in this Assembly that dealt with relieving employees of their responsibilities in the workplace in government and then hiring back and back-filling with NDP hacks? Would you repeat the statement that you made in this Assembly to this Assembly so that the people of Saskatchewan can see what your position really is?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think that if I said such a thing, and I believe I did, the record is there in *Hansard* and it remains there in *Hansard*, and I have no cause to withdraw it or anything like that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, the point is, Mr. Minister, that Zach Douglas is a political hack from your administration in former times; Lisa Thomson is; and we could name dozens and dozens

more from your administration. You said that you wouldn't do that. Is that false advertising or is that false advertising?

I want you to confirm the statement that you made in this Assembly again for the people of Saskatchewan to clearly understand what your official position is, and then we can tell the people of the province what your underlying position is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I don't know what I can add to my previous answer. I made the statement that I made in the House. It's there on record in *Hansard*. The government stands behind it.

We were dealing with a particular situation at the time. I answered the question at the time. I think the member will find, if he checks the records and inquires into the matter in Public Accounts or wherever the appropriate forum is, that my statement was delivered upon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Constituency Letter

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Economic Development and it regards, Mr. Speaker, a letter that was sent out on his behalf.

Mr. Minister, I have here a letter dated April 20, 1993. Make note of the date, Mr. Minister — April 20, 1993. This letter was sent out to your constituents on behalf of the member from Regina Elphinstone. And it reads in part, and I'll quote, Mr. Speaker:

We all know this government is in big trouble with the people of Saskatchewan . . . Even at this late date in their mandate they continue to try to bring in new taxes in the form of the Provincial harmonized GST.

It goes on to say:

. . . you know your contribution will be important in helping defeat the Devine government.

On behalf of Dwain Lingenfelter (the member from Regina Elphinstone) . . . I thank you in advance for your support.

(Signed) Fred Dulmage, President, Regina Elphinstone NDP.

Mr. Minister, I know your government is unpopular and I know that you're having trouble raising money, but I never thought that you would go so far as to deny that you are even the government.

Mr. Minister, will you take it upon yourself to inform Mr. Dulmage that you are in fact the government and that it is your NDP that is responsible for the fact that,

as it says in this letter, that this government is in big trouble with the people of Saskatchewan. Would you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It seems appropriate enough, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition addressed his question to an empty chair.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I think . . . Order. I think the minister knows full well that that comment is out of order, and I wish he'd address the question.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I withdraw . . . In my enthusiasm for the truth I forgot that, Mr. Speaker. I say to the hon. member opposite, it would ill behove the opposition to give us the courtesy of seeing a copy of the document before you ask us to comment on it.

It is clear however from the content of the letter that it was written — if it was written at all — that it was written before the election and not afterwards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — I will be happy to table the letter in the Assembly so that the members in the Democratic Party can read from it. And I would further read from the letter, Mr. Speaker. It says:

We must be ready to fight the most important election in Saskatchewan's future. We must elect John Solomon who has fought Devine since he was elected in 1988.

Mr. Speaker, obviously this government who have such a terrible economic record, who are in so much trouble with their own supporters that they would try and make believe that the member for Estevan is still the premier . . .

I say to the member, I say to the hon. minister, the Minister of Labour, would you stand in your place today, sir, and answer Mr. Dulmage and those NDP supporters who say that this government is in trouble because of your tax increases, because of the things that you're doing to Saskatchewan people.

Would you stand in your place and give him an honest answer of who the government is today and what you're doing wrong?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Clearly the Leader of the Opposition is a little disorientated. This is not the theatre of the absurd, this is the legislature of Saskatchewan, and these questions are utterly nonsensical, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to draw to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition that the question period is to address questions of government policy

which we are in a position to respond to, not letters written by a third party which we are in no position to respond to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crop Insurance Corporation Appointments

Mr. Martens: — My question is to the minister responsible for Crop Insurance.

Will you confirm to this Assembly that the secretary that you hired to be in the Crop Insurance office, is the personal secretary for the member for the Melville constituency, and that you hired her? And then, Mr. Minister, when he got a new secretary, would you confirm that you hired that one as well? And would you confirm that . . . would you confirm for this Assembly that each one of these is probably a back-fill in individuals who were fired from the Crop Insurance Corporation? Would you provide that information to this Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I do not hire secretaries for Crop Insurance. That is the business of the Crop Insurance administration. I'm not aware of who was hired as secretaries out there. It's not my business nor do I make it my business to know each individual that's hired out there and their background. I'm assured that the quality of people that's hired is excellent.

If you're criticizing these people on an individual basis and condemning people, I think you should have some evidence before you come here to question their capabilities and their backgrounds. Certainly we do not do a political check on people that are hired in our Crop Insurance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I would like to ask our guests in the galleries please not to participate in the activities on the floor.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, another question to the minister responsible for Crop Insurance. Will you confirm also to this Assembly that the president of Crop Insurance, whose girlfriend has a . . . Will you also confirm to this Assembly that his girlfriend has an agency and is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Will the members please come to order. Order.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, will you answer to this Assembly whether the president of Crop Insurance's girlfriend has an agency in Crop Insurance and that it officially is still in his own name? Would you confirm that to the people of this Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous. The people opposite use the immunity they have in this House and call people bagmen, to make references to people's personal lives, to slander people, on the basis that they have immunity in this House. We do not, we do not hire people in Crop Insurance on those bases. I am not responsible for the secretaries that are hired at Crop Insurance. It's done in a professional manner and we intend to continue to do that. And I personally raise objection to the members opposite in their personal attacks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — A point of order.

The Speaker: — Order. What's your point of order? Order. What's your point of order?

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker, I clearly heard the Minister of Environment use the word "crap. The other day you sat me in my place and lectured me soundly and firmly for using that word.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I don't have to take any advice from the member from Maple Creek. If he has a point of order, make your point of order.

Mr. Goohsen: — I'd like you to rule on the word used in this Assembly by the member, the word "crap".

The Speaker: — That's a much better point of order . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If the member from Rosthern would just give the Speaker an opportunity, he would rule . . .

An Hon. Member: — You wouldn't have ruled on it unless he got up.

The Speaker: — I'll warn the member from Rosthern one more time: if he interferes with the Speaker, there are other means that I can deal with him, and I intend to.

Does the member from Arm River have a question? If the Minister of Agriculture used the word "crap", I did not hear him. It is unparliamentary, it is unparliamentary and . . . Order. I have asked if the member . . . if the minister used that word I would ask him to withdraw it. I did not hear it. If he says he didn't say it, I will check the records and it clearly would be in the records . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The Minister of Environment wasn't even on his feet.

Order. Order. My apologies to the House. He said the minister, but obviously he was referring to the Minister of the Environment. If the Minister of the Environment used the word "crap" in the House, I would ask him to . . . if the Minister of the Environment used it, I would ask him to withdraw the words.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I used the word from my seat. I withdraw it.

The Speaker: — I thank the minister. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT ORDERS****SECOND READINGS****Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code**

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 1993.

I want to begin my remarks by recalling the very special role which our province has played over the years in the promotion of human rights.

In 1947 the Government of Saskatchewan under Premier T.C. Douglas introduced into this Assembly the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights. It guaranteed fundamental freedoms: freedom of religion, freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly and association, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, and the right to vote. It also prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, creed, religion, colour, or ethnic or national origin.

I cannot overstate the importance of the action of this Assembly in 1947 when it passed the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights. It was Canada's first comprehensive human rights legislation and it was a very important act of political leadership. All of Canada was profoundly affected by it. Following Saskatchewan's lead, all of the other jurisdictions in Canada began passing legislation that addressed the serious issue of discrimination.

I should take a moment to remind members how it came to be that human rights and discrimination found its way onto the public agenda in Canada. The concern about fundamental freedoms and the determination to make discrimination illegal took huge impetus in the years immediately following the Second World War. The people of the world were outraged by the revelations about the grossly discriminatory treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany and by the murder of six million Jews in Nazi Germany and in territories occupied by the advancing armies of Adolf Hitler.

After the war, Mr. Speaker, the United Nations was formed, and the question of human rights was one of the first items on its agenda. The countries of the world worked very intensively on the subject and in 1948 produced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration continues to stand as a beacon to all the people of this troubled world, pointing the way to a future in which people will be more accepting, more tolerant, and more respectful of their fellow citizens.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the inspiration behind Premier Douglas's Bill of Rights in 1947. Saskatchewan's human rights legislation continued to evolve and progress steadily through the 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1970s. This process

culminated with the consolidation in 1979 of our various anti-discrimination laws under our current Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Our present Premier, then the Attorney General, introduced this important legislation into this Assembly and I know he's very proud of this achievement.

The place of the code in our legal regime indicates its importance in our society. It is pre-eminent among our laws. It takes precedence over every other provincial law except where the legislation expressly states that it will operate in spite of the provisions of the code.

It is extremely interesting to note that there was unanimous support for the code when it was passed into law in this Assembly. The code was clearly grounded in the philosophy which rose above partisan politics.

I want to make one other important observation about the role of Saskatchewan in the development of human rights. Saskatchewan can proudly claim as its own two first ministers who were great champions of human rights. Both are legendary figures in the history of this province and in this country. They stood, Mr. Speaker, at quite different points in the political spectrum. I speak of course of former Premier T.C. Douglas and of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

Premier Douglas, as I have already said, headed the Saskatchewan government when it introduced Canada's first Bill of Rights in 1947. In 1960, 13 years later, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker realized one of the great goals of his lifetime when he shepherded the Canadian Bill of Rights through the Parliament of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this is a proud record, a proud record indeed. It is a record of progressive thought and strong leadership. It is a record based upon a century of cooperation, of compassion, of mutual respect and toleration — core values shared by all the sons and daughters of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, by its nature, human rights legislation must evolve and must be amended from time to time to meet our changing social values.

Our human rights legislation is intended to protect people from discrimination. Over time our understanding of the problems of discrimination which people encounter has broadened and deepened.

For example, during the 1970s we came to understand that it was no longer acceptable to discriminate against people on the basis of their age or their sex. The legislation was amended to include these matters as prohibited grounds for discrimination. All members of this Assembly know and all accept that our social values, our understanding of ourselves, our society, and the relationship between people in the society, are not

frozen and stagnant. As a society we progress, we improve, our understanding broadens and deepens. We become more tolerant.

Mr. Speaker, our laws must keep up with this progress. In particular, our laws must be amended to afford protection to groups of persons who, because of certain characteristics, face special barriers and persecution. There are countries where the legislation that safeguards human rights has been controversial and very difficult. This type of legislation often strikes chords of deeply held social belief and prejudice.

Our American neighbours have suffered these controversies in spades. The right to equal use of public transit by blacks in the American South and the right to equal educational opportunities for all children regardless of race, colour, or ethnic origin are two examples. The protection of these human rights by the rule of law were explosive and controversial actions in their time and they were difficult for every politician and every civil rights leader who advocated on behalf of these basic human rights.

To some extent we face these challenges and these controversies with this Bill, but we are prepared to do so because we are convinced that it is the right thing to do. And I personally welcome the responsibility and the opportunity to state clearly in this legislature the content and the purpose of these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that in recent years the evolution of our human rights legislation has begun to lag. Saskatchewan has only added one new protective ground to the code since 1979. That ground was mental disability. This was an important change but is the only substantial change this legislature has made to the code in more than a decade. And the decade of the 1980s was a time when changes and advances in human rights legislation was taking place all across the country.

I believe that the amendments proposed in this Bill will restore and strengthen our province's reputation as a jurisdiction with strong and progressive human rights legislation — legislation which is based squarely on our traditions of tolerance, fairness, and understanding.

Mr. Speaker, we should all reflect on the principles which underlie the public policy respecting human rights. A stated objective of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code is to promote recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family. This objective is based upon the fundamental principle that every person is free and equal.

(1445)

How is our society to advance this principle? How are we to accomplish this objective? Our starting point must be to eliminate wrongful discrimination. The amendments we are proposing today are entirely consistent with these objectives.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code provides

protection to persons who, because of certain characteristics, may be subjected to special barriers. People face these barriers as a result of stereotyping, historical disadvantage, or vulnerability to political or social prejudice. The code states as a general proposition that these individuals are equal in dignity and rights to all other members of society. At present, the code prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, creed, religion, colour, sex, marital status, disability, age, nationality and ancestry, or place of origin.

In this Bill — Bill 38 — the protection of the code is being extended to persons who may be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, family status, and receipt of public assistance.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that discrimination on these three grounds is happening today to individuals in our society. Most citizens of this province strongly reject discrimination. They sincerely believe that all members of our community deserve to be treated equally, to be treated with tolerance and with respect. However there remains a minority who, out of fear or intolerance or simple misunderstanding, actively discriminate against persons with these characteristics.

Mr. Speaker, the most significant amendment proposed by this Bill will extend the code's protection to those discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation. This is the feature of the Bill which has generated some controversy. And I want to deal with several aspects of it.

First, everyone should be clear as to what this legislation actually does. The protection that is extended is a very limited but a very important protection. It prohibits discrimination in employment that covers such things as hiring, firing and promotions.

Let me give you an hypothetical example. Take the case of a woman who has been employed in a company for 10 years. Her performance has been excellent and she has been promoted twice. Then one day her employer discovers that she is a lesbian and fires her.

Does that make sense, Mr. Speaker? Is that fair? Can we in this Assembly stand by and allow such discrimination to continue? I suggest our answer must be a loud and ringing no.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The Bill also prohibits discrimination with respect to living accommodations. For practical purposes, this means rental accommodations other than in private homes. The prohibition also extends to public services.

Mr. Speaker, when we debate this Bill, that is all we're talking about. Essentially we're talking about the right of people to work and to have a place to live. A job and a home. I ask members to think about those

words, Mr. Speaker — a job and a home. These are concepts that are absolutely fundamental to the lives of everyone. And the idea that any of our citizens should suffer discrimination with respect to their job or with respect to their home should be unacceptable to all of us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The second point I want to deal with is the argument that this Bill extends special rights to homosexuals. Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. The Bill does not confer rights at all, it merely prohibits wrongful discrimination. To suggest that it creates special rights is to profoundly misunderstand the scope and the function of human rights legislation.

The thrust of our Human Rights Code is to extend to Saskatchewan people the very basic freedoms to live their lives without fear that they will be dismissed from their jobs; without fear that they will lose their housing; without the danger of being denied public services because of their race, their creed, their religion, their colour, and the other matters mentioned in the code. Now with these amendments there will be added to this list their sexual orientation, the fact that they have children, or that they receive public assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the right to work free from discrimination is not a special right. The right to rent an apartment without discrimination is not a special right, and the right to enjoy the same public benefits as other persons is not a special right. The plain fact is that these amendments do not create any special rights at all. They do not create any extraordinary legal status. They seek only to eliminate discrimination.

The third aspect of this Bill that I must draw to the attention of the members is the situation in other Canadian jurisdictions. We can't ignore the similar developments in human rights legislation in other provinces of this country of ours and at the federal level. Only four provinces have not extended the basic protection of their human rights laws to include sexual orientation. The remainder have done so. At the federal level, similar legislation to this Bill was introduced into the House of Commons last December by the then minister of Justice, the Hon. Kim Campbell. The current Minister of Justice, the Hon. Pierre Blais, has recently assured me that the federal government intends to proceed with this legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, not to afford the protection of human rights legislation to groups that have been subjected to considerable and blatant discrimination undermines the very integrity of these laws. All jurisdictions that have passed this law sees the issue in these terms; this is a fundamental human rights issue. If we do not protect this group, how will we proceed in the future when other groups are singled out for their particular characteristics and are denied full participation in our society? To leave one group beyond the pale sets a very dangerous precedent.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, a recent Ontario court ruling found the Canadian Human Rights Act to be unconstitutional because it did not provide protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The court ordered that the Canadian Human Rights Act must be interpreted, applied, and administered as if sexual orientation was included in the federal code, as if it were written into that law. In effect, the federal government was told it must amend its law to comply with the charter.

The fourth point I wish to make is that in prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, the legislation does not make a value judgement about the homosexual lifestyle. This statement is consistent with the whole of the code. For example, the code protects people from discrimination on account of religion but does not make a value judgement about any religion.

This Bill does not speak to the question of individual acceptance of homosexual behaviour. It does nothing to promote homosexuality. It simply prohibits discrimination against a citizen based solely upon his or her sexual orientation.

The government simply does not believe and does not accept the suggestion that protecting individuals from prejudice and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation will contribute to a breakdown of family values or traditional family lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, in light of some of the concerns we have heard over the past few weeks it is appropriate for me to state on behalf of the government four important aspects of this point.

First, there is nothing in the Bill that changes the traditional definition of who can be considered as married. In plain terms, the legislation does not recognize homosexual marriages.

Secondly, there is nothing in the Bill that speaks to the question of the entitlement of homosexual partners to spousal benefits. Whether benefits accrue under a benefit plan depends upon the terms of that plan. This legislation will not affect that question.

Thirdly, there is nothing in the Bill that affects the adoption of children. In this province the courts have always determined questions of adoption on the basis of the welfare or best interests of the child. This Bill will not affect the way in which the courts have approached or will approach these questions.

Fourthly, this Bill is not the thin edge of the wedge on the question of the legal position of homosexuals. So far as this government is concerned, the law will go this far and no farther.

Mr. Speaker, before I leave the sexual orientation provisions of this Bill, I should note an important exception to its application. In effect the exception permits discrimination in one circumstance.

Presently the code permits a home-owner who rents

one suite in his or her home to make distinctions on the basis of sex, whether renting to a man or a woman. For example, where the home-owner is a woman, she may choose to rent her basement suite only to women. This provision, by virtue of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is being extended so that a home-owner renting one suite may decline to rent that suite to a homosexual.

I want also to add that there is nothing in the Bill that touches on the content of school curricula. The rights of parents as they relate to educational programs in our school system will not be affected by these changes.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the other provisions of this Bill. As I said earlier, the government does not believe that this Bill weakens family values or traditional lifestyles in any way. On the contrary, one of the three new prohibited grounds of discrimination which we propose to add to the code is family status.

The addition of family status will protect persons with children against discrimination in respect of employment and accommodation. Individuals with children should not be discriminated against in employment opportunities or in advancement solely because they have assumed the very difficult task of balancing work and family responsibilities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — This amendment addresses the changing social reality of families where both parents work full time. The government believes that family relationships are fundamentally important in our community and wishes to ensure that discrimination against mothers and fathers and their children does not occur.

Here too appropriate exceptions are included to permit distinctions to be made in certain circumstances. For example, an exception is included to permit seniors-only housing.

Mr. Speaker, the code will also ensure that another vulnerable group, those who receive public assistance, are included within our code. Persons who receive public assistance are protected from discrimination in the human rights statutes of Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. With this amendment to our code, this province will also recognize that there should be no insult or injury as a result of discrimination based on economic disadvantage.

Finally, an amendment clarifies the provision of the code respecting injunctions. It will now be clear that the commission may apply to the court for an order to stop a continuing discrimination. This amendment, Mr. Speaker, responds to a recent court ruling which limits the ability of the commission to apply for an injunction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks with a few general observations. Legislation alone cannot

eliminate prejudice. It's not possible to legislate charity, to legislate tolerance or understanding or compassion into the hearts and minds of people, but some moral goals can be expressed in legal terms. And in this way our statute law and the judiciary can play important roles in establishing new patterns in legal and social order.

(1500)

The common thread in many of the discriminatory acts covered by the code is that fear or hatred caused by reactions to characteristics against which these discriminatory acts are directed, this is the basis for racial discrimination, religious discrimination, and in too many cases, gender discrimination. In many cases unfortunately this common thread of fear or hatred lies at the root of discrimination against homosexuals. When there is no law challenging this wrongful discrimination, society is free to choose scapegoats with impunity.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of law as a positive force in society, a positive force that serves as an example for positive behaviour, is immeasurable. This legislation gives voice to society's rejection of the passive acceptance of prejudice and wrongful discrimination. This legislation serves values shared by most Saskatchewan people, values of fairness and equality, values that fully encompass an outright rejection of discrimination in all of its forms.

Saskatchewan people understand that our community is much richer and more productive when we treat each other with respect and with dignity, recognizing that all people are equal.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make a general comment about our responsibility in this Assembly as legislators. Legislators must of course consider popular opinion when making laws, but the basis of this opinion must be examined carefully. When popular opinion is based on prejudice or when it is based on a lack of understanding of the effect of the legislation, then as legislators, each one of us is duty bound to give calm consideration to the proposed law.

Mr. Speaker, we must do so here. We must consider the horrible injustice of wrongful discrimination. We must consider how this horrible injustice blights the lives of the victims of discrimination. We must consider how this horrible injustice harms the fabric of our society, and how we are all lessened and damaged whenever it occurs.

I believe that most citizens of this province will support our approach to this issue, based as it is on values that lie at the very root of our existence.

Great strides have been made in the lifetime of the members of this Legislative Assembly to end discrimination. Thoughtful men and women, recognizing the lack of any rational basis for their prejudice, choose to overcome it. They choose to embrace a belief in our common humanity. It must not

be forgotten that it was not so long ago that racial discrimination was not only common but was accepted on our continent. The civil rights legislation enacted in our country, in our province, in the late 1940s and 1950s and in the United States in the early 1960s marked an end to that acceptance. It called for men and women to examine their individual consciences. That legislation marked the beginning of the end of public acceptance of discrimination on the basis of race, creed, and colour.

Today I invite this legislature to continue this province's great tradition of fairness, and to extend the protection of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code to other groups who continue to suffer the horrible injustice of discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end my remarks by quoting from a speech given in 1950 by then Premier T.C. Douglas. With all of his deep compassion and with all of his commitment to humanity, and in his grand eloquence, he said these words:

I hope that this province will be an island of tolerance and good will. I hope that in this province there will be a haven of neighbourliness in which we shall give to all men, and to all classes, and to all creeds, and to all colours, the same rights and the same civil liberties that we ask for ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, listen to the power of those words: an island of tolerance and good will; a haven of neighbourliness. Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this Assembly to join with me in working towards this end.

I move second reading of An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address the minister's comments and the amendment to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we start at a position that discrimination is wrong, discrimination in any form. And protection from discrimination should cover everyone in society, not just those that might be specified in an Act.

As a society we have stated there shall be no discrimination based on race, religion, creed, sex. We have set out other declarations that we are all equal; that no one should be excluded or penalized on the basis of their class, status, or beliefs.

However, we continue to see various examples in our society, of discrimination, but we have provided avenues and rules to handle such situations. Mr. Speaker, these avenues are already in place. We have the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code; we have the Canadian charter of rights. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring to your attention and to the Assembly, a letter

that I received, dealing with the Canadian charter of rights.

And this letter is from EGALE Regina — Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere — and this letter is dated February 5, 1993. And I would like to read one sentence because I think it says where the Canadian charter of rights stands on this issue. The sentence reads: The courts are consistently finding that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does indeed protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that sentence says it all. It says that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does indeed protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination. And this is from EGALE Regina, Mr. Speaker, a group that represents gays and lesbians in this city. And they are saying in their letter that the charter of rights does indeed afford them protection. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, why is there a need to change the laws that we already have in place, that are providing those protections?

Is there some other reason perhaps for this legislation which is not so readily apparent? We see people in other areas of society who are discriminated against, and yet they are not identified for inclusion of this protection under the Human Rights Code. Mr. Speaker, we see rural residents discriminated against in health care. We see people discriminated against because of their political beliefs or because they have no political involvement.

We see people fired because of their beliefs in a particular political party or process, or we see them fired to allow government partisans to have those positions at the taxpayers' expense. Are not these people also worthy of protection from discrimination?

The minister who mentioned a woman who was fired from her position because it became evident to her employer that she was a lesbian. Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that is wrong, but there are protections in place to handle that situation.

But the government has exemplified that if that same woman had happened to belong to a particular political party with which they did not agree, then it's perfectly acceptable for her to be relieved of her position. And, Mr. Speaker, that too is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government deny a class of people the right to have access to the courts, right to have access to the court when a contract was broken. The government, Mr. Speaker, this government today broke contracts with farmers under GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) and then denied them the access to courts, an access to court, Mr. Speaker, which each and every one of us as citizens have. Mr. Speaker, this is a clear example of discrimination — discrimination by this very government that brings forward this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talks of protection for jobs and for homes. Mr. Speaker, those protections are already in place in this province. The minister spoke

of wrongful discrimination. When he spoke of that, Mr. Speaker, what came to mind was that he was suggesting that discrimination in some cases is acceptable. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that discrimination is discrimination and it is not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, we support protection from discrimination. We feel that all members of society should be protected equally; that no member of society should be singled out for special protection or privilege.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I wish to have the opportunity to study this legislation and the minister's words. Therefore I would move that this debate now be adjourned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Mr. Neudorf: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point of order, Mr. Speaker, is that how do we get into the Committee of Finance when the resolutions are only being indicated that on Friday next, which is tomorrow, we're going to be considering that? It's in the motions and in our books right now.

The Speaker: — Order, order. First of all, I'd like to draw to the attention of the member from Rosthern that the House can go into Committee of Finance at any time they wish to go into.

Number two, the appropriate . . . the notice has been given of the Appropriation Bill, and that will be coming up tomorrow, unless members move by leave.

Thirdly, resolutions do not need any notice. And so therefore what we have done moving into Committee of Finance is quite in order in what we have done. And therefore I find the member's point of order not well taken.

(1515)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

The Chair: — Order. I would ask the Minister of Finance to please introduce the officials who are here with us today.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to introduce, on my right, the deputy minister of Finance, John Wright; behind me, the associate deputy minister of Finance, Craig Dotson.

I would like to make a few comments about the purpose of interim supply. Each year the annual budget is tabled in the legislature to provide funding for the entire fiscal year. The Assembly then reviews the details of the budget, department by department, and it's at that committee stage that detail questions

can be asked about the budget. Then the whole budget is ultimately passed by means of The Appropriation Act.

In the interim, however, the operations of the government have to continue. And therefore it has been tradition for some 30 years for interim supply Bills to be passed by the legislature to allow the basic affairs of the government and the province to continue in the interim before the final budget is passed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move:

That a sum not exceeding \$796,545,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the twelve months ending March 31, 1994.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would the minister provide for us the items that interim supply is being asked for and if we could have that, please?

Would the minister provide to us — because I haven't had the time to look at this — information as it relates to where the variables will come in relation to the one-twelfth and not being the one-twelfth, more or less?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the additional funding of 99.174 million will be used to finance the government's commitment of providing six-twelfths to school divisions by June 30. School divisions operate on a calendar fiscal year and the government's fiscal year is April 1 to March 31.

Due to the difference in the fiscal years, school boards are forced to borrow funds to finance operations for the period January to April. To alleviate this financing burden, the government has traditionally provided one-twelfth K to 12 funding on April 2 . . . in April and two-twelfths in May and three-twelfths in June. The second interim supply for May and June has five-twelfths funding for K to 12.

The impact of not providing this additional funding would result in educational funding being used to offset the higher financing costs associated with a longer borrowing period.

Another area is in the area of fire fighting. Fire-fighting costs are predominantly incurred in the summer months and two-twelfths funding for May and June will likely be insufficient to cover expected or potential fire-fighting costs. The additional funding of 3.36 million will be used for potential fire-fighting activities to ensure the protection of our forest resources.

The other area is medical practitioners. Medical practitioners get paid on a biweekly basis. There are three biweekly pay periods in May. The additional funding of \$12 million will be used to accommodate the additional biweekly payment run. Not providing the monies would mean delaying the payment of the government's obligations to medical practitioners.

Funding with respect to legislation. The additional funding of \$243,000 will be used for the extra administrative costs incurred when the House is in session.

Mr. Martens: — You mentioned, Madam Minister, that the \$99 million would be used for the funding to education as it relates to the requirements to be paid out. Is that under the authority that that 99 million is going to be adequate until the end of the 6 month . . . or until the end of June, or does it go beyond that for money that is required until the end of May?

Is that requirement the end of May, or is it the end of June that that requirement for the 99 million is there?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the last interim supply provided for one-twelfth. This provides for five-twelfths. So what they will have is six-twelfths or half of their annual funding. So it will take them to the end of June.

Mr. Martens: — I didn't quite hear you, Madam Minister. Would you repeat that for me?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, yes, I'd be glad to repeat that. The last interim supply provided them with one-twelfth; this will provide them with five-twelfths. After this is passed, they will have six-twelfths. Because they run on a calendar year, that will take them until the end of June.

Mr. Martens: — Is that the volume of dollars that has traditionally been given for the requirements for the Department of Education? Is that the normal requirements that have been made?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, yes, this is the traditional practice.

Mr. Martens: — You also indicated that the reason for the 12 million to Department of Health was there for a specific reason. Would you outline that for me again, too.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, medical practitioners get paid on a biweekly basis. There are three biweekly pay periods in May, therefore the additional funding of \$12 million will be used to accommodate the additional biweekly payment run. And not providing the monies would mean delaying the payment of government's obligation to the medical practitioners.

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, the 3 million in Environment and Resource Management is for fire fighting. I'm not sure whether there would be any reason for that now, as it relates to the springtime. Normally the fire-fighting component is dealt with in the fall or the late summer. Would you give us an explanation as to why the Environment and Resource Management needs the extra three and a half . . . \$3.3 million?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, our hope is that they will not need the extra \$3.36 million.

However it has been quite dry in the North — I was up there a few weeks ago — extremely dry, and there is a hazard for forest fires in May and June. So we just want to be sure in the eventuality that there is that problem because of the dry conditions, that the department has the resources to be able to fight the fires effectively.

Mr. Martens: — What's the normal requirement for fire fighting? Is this a percentage of the total that is listed for fire fighting? Would you provide us with that number so that we can judge whether this is one-twelfth or two-twelfths or a quarter or 50 per cent, whatever that is?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the total budget is about 26 million; we are providing just over 3 million. So it is about an eighth or ninth of the total budget allocation.

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, what happens to this budget if it isn't used?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — It is just part of the department's ongoing budget. Just because we . . . if we pass this motion, just because the money is allocated it doesn't mean that it has to be spent. If it's not spent, it would be retained in the department. But it does not have to be spent. It just allows the money to be spent if it's necessary to spend it.

Mr. Martens: — Well what if they don't spend the \$20 million in their budget? Does it go back to the Department of Finance then?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, if at the end of the year the money allocated for fire fighting was not totally spent, it would be recorded as an underexpenditure and essentially it would go to deal with the deficit problem.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, when we went through this exercise a month ago or so, we had quite a long debate and deliberation on some of the tracking that you do and some of the things that your Department of Finance does, and you and I agreed on some things and disagreed.

Recently the federal government has released figures dealing with consumer spending, retail sales, areas that obviously affect their budget in a big way and obviously would affect your budget in a big way.

Madam Minister, I know that you've allocated money in your interim supply to do some of that analysis and tracking, as you did in the month before. These numbers that the federal government has released would make us wonder if your predictions made in the budget aren't a little bit off the rails already. And I'm wondering if you could give us some of the analysis and the tracking that you've done since the budget on retail spending and some of the consumer-related items that would be of great interest to how well your budget is doing. I wonder if you'd provide that to us today.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the deputy's

going to look up some more detailed information, but I welcome that question about the federal budget and the economic forecast upon which it was based. Because I will say for the current year, the year that we are in right now, there is a pretty close relationship between our assumptions and the federal government's assumptions.

But when you get beyond this year, you move into '94, what is very striking is the fact that the federal government is much more optimistic in its assumptions about growth than the Government of Saskatchewan. Their statistics with respect to unemployment, their statistics with respect to growth in the economy, their statistics with respect to interest rates are much rosier than either the forecasts of the Government of Saskatchewan or the forecasts of the private agencies upon which we based our budget.

(1530)

So what I would say to the member opposite is this. If in fact the federal government is right, and I hope they are, then our balanced budget plan released in March looks even more optimistic than it did when we introduced it. I guess I happen to be somewhat nervous because I think the federal government has been far too optimistic in making its assumptions.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, we aren't here today to worry about the level of optimism that you have or the level of optimism that Mr. Mazankowski has.

What we're here today is granting you sums of money to spend, and those sums of money are predicated on a budget which you delivered in this House that said that the taxpayer of this province was going to have to come up with so much to give you. And the questions that we asked you last time were the fear of Saskatchewan taxpayers that you're going to be asking them for more because your assumptions weren't right.

Now what I'm asking about is hard, cold data which evolves on Main Street, Saskatchewan, each and every day. And it's the volume of people who go in and out the front door and ring the cash register that I'm talking about. Now there is some data being released that says that those retail sales aren't meeting the mark for the first quarter, that they aren't meeting the mark for the second quarter, and they don't jibe with the predictions that you made, Madam Minister.

Now if I'm wrong, if you're saying that retail sales in Saskatchewan are different than retail sales elsewhere in Canada, then I'm simply asking you to bring the information forward and table it here in the legislature so that the taxpayer can be assured that your numbers aren't all wet. That's all I'm asking for. And I know your department does that analysis.

You say you take numbers from the Conference Board of Canada and you take numbers from the federal government and you take numbers from all sorts of places and then you do your analysis. You've had

some time since your budget. I want to know what Saskatchewan's economy is doing in 1993 and how it is affecting the way that you spend taxpayers' money.

Same questions we asked you last quarter. You said you couldn't provide them because you didn't have enough time. Well you've had some time now and you've had some data and you've had some results. We're going to be into the month of May and I'm just saying, would you please now inform the Assembly of what that data is?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I would remind the member opposite, if he doesn't want to discuss the federal budget, don't raise it. And I'm not talking about thoughts about the federal budget; I'm talking about the basic numbers it was based on. They are wildly optimistic.

Now with respect to some statistics to back that up, I would say this. In 1994 the federal government is assuming that real GDP (gross domestic product), that is, the growth in the economy, the rate of growth will be 4.6 per cent, whereas in our forecast, we have assumed growth within Saskatchewan at only 1.6 per cent.

That number, federally, 4.6 per cent, relative to the economic forecasts of other independent agencies, is wildly optimistic. I hope it's true, but it's wildly optimistic. Ours of 1.6 per cent is very cautious.

Now you asked for some indicators as to how well we are doing, and I would give you an important statistic here. Retail sales, seasonally adjusted, February '93, January-February '93 relative to January and February '92, an increase of 5.3 per cent. What we assumed in our budget was an increase of 4 per cent for '93. So if this trend continues, our projected increase was cautious.

Mr. Swenson: — Are you saying then, Madam Minister, that your revenues are ahead of schedule by 1.3 per cent and correspondingly the pressure on the tax load on Saskatchewan citizens isn't as great as what it was before, that you have that extra money coming in and therefore would be showing a surplus over what you're projecting?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we of course do not have the figures, because the sales tax is collected, but it takes a significant period of time before it's remitted to the government. So we have no sales tax revenue remitted from this budget year. All I'm saying is that there has been a 5 per cent increase in retail sales, over 5 per cent increase in retail sales thus far. If that trend continues, our projected increase of 4 per cent will be cautious. There is no evidence to support the view that it is an optimistic assumption.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, just so I understand this. You know that retail sales have gone up 5 per cent, but you don't have any idea what sales tax revenue is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you broadened the base out considerably. And you went from 8 per cent to 9 per cent. So if you had a

retail sales increase of 5 per cent, and it was 8 per cent last year, and you've tacked another point on there, I would suggest you must have some knowledge of what those numbers are. There's some arithmetic there that I'm sure your officials are capable . . .

You're telling me you're ahead of the game. Why don't you tell Saskatchewan taxpayers that? I mean I think they'd like to know that; they'd like to know that maybe there's some optimism that you're not going to tax them quite so heavy because you're ahead of yourself on what your predictions are.

You're saying 5 per cent; 5 per cent has to equate into a corresponding amount of money, does it not? Because you've broadened the sales tax from where it was in 1992. You've got more items now being taxed, not less. You've got a higher percentage of tax than you had before, not less. So therefore there must be more money involved here somewhere, Madam Minister. And I think it's appropriate that you tell the Assembly how much more that is.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, two points. These statistics are not for this budget year. They're for last budget year. And the reason they're for last budget year is there's a delay. There's a delay in the collection of the statistics. And there's a delay in the collection of the tax.

You asked for the most current information. I'm saying the most current information is that in January-February '93, relative to the previous year, there's been a 5.3 per cent increase in sales tax.

So I mean . . . that's all I can tell you. I can't tell you what it's going to mean for this budget year, because we won't know until the money is actually collected and remitted to the Department of Finance.

The member opposite knows that the tax rate is fixed. And so the level of money that we collect is not going to affect the tax rate.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, maybe you could tell me this. I'm sure that we're going to get to do interim supply again some time in this session. So how long does it take for your officials to get this information? Is it done on a quarterly basis? Is it done biannually? How often . . . when can we expect you to give the taxpayers of this province some information as to what your increased taxes are doing to the Saskatchewan economy? When can we expect an answer? Will it be when this House is in session, or will it be conveniently when this House is out of session?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, by late May we would be able to report on the April statistics.

Mr. Swenson: — So I am to assume then, Madam Minister, that if we have interim supply in this House at the end of the month of May, when you come back for another nearly \$800 million as you've done this time, that you will be prepared at that time to tell Saskatchewan taxpayers how much your tax

increases are taking out of the Saskatchewan economy. Is that right then? I hold you to that.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, what we would be prepared to tell you is the level of sales and the level of revenue being generated from those sales as soon as that information is available to the department.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Madam Minister. It will give the taxpayers some assurance, I think, that they will be able to get some type of an update when we do this again in a month's time, because there's an awful lot of people out there are telling us that they haven't seen their doors swinging more often and they haven't seen their cash register ringing more often; that in fact those sales projections aren't happening.

And I would suggest to you, Madam Minister, as we did before, that if that combination is out of whack, then your budget is badly out of whack. And if that's the case, then we're going to have to look at some ways of doing some adjustments, and it's those adjustments that have people very frightened in this province, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, do you expect that the next interim supply motion will deal with the same volume of dollars as we're doing here; that when you have your non-budgetary items included in here that you are at 796.545 — that you're nearly \$800 million — would you expect your next interim supply motion to be at that level?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we'd have to assess it at that particular point in time.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, you said that sales were up 5 per cent in the province. Would you be able to tell me which of those commodities, which commodities — is it cars and trucks and hardware where the sales are up?

As my colleague from Thunder Creek has just stated, when we go into the places of business, we don't find that that's what is happening there. And so we want to know from you for which period of time have you got the 5 per cent. Is it January 1 to . . . February to February? Could you tell me in which areas, Madam Minister, the sales are up?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, this is not information gathered by the Department of Finance. It's Statistics Canada information, and it's readily available in the library. So that breakdown is readily available to the members opposite. It's February '93 relative to February '92.

Mr. Martens: — Is this information that is unique to Saskatchewan, this 5 per cent?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I welcome that question because that was a point I should have made. For those who are pessimistic about the economy and the future of Saskatchewan, they should look very carefully at this statistic. Because what the

statistic says is that February '93, retail sales in the province of Saskatchewan increased by 5.3 per cent.

What the significance of this statistic is relative to what happened to the rest of Canada, the increase in Saskatchewan was higher than the national increase. The national increase was only 5 per cent.

Mr. Martens: — So that this is February '92 to February '93. Since you have that information, would you be able to provide me with the information on which areas increased, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, as I said before, this is not information that is collected by the Department of Finance. It is information collected by Statistics Canada at the federal level and that information is readily available in the library.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, if you've got it with you there, why don't you provide it to the committee?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we do not have the detailed breakdown here right now.

Mr. Martens: — Will you provide that, Madam Minister, to the committee?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, if the member seems to have a problem in getting it from the library himself, we certainly know the process to use the library. We will use the library and provide the information to you.

Mr. Martens: — Well I thank the member for her benevolence. When would I be able to expect it, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, as soon as we are finished with interim supply.

(1545)

Mr. Martens: — Very good. Your benevolence isn't as greatly appreciated as I thought it would be. Would you be able to provide it for us today?

And I honestly believe that you've got it with you, and I believe that you could provide it to the committee at this point, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I can assure the member opposite I do not have it with me today. But I can assure the member opposite that for somebody who knows how to use the library, it is not a difficult task and we will get that at a future point.

Mr. Martens: — Would you be able to comment on a statistic that I heard recently that car sales were down 1,900 for the month of February?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I do not have any information to that effect. And all I can say is anecdotal stories are quite in the opposite direction.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, I'll ask you some other question. How much did the trip to New York cost you then if you need recent history to remind you? How much was the cost of your trip to New York and how many people did you take along with you? Would you be able to provide that to the Assembly?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the figures have not been compiled yet. The delegation included, from the point of view of Finance, it included the deputy minister and the associate deputy minister, Bill Jones. The Premier had along with him his staff, who was his deputy, his chief of staff, and his executive assistant.

Mr. Martens: — Would the minister tell me how many meetings she had in New York with the various bond rating companies?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, this is not a complete list, but it is as complete as we can recall. Who we met with were Standard and Poor's, Moody's, DBRS (Dominion Bond Rating Service); we met with the investment dealers, which included meetings with First Boston, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, the American investment syndicate, the Canadian investment syndicate, Wood Gundy, Dominion Securities, ScotiaMacLeod, Burns Fry, Nesbitt Thomson. And then we also met with the people who buy our bonds themselves.

Mr. Martens: — Going back to the paper that you gave us, the question I have is why would we be voting two-twelfths on this occasion rather than one-twelfth?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, this is quite standard procedure. I would recall the member's memory here. In 1983-84 when the members opposite were government, they voted one-twelfth, then they voted two-twelfths. In 1984-85, when the members opposite were government, they voted one-twelfth, then they voted two-twelfths. In 1986-87, when the members opposite were government, they voted one-twelfth, they voted two-twelfths.

This is standard procedure.

Mr. Martens: — Well I'm not . . . I'm asking you why you made the decision, Madam Minister, to do two-twelfths.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, what I'm telling the member opposite is we're doing it because it is standard procedure to do so. And what we really want to assure is that the institutions in the province, such as our schools and our hospitals, have the capacity to continue to operate while the budget is still before the legislature.

Mr. Martens: — You still haven't given me the reason, Madam Minister. Because you could come back to this Assembly for one-twelfth at the end of May just as well as you could come back for one-twelfth at the

end of June. And I want to know, Madam Minister. You've got to have some reason why you want to have two-twelfths instead of one-twelfth.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, it's better management because it allows these institutions to be assured of their funding for a period of time. It's better management because it allows this legislature . . . I assume, although considering their actions thus far in the session, maybe this isn't true. I assume the members opposite really do want to get into the estimates so they can ask the detailed questions that the public may have of what we're doing with the taxpayers' money.

And again I return to the point that this is standard procedure done by governments for a significant period of time.

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, I find it a little unusual. You ask for, in the first one-twelfth you asked for, let's take education for example, you asked for \$72.591, now you're asking for \$145 million, which is two-twelfths, and then on top of that you're asking for the money that would take them to the end of June.

Why didn't you ask this Assembly for the money that was required for them? Why ask for every other department in the same fashion you ask for the schools and environment, for fighting fires, and all of those kinds of things. Why didn't you take one-twelfth and add on where it was necessary? I want to know what the reason was for two-twelfths rather than one-twelfth.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, again I will repeat the answer. It means that the institutions can be assured of funding. It means that we can move in this House onto estimates and it is standard practice. There is really no other answer.

Mr. Swenson: — Madam Minister, I'm glad my colleague from Morse . . .

The Chair: — The Chair will recognize the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just earlier on in our conversation today, you assured us that you would have the results of how certain portions of the Saskatchewan economy were performing by the end of May.

And now it seems, Madam Minister, that because you have chosen this route of asking for two-twelfths, that we won't have the opportunity to ask you those questions, that you simply will be able to avoid telling Saskatchewan taxpayers how things are turning out as per your projections and how your taxes are affecting our economy. Because we could be into your estimates next week, Madam Minister, and you won't have time to have the data, and it'll be one excuse and run-around after another. You made a commitment in here that you're going to have those results here for Saskatchewan taxpayers to see at the end of May, and if we're doing interim supply we won't have an

opportunity to question you.

So I guess what we need from you, Madam Minister, is some assurance that come the end of May when you have those results, that you're going to make them public in this legislature.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I'll give the member opposite that assurance.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really don't believe that two-twelfths in this instance is here for any historic reason except that you personally don't want to be before the committee of this Assembly, in this forum, for the third time. That is what I believe, Madam Minister, is the reason why you're doing this.

And I would suggest to you, Madam Minister, that you are . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I don't need help from the Minister of Labour, and actually under his own admission, a toy minister at that on occasion.

I believe, Madam Minister, that you personally don't want to be before the committee. You don't want to represent the Department of Finance in providing two-twelfths. You are going to say to this Assembly that without any regard for the kinds of things that are necessary to be done, you're going to flippantly go through this and just say that three-quarters of a billion dollars can be voted without explaining to us why you would want to have two-twelfths instead of one-twelfth.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite is asking a question about a practice that his government, which he was a member of, engaged in regularly. If the member opposite wants answers with respect to the questions that he asked about the Department of Finance, its statistics, its reports, we would welcome the opportunity to do so when we get into the discussions of the estimates for the Department of Finance.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, I really don't believe that that's the answer but I'll have to take it for what it's worth. And I'll say this, that we have had a certain degree of difficulty obtaining answers from the Minister of Finance because . . . and it's been this rule from the ministers of Finance throughout the sessions that I've been here, and typically we never got any answers from the Associate Minister of Finance either. And that is typical of what the ministers have done for us.

And I will say this too that there is very serious concern on our part — and we will go into those matters when we deal with the Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labour, and all of the various departments — but, Madam Minister, voting two-twelfths today, spending \$796 million, and you don't have a reason why you should, why you should not be asking for one-twelfth rather than two-twelfths.

Historical reasons have no reflection on what you should be doing. If you would have taken and done

historically the things that were done in the past, you would have also said that harmonization was probably a good thing to do. And yet you took and deliberately decided that you didn't want to have anything to do with that, so you chose to alter the course. And so you, Madam Minister, have done that on your own volition, and I believe that that's your decision.

Now you made a decision to ask for two-twelfths. And I believe, Madam Minister, that you should have been involved enough to make a decision on the basis, not of history, but you should have made the decision of whether it is good for the taxpayers to have those items. You could have exclusively listed, as you did Education and Health and fire fighting.

And, Madam Minister, I don't believe that fire fighting is of significance at this point in time. And I really don't understand why you did that. I think there probably is a reason that is other than fire fighting. And that's the reason why you're moving more money into that area than there was already budgeted.

You already have three-twelfths . . . if we conclude today, on the basis of what you have provided, you already have a quarter of the budget for fire fighting, and then you're going to add another significant amount to that amount of money. Therefore, Madam Minister, I don't understand why you would want to have two-twelfths taking it to the end of June — the volume of dollars that you would require for servicing the government — I don't understand that.

And therefore, Madam Minister, I don't really believe that you have the matter in hand. You're just using that as an excuse. And I wonder if I could really get the real answer for your reason.

(1600)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know how long the member opposite wants to go through this process. I said there were several answers. One answer was that we wanted the various institutions involved — the educational institutions, the health care institutions — to be assured of funding.

The second is management of the government and of the time of the legislature. Rather than coming back to this again, what we would like to do is to move on to estimates which is the detailed examination of the various departments' budgets.

I'm not surprised that the member opposite admits to no regard for history or precedent or tradition. Because when the history is written of their time in government, one of the things that will come out of that history of the 1980s is exactly that — a lack of concern, a lack of respect for the history and the traditions of the parliamentary system. If we want to continue this debate, I will raise different examples of that lack of respect for history and for tradition.

What I will end on is a listing of these sessions in which this particular practice was followed:

1974-1975, 1973-1974, 1972-1973, 1971-1972 — and the list goes on.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1994, the sum of \$796,545,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — By leave of the Assembly, I move:

That an Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 1994, be now introduced and read the first time.

The Chair: — I think I have to advise the minister I think you're a step ahead of us and I will ask that you will . . . It would be in order to move that the . . . Order . . . It would be in order to move the committee rise and report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — By leave of the Assembly, I move:

That Bill No. 57, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 1994 be now introduced and read the first time.

Leave not granted.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that **Bill No. 28 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Act** be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and

referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 37

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that **Bill No. 37 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act**, 1984 be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 30

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that **Bill No. 30 — An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 31

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that **Bill No. 31 — An Act to amend The Heritage Property Act** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 34

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Anguish that **Bill No. 34 — An Act to amend the SaskEnergy Act** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 44

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Anguish that **Bill No. 44 — An Act respecting the Inspection of Gas Installations and Gas Equipment** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 45

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Anguish that **Bill No. 45 — An Act respecting the Inspection of Electrical Equipment, Installations and Materials** be now read a second time.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government will be moving to Committee of the Whole, and we'll be dealing with An Act respecting Social Workers. And as that's progressing, we'll give the opposition a list of . . . perhaps work out with the opposition what we propose to do for the balance of the day.

Work has moved a little quicker than what we had anticipated for which we are grateful but somewhat unprepared, if I may put it that way.

(1615)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 7 — An Act respecting Social Workers

Clause 1

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

Mr. Martens: — Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The point of order is this. We have important questions to ask and we want to have the officials here as well as the minister. If all we do is waste our time in transferring an option on whether the minister will be able to answer the question until her officials get here, we might as well wait until her officials are officially here.

Mr. Upshall: — Just speaking to the point of order, Mr. Chairman. The officials are on the way and will be here shortly.

The Chair: — The Chair has listened carefully to the point of order raised by the hon. member from Morse and also the input from the hon. member for Humboldt. It's not the role of the Chair to determine whether the minister has officials to answer questions or not, and therefore I find the point of order not in order.

We will now deal with Bill No. 7, An Act respecting Social Workers.

Mr. Muirhead: — Yes. We'll perhaps have the minister introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you for the question. My officials aren't yet here, but as the minister responsible for Social Services, as the minister who is familiar with this Bill, I am prepared in order to have the House proceed to proceed with any questions that you may have regarding this piece of legislation.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, that isn't the point. The point is that just the arrogance of this government. I understand that you can probably answer the questions, but that isn't the point. If you knew this was going to happen and if you were

going to be prepared — I used to see officials sit out there and sit there and wait — why would you even want to ask? Why would you even be so arrogant . . . this government they want to even ask us to start without officials. Because probably the first question I ask, you'll just answer it and then you'll have to start over again when your officials get here. I'm not even . . . I don't think we should be . . . I don't understand why we have to start without officials. Normally we don't.

The Chair: — I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Easy on the deputies; there's only one of them. I think this is the opposition's call. If you prefer to wait for the officials — they'll be here in five minutes — then we'll do so. We thought you may have some questions of a general nature which wouldn't require the officials, but this is your call. If you want the officials here, we will adjourn and they'll be here in five minutes.

Mr. Muirhead: — Now let's be fair here. Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, we're not going to ask many questions, if any, on this Bill because we understand that the workers are quite satisfied. So if you haven't got them here, we might as well let it go because we'll just let the Bill go. We'll just let it go because if you people want to be that arrogant, you can't be ready, we'll just let the Bill go. We'll let it go like everything goes. We can sit here till 5 in the morning we don't get any answers anyway.

Anyway to be fair there's nothing wrong with the Bill, and I understand when I wasn't here my colleague asked a few questions and let it go into committee. When the social workers are quite happy about it and we can't see any reason to be asking any questions anyways, so as far as I'm concerned as critic for Social Services, the Bill can go.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Some of our members may have questions. We let them go. And then by that time I think the officials will be here, and you can put any questions you want. Some of our members had some questions on this, I believe. So we'll perhaps wait a moment to see if those members who are interested are here.

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, when I was working at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina, we got some information that another province was planning on passing a similar Bill. And at that time I was somewhat concerned about it because I worked in non-profit organizations for a long time, and quite often in those kinds of organizations you have people working in them who are not having professional status. You know, they may be people who have experienced the problems of the people they're working with or people who have worked their way up through the system and have gained experience as they've gone along, but particularly in some areas where some groups of people may have not had as much opportunity to have training. For example, I worked up in northern Saskatchewan for a long time, and

there weren't very many people there with social work training.

Now what I really want to clarify for the record and for people like that who would be concerned about any kinds of limitations that this kind of Bill might present to their being able to work in those kinds of organizations, I'd like you to clarify for me, would it prevent non-government organizations from hiring people to do helping work, that weren't social workers designated under this Act? Or would it prevent them, or require them to pay the wages of professional social workers when in fact their budgets might not allow for that?

I'd just like to get some clarification, because I know there will be some concern. Because I had those kind of concerns myself when I first heard about this type of legislation.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question. First let me say this, that non-governmental organizations have been consulted on this legislation, and there were very, very few concerns.

Non-governmental organizations will still be able to hire people in the helping profession. The people in the helping profession will however not be able to call themselves social workers or use the title social worker, unless they have been licensed by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers.

In terms of whether or not they can pay people appropriate wages, it would be entirely up to the organization to determine a fair wage for the type of work done. We have many instances in non-governmental organizations where people are working who have qualifications in the helping profession whom are paid wages that would not be dissimilar to wages paid to social workers.

But this legislation really is about professionalizing the profession and ensuring that anyone who calls themselves a social worker is in fact qualified under the provisions of this legislation and who in fact would be licensed by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers.

Ms. Crofford: — Okay. If I could just . . . I wanted to clarify whether people who are now working in jobs that are helping roles but may not be designated as social workers, how would they go about checking out whether they qualify under this new designation? How would they find out how they could be brought under the definition of social worker if they aren't presently decreed in that area? Because I do believe my recollection is that there's some provision for grandparenting but . . . Can you explain that to me so I can let people know what they have to do?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — People who are presently called social workers, who do not have a Bachelor of Social Work or a Master in Social Work, can apply to the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers for licensing. And the association assures me that people

who have met the criteria and the qualifications as determined by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers will in fact be licensed and will be able to practise social work under the provisions of this legislation.

Ms. Crofford: — If I've got time for just one more question, Mr. Chair. Minister, if a person is concerned about this Act, would their best avenue be to get in touch directly with the Association of Social Workers or with your department?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — People could do either. They could contact the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers or they could contact the Department of Social Services, and we would be able to clarify any concerns that they may have or answer any questions they may have.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, just a couple of short questions. And I'm sorry I wasn't here when second reading on the Bill . . . But I went through it and there's only a couple of questions that I wish to ask.

You made the statement, Madam Minister, in order to prevent individuals who call themselves social workers from using the title to attract clients. I just wonder if you'd clarify what you mean by that. You had made that statement yourself: in order to prevent individuals who call themselves social workers from using the title to attract clients. I don't know what you mean by attracting clients. Either there's a problem and they come on their own. I don't know what you mean by attracting.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well as the member may know, that there could be people in the private sector who call themselves social workers, who charge fees, when in fact they do not have the qualifications and haven't been licensed under the provisions of this Act.

What this Act will do is ensure that anybody in this province who uses the title social worker is in fact licensed under the provisions of this Act and does in fact meet the standards and qualifications of a person who is using the title.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, do I understand that you mean there's people doing social work has no connection with Social Services department? Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. I mean obviously there are people in this province who are not employees of the Department of Social Services but are in fact social workers. We would find social workers in the Department of Health; we would find social workers in the non-governmental organization sector; we would also find social workers in private practice in the province. And we would find social workers in schools, social workers in long-term care facilities or rehab facilities.

Social workers don't just work for the Department of Social Services; they work in many other areas of

endeavour as well.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, I just picked this up too. You also said exceptions will be made for those with five years employment in the practice of social work. I'm interested in what definition of this area the work will be. What kind of work, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That is the transition time, Mr. Member, where we are recognizing people who in fact have called themselves social workers, are recognized as social workers, but don't necessarily have the paper qualifications.

And so what the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers has said is that there will be a grandfathering clause for those people who in fact have all of the knowledge and capabilities, skill, and have met what in fact would be social work endeavours, but don't have the paper qualifications. So those folks will be grandfathered in if they meet the criteria.

(1630)

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, will this be the . . . what'll be the criteria surrounding people . . . the handicapped people then? Would that be the same criteria there — with the handicapped people?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The Act is not intended to cover all helping professions. But if a person is working in an activity centre — working with mentally challenged persons, for instance — and they are called social workers by their employer, which would be the activity centre, for example, and if they meet the criteria as set out by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers, they would in fact be a member of the association and would be licensed under the association and therefore would be able to use the title social worker.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, who is going to designate who will be allowed into the association, like who makes that decision?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — During the transition time period it will be the council of the association, and they will determine who in fact can become a member. If they don't have the qualifications after that transition time, the Act stipulates who will be a member of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers and who in fact can call themselves a social worker.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, I wonder if I could just get your comments on the people that work in shelters for battered women and also the handicapped people. Are they going to be allowed exactly the same status and do the same work? Could you just maybe clarify that for me, just so I understand it.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I am not aware of any shelter for battered women who has anyone using the title

social worker. Most non-governmental organizations, their present practice is that unless you have a Bachelor of Social Work or a Master in Social Work or those kinds of qualifications, you don't use the title.

So what has developed is we will have other titles like family counsellor, family service worker, social service worker, maybe a parent aide or a family support worker. Very few non-governmental organizations have employees using that title unless in fact they do have the paper qualifications to use the title.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, you're saying that . . . like throughout Saskatchewan there's several homes where battered women go to. There's no association between the government and these homes then? They're completely private then, is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — All of the transition houses or houses that are serving battered women and their children are non-profit organizations or what's now called the non-governmental organizations. They would in fact receive funding from the provincial government, but they also raise private funds. They may receive funds from their municipality or their municipal government and funds from the United Way, but they are not . . . Services to battered women and their children are not direct services supplied by the province of Saskatchewan or the Government of Saskatchewan. They are provided by non-profit organizations which would have community-based boards.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, I understand that there's a five-year time limit here to be trained for a social service worker. Is that mandatory, or why is the five years . . . Could you explain your reasons why the five years?

Is that a training process, or are they trained before they . . . Do you take trained people on to start with? When you hire someone through Social Services for this type of work, do they have some kind of training to start with, and why the five years afterwards before they're called a social worker? If you just could explain that, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — At present in order to become, for instance, an employee of the Department of Social Services and to be called a social worker, you have to have the professional qualifications or what I will call the paper qualifications — a Bachelor of Social Work, a certificate in social work, a master's in social work. Employees that are being hired today have those qualifications in order to call themselves social workers.

We do however hire social service workers who would be employees that would have other qualifications. They may have worked in an activity centre for mentally handicapped people. They may have worked in a transition home. They have worked in the helping profession; they just don't have the paper qualifications.

The five-year transition period is to recognize those employees who have been long-time employees of the Department of Social Services or the Department of Health or other agencies, who have always used the title social worker. They have all the skills knowledge associated with using that title, but they don't have the paper qualifications. So the five-year period is a transition period for those people.

And the other point I want to make is social service workers will not be licensed under this Act because they do not use the title nor do they have the qualifications, paper qualifications, that would allow them to call themselves social workers.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I said I didn't have many questions, but more questions keep coming to mind as we get into the . . . And don't get me wrong, I'm not opposing the Bill or whatever; just clarifying some things here because I think it's something that's very, very important.

I've been a member for 15 years, and naturally through working with people in your constituency you have a lot of contact with social workers. And I think it's a profession where we have to have special people, that's for sure.

And I'd want the government, as I think the governments through the years — I've watched the NDP from '78 and us through the years — I think there's been a pretty good handle on the type of people who are working there. And I'd just like to, you know, make my point that it's very important that somebody keeps a real good handle on the type of people.

So you can't do enough. I'm not against the five years at all, just ask why. That's good. There's nothing you can't do to get better people to serve the people.

Another question that comes to mind. I understand something about . . . Reading through the *Hansard* from before and the comments, something comes to mind about a fee. Could you explain what that fee and . . . what's it's about and how much?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I am advised by my official that the association is looking at a fee of 165 to \$180 per year, and that's to cover the administrative costs of running the association, that they will have a generous fee schedule or payment schedule for those people who are unable to make payments.

I would also like to advise the member that for employees who are members of the Government of Saskatchewan or the civil service, that their fees will be paid by the Government of Saskatchewan as we do for lawyers who work for the government in the Department of Justice who have to be a member of the Saskatchewan bar, as we do for registered nurses who have to be members of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. Anybody in the province who works as a civil servant and because of their profession has to belong to a professional

organization, their fees are paid by the employer.

Mr. Muirhead: — Madam Minister, say someone is just starting out and they've been approved and they've got qualifications but . . . Will they be denied if they can't raise that money? Is there some provisions to help them?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I understand it, the association will have a very generous payment schedule, which will mean that you won't have to pay the fees the minute you are licensed, but you can pay the fees over time. And for anybody who is starting out in the civil service as a social worker in government, their fees will be covered by the province.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well that's fair enough. Mr. Chairman, that's all the questions I need to ask on item 1.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 14 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 15

The Chair: — There is an amendment proposed by the minister for clause 15, and I'll ask the minister if she will move that amendment.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I would move that amendment.

The Chair: — I'll ask that you read it into the record, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chair, I would move an amendment to subsection 15(1) of the printed Bill:

By striking out "council" in the first line and substituting "association".

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, could you just explain why? Then we'll understand why you're doing this.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I will. This is an amendment that has been asked for by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. The reason is that they want their by-laws to go before their association or their annual meeting and not just the council. It is to democratize the process, and it was an oversight in the drafting.

Mr. Muirhead: — That's fine, Mr. Chairman.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 15 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 16 to 30 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 31

Mr. Muirhead: — "The discipline committee may, by resolution, expel the member from the association . . .

" It's from (a) to (d) there, it's spelled out. Just in your own words, would you explain that, Madam Minister, what that means . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh sorry, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, in section 31, "The discipline committee may, by resolution, expel the member from the association where:" and then there's four points there. Could you just explain that in your words, because it isn't just 100 per cent clear.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — In response to the member's question, this provision is here with regard to a member of the association — which would be a social worker — who had been convicted of an indictable offence or a criminal offence, would be subject to being expelled from the association and therefore would no longer be able to use the title, social worker.

It is to provide protection to the public, so that the public would know that if you're coming in contact with a social worker, that anybody who uses that title has the qualifications necessary to practise social work, and that no one who'd been indicted for a criminal offence or had been convicted for a criminal offence could practice social work. It's clearly there to protect the public.

Clause 31 agreed to.

Clauses 32 to 39 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Chairman, there is an amendment to clause 14 which was passed over in some fashion. Perhaps we could ask for leave of the opposition to revert to it and we could move it, they could ask their questions, and then we could resume. So I guess I'm officially asking for leave of the opposition to revert to clause 14.

Leave granted.

Clause 14

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to amend clause 14(4) of the printed Bill:

By striking out "other than the power to make bylaws".

The Chair: — The minister has moved an amendment to clause 14.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, if you would just give an explanation of why.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, member. The Legislative Law Clerk has advised, in order to have clause 14(4) in sync with our amendment to clause 15, we have to strike out "other than the power to make bylaws".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 40 to 52 inclusive agreed to.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, thank you. Yes, I'd just like to thank the government for bringing in a good Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — That's how good a man the member from Arm River is. When I see something good, I say so. But I'm sorry I can't say that about the other Bill that's gone through this House. I just wish all Bills in this session were as good and simple as this Bill to help people, instead of so many that hindered people.

And, Madam Minister, I want to thank the officials for coming. And I just want to say to the House Leader and whoever the Acting House Leader is, that when we have Bills coming up or Committee of the Whole or whatever, have the officials ready, even if they have to wait. It's no way that it'll be the officials' fault. It'll be somebody that didn't warn them ahead of time to be here. But anyway, it all worked out fine. And I wish to again say thank you, and it's a good job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well since the member from Arm River is giving out compliments, I want to thank him for his cooperation and the members of the opposition for their cooperation in terms of this Bill.

This Bill is an initiative of social workers in the province of Saskatchewan. Social workers are very interested in professionalizing the profession. As you may know, social workers have not yet reached the, I suppose, the public perception that we have towards teachers and nurses and other professions. And they are hopeful that the public will begin to recognize that social worker is a most honourable profession. And we are hopeful that with this legislation, along with the most honourable profession will come the most honourable pay.

So I want to thank the member of the opposition for his cooperation. And I also want to thank Tara Truemner from the Department of Social Services for assisting me this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — The Chair would simply like to remind members of the committee, including the opposition critic and the minister, that it's not usual to have statements of this length at the end. I think some of the handling of this Bill was a little bit unorthodox and so the Chair has allowed a little latitude, but I would ask that this not be considered precedent.

It would be in order for the minister to move the Bill with amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 26 — An Act to repeal The Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation Act

Clause 1

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'd like to introduce my official. No, there are . . . I wondered if that would startle the member from Redberry.

We are in this Bill repealing a defunct corporation. It has not operated for some time. There are no assets and no officials actually. So there really are no officials for this one. I think I can answer any questions the members may have.

We have someone here from CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) which watches over the Crown corporations and there . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Right. And there's no need to introduce the person to them; I will — Patti Beatch from CIC. And we'll take any questions you may have.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 26 is the repeal of SaskCOMP Utility Corporation. What happened with this corporation was that it was turned into WESTBRIDGE by the previous government. WESTBRIDGE has in turn become a very successful corporation, part of the effects of this . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. The Chair is having a difficult time hearing the member for Souris-Cannington, and I'll ask members to allow him to make his remarks.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Part of what has happened with WESTBRIDGE is that the employees have become part of that organization and that has proven to be a very successful enterprise, Mr. Chairman.

I would just like to ask the minister what is going to happen . . . what assets does Sask Computer Utility Corporation presently have?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There are no assets whatsoever.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then I gather that there is really not a lot to do with this Bill even though we've had a serious discussion with the political implications of it prior to reaching Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Chairman, we're prepared to allow this to proceed.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I would like to thank my official for a sudden but timely appearance, I guess one would say, and thank the opposition for the spirit of cooperation in which this was handled.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister's official for coming in today and providing us with the assistance, and I would also like to thank the minister for his cooperation.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I don't know if the members want to do the next one before 5 or not. In the event that you think that might rush it a little, we'll call it 5 o'clock and come back at 7.

An Hon. Member: — Well let's do it now.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I think they'll have a few questions, yes.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.