

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
May 10, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present the names of over a thousand Saskatchewan people today on a petition. This prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to support Bill 31, An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Property Rights), which will benefit all property owners in Saskatchewan, specifically firearms owners, in order to halt the federal Liberal government from infringing upon the rights of Saskatchewan people.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from across the province. I so present.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition, and the prayer says:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to support Bill 31, An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Property Rights), which will benefit all property owners in Saskatchewan, and specifically firearm owners, in order to halt the federal Liberal government from infringing upon the rights of Saskatchewan people.

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

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions I would like to lay on the Table this afternoon, and I also will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to support Bill 31, An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Property Rights), which will benefit all property owners in Saskatchewan, and specifically firearm owners, in order to halt the federal Liberal government from infringing upon the rights of Saskatchewan people.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have literally hundreds of names here as well. And looking over them, I find that they come from literally all parts of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a pile of petitions that have been sent to me, coming from mostly the Saskatoon area, and I'd like to read the prayer. It says:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to examine the decision to close St. Paul's labour and delivery and post-partum wards; and further, to reverse this decision as soon as possible.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to allocate funding toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. D'Autremont, Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presents the committee's seventh report which is hereby tabled.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move the motion, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts now be concurred in.

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to make some brief remarks about the report.

I want to say, first of all, that over the last few years we've had the opportunity to work with the member from Morse, who served as Chair of the committee. And I want to say that the committee members certainly enjoyed our relationship with the member from Morse, and he did a good job and we thank him for his work as Chair.

I also want to thank the Clerk, Mr. Putz, who worked with us; the Provincial Auditor and his staff; and the Provincial Comptroller and his staff; as well as the staff of *Hansard*; and the various government officials that appeared in front of us.

I want to say that there were several major accomplishments by the committee in the last year or so. One was the resolution of the task force report on roles, responsibilities, and duties of auditors, and in particular the relationship between the Provincial Auditor and the private auditors which was a matter of ongoing concern. And I'm pleased to say that we were able to concur in the development of a good working relationship between the Provincial Auditor and the private auditors which was a significant accomplishment because the problem had

existed for some time.

Another major piece of work that we managed to accomplish was the ongoing work we're doing in terms of monitoring the government's implementation of the committee's recommendations. And the members will see in the seventh report, an appendix of recommendations we've made and the actions that have been taken by the government. I'm pleased to report to the Assembly that by and large the government is following the recommendations of the committee which is a very positive development from our point of view.

We have also managed to have The Provincial Auditor's Act amended last year by the House. The Act that we proposed, or the amendments, were moved by the member from Morse as Chair of the committee, and they enable the Provincial Auditor to issue more than one report per year, so that he can issue a spring report and a fall report, also to table and distribute his report when the House is not in session. And we think these are significant advances in terms of public accountability of government funds.

For the first time, pension costs and liabilities were recorded in the summary financial statements issued for the year ending March 31, 1994, which was another important milestone.

Generally, Mr. Speaker, we've found that the government and its departments are complying with the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor in his reports. We believe that the developments that are occurring improve public accountability in our province, and I'm very pleased to second the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Clerk Assistant: — Ms. Lorje, Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, presents its fifth report which is hereby tabled.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to move that the fifth report of the Standing committee be now concurred.

In doing so I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that your committee has been extremely diligent, and members on all sides of the House have been extremely cooperative in meeting regularly. Indeed we met 21 times over the last year to review the various items of business that are properly before the purview of the Crown Corporations Committee.

Mr. Speaker, members of this House will recall that one year ago, on May 5, 1994, the legislature adopted new guidelines for the terms of reference for the Crown Corporations Committee. These new guidelines expanded our mandate and enabled us to look at the goals and objectives of the various Crown corporations and to do a prospective, as well as a retrospective, review of their annual reports.

Mr. Speaker, that change in the guidelines has significantly opened up the considerations of the committee and the debate has been extremely interesting and, I believe, in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

We also changed our procedures so that members of the electronic media could more easily record the proceedings. I believe that has also increased the accountability of the Crown Corporations Committee.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we expanded our terms of reference so that we now review a couple of major entities that receive the majority of their revenue from some place other than the General Revenue Fund. I refer specifically to the Workers' Compensation Board and to the Liquor and Gaming Authorities.

We have concluded our review of the Workers' Compensation Board. Our review of Liquor and Gaming is still ongoing. We have also concluded our review of several of the Crown corporations and related agencies. We do continue to review the Crown Investments Corporation, the overall holding company for the Crowns in Saskatchewan.

I would like to, as has the speaker from Saskatoon Idylwyld has done, I would like to thank various people for their help with the committee. We met with the task force on the roles and responsibility of auditors and I am very appreciative of their input and their comments to us.

Mr. Putz was the Clerk to our committee. He then changed responsibilities and Ms. Woods became the Clerk. Both these people have been extremely competent and very helpful. *Hansard* as well has been very helpful. And the Provincial Auditor attended faithfully and gave us extremely good feedback about the various items we were considering.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there were several private auditing firms who are responsible for various Crowns, and they attended the committees faithfully and also gave us extremely important input in our reviews. So I do wish to thank them.

I also wish to thank all the members of the Crown Corporations Committee for enabling this experiment in the change of reference for the Crown Corporations Committee to become the success that it has, and I look forward to working with them in future years.

Having said that, I do now move, seconded by the member from Moosomin:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to add a few comments to my colleague from Saskatoon Wildwood regarding the concurrence into the Crown Corporations Committee report and acknowledge that, while we did proceed and were able to review a number of Crown corporations and

while the mandate of the Crown Corporations Committee was certainly expanded, there were times when ministers were more than willing to debate current issues; there were other times when they still referred back to the current committee . . . or the year under review.

So I just wanted to bring that to the attention of the Assembly, that yes we did expand the purview, and I think that in the future will probably work well. But ministers also chose at times to just acknowledge that they preferred to stay into the year under review.

One area that we felt we weren't getting a lot of responses in and we'll look forward to debate in the future is the Gaming Commission. I think that's an area that's going to need a lot of review.

I guess at the end of the day though, Mr. Speaker, I would have to suggest that while our committee worked well, there were times when we just had to acknowledge . . . bring the Chair to a point of acknowledgement that maybe she was trying to stymie the work of the committee. And we just had to bring her to the . . . to bring to her remembrance the fact that she was Chair, and if she wanted to debate, that she could certainly relinquish the position of Chair and take part in debate.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, in general it was . . . we've had a fruitful discussion in committee and I thank all members for their involvement.

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a group of 46 grade 8 students from my constituency in Saskatoon from Dundonald School. And they're accompanied today by teachers Derek Barss and Verdynne Schmidt, and also by Audrey Sabiston who is the secretary at Dundonald School.

And they're going to be observing the proceedings here, having a tour of this building, and I'll be visiting them at 2:30 after which we'll even get our picture taken. And I hope the students have a pleasant day in the city of Regina and see lots of interesting things. And I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislative Assembly, a group of guests, Mr. Speaker. I guess I am twice lucky. Last week I had the privilege of introducing around 50 grade 5 students from Martensville School and it's my privilege and honour, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to the Legislative Assembly some 73 grade 7 and 8

students from Venture Heights School, also in Martensville.

And they, Mr. Speaker, are accompanied by teachers Debbie Rodger, Terry Stanviloff, Diane Beaule, and Patrick Kazuzka. And if I have my information right, a chaperon, Mrs. Geisbrecht, as well.

And I would ask all members to help me welcome these students to the legislature this afternoon. And I'm also looking forward to a visit with them at 2:15. Subsequently to that, pictures. So, members, please help me welcome these grade 7 and 8 students from Martensville.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I draw your attention to your gallery, there are three gentlemen that I'd like to introduce this afternoon to you and to the members of the Assembly.

And I'd ask them to stand — the first one is Mr. Kent Latimer, the second one is Jordan Cooper, and the third one is Tim McGillivray. These three gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, will be representing the Progressive Conservatives, as candidates, in Saskatoon constituencies and we look forward to their presence on the floor some day.

So I'd ask all members to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Schizophrenia Public Awareness Campaign

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we are wearing irises on our lapels and these are worn as symbols of hope for people suffering from schizophrenia. On April 24, the Schizophrenia Society of Canada launched its first national public awareness campaign to dispel misconceptions and to raise awareness.

Schizophrenia is much more common than people think. It affects about 270,000 Canadians. Sadly, 40 per cent of these attempt suicide and one-quarter of those succeed, but this illness receives relatively little public attention.

Schizophrenia is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain and often strikes young adults. It drastically affects an individual's quality of life and causes great strain on the family. Because mental illness is feared and misunderstood, sufferers are often ostracized. Fortunately, research is resulting in more effective treatment programs.

The Schizophrenia Society of Canada is a charitable organization. Through chapters and provincial associations, including the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan, the society provides educational information, emotional support, advocacy work, and supports research.

And I'd like members to join with me in congratulating those involved in the society for their continued commitment and hard work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nursing Week

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is Nursing Week in Saskatchewan and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the 9,600 registered nurses in our province.

As members will know, the role of registered nurses has greatly expanded in the last few years, particularly in towns and villages across the province where the nurse is more than the front-line health provider. She may only be — and he may only be — the only health care provider.

Last week the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association had their annual meeting in Saskatoon, and one of the decisions made at that meeting was to open the discipline hearings of the SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) to the public. They will be making a more detailed announcement about this resolution at a news conference this Friday.

The other major result of their convention was some movement by the Minister of Health toward accepting the SRNA's desire to have all registered nurses hold a baccalaureate degree as entry to practice by the year 2000.

Today also marks Registered Psychiatric Nurses Day in the province; the RPNs (registered psychiatric nurse) are holding their annual meeting, both yesterday and today, in Saskatoon. And last night at their awards night, Barbara Wilson was honoured as the RPN of the year, having been selected by her 1,200 colleagues in the province for that honour. Barbara is the adult day care coordinator at Regina Pioneer Village, and her area of specialization is Alzheimer's patients.

So to all Saskatchewan nurses, the RNs (registered nurse), the RPNs, the LPNs (licensed practical nurse), and the CNAs (certified nursing assistant), we wish to extend thanks and appreciation on behalf of the people of our province for the important role that they play in our health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Schizophrenia Public Awareness Campaign

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with colleagues in the Assembly today in saying a few words in support of those who are affected with schizophrenia and those who support individuals affected.

My colleagues and I are pleased to join with organizations across the country and the world who work on behalf of the mentally ill and have designated the iris as the worldwide

symbol of faith for those who suffer with mental illness. Individuals suffering with such an affliction deserve the respect, support, and recognition of all members of our society, and we join with those who support them.

It's my sincere pleasure to wear this iris and to share in the faith for people with mental illness, and as well, Mr. Speaker, to extend our appreciation for the work that nurses do in our society and in our province in supporting people who suffer with mental illness, plus supporting and offering support and encouragement to individuals who suffer with any other form of illness. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nursing Week

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nursing Week is that week in which we give recognition to that group of dedicated professionals who it can be said without exaggeration are the heart and soul of our health care field.

Mr. Speaker, it can also be said that members of this nursing profession will probably not take time themselves this week to observe any special ceremonies because, as always, they will be too busy providing expert care.

As well, today is Registered Psychiatric Nurses Day. Psychiatric nurses are the mainstay of our mental health system. They give it continuity. Psychiatric nurses provide in-patient care in special care homes, in acute care psychiatric facilities, and our prisons. And in the community they provide care in out-patient settings such as clinics and the home.

Nurses all too often don't get the recognition they deserve. In a very small way I hope that this week can help to change that. And I ask all members to join me in expressing our thanks and paying our respect to all Saskatchewan nurses who care for Saskatchewan people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Schizophrenia Public Awareness Campaign

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleagues in recognizing the launching of the national awareness campaign by the Schizophrenia Society of Canada. Schizophrenia is a biochemical brain disease which results in disordered thinking, delusions, hallucinations, and a lack of energy and motivation, striking, as my colleague from Saskatoon Idylwyld said, over a quarter of a million Canadians.

This devastating disease takes a terrible toll on young people because it usually strikes its victims in their late teens or 20's, though I must comment that I have in my work worked with children as young as six who suffered from the disease. And it usually continues throughout their lives.

Mr. Speaker, schizophrenia has a devastating affect on the

families and the friends of victims. The national awareness campaign about schizophrenia has as its slogan: If you think spelling it is hard, imagine living with it.

The goal of this campaign is to educate the public, because they know very little about this disease. Ultimately the goal is to encourage more research into this brain disease to find a cause and possibly a cure.

The Schizophrenia Society has presented some of us with irises. Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to acquire a better understanding of this disease and to pledge their support to the work and goals of the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan; and their support, especially, to the victims and their families. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Regina Aquifer

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, constituents of mine have asked me to investigate the concerns for the Regina aquifer. I'm happy to do so, and because their interest in this portion of Regina's water supply is shared by us all, I would like to take the opportunity to respond publicly.

As is the case with any water supply, our considerations are twofold: one, is it safe to drink; and two, is it sustainable over the long term?

Since 1992, Mr. Speaker, when four new wells on the aquifer were added, the water quality has been tested by four separate agencies: Sask Water, the city of Regina, Sask Environment, and Saskatchewan Health. All studies found the water quality acceptable. As well, an independent water quality consultant agreed there was no problem with the supply. This is the kind of thorough monitoring I believe we should all expect for such an important resource.

In recent months, the issue has been raised again. In order to assure the public that the water from the north-west portion of the Regina aquifer is both safe and sustainable, an independent consultant has been hired to review all relevant data. The consultant and his team of experts met Monday with city and provincial officials to begin the consultation process which will lead to a full report on the state of the Regina aquifer.

Mr. Speaker, the city of Regina and the Government of Saskatchewan are taking every step possible to ensure the proper management and safety of our water. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Great Canadian Geography Challenge

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege to meet an outstanding young geographer in Weyburn just a few days ago. Justin Craigen, a student at Weyburn Junior High School, is one of the three provincial

finalists in the Great Canadian Geography Challenge. In fact he scored the highest marks in the provincial competition.

This contest is sponsored by the Canadian Council of Geographic Educators and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. The top three finalists travel to Ottawa on May 20 to compete in the national geography contest, from which the winner goes to the international geography challenge to be held in Disney World. I am sure Justin and the other contestants will be able to find their way to the proper locations.

The Canadian contest, with 36 students from all the provinces and territories, will be hosted by Alex Trebek, the Canadian host of the TV show, *Jeopardy*. We may all do relatively well at home answering the questions on this show, but Justin and the others will have to do so under pressure in front of a large audience.

I wish Justin and the other two Saskatchewan representatives well. It takes a lot of preparation, hard work, dedication, and love of geography to accomplish such an achievement. I admire their knowledge of the world we live in, and I know they will put it to good use at the contest and throughout their lives.

Congratulations and good luck in Ottawa. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If the member has a statement by members, he'll have to wait for another day or ask for leave.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Firearms Legislation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, the all-party committee has made its presentation to the Justice Committee in Ottawa. And, Mr. Minister, you got the limelight and you've had the photo opportunity that you were looking for there, but you didn't bring anything back for the law-abiding citizens of Saskatchewan. You came, you saw, but you were rejected.

And I hesitate to say it, but I told you so, Mr. Minister — I told you so. Your plan of talk, talk, talk, has failed. And now, Mr. Minister, it's time for a plan of action. Mr. Minister, the ball is in your court. What are you planning to do now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm terribly disappointed in that question. We went to Ottawa — that is to say, three members from the government side of the House, two members from the opposition Conservatives, and the Leader of the Third Party — and I thought we put on a pretty good show.

I thought we were able to very clearly articulate to the standing committee and to the eastern media exactly what were the views of the people of Saskatchewan and this Assembly. And I

thought that was far more effective than anything, than anything that the members opposite have suggested during the past few weeks might be done by some kind of futile gesture from this House.

I thought our presentation was very powerful and very effective, and I'm disappointed that apparently the member doesn't share that view.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, it was indeed a very good show, and the Liberals rejected it out of hand.

Mr. Minister, lawyers tend to drag things out with endless and endless streams of rhetoric, somewhat like politicians. And that's exactly what you're doing — being a lawyer, Mr. Minister, instead of representing the people of Saskatchewan.

We need a made-in-Saskatchewan plan, Mr. Minister. We need to protect ourselves from the Liberals. We've introduced legislation that would entrench property rights and invoke the notwithstanding clause — something that firearms owners in Saskatchewan want.

What are you going to do today, Mr. Minister? Would you please do something — do anything.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I stood in this House last week when they were making similar noises and I said, if that's how you feel about it, don't come. We'll go without you. We'll go without you and make a presentation.

We presented to the federal government yesterday a united front, and I thought that was a very, very effective way to approach the problem. We should be proud of that and we should maintain our unity. We don't need to come back here at home, having these fights across the floor of this House, and thereby weakening the presentation that we made to Ottawa.

We heard again and again, Mr. Speaker, comments from all sorts of people that ours had been the most effective presentation made to the House of Commons committee, and we should all be proud of that. And we should continue to follow that up with all of the contacts that we have to try and impress upon the standing committee our point of view.

I did not hear anybody in that standing committee reject our option yesterday. I did not hear Minister Rock, in any of his interviews, deal with our point about the necessity of doing a very careful appraisal of the effectiveness of existing gun control legislation, which was the major part of our approach.

So I wouldn't be nearly as pessimistic as the members opposite. I would just continue the enormously important work that we have begun.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we agreed to go, but we wanted to go with some action out of this legislature, something real that we could take down to Ottawa, and you rejected that.

Mr. Minister, you can spare us the interpretations that you continually give us about the Act — that we can't do anything about this issue — because you can get a lawyer to say almost anything about anything . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Will the members please settle down. There's just too much interruption on both sides when the person is asking the question and when the minister is answering. So please settle down and let them have their turn.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, will you please save us the time of listening to your long speeches with no action in them. Take that team of bureaucrats that you took with you to Ottawa, and put them to work, and come up with a real solution to deal with the problems in Saskatchewan related to firearm registration. Or, Mr. Minister, are you admitting defeat, that you can't do anything. And if so, will you step aside and let somebody else carry on the fight?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I just can't really credit that the member is sincere in some of the things that he's saying. I for one was very happy yesterday not to have the embarrassment of trying to explain to the standing committee what effect a change to our Human Rights Code might have on their gun law. Every constitutional lawyer in the country would have been laughing at us, including the people who are advising the standing committee. And that is the fact of the matter.

Anybody who thinks that a change to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code would have any impact at all on this debate and on the constitutionality of the federal proposal is just dreaming — is just simply dreaming and not being realistic. Furthermore it's irresponsible to continue to press that view when you must know better. You give some hope to people that there might be something here we can do by amending our provincial legislation when you must know and your advisers must tell you that it's just a bunch of nonsense.

Now let's keep our shoulders together on this thing. Let's keep side by side in our determination to oppose these laws. And let's not pretend to anybody that there's anything we can do on the floor of this House that is going to buttress our position as far as the constitutionality of the federal Bill is concerned. And that's the fact of the matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Sales Tax

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Mr. Premier, do you think it's fair that status Indians are exempted from paying

the provincial sales tax?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, what we have said consistently is this: we have discussions on an ongoing basis with the previous, with the new, leadership of the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) about the whole package of tax issues as they affect first nations people. We will continue those discussions and we will not play petty politics with this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, why is it so hard for your government to give a straight answer on this issue? I was really interested in reading what the member from Elphinstone, the NDP (New Democratic Party) campaign manager, had to say about this issue. He said, and I quote:

I think a 28-day campaign is not the place to deal with a complicated issue like taxation and Indians.

All of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, I'm starting to feel pretty good about this upcoming election. Here we are just a few days away from an election call and the NDP campaign manager is starting to sound like Kim Campbell.

Mr. Minister, I think this is an election campaign issue, and I think it's a perfect time to discuss important issues like fair taxation. My position is very, very clear on this. Will you tell us what your party's position is; do you intend to end the exemption for status Indians — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite, I'm not sure why they're so proud of what they've done here. They've announced some major change. They haven't consulted with the people affected. They haven't looked at the whole package of taxes. They haven't looked at the fact that first nations people in this province in some cases pay less, in some cases pay more, than other provinces. And they haven't taken account of the fact that we have very important discussions going on with these people at this particular time.

What the people of this province want is tax policies that are well thought out, that are long term, that promote harmony, and tax policies that are sustainable into the future. And that's what this government will deliver.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is going to be an interesting election. The Liberals are taking their campaign strategy from Texas. The NDP are getting their campaign strategy from Kim Campbell and drinking Campbell Kool-Aid, and they don't want to talk about the important issues for 28 days. We are the only party that is getting its platform from listening to the people of Saskatchewan.

Let me tell you, Madam Minister, Saskatchewan people want tax fairness — that's what they're asking for. They want

spending cuts and an end to the tax exemptions as an overall part of reducing the PST (provincial sales tax).

Madam Minister, what are your plans with regard to lowering of the provincial sales tax in Saskatchewan? Or is this one of the issues again that you don't want to talk about in the 28-day election period?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. What we will say to the people of Saskatchewan is, in 1991 we removed the E&H (education and health) tax from all the items that the members opposite tried to tax: children's clothing, books, etc.

We will say we have provided targeted tax cuts to promote jobs. We will say that we have a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan that, as our finances improve, one-third of every dollar will go to tax cuts, and we delivered on that promise in this budget by reducing income tax. And finally, what we will say to them, is we've laid out our whole plan. Here's how we going to reduce taxes; here's where the money's coming from.

The members opposite will just lay out part of their plan. Here's how we're going to reduce taxes, but you wait till after they're elected to find out where the cuts will come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Food Bank Use

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I refer to the 1991 NDP Party platform, which states that the NDP will, and I quote: eliminate the need for food banks in Saskatchewan.

I'm very sad to say, Mr. Speaker, like their promise to restore the drug plan and like their promise to get rid of the PST, this promise, too, has been broken.

My question is to the Premier this afternoon: sir, given your promise, can you explain why the Regina food bank has experienced a 20 per cent increase in requests? The Saskatoon Food Bank has been hit with a 25 per cent increase in requests since your government came to office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there must be an election in the offing because this Liberal leader who had her picture taken the last time there was an election, at the food bank in Saskatoon, is all of a sudden interested in poverty. The limo's gone, and here we are.

I will tell you that five hours of estimates in Social Services and they weren't around, Mr. Speaker. The questions we . . . Ask those questions later today. The key issue is jobs, and there's good news here. We have the lowest unemployment rate in

Saskatchewan; you know that very well. We also have created 9,000 new jobs this year, 7,000 jobs new over last year, net new jobs. We've created over 500 jobs for students.

And what do you support? You support the federal budget that will continue to unravel the health care system on your Texas-style model. That is very much related to this. You have voted against every initiative to help those people that you say you're supportive of. You have voted against every single issue — every one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Everyone knows the reason why we have the lowest unemployment rate is people leave this province. Mr. Speaker, these particular figures come directly from the food banks themselves. And perhaps the Minister of Social Services and the Premier of this province should be genuinely concerned about wishing to respond to this very, very serious issue.

Last year, sir, almost 32,000 families alone in Regina turned to the food bank for help. That's almost 5,300 more families requesting assistance than when your government came to office.

My question, sir: does the fact that almost 5,300 more families in Regina have turned to the food bank for help since your government was elected . . . do you think it has anything to do with people having given up, giving up looking for work because of lack of real opportunities, the high cost of taxation and utilities, the unfortunate set of circumstances that places them at an extraordinary disadvantage just because they happen to be in Saskatchewan with your government in charge?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this question on behalf of the government because the Leader of the Liberal Party has now shifted to the larger issue of how she would manage government if — which is the biggest word in the English language — if ever entrusted that responsibility. I don't think it will happen.

In her campaign document, the way that she's going to handle it is by something called efficiency audits. Notice the approach by the Liberal leader in saying all of these things that we've done, by this document she will undo by the Texas-style efficiency audits.

By the way, in Texas 102 auditors were hired — 102 auditors were hired. I would table at some later date an article by the *Business Week* newspaper. The headline tells it all: them's pretty fancy accounting tricks, pardner — according to the *Business Week* report about the Texas audit.

And what's the Liberal document say in Saskatchewan? Quote: the Texas experience suggests that efficiency audits in Saskatchewan could identify savings, and efficiency is the sole test. No mention of caring, no mention of compassion, no mention of sharing — efficiency, Texas style. That is your

answer, and your answer is the last time you're at a food bank is when you got your picture taken prior to the last election. I suspect it will be in 1996 as well, coming up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not at all surprised that this Premier has no idea how to make smaller government in Saskatchewan. That particular paper deals with smaller government. And as he knows, the budget in Texas is 12 times bigger than the budget in Saskatchewan. If they had 102 auditors — and I have faith in the Provincial Auditor; I have faith in Saskatchewan auditors — and we would require one-twelfth of that number. Twelve auditors from Saskatchewan, I think, would be very worthy investment of finding 5 per cent savings in this government which is totally bloated compared with every other government across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about choices. The cost to society is tremendous for poverty . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Well there's just too much interruption by people.

An Hon. Member: — It's 20 degrees above outside.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Then let's go outside for those who . . . and for those who don't abide . . . order. I was just going to suggest, for those who don't abide by the rules, they will be.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The cost to a society for poverty is tremendous in terms of mental health and well-being, a loss when productive citizens lose their self-esteem and a tragedy for children who must face life with odds stacked against them. But we can measure, we can measure how much taxpayers are paying for increased poverty even though the social costs are very difficult to measure. Saskatchewan taxpayers are paying \$28 million per month for welfare. That's \$12 million more per month than four years ago.

Mr. Premier, instead of laying the blame at the feet of absolutely everyone else, it's your government that's in charge. What exactly are you doing to improve the lives of these people who need hope?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I could spend some considerable time, which question period does not permit, in outlining programs ranging all the way from children's action plan to the fact that with every budget that we've introduced we've never reduced the Social Services budget. There is a problem that needs to be continued to work at. I could make that answer and at some appropriate time will do so in this legislature.

But I want to come back to you and your position. I'm reading from your document, quote . . . listen to this, Mr. Speaker,

listen up. Every social worker, listen up. Every teacher, listen up. Every health care worker, every nurse, listen up. This is what the Liberal leader says, quote: and by testing every program — I repeat, Mr. Speaker — by testing every program against the strict demands of efficiency, services to Texans were actually improved over this time.

Every program . . . efficiency, not caring, not compassion. That means children's action plan. That means first responders. That means every form of initiative undertaken. Listen up, health care workers. Listen up, teachers. You elect a Liberal, and you elect a Texas-style approach of accountant's efficiency. You have no right to come to this legislature and plead compassion when you don't show even one word of compassion in any of your statements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Battlefords Constituency Office

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question of fairness for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, last week the member from The Battlefords indicated in this Assembly that he had corresponded with you directly over his constituency rental scheme involving prominent NDP supporters. He said that we could check in on it, and that's exactly what we would like to do with you today, sir.

Mr. Premier, did you review the member's rental scheme, and did you give it your personal approval, as the member from Battlefords alluded to?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I answered this question last week in the Assembly. I answer it again.

I have full accountability for the practices of rental of my constituency office. I ask the hon. member, trying to attack people and smear people to cover up for your own inadequacies, call this before the Board of Internal Economy, and I'll reveal all the evidence to you. You can do your research work first with the Legislative Assembly Office.

But for Heaven's sakes, stop the accusations and bring this before the Board of Internal Economy where I can deal with it as a member of this Assembly who should have the right to have all that information on the table and not have to deal with the accusations and the innuendo that you make as a member struggling for existence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, I did raise it at the Board of Internal Economy, and the government majority took great issue with what I had to say.

But the point I bring to the Assembly today, Mr. Premier, is this. The member from Battlefords said that he had gone to

great time and expense to prove to you that this was all right. And what I asked today, sir, in the Assembly is do you approve of the scheme that the member from Battlefords has used, with public money, to pass on his constituency office to some charity in the city of North Battleford? Do you approve of that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the member's question is flawed with inaccuracies. And if the member thinks there's some wrongdoing on my part as a member of the Legislative Assembly, then you should take the appropriate action, whatever that action may be.

One remedy I suggest to you is through the Board of Internal Economy. Maybe you want to resurrect the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. Maybe you want to turn over the file to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

Do whatever action you want, but stop making false accusations against my character and the arrangements I have as a tenant with the landlord in the city of North Battleford. Just stop that and deal with this in the appropriate fashion instead of trying to cover up for things that happened within your own caucus.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Paul's Obstetrics Ward Closure

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question today to the Minister of Health. Earlier on I tabled petitions with over 1,700 signatures on, opposing the closure of St. Paul's labour and deliver post-partum wards.

With the closure of so many rural hospitals, there's a much larger rural population having to use Saskatoon's labour facilities. After the closure of St. Paul's obstetrics ward, there will only be 15 labour and delivery rooms in Saskatoon, three of which aren't even equipped with showers. And these individuals feel that's not enough.

Mr. Minister, before Saskatoon's labour facilities fall short of what is needed to accommodate the number of births in the Saskatoon area, would you examine the decision to close St. Paul's obstetrics ward and reserve this decision . . . or reverse, pardon me, this decision if necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite I think have got to straighten out where they stand on this issue of health care renewal, particularly when it comes to the question of district health boards. You either want local people inputted through elections, which is what the concept of the district health boards are, or you don't. Or you don't.

The elections are coming in the fall, and the nominees are the representations of this Assembly, as represented by the government, based on widespread consultations. Now if the argument of the member opposite is that the government of the day should simply say to the district health board, look, you must do it this way, come heck or high water, then we might as well do away with the district health boards.

I don't think he's saying that. He can argue they should be improved, there should be immediate elections, whatever he would argue in that context we might debate. But the overall concept, I think, has a lot of merit. We didn't do it like the Liberals in New Brunswick where they wiped out all the hospital boards and virtually had the Department of Health in New Brunswick control everything.

So this is an issue which has to be worked out by the Saskatoon District Health Board. I will say to the Minister of Health, who's not here today because of an announcement of a spa opening in . . . the opening of the spa in Moose Jaw, economic development, I'll ask the Minister of Health to have his officials inquire into this matter. But please understand that this is a cooperative arrangement between the Department of Health and the district health boards, and that is the nature of many of these kinds of concerns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our office has received numerous calls regarding the proposed closure of Saskatoon's St. Paul's obstetrics ward. And I believe the people who are calling us would feel more comfortable if they knew that the decision was made by a group of individuals who are accountable — not an appointed board but a totally elected board. I believe, Mr. Speaker, the issue would be addressed in a much different manner.

Most people believe that the closure of the obstetric ward means that in the near future all of St. Paul's will be shut down. In fact, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier, one letter states that the former bishop at St. Paul's feared the loss of the entire hospital and was threatened with that possibility if obstetrics wasn't shut down. Could you give these individuals your personal assurance that this will indeed not be the case?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again this is a variation of the same question. And unfortunately my answer will have to be, I guess, a variation of the answer that I gave earlier.

I don't think it can be argued credibly that people like Mr. Cliff Wright, who has served the city of Saskatoon and the people of the province of Saskatchewan — I'd even argue Canada — honourably all of his life and all of the representatives there, plus the people who are advising them, are either unresponsive or are manipulative or determined to thwart the legitimate interests of the best health care services and needs for the people of Saskatoon and area. I don't believe that, and I don't

think that you believe that either.

What is implied here is that somehow there is a refusal to listen to the case. I argue that that is not the case. The Department of Health will raise the matter with the district health board. Of course we shall do that. We're aware of the concerns raised. I was at St. Paul's Hospital, opening up a safe haven project for the west side for street kids — something which, by the way if some political leaders were to attain office, would undergo the strict test of efficiency. And I don't know whether one could really measure it by efficiency.

I was at St. Paul's and I know about the concern. What you have to do is raise it with the district health boards, please. And understand that while there have been difficulties in the reform of health care, we want to see these things worked out but in partnership with our local organizations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Good Spirit Regional Economic Development Authority

Hon. Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to apologize to the opposition for not having extra copies here today. I am pleased to report the launch of another regional economic development authority to foster regional job creation and cooperation in the provision of economic development services.

Good Spirit is Saskatchewan's 11th regional economic development authority. Founding members of the Good Spirit Regional Economic Development Authority include the RMs (rural municipality) of Cote, Sliding Hills, Insinger, and Buchanan; the villages of Buchanan, Pelly, Semans, and Theodore; the towns of Canora, Esterhazy, Kamsack, Norquay, and Sturgis; the city of Yorkton, and the Assiniboine Plains Rural Development Corporation, which represents a number of RMs in the communities.

REDAs (regional economic development authority) are an excellent way for rural areas to reap the benefits of the economic recovery that is under way in Saskatchewan. They will enable regions to take advantage of the climate of growth and job creation as the government's budget plan implements sustainable surpluses, tax relief for families, targeted tax cuts to manufacturers and processors, training and education, and a focus on supporting job creation as a number one priority.

Good Spirit REDA has opportunities in food processing, specialty crops, tourism; recreation and cultural activities related to the history of the area that are unique. I know that all the members will be working together to capitalize on these opportunities. By creating partnerships, we are finding new and creative ways to work together. Everyone has the opportunity to make it work.

As part of that partnership, I am pleased to invite the members

to join me in offering the best wishes of this Assembly to the Good Spirit REDA, as many communities and committed stakeholders continue to make progress in its important work. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in response to the minister's statement, we certainly . . . we're always, on this side of the House in opposition, in favour of economic development.

But after attending the meeting in North Battleford a couple of weeks back, the way that the people in that area say that you create economic development, is by having a low tax regime, putting us in a competitive position with other jurisdictions across this country, lowering the PST — that's what they said to us that night, Mr. Minister.

The way to have long-sustainable economic growth in this province is by having a tax system that is competitive with other jurisdictions. And that is why, Mr. Minister, we have formulated a policy that says by cutting government spending, by cutting government spending by 5 per cent, we can lower the rate of taxation, lower the PST from 9 to 7 per cent, providing equal tax treatment, fair tax treatment, to all people across this province.

That's what I think the minister should be talking about in terms of economic development. That's how you create a climate for business that sustains economic development, creates jobs and more opportunities for people all across this province.

It's not by some of the measures that the minister is talking about and has been talking about over the last number of months. It's by having the lowest tax regime possible in this province. And lowering the PST from 9 per cent to 7 per cent is certainly a step in that direction, Mr. Minister. If you were serious about economic development, those are the kinds of policies that you would be bringing forward to the people of this province.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I would ask leave of the Assembly, which I think has been obtained by the respective House leaders, to speak to a condolence motion.

Leave granted.

(1430)

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move, seconded by the hon. member from Souris-Cannington, a condolence motion respecting the passing of Charles David Cuming. And, Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise to inform this Assembly of the death of Mr. Charles David Cuming who was a former member of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Cuming lived a very full and complete life. He died at the age of 95 years on April 27, 1995 at the Pasqua Hospital here in Regina. Mr. Cuming leaves to mourn his wife Elaine, children Blanche, Zelda, Dale, Ron, and Douglas, as well as 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

I happen to know Mr. Ron Cuming on a personal basis. Ron is a professor at the College of Law, and I've known him through school days when we both went to the College of Law together at the same time and also in his capacity currently at the College of Law. And all of the family indeed is a family of accomplishment.

The government members of this Assembly, this side for sure, and, I would argue, in a non-partisan way, that the body politic generally owes a great deal to Mr. Cuming. Charles Cuming was elected in the important election of 1944 — every election is important, whether one agrees with the outcome or disagrees with the outcome; it certainly was a watershed election campaign result — when he was elected in the Souris-Estevan constituency as part of the first government and CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) members of the CCF team of Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Cuming, like so many of the pioneers of that particular time, moved very strongly in cooperative circles, in segments of fighting for the improvement of the average position of people in Saskatchewan. He lived very much, on a daily basis, his beliefs, social democratic beliefs. He was a true believer, a firm believer.

And he began early. He began by organizing the Estevan Credit Union. He continued to be active in the CCF and the co-op movements in a variety of forms for over 60 years. And he, I think, is the last — I may stand to be corrected — if not the last, near the last of the 1944 team that was elected to the legislature whose passing we are marking today.

In those days politics really was a clash of ideology in the classic sense of politics. Economic and social, it was also politics of the people very much. In the absence of television and radio, the way that politicians had to work was the way that I kind of mourn the passing — although we try to maintain it; all of us do — they had to, in those days, meet in the town halls, on coffee row, coffee klatsches in the kitchens and basements of interested people. Television and radio and instant communications has partly robbed all of us of that benefit.

And in that period prior to 1944, coupled with the classic debate about left-of-centre social democratic principles, right-of-centre principles, Liberal-Conservative views — if I may, generally. I don't mean this in any partisan sense — it must have been a very, very high time and a very important time to be involved in the shaping and the reshaping of Saskatchewan and Canadian life.

And it is people like Charles Cuming who dedicated all their lives to these beliefs that I would hope all of us would recapture the sentiment, the kind of the fervour, all of us would recapture

that in the 1990s as we head the 21st century, as a means of battling back what unfortunately is a prevalent mood in many areas, of cynicism toward political people and the political process.

Well in his professional life, Charles Cuming also served as sheriff to the Estevan judicial district very admirably and impeccably until his retirement in 1965. He modestly said, and really modestly, that he was proud to be a small part of the great movement which swept this province in 1944 and which has continued to be felt ever since.

But to those of us who came after, the contribution of Mr. Cuming and his contemporaries was and is not a small contribution but immeasurable. They saw the promise of what could be. They worked very hard to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. And when victory was theirs, they set about to create a government which would build programs that were envied around the world.

Mr. Cuming lived a long life filled with service. His commitment was such that he continued to travel to party events right up to the very last few years of his life, his very long and productive life. And not least was his great love for children and young people, which reflected his hope for the future and which was reciprocated by the youngsters who came into contact with him.

Mr. Speaker, I feel saddened on this occasion to witness the passing of an important era. I am rejuvenated to contemplate and to think of the life of Charles Cuming and his contribution, and motivated again — as I hope all members would be, regardless of their points of view — to the efficacy and the worthwhile nature of serving in this legislature, serving in the Commons, serving anywhere in public life.

With those few, brief words, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move, by leave of the Assembly, seconded by the hon. member from Souris-Cannington:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution that he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

Charles David Cuming, who died in Regina on April 27, 1995, was a member of this Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Souris-Estevan from 1944 to 1948. Mr. Cuming was born on April 7, 1900, at Inchkeith, Saskatchewan. He received his early schooling at schools in Inchkeith and Kipling. Later in 1920 he continued his studies at business college in Calgary, Alberta. It was here that he first became interested in social change.

Mr. Cuming had a long and accomplished record of service in public life. In his own community of Inchkeith, Mr. Cuming was an active member and

director of the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan section, and served for several years on the school board. He devoted considerable energy to the formation of cooperative movements, a devotion that was to survive in excess of 60 years. His interest in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was an extension of his occupation in farming and insurance.

Mr. Cuming's contribution and support played a valuable role in the growth of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and later the New Democratic Party. Initially he assumed an organizational role, managing the provincial campaign for the Cannington constituency in 1938, and the Assiniboia constituency in the 1940 federal election.

Subsequently, in 1944 Mr. Cuming was elected to serve as member of the first CCF government. He ran again in the general election of 1948, but was unsuccessful in retaining his seat.

After leaving provincial politics, Mr. Cuming's commitment toward serving his community did not diminish. He was appointed sheriff in the Estevan judicial district and served in this capacity until his retirement in 1965.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

Mr. Speaker, I so move, seconded by the hon. member from Souris-Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to second the motion moved by the Premier.

Charles Cuming was a man who gave much to his community; he was a man who cared. Although I didn't know Charles Cuming personally, his history and reputation speak for itself. Mr. Cuming represented the constituency of Souris-Estevan from 1944 to 1948. I have the privilege today, Mr. Speaker, to represent part of Mr. Cuming's old riding.

Mr. Cuming was born and raised at Inchkeith, Saskatchewan, where he cultivated an interest in social change. This interest, Mr. Speaker, came while he attended business college in Calgary. In his own community, Mr. Speaker, was involved in agriculture and became an active member and a director of the United Farmers of Canada. Along with that, Mr. Speaker, his community interest involved the credit union system and he spent a number of years on the school board.

Mr. Cuming's strong interest in politics led him to become a member of the first CCF government in Saskatchewan and an active political worker for a great number of years. He further served his community as being appointed sheriff in the Estevan judicial district from 1948 until his retirement in 1965. He was a man who demonstrated through example the kind of life all of

us strive for — a life full of working and giving to others.

I'm certain that he will be sorely missed by his family and friends scattered throughout this province and across the country. On behalf of the official opposition, I would like to express our deepest sympathies for the Cuming family. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Leader of the Third Party, I join other members in this House as we pay tribute to a former member, Mr. Charles David Cuming, who served four years in this Assembly as a member from Souris-Estevan.

Mr. Cuming served in this legislature during a time in Saskatchewan's history when enormous challenges were faced by people and governments. His term covered those post-war years when optimism ran high for our province's future. That time must have been an exciting one for Mr. Cuming and his fellow members, but it was also a time of enormous adjustment as many service men and women came home from the war.

I came across a debate in an early edition of *Hansard* that took place on February 28, 1947 in which Mr. Cuming participated. In this debate he seconded a motion that called for more adequate housing. In the text of his remarks, Mr. Cuming said:

... our returned personnel, recently released from the Army, is seeking housing accommodation without any proper provision having been made for them . . . I would just point out that I think it's obvious to Members that in their home towns all across the province here at least, we see improvised housing being used by our returned personnel such as single rooms, one or two rooms in industrial or business sections, without proper sanitary conditions provided for, without proper garbage removal, lack of playgrounds for children . . .

Just two days ago in this Assembly we marked the 50th anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) Day, but today Mr. Cuming's remarks reinforce what the aftermath of war was here at home and the level of adjustment that was required before normal life could resume.

On behalf of the members of our caucus and the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, I extend my condolences to the family of the late Charles David Cuming: his wife Elaine of Regina; two daughters, Blanche Hopp and Zelda Nelson; three sons, Dale, Ron, and Douglas Cuming; and his 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

I want to express my gratitude and appreciation for the life and work of this former member, Mr. Charles David Cuming; for his service to our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to be able to add a few words to those of the other speakers in

memory of Charles Cuming.

I first met Charlie in the mid-'70s, when both he and I became active in a local constituency organization in the city of Regina. I was elected to president that year and Charles along with me was elected the treasurer. We were both rookies in our positions; the difference was that I was in my 20's and Charlie was in his mid-70's — but we were both rookies.

That didn't deter him though. I found out that at about the same time, that although he had never learned to swim, Charles started swimming lessons also in his mid-70's. That's the kind of person he was. He was an enthusiastic and hard worker. There's a rather difficult . . . a word that is very difficult to pronounce in the dictionary that I saw once, I think it's indefatigable, which best describes Charles. He's one that never tires.

I had lots to worry about that year as a rookie president of the constituency organization, but I didn't have to worry about the job that Charles was doing as the treasurer of the organization. He was competent, efficient, and thorough. I very much enjoyed working with him.

He was a man of principle. He truly, deeply cared about his community, his province, the world. He spoke out against injustice. He spoke out for cooperation, friendship, social justice. And I guess I'm not surprised, and neither is anyone else, that a person of his deep principles and deep commitment would become both active in the church and in politics, because he deeply cared about his world.

I moved out of the constituency but we stayed in touch after that time, Mr. Speaker. Charles always liked to stay current; he liked to talk about today and tomorrow, not much about the past. He always relished a new challenge. He liked being with people, but he didn't ignore his garden. He was a kind person, he always had a kind word for everyone.

In my estimation, Charles Cuming was an outstanding person. He enriched the lives of many who knew him and especially his family, and I will miss him. And I extend, along with the other speakers, my very sincere sympathy to Elaine and all the members of the Cuming family. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

(1445)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move, by leave of the Assembly, seconded by the hon. member from Souris-Cannington:

That the resolution just passed, together with the transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

with other public sector money purchase pension plans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We'll be converting both those to motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Questions 77 and 78, motions for return (debatable).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 65 — An Act to amend The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act, 1979 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act, 1979 (No. 2). These amendments respond to the unanticipated consequences of the new pay arrangements recommended by the McDowell committee.

If adopted by the Assembly, the new salary structure could result in dramatic increases in pension allowances for members participating in the defined benefit plan, ranging in increases from 32 to 43 per cent. Such increases, Mr. Speaker, are simply not acceptable.

The amendments proposed in this Bill will do the following: they will eliminate the Premier's allowance which was instituted during the Liberal administration of Ross Thatcher; they will cap the pension entitlement for all non-superannuated members of the defined benefit plan at 70 per cent of the best four-year average earnings. They provide that when the pension entitlement of a sitting member has reached the statutory maximum, the member is no longer required to make a contribution from which there would be no benefit, as is the case in policy for all other pension plans.

They will expand restrictions on double-dipping to include members of the House of Commons, members of the Canadian Senate, judges of any court, and any employment or service paid for by the Government of Canada or any other province or territory.

They will allow non-superannuated members of the defined benefit plan to transfer into the fully funded money purchase plan on a voluntary basis and allow members of the money purchase plan to transfer the monies credited to their account to a locked-in registered retirement savings plan, commonly known as a locked-in retirement account, when they cease to be members.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed with respect to the money purchase plan bring the plan more in line

The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act was enacted in its most recent form in 1979 with subsequent amendments. The legislation provides a defined benefit plan for members first elected prior to April 1, 1979 and a money purchase plan for members elected after April 1, 1979.

Under the defined benefit plan, members contribute 9 per cent of their earnings. The government pays each plan member a pension based on the member's salary and the years of service.

In the money purchase plan, the government and the member each pay a percentage of the member's annual salary into a fund. The member's pension is based on the accumulated contributions and investment earnings, and when the member reaches the age of 50 and ceases to be a member, he or she can buy a retirement annuity which then becomes the pension benefit paid to the member.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, these amendments will ensure that there are no unintended pension increases resulting from the recommendations of the McDowell committee. They will ensure that there is no opportunity for improper double-dipping and ensure that the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) pension allowances are fair and reasonable.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Amendment Act, 1979 (No. 2).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to make a few comments regarding the Bill before the Assembly, An Act to amend The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, one could ask if this is a last-minute repentance or what have you, or the fact that the government has responded to the wishes and the demands of the general public . . . certainly has responded to the questions that have been raised by the opposition members, by our caucus.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate and we can certainly see that the government has made some serious attempts to address this issue. I think as well, Mr. Speaker, the government has also indicated that they're only willing to go so far.

And maybe it would have been more appropriate to have a minister raise the Bill who isn't affected by the Bill directly, in the fact that the minister, the Provincial Secretary, is certainly one of the individuals whose salary would fall under this. And while most members of the House, or the Legislative Assembly here, are under another plan which won't even come close to what the . . . even the changes under the superannuation bring forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's certainly appropriate that this

legislation comes forward to the House. I believe there are two or three areas where we certainly would want to enter into some debate and some discussion. I think that discussion certainly can be handled quite comfortably in Committee of the Whole; in fact may give us more of an opportunity to raise the questions rather than just taking the time to debate them in the House without any responses from the members.

We as well would like to bring forward an amendment or two to address areas that we feel may not have been addressed as accurately as the general public would like to accommodate.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly not going to take a lot of time just to . . . holding up the Bill, but I want to indicate that I think it would be appropriate and much more important for us to take the time in committee to address the areas of concern that we may have with this Bill. And so therefore I thank you for the opportunity for just having a moment to bring up some points that we would be concerned with. Thank you.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 65 pertains to just several people. It pertains to the Premier, Deputy Premier, the member from Elphinstone, Regina Centre, Athabasca, the Speaker, and myself — seven current members.

I thought that maybe I should make some comments on this Bill because it was pertaining to myself, but I see that it doesn't affect the pensions of the member from Elphinstone and myself. So I thought, seeing that I'm neutral really, whichever way this Bill goes, whether it had been brought in or whether it was passed or not when it comes in or died on the order table if an election was called, doesn't affect me.

Bill 65 should not have been brought, I believe, Mr. Speaker, should not have been brought to this Assembly until after the next election or until the recommendations from the McDowell report or the commission have been studied and passed in its whole or part, and then we should have looked into the pension plans, how it affected.

There's too many assumptions being made, as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to sit and forecast that if something is going to happen, and if somebody's going to be re-elected, and if somebody's going to be elected so many years, what they're going to get. I don't think that this is nothing but perhaps playing a little politics on behalf of the opposition sides.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition parties, they've made the pension plan, as far as I'm concerned, a political issue. And I can see why they would do it because none of them have been elected too long, especially the leaders; they've only been here three and a half years. And I can see that it looks like a lot of money for somebody being here so long as somebody from 15 to 30 years.

I don't know whether . . . the Deputy Premier did explain quite well, but I'll just cover just a little bit more of what these defined benefit plans . . . and the money purchase plan.

When I was elected in 1978, Mr. Speaker, we were called in by the Clerk, Mr. Gordon Barnhart, to explain the two plans. I'm sorry, that was after March of 1979 when the new money purchase plan was made law. And we were given a choice, and some of our members chose the money purchase plan and some chose — most of them chose — to stay in the defined benefit plan.

But we were told if we were young and thought we could be lucky enough and fortunate enough to serve Saskatchewan people for a long term, that you'd be better to go to the money purchase plan, and which I think some of the members of the opposition don't understand yet. And they'd have to be elected like myself for 17 years. If the now Premier serves for 29 years until 19 . . . another four years, what it might do for them, that maybe under the new money purchase plan . . . And I don't think they understand just exactly how that works and I want add a little bit to what the Deputy Premier didn't say, or least I didn't hear him say.

Mr. Speaker, in the old plan, they took . . . When I came in here in '78, 9 per cent went off my cheques exactly the same as anybody on the new plan. But in the old benefit plan it was matched by a different figure up as high as 24.5 per cent depending when you're in cabinet, Legislative Secretary, or what your positions were. It was matched by . . . and it stopped there, and that's what you were paid on.

But they're not understanding in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, on the money purchase plan, money purchase plan, you paid in 9 per cent matched by the government for 9 per cent. But what they're not talking about is that money was invested and that money was invested in Saskatchewan in the markets. And through the early part of the '80s, when investment money was in the two-digit figures, there was a lot of money accumulated for the people in the money pension plan.

So who's to say if the members of the opposition here — and I'm one too of course, but I'll say the Conservative Party and the third party — if they happen to stay here for the next 15, 20 years, like many people have been, and longer, elected people, that maybe we might have two-digit investment money again and their plan could be more money than we're talking about in the old benefit plan. I don't think a lot of people understand that, and the media definitely never put that in the papers to get the people to understand.

(1500)

There's one thing that bothers me just a little bit, Mr. Speaker, especially from the member from Kindersley, the Leader of the PC (Progressive Conservative) Opposition. He wasn't always in favour, along with myself when I was in the PC caucus, of retroactive legislation. They had a fit along with myself when the government of the day changed the retroactive GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) plan, and they didn't like the judges' salary being changed and several other issues they felt that were retroactive.

But now that it's a political issue they seem to think it's fine to have retroactive legislation to affect four or five to eight members of this Assembly. And I think if that isn't absolutely nothing but . . . it's being hypocritical to go out at election time and say, here we are, we're going to want to change . . . just for political points, we want to have the four or five people's pension plans being affected when this is no way their fault that these pension plans got to be so high.

It was the McDowell commission that came in recommending something that hasn't happened yet. And you know, Mr. Speaker, we all know in this Assembly that after that recommendation is either passed in part or whole, then they would deal with it.

And I not very often stick up for what the government's said in this last 17 years, but in this case the Deputy Premier stood to his feet and says he realized something was wrong here and said he was going to deal with it. Why do we have to make an election issue of it and go this far?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to — I'm only going to be a few moments — and I'd just like to make a few comments about MLAs and their salaries and wages and pensions. It all works together. We are making mistakes out there, and the Leader of the Opposition is trying to say that they'll have no pensions after the next election and maybe we should be working for less; we should be cutting government down to eight cabinet ministers and all this. They're only trying to fool themselves because it will not work.

What we're going to do in this province, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a hard time to get a candidate to ever run for these offices if we don't pay them for their time. And that's what's happening out there.

All three parties at this very moment getting ready for this upcoming election are having a difficult time in finding candidates. And I can see why the Progressive Conservatives cannot . . . which I've always been a part of and always will be a part of, even . . . maybe not momentarily but I always will be. They can take my position away from me in the party, but they can't take my vote away from me.

And, Mr. Speaker, these people are not able to get candidates because, as I said, we're not going to have pensions. We're going to have to have less cabinet ministers. Less cabinet ministers and pensions — how ridiculous can we be? It means bringing in more people to help the cabinet ministers and just the same amount of money. They're only trying to fool the public.

I agree a little bit what the Reform member in Ottawa came out the last few days and said about pensions, that maybe we should drop the pensions. But then let's pay the MLA and MP (Member of Parliament) as if you were paying an executive type position, \$150,000 a year, which maybe he comes out with the same amount of money.

If you want to drop pensions in Saskatchewan, then for goodness' sake pay an MLA so you'll get the executive type, the executive type from the farm, the educated farmer, the educated businessman. He'll come in here in competition and fight to be a candidate. Don't have to have parties running around trying to dig them out: will you run for us? Will you run for us?

It's not right, and it's going to ruin Saskatchewan's politicians that the type of people who are going to be sitting in this Assembly . . . Because as far as I'm concerned, what we've had for many, many years is a few people that are absolutely dedicated — dedicated — that they want to go do something for their country, something for their province. They weren't worried about pensions. It didn't mean nothing to them.

I only know of two real dedicated people in my lifetime, and that's John Diefenbaker and Tommy Douglas. They believed — whether I believed in Tommy Douglas's philosophy or not — but they believed in what they believed in. They believed in their philosophy, and they were politicians.

And you got quite a few people that are well-to-do and they don't care about the salary: well I'll get a little glory out of running for an MLA or an MP regardless what I get for a pension. Then after that comes the people that can't even get a job: I'll go out and fast talk and get myself elected and see if I can grab a few easy dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I think our whole philosophy on trying to fool the people out there — that we have to get MLAs salaries so low we can't get them to run and we got to talk about no pensions . . . Because if everybody elected in this next upcoming election come in and said: we'll work for nothing for four years, zero, and take their deputy ministers and all their secretaries in this building, we'll work for zero — wouldn't put a dent in the deficit we got in this province what was created by the NDP and the PCs, all together.

No sense blaming it all on the Progressive Conservative because we're all to blame. We're all to blame. Everybody in this province to blame, but not on purpose, Mr. Speaker. They all thought they were doing the right thing.

I will feel very badly if a pension is taken away from my past premier, the member from Estevan. He was a premier for nine years. He worked hard; it will affect him for the rest of his life what he's had to go through for nine years. I watched Mr. Blakeney, I watched Tommy Douglas, I watched the now Premier now. It takes something out of their life. If Saskatchewan people can't pay them when we're through, well then Saskatchewan better start examining themselves.

And I ask the Progressive Conservative caucus to examine their hearts and say, why are we doing this? Don't play politics. And the member from Moosomin just made a statement that the change wouldn't even come close to being the same as the new plan, when these changes come in. How does he know? There's no way that he knows because he doesn't know the future of the investment money in this province of Saskatchewan. So they're

only guessing.

And I ask this man, which is a very honourable, decent man, to examine his heart and look out to what the people of Saskatchewan really need, and that is politicians that you're going to pay, and pay well.

And I'm going to close, Mr. Speaker, in one comment. And that's when we did . . . 1988 when we brought in the changes to salaries and pensions, and directive 4 was changed and we had increases; it hit the papers on a Friday and everybody was talking about these MLA pensions and salaries going high.

I walked the next morning into my local café and I heard one person say: there's Mr. Muirhead, he surely didn't vote for that. He surely wasn't in favour of this. And they said to me, Gerry, are you in favour of what you done yesterday? And I said, absolutely not. And they said, well we didn't think you would be. No, I said, I wish they had have made them double, double my salary. And if any of you people want my job, come and get it. And nobody came. Now the person that takes my place, I hope they come in here, and I hope somebody over the future pays them well for their service.

And I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time. And I believe what I'm saying. And in this case, if I happen not to be here when the vote comes — I expect to be — but I'll be voting with the government on this Bill, Bill 65, but I'm very open to look at any amendments that anybody brings in. And I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 61 — An Act respecting the University of Saskatchewan

The Chair: — Before we proceed to clause 1, I would ask the Minister of Education to please introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. To my immediate right is Dan Perrins, the deputy minister of Education, Training and Employment; behind Mr. Perrins is Lily Stonehouse, assistant deputy minister on the post-secondary side; immediately behind me is Jim Tomkins who is a senior policy analyst on the post-secondary side of the department.

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Madam Minister, and officials. It seems I get to see your officials almost as much as you do with these Bills.

Madam Minister, I was wondering if you could tell us, please,

who you consulted with in dealing with this Bill. It's my understanding that the university had a great deal of input into this and in all likelihood made the suggestions for coming forward to this Bill.

So I'm just wondering, just who did you consult with in that context? Was it both universities? Was it all the various governing bodies? And who else might you have consulted with?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We consulted with the board of governors of the University of Saskatchewan, the senate of the University of Saskatchewan, the administrative management council, which would be the administrators at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), the faculty association, the students' union. As well, we had discussions with the University of Regina senior administration. Because in the past the U of S and the U of R (University of Regina) Acts have basically reflected each other, and this is a departure from that. The University of Saskatchewan has a different piece of legislation now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. With your consultations, what kind of a response did you get back from the various bodies you talked with? Were they in agreement with this particular piece of legislation? Were they recommending some changes, or were they opposed to it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We had a strong endorsement of the notion of a representative council. The only concern that we heard came from the faculty association and it emanated around two issues: the issue of the impact that a representative council would have on their collective agreement when it came to the interpretation of that collective agreement; and the second issue was on the powers of the board of governors in that the board of governors would be able, due to financial exigency reasons, disestablish a college, a department, a chair, a program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'll get into both of those particular issues after a bit.

This whole governance system within the university seems to be a fairly complex system with four different bodies being involved. Why is it necessary to have those four bodies? And couldn't the governance of the university be somewhat more streamlined?

(1515)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — First of all, let me say that this piece of legislation essentially emanated from the University of Saskatchewan. It had gone through all of the internal processes of the university, been endorsed by the board of governors, endorsed by the faculty council, by the administrative structure; the students' union is supportive of this legislation, as is the senate.

Basically there will be . . . there are two governing bodies. The board of governors will have jurisdiction over financial

exigency matters, financial matters, and the representative council will have decision making over academic matters.

The senate and the general council will be sober second thought when it comes to some of the recommendations of the board of governors and the representative council.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. This sober second thought, what kind of an impact, what kind of powers, will they have to be able to influence the financial questions or the academic questions? Do they have any real levers or hammers in which to either slow down or speed up some of the processes?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The general academic assembly, which consists of all of the faculty and some student representation, would be able to, on the basis of some decisions of the representative council, could suspend the decision-making process for awhile. And they also, on the basis of some actions of the representative council, they could recall the representative council members.

In terms of the senate, the senate would also be able to delay the implementation of some recommendations of the representative council.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. It sounds like the Senate in Ottawa. They can slow things down but can't really do anything about it.

Madam Minister, I wonder if you could give me some idea of the dollars that would go into, not into the programming that would be administered by the various bodies, but rather into the administrative costs of each of those bodies.

I'm curious to find out just how much money would be spent on some of these sounding boards — the two sounding board governance bodies as compared to the administrative and the academic — to get a feel of just how much money we're spending on this.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You're asking me a question that the University of Saskatchewan will have some knowledge of. As you may know, the province of Saskatchewan has given the universities unconditional grants, and through their own internal decision making they make the appropriate decisions. So we do not have that information here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, that disappoints me because if we're going to provide legislation to provide these governance bodies, I think we should also have a little more information on what they do and what it costs us to gain that action.

If they're simply there as sounding boards and we're spending a significant amount of money on them, perhaps there's some other way that that could be done. If all they can do is slow down the process, maybe some brakes need to be put into place in the other two bodies — the academic side and the finance

side — to provide some opportunities there to slow the process down to allow some input from either the faculty or the students.

I'm not sure that we need two other bodies that are going to spend a significant amount of money. And I don't know if it's a significant amount of money because you can't give me the information on that. I think it's important that we should have some idea what these two particular bodies are going to cost us, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We will get that information for you as to the cost of the senate. I'm advised that it costs about \$30,000 for the senate. The representative council, I presume . . . as committee making is now done on campus, people participate in those committees as part of their academic functions. So I don't anticipate that there'll be any incremental costs whatsoever. But the representative council's purpose is to have a more consistent involvement of faculty members, through their representatives to the council, on various academic decision making. It does not mean that the faculty is going to be paid additional dollars. They're not. This is all part of their normal function on the University of Saskatchewan campus.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Madam Minister, if they're doing this after hours I have no complaint. If they're doing it during work hours, then perhaps we need to look at how the money is being spent on this.

When we look at the previous Bill, the previous constitution for the Saskatchewan university, what was failing in that particular legislation or that governance structure that needed to be rectified and changed?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The faculty council, as it presently exists before the introduction and proclamation of this Bill, amounts to over 1,000 people being members of the faculty council. The faculty council presently only meets twice a year. There have been occasions when the faculty council could not proceed with its work because they did not have a quorum.

The whole purpose behind a representative council is to have elected people meet on a more regular basis. And I'm being advised by the university that it's their intention to meet at least 10 times a year so that more work can be done on campus to deal with academic decision making.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well let's say that the board wants to shut down a group of studies or a chair or a college or whatever it might be. How would they go about doing that? How would the decision-making process work through this governance structure that you're proposing today?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It would depend on the reason, so you'd have to give me the reason before I could respond to how it would work.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I believe that there was some

discussion, Madam Minister, at one time — and I'm not sure it happened — about the closure of the school of dentistry. So let's use that as an example because it's a high-cost college and graduates a very few students, and perhaps we could better deal with those monies by having those students go out of province to a larger college. So let's have that as the example.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We'll use your example. If, because of financial reasons, the University of Saskatchewan board of governors was put in a position where it had to disestablish a department or a college, they could disestablish that college, but they would have to consult with council before the final decision was made.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well, Madam Minister, I wonder if you could explain to me, not just in terms of the powers of the boards — what the different segments do — but what kind of a role they play within the university when it comes to a political and a social role. I'm talking small "p" political. Within the university structure, what kind of a role the four different bodies would play.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. I'll give you an example of the senate. The senate will focus on, in this new legislation, on external matters. It will approve honorary degrees. It will have suspensive veto and dissolution of departments, colleges, or federation affiliation agreements, and changes to admission requirements or admission quotas. It will receive proposals and provide advice — for example, addition or closure of academic units, federation or affiliation agreements. And it's responsible for the student discipline related to non-academic matters.

The council, the council will have the power to authorize all degrees from the University of Saskatchewan; grant scholarships and prizes; authorize the establishment or disestablishment of academic units, chairs, institutes or affiliation federation agreements; determine student appeals on academic matters; review physical and budgetary plans; and give advice to the president. And it will set the academic timetable for each year. It will prescribe admission standards, set admission quotas, and discipline students for academic reasons.

The board of governors will be able to manage, administer, and control university property, revenues, business affairs. And there is no significant change to the powers of the board of governors in relationship to this new Act, other than the new Act explicitly empowers the board of governors to dissolve academic units and federation and affiliation agreements under some circumstances, and those circumstances are for financial exigency reasons.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to go back to the example we used earlier. I went off on this question because my colleague was talking to me and I wanted to carry on on the previous example. What would happen in the circumstance where the board, because of financial reasons, decided to shut down a college? And let's say the senate was to veto that. What would happen in that process then? Can you

end with a circumstance where the college still exists but the board will not fund it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The answer to your specific question is yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you; that was an unexpected answer. I had not expected that you could have a college still operating at the university but receiving no funds. So I have to ask you, why is that permitted? Why do you have that within the Bill; that if you're going to have a college there surely it must provide some service, or why is it retained on the roll of course of studies that would be available at that university?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, the creation of an academic unit or department or college or a program takes some time to go through all of the proper processes to have that particular program, department, college, developed. And so one does not want to disestablish a college, a department, a program, a chair, without considering some of the implications.

As you know, the federal government is in the process of downloading onto the provinces a considerable amount of money and programming through the federal transfers and changes to EPF (established programs financing), post-secondary EPF, health, and CAP (Canada Assistance Plan). And that has some terrific implications for the province of Saskatchewan.

(1530)

We do not yet know what the federal Liberals are going to send us for the fiscal year 1996-97. And this prospect that's emanating from the federal Liberals has some tremendous potential impacts on the province of Saskatchewan.

So we want to ensure that the board of governors of the University of Saskatchewan has, for the financial exigency or financial emergency reasons, the power and authority to deal with what could be coming down the pike. And that is why there the board of governors has been given the very limited power of being able to disestablish a program, a college, a chair, a department — because we don't know what's coming, and they would only be able to do that for emergency reasons or if the general . . . or if the representative council recommended to them that a college, a department, a chair, be disestablished for academic reasons.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Well let's say that three of the bodies have approved the disbandment or discontinuance of a particular course or chair or whatever, but one of the groups — the assembly or the senate — vetoes it. So you end up with a situation where the board may not fund it, so you have no capacity then to maintain staff.

Your educators are gone, your staff is gone, your equipment is gone because somebody else is now using it. Your space within the university is gone because I'm sure that building space is never left empty at the universities. Somebody is in there using

it for something within one of the other colleges. So while you have the name of that college or that chair still in place, it has nothing else happening. So you've lost all that corporate memory.

You talked about that it takes a long time to get a program up and running. Well if everything is gone but the name, it's going to take just as long to get that up and running the next time, because you have to go through the whole process of staff and equipment and space, as it would if there was no name there. The only change would be the College of Dentistry or no College of Dentistry, and we'll start a new College of Dentistry tomorrow.

So I don't understand why they would be allowed to discontinue the function of the college and the funding while carrying on the name simply because you stated that it takes awhile to get it up and going.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Under the old Act, at the University of Saskatchewan there's a program called far eastern studies. It is there in name only. It doesn't have staff attached to it. It doesn't have a program attached to it. My understanding is that far eastern studies, for financial reasons and other reasons, was disestablished.

Under the new Act, the board of governors at the University of Saskatchewan will be able to disestablish a program for financial reasons. So we shouldn't have to go through this, I guess, bit of a shadow boxing to have a department there in name only because you didn't have the authority to disestablish it for financial exigency reasons. Under the new Act we shouldn't have this problem.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well can either the senate or the assembly prevent the discontinuance of a college though?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The general assembly, the faculty council, and the senate cannot prevent the disestablishment of a program when the board of governors makes that decision for financial exigency reasons, meaning a financial emergency.

So they do not have suspensive powers when it comes to a financial emergency.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When I asked you, with the consultation and who had problems with this particular Bill, you talked about the faculty and the collective agreement that's in place. I'm sure you received a copy of this fax today also, Madam Minister — your name is on the list — from the faculty association. I'm wondering how you're going to respond to this.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Let me say this about the concerns of the faculty association. The Government of Saskatchewan has had a couple, maybe even three — I can't quite recall the exact numbers — legal opinions, legal advice indicating that under the collective agreement, even though the definition of council has changed to representative council, that for the purposes of

the collective agreement that the procedural rights of that collective agreement are intact, that if the purpose of this legislation was to override the provisions of the collective agreement, the legislation would have to be very clear and specifically state that this Act takes precedence over the collective agreement.

That is not the legal advice we have gotten from the Department of Justice. We have been told very clearly that the faculty association's collective agreement's procedural rights are still intact, and that The University of Saskatchewan Act cannot be used to override the procedural rights as contained in the faculty's collective agreement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I think I have expressed to you before my concern over the legal opinions that are provided to your government on other matters, and I can understand why the faculty association has some concerns about those legal opinions.

I'm wondering then, if nothing is being changed by this Act in regards to the collective agreement, what are the real concerns then of the faculty association? They state in the letter that all that is required is a clarification that the new general assembly inherit the negotiated powers of the old council in the collective agreement. What is the problem there, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'd just like to state that, because of the concerns of the faculty association, that I have had discussions with the president of the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Ivany. And he has put in writing to me that he is prepared to negotiate the concerns that the faculty association have.

I just want to reiterate that it is true that the faculty association has expressed concern that the amendments would legislatively change their collective agreement. I have sought legal opinions. I have sought advice from outside of government. And I can say with some certainty that I have been advised that this new Act does not override the collective agreement, that the new Act would not affect in any way the substantive and procedural rights of the individual faculty.

So in other words, I've been told that the University of Saskatchewan administration and the faculty association must abide by the terms of the collective agreement, and any changes to that collective agreement would have to be negotiated.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I only have a few more questions for you.

I have some questions concerning the elections to the senate. Under the Bill, you're going to have 14 elected from the alumni — I believe it is — from different regions or zones around the province. You're also having another 14 that are going to be elected at large. Will these elections all be held at the same time?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that that's the intention.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Why was this change necessary? Why are you now bringing in the at-large group?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that this is what the senate wanted. They wanted to have more representatives from across the province and that they wanted them to participate regardless of where they lived. As you know, graduates don't necessarily live in Saskatoon or Regina, and it was their hope that they could have people on senate who came from outside of those two large areas.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. With those comments I'm not sure if you're referring to the 14 elected in the electoral districts or the 14 at large. I would hope that the 14 electoral districts would not somehow all funnel into the two main cities so that someone in the two main cities could represent all of the 14 electoral areas. Now perhaps you can clarify that, Madam Minister.

Who will be . . . okay, they'll be elected at large, but what kind of requirements will there be on those particular 14 at large? And do the electoral districts in some manner or function incorporate the two main cities into a number of those electoral districts?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, I'm advised that there are 14 districts right now. And the Act will give them the authority to change those districts, but it's not anticipated that they will. And when we talk about people at large, we're talking about alumni being able to run for senate whether they live in Saskatchewan or not. It would be any graduate of the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. When these elections are held, who pays for them? Does the university sponsor it, or does some other body pay for those elections?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The University of Saskatchewan does.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well with the explanation as to the powers of the senate and the assembly, I really question whether the taxpayer should perhaps be paying for these elections. I'm not sure that the taxpayer is getting a significant benefit from those bodies to warrant all the expenses. And perhaps they are; I'm just not sure if they are.

Madam Minister, another issue that I want to bring up is the expropriation powers under section 83. To what does that expropriation power apply?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that this has always been in the Act, and it's just a continuation of the power under the old legislation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. It seems like a fairly broad power, and I was concerned as to whether or not they were going to be expropriating lands or other

properties. So if it has been there before, they seem to be using it responsibly. Thank you.

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Madam Minister, I'm pleased today to hear some of the reassurances you've given relative to the faculty agreement because I've received some strong expressions of concern from faculty at the university in this regard. And so I just want to confirm that you have opinions from the Department of Justice, and you have additional legal opinions outside of the Department of Justice, and you have other advice, you said, from outside government that says that there's nothing in this University of Saskatchewan Act that can override the collective agreement. I just want to be very, very clear on that point.

(1545)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Mr. Koenker: — Well if that's the case, then I think I'd like to request that you spend some time and emotional energy with your department sharing this information with people in the faculty association such that they can disseminate this because it's obviously a big concern. And if there's misunderstanding on this score, the communication needs to restore understanding of exactly what is allowed and what is disallowed.

So with that assurance, I will leave this issue if I can be assured that there could be communication on this point.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can assure you that I have spent a great deal of time on this issue because I wanted to be very sure that the legislation was not going to override the faculty association's collective agreement. As you know, our government supports the free-collective bargaining process, and we do not support the notion of legislatively amending collective agreements.

So we spent a great deal of time and effort discussing this issue with people from Justice and others. As well, we have spent some time consulting with the faculty association. We met with their lawyer as well. They have a bit of a different opinion, but I am satisfied that this Act does not override the collective agreement. And I am satisfied that the substantive and procedural rights contained in that collective agreement are still intact. And I am satisfied that the University of Saskatchewan president, in writing, has indicated that it is his intentions to negotiate any changes. So changes could only come about if they were negotiated through the collective bargaining process.

Mr. Koenker: — Well I very much appreciate, as I've said, those expressions of your satisfaction with the process.

And the only point I would make again though is that that be communicated with people on the University of Saskatchewan campus. If it has been communicated in the past, the communication seems to have broken down, and maybe some of the transcripts of this procedure today need to be shared with those people.

I just want to move on very briefly, Madam Minister, to basically one other concern, and that is representation on the board of governors. I have received correspondence on this matter from the graduate students' association at the U of S who basically express their concern that it's simply not adequate any more in this day and age that the president of the students' union be the student representative, especially when the graduate students in 1992 voted to disassociate themselves from the USSU (University of Saskatchewan Students' Union) at the U of S.

So they make the case that they have some 2,000 graduate students who have a very distinct relationship to the academic process in the university community, distinct as apart from that of undergraduate students, and they had requested that they would have representation through this Act on the board of governors. And I'm wondering why they don't have representation. If you could comment on that. Maybe . . . I'll just leave you with that part; that's part 1 of my question.

And a related issue pertains to representation from CUPE on the University of Saskatchewan campus. It's long been a concern of CUPE members, Canadian Union of Public Employees, that they might have representation on the board of governors.

And I think this also makes some reasonable sense in my estimation in as much as the powers or responsibilities of the board as indicated in clause 48 have to do with the management, administrative, fiscal, property, revenue kinds of concerns on campus. And I personally have heard a number of stories of governance at the university, where it seems to me if CUPE representation might have been on the board of governors, they might have been able to interject some very valuable fiscal material perspectives into the mix of governance of the university.

And I think the university is the lesser for not having CUPE representation on the board, and I'm wondering if you could comment then. And that is the second part of my concern in terms of full representation from the university community — both graduate students and CUPE representation.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I want to thank you for the question because it's certainly a question that I've been asked on many occasions. As you know, when our government was elected in 1991, we moved very quickly to do a couple of things.

We now have working people represented on our various boards of Crown corporations, and we also have people who work at SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), both faculty and support staff, represented on the board of governors of SIAST.

The University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina are somewhat different in that historically government has been at arm's length from those two institutions, and this is not unlike what happens across the rest of Canada where universities tend to be autonomous institutions. Governments

give them the appropriate funding, and then they self-administer themselves with very little input from the province.

I certainly would welcome any suggestion for an amendment from the board of governors of the University of Saskatchewan or from the administration or through the new representative council to a change to the structure of the board of governors. But I think that that change would have to come forward from the University of Saskatchewan because we've tended to have this arm's length institution, and this legislation has been generated internally. So I would certainly suggest to the grad students and the CUPE members of both the support staff and the sessional lecturers that the government would welcome an amendment if the board of governors wanted to have the legislation amended or if the administration or faculty did. So I would welcome that amendment at some later date.

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for that explanation. That's helpful information to have. I just think I . . . I'd like to conclude by saying on balance I think I simply don't agree with the argument that the government maintain an arm's length distance from the university in this instance. I think when it comes to the very governance of the university, I think that in this day and age I would feel comfortable as a legislator proposing that representation should be there for example, from CUPE membership. I'm not going to open that whole can of worms today.

I respect that the University of Saskatchewan, through its own processes, has brought this legislation to government and consulted with you on it. I would just want to state for the record that I don't agree with the legislation on this point, both in terms of the graduate students and the CUPE membership. And having said that, I am prepared to defer to other members in the House.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Just to respond to the member's comments, I would say this, that in this day and age it's not unusual for very large corporations the size of the University of Saskatchewan to have representatives of working people from inside the institution. That's not unusual. We're doing it in our Crown corporations, and we're doing it at SIAST. And I think in terms of quality of working-life issues and the new mode of management style that it is appropriate to have working people on boards of governors of universities.

I would strongly encourage that the working people on campus at the U of S and the sessional lecturers and the grad students work with their university administration and faculty and board of governors. And if they can develop a consensus, we'd certainly welcome an amendment to the University of Saskatchewan Act which would change the composition of the board of governors.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given that my colleagues have ably asked the questions that I was prepared to ask on behalf of the faculty association, the graduate students' association — and I believe quite adequate answers have been

given — I would like to thank the officials for their assistance in this.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 108 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1600)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 61 — An Act respecting the University of Saskatchewan

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

The Chair: — Before we proceed to the first item, I would like to ask the minister to please reintroduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To my right, Conrad Hnatiuk, deputy minister. Behind Con, Neil Yeates, the associate deputy minister. Just to the right of Neil, Phil Walsh, the director of income support. And behind me, Bob Wihlidal, the director of the budget branch.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, the last time we spoke in this Assembly, I raised the question . . . you had indicated that my colleague before . . . that comes from a Dalmeny resident, had asked the questions, and all of them had been answered.

We've done some research, and obviously either all the questions weren't asked, or all of the questions weren't answered. But I know one or two of the questions were. So I want to bring these questions to your attention to make sure we've got this file completed and closed before we move away from it.

The questions are, does a welfare recipient have to sign any kind of form when they request a move? And how do they get a move authorized?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — As clients, like anyone else, can move on their own if they decide to. If they — and some do — if they decide that they need some additional assistance to do so, they

request a form that they have to fill out stating the reasons and cost and so on. And that would need to be approved usually, depending on the amount, by a supervisor.

Mr. Toth: — I guess, Mr. Minister, the fact that no one . . . Or the recipient really isn't accountable and doesn't have to answer to Social Services. The question that arises is, who then is left with the responsibility of paying the bill?

Normally, a tenant would give a 30-day notice that they're leaving. But in many cases — and that's where this question is coming from — a tenant just moves out, and what happens to the landlord? Who does the landlord go after for the payment of rent, especially if there's not only rent that is owing but the fact that there's that 30-day notice for rent recovery as well? Who's responsible for that?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well clients are responsible. Whether they are high-income earners or low-income earners or people on assistance, clients are always responsible for their own lease, if they're renting, and their own requirements around their shelter. So it wouldn't be correct to say that clients aren't accountable. That just wouldn't be a fair statement.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, what does a landlord do then if a client of Social Services does leave a residence and moves to another residence? Does Social Services then cover the cost of that rent that was still owing?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well again it's really the client's responsibility to look after their own shelter needs. They get an allowance to do that. People make their own arrangements; we don't make arrangements for people. Just because they're poor, they don't need the government making their plans and arrangements for them.

If they move without giving due notice, then landlords can do what landlords have the opportunity to do, and that is to go to the Rentalsman's office. And so those are the opportunities available to them.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, how many times must a social assistance recipient misspend funds before being put on a trusteeship? And I wonder if you could give us the regulations regarding that.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Basically again the starting point is that just because you're poor doesn't mean you can't manage your money. So basically people are given their money to manage it, and the vast, vast, vast majority do.

It is an option available. If someone demonstrates that they can't manage, for whatever reason, then trusteeship services are possible and available. And there are some clients on trusteeship services.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, what is the format that would be followed for a client to be put on trusteeship services?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well there's no specific criteria. It's based on the ability or inability of the client to manage their money. And the caseworker would know that, based on the experience of that particular individual on social assistance. And as well there's always the right to appeal any decisions that we make.

Mr. Toth: — I guess the reason I'm asking that and the reason we're bringing these questions of Ms. Attwater forward . . . and it's certainly another question that came up . . . is the fact of a person moving without notice. And if there's bills left regarding utilities from the town, who's responsible? And I would take it from your previous answer that the tenant would probably be responsible for that as well. Ms. Attwater actually requested that a previous tenant be put on trusteeship. The department disagreed. And as a result, he has moved without notice and owes money for bills.

Mr. Minister, do you not agree that a trusteeship would have been the answer in this particular situation? I don't have all the details, but it appears to me it's been something that was ongoing. And there had been problems arose before, and that's why Ms. Attwater had called for this. Is this a way of maybe protecting landowners from tenants who would move, especially tenants that may be under the auspices of social assistance?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well we'd really have to review the case to answer that question. I really am probably missing some information. But I think I've answered as fully as I can.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I'll take the time to send you over the name of the individual and ask if your department would at least follow up and follow up with Ms. Attwater regarding this, if you don't mind, please.

While this is coming across . . . also can an individual's GST (goods and services tax) be garnished for money that is owing in rent?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well we don't do any garnishees. We just don't have that authority. But the landlord can apply to the courts on that instance, just like with anybody else.

Mr. Toth: — Finally — and this is the last of the questions that were brought to our attention by Ms. Attwater — do social assistance recipients receive extra funds to get their driver's licence renewed, or does this money have to come out of their daily living allowances?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — It comes out of their daily living allowance. We do not pay for the renewals.

Mr. Toth: — A question regarding foster parents. Could you briefly outline how the department chooses foster parents, more specifically — and I'm going to give you five instead of just getting up and down — what is the recruitment process; how are potential candidates screened; what kind of training do they take; how intensive is the training; and what happens when a

complaint is made against a foster parent? Are the children removed from the home? And has this process changed at all over the last three years? Maybe I should pass you the list of questions over.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — We made note of your questions. If it's okay with you, we will . . . We have a manual that outlines all of those; it's not very lengthy. We'd be very happy to . . . That's all in writing; it's part of our package. We'd be very happy to send that over to you, if that's okay?

Mr. Toth: — Sure, I'd appreciate that, Mr. Minister, and thank you.

A couple questions regarding the North Battleford Youth Centre. How many incidents have been reported at the North Battleford Youth Centre in the last fiscal year? And I wonder if you could provide me with the incident and the date on which the incident occurred. I'm referring to escapes, assaults, and drug or alcohol abuse, and any other complaints about staff members.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we have all of that information. We don't have it just at our fingertips here. We'd be very happy to send that over to you, if that's okay.

(1615)

Mr. Toth: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Minister. And would you also include the incidents for the '93-94 fiscal year and '92-93 fiscal year at the same time, if you don't mind, please? And I'll just go on to another question. What changes have been made to prevent these incidents from happening?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — On your first question, the '93-94 information, we'll provide you with that as well.

You recall that we had the Jackson Review, the major review of the North Battleford Youth Centre, a couple of years ago, and we have recently completed a progress report on that. We've implemented virtually all of the Jackson recommendations to strengthen the centre. And we also have just received some feedback from the Ombudsman's office, who has done their own review, and the feedback is very positive about the steps we've taken.

And we can send that all over to you if you like, because it's fairly detailed. And I actually did send some of that to the official critic, but we can supplement that.

Mr. Toth: — I have about four questions here, Mr. Minister, that maybe could be handled in the same manner. Rather than taking the time to respond to each individual separately, you might be able to send us the information following this in written form.

Can you provide us with the staff listing at the centre that notes the positions and education?

Do staff positions require mandatory levels of training and education?

Have you received any complaints about staff promotions or lack of qualifications?

How many other youth facilities are in Saskatchewan? And please provide us with a list of closed and open custody facilities and information on escapes or any other incidents that have occurred. And I would like this information to compare it with other years.

And at the same time, we'd like to use this information in comparing how the North Battleford Youth Centre is holding up compared to other facilities.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we'll . . . If you'll provide us with those, to make sure we have all your questions, we'll send that information over.

Mr. Toth: — Yes, I will. There's about three more. And maybe if I just read them into the record and then I'll send them across to you and you'll have them.

Do all of these facilities have the same programming available to the young offenders?

What sort of programming is available at the various centres? For example, are they required to take classes or participate in counselling or drug and alcohol abuse sessions, anything of that nature?

Could you tell us what an average day is like at a closed facility in Saskatchewan. What time do the incarcerated arise? What duties they perform. Do they work? Do they take classes?

And I'd also like the information on the population at the open and closed facilities. I would appreciate this broken down by age.

Now if you could agree to provide this, we'll just send it across and await your response.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we keep regular reports on all the questions you raise. The answer is yes to all those questions. But we'll send over the details so that you can study it and ask for clarification or share your ideas if you so wish.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Regarding young offenders in the school system, when young offenders are released from custody or are in open custody and attending schools, are the teachers and principals, or at the very least, school boards, informed that the individual's an offender, or would this violate the law?

And also, how are teachers and students protected from violent, repeat offenders? Representatives from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation have mentioned that this is an area of concern. What does the government plan on doing to protect

our school system and those within the system from violent offenders?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, right now it really is the court's decision if it's an open custody situation where the court decides it is safe for that young person to be in the school. That decision is made by the courts.

With regard to the question of sharing of information, we share the concern that you raise. And as you know, the Young Offenders Act amendments are before the House of Commons right now. We share the notion of, on a case-planning basis, there needs to be more opportunity to share that information with the schools.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess one question I would ask before I leave that area is, were you or any of your officials asked for some input regarding the legislation that is before the federal House, in view of your experiences here in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we've had input and contact. In fact the Minister of Justice and myself wrote a joint letter to the minister federally and to the joint committee that's pursuing the . . . yes, the joint senate committee, sorry, that is reviewing the Act.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, a couple of questions arriving out of the globals. I notice under government department agency report, personnel report, last year you had two contracts for a total \$8,505. This year I notice there's three contracts for \$95,938. I wonder if you could explain what these contracts were for, who they were for, and why we have an increase of more than 10 times the last year's expenditure.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Could I just clarify, you're talking about employees on contract, are you?

Mr. Toth: — It's under the personnel report, general department agency report, personnel report no. 1, I guess it's marked.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Those are for employees, I understand, short-term contracts. We don't have the detail of those but we could provide you with the names and the detailed description of those duties, if that's acceptable to you?

Mr. Toth: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. Under the personnel report no. 3, I notice that compared to last year — there were 28 reclassifications — and conversions were up to 114 this year.

Could you give us some details on the difference that took place from last year to this year, from 28 to 114? What would that involve?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — These were new positions that had to be classified and the three areas that we required new positions in related to, first of all, federal offloading on the social assistance

program, to administer that, those increased case-loads due to that; the increased youth and young offenders program requirements; and the audit verification program.

Mr. Toth: — Last year, Mr. Minister, you gave us a very extensive list of manuals that your department had put out. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could just give or send over or inform us of any additions or deletions of manuals that you published as compared to last year.

In the case of additions, what was the purpose, the audience, and the cost of the publication and whether it has been registered with the Legislative Library.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — There were no new manuals over the last year. There were some adjustments and updating and so on and we can provide you with those adjustments if that's okay.

Mr. Toth: — Okay. I noticed in your advertising, under advertising and communications, Westcan media monitoring of sixty-two twenty-seven. What is the purpose of Westcan media monitoring?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — We don't have that information with us. We'll have to check and get back to you on that.

Mr. Toth: — I guess the real question we have is what do you really mean? Who are you monitoring, or why are you monitoring the media? And that's what I'm trying to figure out, why we've got this expenditure.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Okay. It's actually the media clipping services from the daily newspapers across the province that we get, and on social service issues.

Mr. Toth: — I had a feeling that's what it may be, but just the way it's worded it's almost: are you trying to figure out what the media are going to say next? It's an interesting challenge.

Another issue under advertising — and I find it very interesting, Mr. Minister. Phoenix Advertising Group, last year received \$36,727. This year we see they have increased to \$64,692. I wonder if you could explain the reasons for the increase. And would it be . . . one of the reasons be that it's just a matter of trying to get the message out before another provincial election?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That is all staff, and related to those positions I talked about in your earlier questions. It's all related to the staffing advertising.

Mr. Toth: — One final question before I allow other members to speak out on this or ask questions that they may have. Last year you had a total of 25.19 on ministerial greeting cards and thank you cards in your budget. This year I noticed it's up to \$530.83 on ministerial Christmas cards. I wonder why we've had such a dramatic increase and why you . . . \$25 seemed appropriate one year, now we're up to 530. Could you explain that please?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I would think this is because the first year I was minister I just became appointed, and I think I sent out a lot of Christmas cards over this past Christmas, and it relates to that.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying, it's cards that were directly sent from the minister's office. Who would the cards go to? And are they just generally to workers or people involved in Social Services? Or who would you send those types of cards to — constituents?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — No these would be — there'd be no constituents from the ministerial office — these would be provincial associations, agencies, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), those who in a sense are sort of partners around the province in terms of providing Social Service's programs and services.

(1630)

Mr. Toth: — One further question regarding polling. As I understood it, you undertook a poll this year on public opinion on the child action plan. I wonder if you could summarize for us the results of that poll.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — We really don't do any polling except that we did the one question there where it related to testing the level of public awareness of the child action plan. At the time we did that, which was some time ago now, we found out that about 12 per cent of the public was aware of the plan. So that's what that is.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Minister, to your officials. And I wonder, before I start, if we might have assurance that all the information that you will be sending over to the opposition would also be sent to us.

Could you outline the department's responsibility in relation to the youth detention centres and in the disposition of young offender sentences?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — With regard to the information requested, we will send that to you.

As you know, the Young Offenders Act is really a federal legislation and we administer that Act. We basically . . . the sentences are determined, as you know, by the courts — closed custody, open custody, service, or probation — or through the police prior to that process. There may be alternative measures worked out, is another disposition.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, can you tell me somewhat of the process of the determination and cooperation with the Department of Justice, or whoever you cooperate with, in how these decisions are made on closed, open, or alternative measures, and what sort of alternative measures are available?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, as you know, I'm sure that the court makes the decision as to one of these dispositions based on the

information presented to them by the police. And of course, we are sometimes asked for a pre-sentence report in terms of our judgement here. But based really on the arguments of the Crown and the defence, the court then makes a decision.

There are many, many alternative measures. We'd be happy to send you over a list of those. But the recent victims' program in Regina here, administered through the Friendship Inn, with the police and Social Services and a number of other partners . . . The shoplift program for young people who might be involved in shoplifting . . . And there are a number of community service order type things where you try and bring the young person in touch with the person that's been victimized, and many variations of that.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. In terms of the pre-sentencing report, what information do you work from? How is that pre-sentencing report put together and presented?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, the worker . . . Basically it involves developing an assessment of the situation the young person is in — a profile, if you will — based on interviews with the young person, the family, the school, the police, collateral agencies if there's some involvement there, to try and get the best . . . to try and sort of capture what the real needs are in a situation and what, I guess, the problems are and sort of what . . . (inaudible) . . . recommendation as well in terms of disposition. Yes.

Mrs. Bergman: — So as you say, you make a recommendation for the disposition. Now is this the disposition whether it be closed, open, or alternative?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Right, you're right there, but I forget to mention that we just give them, you know, an informed, an educated opinion from this collection and this assessment, that at the end of the process, as you know, the court still makes the decision.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. Can you please tell me, what is the current provincial population of young offenders in custody, whether open or closed or in remand?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Three hundred and fifty-five in total.

Mrs. Bergman: — How many would be open, and how many would be closed, and how many would be in remand?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, 140 in open custody, 167 in secure custody, and 48 on remand. Now those are the December figures.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. In terms of the institutions, could you tell me how many spaces each of these institutions was designed to meet the needs of . . . or to serve?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — The total number of spaces they were designed to accommodate were 310.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. And that is a problem I'd like to address. I've been told by staff members that the most urgent priority in the institutions, given the excess numbers according to what they were designed to provide program to and to provide facility for, is, to quote them directly . . . the quote is: the point is to reduce the case-load.

At least that's the feeling of many staff members I've talked to. I've visited two of the institutions. Does this accurately reflect the situation at these institutions?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — We are trying to reduce the case-load. But we're sorry; could you just give a clearer picture of the question? We're not sure we understood.

Mrs. Bergman: — Certainly. I've visited at least two of the institutions, and I've also talked to staff outside their work time. And they said that the most urgent priority, it seems to them, is to reduce the case-load in whatever way possible, given the overload of these institutions. And that's a fairly strong feeling. Does that accurately reflect the situation?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I would agree with you and the staff that this is a challenge that we're trying to address. And on that note, the staff have done an incredible job in a very challenging situation.

As you would know, I'm sure there's a similar . . . the numbers are similar across Canada as we struggle to not only come to grips with some potential changes in the Act but also, maybe more fundamentally, to deal with the issues like family poverty, unemployment, and other longer term solutions which we're attempting to do through the child action plan which, I might add, has significant interest across Canada as a joint government-community holistic approach to dealing with community challenges.

But I would agree with you that we need to continue to work to reduce the numbers. And we believe that some of the preventive measures that we're putting in place, some of these are investments, and it doesn't turn the situation around overnight. We're on the right track in terms of that strategy.

Now it's going to make it very difficult to maintain some of these programs with the . . . unless we can get back on track with the federal government in terms of some of the joint initiatives that we believe that together would be very helpful in terms of our long-term family poverty strategy. And so any support you can give us in that regard would be very helpful.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. And you will know that I've worked in the preventative area for many years, and I know that's where the solution lies. And I encourage the efforts of 20 years worth of work coming to the child action plan; it's extraordinarily important.

But I am concerned about what is happening in the institutions. When I related this quote about reducing the case-load, it seems to me that in addition to this, what staff had to say is that they

cannot deliver the very fine programs that they are designed and trained to deliver, partly for lack of sufficient staff, partly because of overcrowding, because of the pressure on the institution. So that's a big concern, and I wonder if you might address that.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well I think you raise a good point. We agree that the overcrowding has contributed to the inability to deliver the programs, very fine programs. We know we're on the right track there in relation to the challenges.

And as a result of that though, we believe that we've been responsive, and we have opened up a new Echo Valley camp. We've re-opened the camp there. And also we've just announced and are working on additional spaces at Whitespruce, 14 additional spaces at Whitespruce. And we believe that will take some of the pressure off the institutions. And the staff should see a reduction because those are the two new units that are available within the next month or so.

(1645)

Mrs. Bergman: — Just to go back to another figure we talked about, you said there were — the institutions were built for 310 — that were 355 young offenders in them right now — 140 open, 167 closed. And I wondered in the closed institutions what those figures might be, what the institutions were built for, and what they actually are handling at the moment?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Basically . . . I mean we're agreeing with you here. Echo Valley and Whitespruce will halve that problem for us. We're about 40 to 50 spaces short. Echo Valley and Whitespruce will have that for us, and we're working on two other contingency options as well.

Mrs. Bergman: — Are the Echo Valley and Whitespruce closed custody facilities?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, that's correct.

Mrs. Bergman: — As you've said, it's a very important and difficult problem to deal with, and I understand the difficulties. But in a time not only when there's a demand for more accountability of youth and institutions, when the institutions we have cannot deliver the services that would a difference, it becomes an even bigger concern.

What about the remand facilities? How often are they filled at or beyond capacity? I understand that there's a lot of pressure on them. And there was the recent case I believe at the Dojack Centre where there was a suggestion that a young offender was too violent and disruptive for that facility.

The first question is about the remand centres themselves, the remand themselves, and then into this particular case.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — . . . separate remand facilities as such. Older youth for example, if necessary, could be on a temporary basis remanded at the adult system, so we do not have as such

the separate remand facilities. But the point you raise is part of the overcrowding that we discussed. If and when we're successful, as we believe we will be with reducing the overcrowding, that will also . . . We're satisfied that we will have enough remand spaces in the system.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. When will these two facilities be on-line, and when will this overcrowding begin to lessen?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Echo Valley is already in operation, and Whitespruce will be receiving the first young person this Friday.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. That's encouraging, Minister.

One more question in this area. How are these young offender facilities structured administratively? What role do communities play in the running or supervision or cooperation with the department in these facilities?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes. Well many communities are involved in different ways. For example, say North Battleford, a lot of the people who live in North Battleford are employed at the centre. We utilize . . . we work very closely with the aboriginal community, so elders go into the centres, for example. We also have again different arrangements in different centres but a number of volunteers go in for different reasons.

In addition to the community partnering that goes on, sort of the working relationships on behalf of families from more of a holistic perspective, that goes on again in each community.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. The community aspect of these is very important. And given another time and more time, I'd like to explore that with you.

I have a question about a program called the Queen's University national executive MBA (Master of Business Administration). It's a program designed for managers and professionals at Queen's University. And according to the document I have, participating organizations include the Department of Social Services. Can you tell me what the involvement of the department is with this MBA program?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, one or two of our staff are involved in this program through extension as they're pursuing their MBAs, but there's no departmental money involved here.

Mrs. Bergman: — How does the department come to be then involved as a participating organization? Is it just because the staff is from the department, or what reason would they be listed?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That must be the case, because they must have identified themselves as having worked in the department, because we have no involvement with them nor has there been any money spent in any of these courses on behalf of staff.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. As I understand your government's JobStart program, there are two client groups eligible to participate in the program, and one group includes social assistant recipients in the 17- to 24-year age range. Can you explain your department's role in the JobStart program?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Do you know the program is run by the Department of Education? We make referrals to New Careers who run that with the Department of Education. That's basically what our role is in this.

Mrs. Bergman: — How many of your clients are participating in the JobStart? How many referrals have you made; how many are participating?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, as you know, it's a new program and the numbers will increase, but as of yesterday — and we don't have this written but we're recalling it from a report we saw yesterday from Education — there are 59 of our clients in that program.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. Before we close off, I just have one more question. You've recently begun sending out a newsletter called *Next Step*, and I guess there have been two issues now, and I just wondered who it goes to — what is its circulation?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Actually this letter's been ongoing for two years now, so there have been 8 or 10 volumes of it. It goes to all employees, to a number of organizations, and to government departments. And it also goes to other provinces where we get theirs. Other provinces have similar letters to communicate in terms of what they're doing, and so we send ours to them as well.

Mrs. Bergman: — I would imagine it's also available in centres for clients to read as well.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, it is. It's in all the offices, and as a matter of fact, they sent it to the MLAs as well, as you would know. So yes.

Mrs. Bergman: — Can you tell me the cost of this newsletter on an annual basis, what it cost this year?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — It's very minimal. It's done by staff and . . . but I can get that information to you, if that's okay.

Mrs. Bergman: — I'd appreciate that, and also perhaps the number that are distributed.

Before I sit down, I'd like confirmation that we'll be receiving the information you sent over to the opposition as well.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we will do that. Thank you.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you very much, Minister, and thank you to your officials. You've been very enlightening this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I just want to thank my officials as well, and to thank all the department and all the staff in the department for a very challenging, and, I think, year where we've done a lot of creative partnering with our communities, and it's a real credit to them. So I thank you for your important questions.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1994-95
General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36

Items 1 and 2 agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to extend my appreciation and thanks to the minister and to his officials for their indulgence over the past number of meetings we've had and for your response to our answers. And we look forward to a response to the answers that you've committed to us. Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.