

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Fourth Session - Seventeenth Legislature
31st Day

Monday, March 18, 1974

The Assembly met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.
On the Orders of the Day.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Mr. F. Meakes (Touchwood): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to you and through you to the other Members of the Legislature 15 Grade Twelve students in the Speaker's Gallery from Lipton High School. They are here today on a tour of the city. I haven't been able to meet with them yet but I hope to meet with them after they leave the Chamber. I hope that this day is an enlightening and educational process for them and I wish them a safe journey home.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. E. C. Whelan (Regina North West): — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Assembly 90 young citizens from Regina North West. They are seated in the west gallery. They are Grade Eight students from Sherwood School. Their teachers, Heather Hewson, Larry Huber and Russ Marchuk are with them. Members I am sure join me in extending a warm welcome to these visitors and expressing the wish that their stay with us will be informative and educational.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. E. F. Gardner (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could also add a word of welcome to the students here today from Sherwood School. My son teaches at Sherwood, although he is not with this group that are here today. Perhaps they could give my regards to Don when they return to Sherwood School.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ANNOUNCEMENT

Introduction of Special Guest

Hon. E. L. Tchorzewski (Minister of Culture and Youth): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to a special guest we have visiting with us here this afternoon. I know that all of the Members will join me in welcoming to our Saskatchewan Legislature, the Minister of Travel, Industry and the Provincial Secretary from British Columbia, Mr. Ernest Hall, who is sitting behind us.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Mr. P. P. Mostoway (Hanley): — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of John Richards who is busy at this moment, I should like to welcome a group of students

from Greystone Heights School from Saskatoon who are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Schmidt, Mrs. Castor and Mr. Sherwin. Now it is my hope that you enjoy yourselves watching and listening to the proceedings of this House this afternoon and that you have a safe trip back.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. W. E. Smishek (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that we have a group of students from the Strathcona School. On behalf of the Hon. Member for the Wascana constituency (Mr. Baker), I should like to extend a welcome to them and hope that their stay and visit with us this afternoon will be a pleasant and enlightened one.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Therapeutic Abortions

Mr. E. C. Malone (Regina Lakeview): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I have a question to ask the Minister of Health (Mr. Smishek). Several days ago, Mr. Speaker, I brought to the attention of this House what I considered a rather alarming number of abortions that were performed at the Saskatoon City Hospital. I believe the number was 566 which is over half of all the therapeutic abortions that were performed in the Province of Saskatchewan and far more than the number of abortions performed at any other hospital. My question is this: In view of what I consider an alarming number of abortions being performed at the City Hospital has the Minister caused an inquiry to be made pursuant to the provisions of the Criminal Code and if not, why not?

Hon. W. E. Smishek (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question of the Member for Regina Lakeview relating to the number of therapeutic abortions performed in the City Hospital at Saskatoon. I should like to, first of all, correct the figure stated in his question. The figure of 566 that he used refers to the number of cases approved by the Therapeutic Abortions Committee of the City Hospital in 1973. The hospital has reported 517 therapeutic abortions as actually having been performed in 1973. This represents about 42.5 per cent of all therapeutic abortions carried out in the province, not more than 50 per cent, I believe he stated initially. During 1973, 1204 therapeutic abortions were performed in Saskatchewan hospitals, of these 517 were performed in the Saskatoon City Hospital, 166 at the University Hospital and 277 at the Regina General Hospital. Examination of these figures shows, however, considerable differences in the practices between the three hospitals. Of the 277 abortions carried out in Regina, six were late abortions. On the other hand of the 683 abortions performed in Saskatoon hospitals, 175 were considered as late abortions. Such differences are a result of local patterns of medical practice. This is not within my jurisdiction to control but rather these patterns are the responsibility of individual physicians, hospital boards and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Therapeutic abortions in Saskatchewan in 1973 were being done at the rate of 8.2 abortions per 100 live births.

This compares with the national average of 11.2 abortions per 100 live births, which are the latest figures available from the Department of Health and Welfare. Compare the Saskatchewan situation with the Canadian figure and it does not appear that an unduly high number of therapeutic abortions are being carried out in our Saskatchewan hospitals and would not warrant investigation by either my Department or by the Attorney General.

Mr. Malone: — By way of supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, I take it that the answer to my initial question is 'No', that the Minister did not conduct an investigation. Can the Minister assure me that the procedures as laid down by the Criminal Code for therapeutic abortions are being followed in all of the hospitals and in particular the City Hospital in Saskatoon?

Mr. Smishek: — The answer to the best of my knowledge is 'Yes'. We have not had any reports from either of the hospitals, the physicians or anyone else that there is any contravention whatsoever of the Criminal Code.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate by the Hon. Mr. Smishek that Bill No. 49 — **An Act relating to the premium levied under The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act, the tax levied under The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act and the Personal tax levied in Health Region No. 1 (Swift Current) under The Health Services Act, and various matters related thereto** be now read a second time.

Mr. E. C. Malone (Regina Lakeview): — Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments I should like to make in connection with Bill 49. I wish to restrict my comments, Mr. Speaker, really to Section 3 of the Bill and, of course, this is the paragraph which refers to the taking away of the levy of the medicare premium on the taxpayers' of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in his initial remarks the Minister of Health (Mr. Smishek) indicated that it really wasn't necessary for this provision to be in the Bill. I believe he indicated in his remarks that the only reason the provision was in there was to see how the Members of this Legislature stood as far as this particular provision was concerned. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a proper matter for this Legislature, that the Minister and others opposite are just playing cheap politics and using the health of the people of Saskatchewan as an excuse to do this.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Malone: — It is a complete abuse of the procedure of this Legislature and as such, Mr. Speaker, I take exception to it.

Now I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there are many people in this province who can well afford to pay the premium of \$72 or \$36 or whatever it is. These people are quite prepared to pay this premium if the moneys that are going to be used from it are to be used to advance the health care of the

citizens of this province. There is no reason whatsoever for these people not to pay the premium and I can think that there will be millions of dollars just wasted by this Government if they go ahead with their plans to take away the provisions of paying this tax. This premium could be used for paying for such things as a proper dental care plan. It could be used to provide for extra beds in senior citizens' homes. It could be used to increase income of over \$7,000 a year and who otherwise do not qualify for old age pension benefits.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Malone: — This money as I said, Mr. Speaker, can be used for many things in this province and I think it will be interesting for the people of Saskatchewan and for the Members of this House to see how the Members opposite stand when they come to vote on this amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. K. R. MacLeod (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to rise and limit my remarks to another section of the Bill. I refer to Section 6 and Section 5 of the Bill which require that those businesses which are now paying hospitalization benefits on behalf of employees should make those now directly to the employees. I want the Minister to understand that we know precisely what he is doing. The Government has decided in its wisdom to relieve people of the burden of paying the annual hospital premium. In the province up to the present time that premium has been paid principally by two groups of people. First of all, by individuals on behalf of themselves, and by corporations and other businesses who have determined that it is appropriate for them to assume this burden. The Government has decided that it will relieve the individual of the burden of paying those taxes in those cases which up to now the individual has paid the premium. But the Government has decided not to relieve any business in Saskatchewan of the burden of paying the \$72 premium.

The Government might well have determined and given an indication of its support for business in the province, notably small businesses by saying to everybody who now pays the \$72 annual premium, or up until that point had paid the \$72 premium, that they would no longer have to pay it. They could have said to each individual who pays it, you no longer have to pay it. And to every business in Saskatchewan that pays it they could say, you no longer have to pay it. But they have made a clear distinction between individuals and corporations and while they are benefiting the individual they are deliberately refraining, by a very complicated paragraph 5 and a very complicated paragraph 6, from doing anything at all which will assist business in this province. In my view, Mr. Speaker, nothing demonstrates the philosophy of this Government more clearly than the deliberate and devious (and I say devious in the sense that

it is very complicated) procedure which requires businesses to continue to pay this amount of money.

For that reason I concur with the general comments made by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Lakeview, although I am not sure I agree with everything he said. I do concur that this Bill is nothing more than a cheap political trick.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. A. E. Blakeney (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, may I make some very brief comments on the two points made by Members opposite.

First I refer to the comments of the Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod). There has been, I think, a general recognition that when a benefit such as a premium is paid by an employer on behalf of an employee it is in fact a payment of wages. It does not find its way into the salary cheque but it is a benefit paid by the employer on behalf of the employee. The short question which the Government had to ask itself was whether or not that benefit should be eliminated when the Government decided that there should be no further payment of Medicare premiums. I think again that the answer that most people reach under those circumstances is that the benefit should not be eliminated — that the benefit should be continued at least until the employer and the employee have an opportunity to renegotiate the situation. This has generally been the practice.

Some will recall that in 1962 when the Medicare plan was originally introduced, this arrangement was put into law. Where employers had paid a Medicare premium on behalf of employees to a private plan the law provided that this benefit which had been paid on behalf of employees would be continued to be paid on behalf of employees. In a very short number of years this was negotiated out and there was no identifiable payment by employers in respect to the Medicare premium and that surely is the way we would like to have it. Surely the employee should not lose because of this particular Government policy. They lose a benefit which they may well have negotiated in lieu of wages because indeed that is a normal procedure. I have negotiated a number of contracts on behalf of employers and we calculated the whole package, the amount of money paid out in wages, the amount of money paid out in fringe benefits and we counted it all as a payment on behalf of employees. If we, as employers, had been relieved of a cost of fringe benefits we would have assumed that this was a benefit which we were achieving at the expense of the employee because he was not getting the package which we had assumed he would get. This surely is the way it ought to be viewed. If viewed in that light then I think all will agree that the fair thing to do is to provide that the employer will pay that to the employee at least until negotiation time, until the matter is renegotiated.

Now with respect to the other point raised by the Member for Lakeview (Mr. Malone) as to whether or not this \$72 tax should be paid on the basis of an income test, I wonder whether Members opposite feel that a payment out of \$72 a year, that small an amount, is an appropriate subject for yet another means test. If the payment were \$400 a year or a \$1,000 a year, a case could be made for administering a means test to four or five hundred thousand people across this province but since it is only an amount of \$72 and since it is pretty clear that to

administer a means test, even a simple one like the one for the Guaranteed Income Supplement, even on application — you have to process three or four or five hundred thousand pieces of paper. You have to ask the people of the province to declare their income three or four or five hundred thousand times each year. It seems to me that for an amount of \$72 this is not good government. It seems to me that under those circumstances the appropriate thing to do was to make this a universal benefit. Again, if we were talking about large sums of money, \$80 a month, \$72 a month rather than \$72 a year, a case can be made, however weak, for a means test, but for that sum of money per year for families and for \$36 for single people, I suggest that a case cannot be made for a means test. The appropriate thing to do is to make this a universal benefit. That is what the Act proposes to do and I am disappointed to think that Members opposite propose to ask all the people of Saskatchewan to take another means test to find out whether or not they make \$7,000 a year. And presumably it would vary, it will be \$7,500 if they have one child and \$8,000 if they have two and it will be a very elaborate means test if it is going to be fair. All this to decide whether or not they should receive this benefit of \$72 a year. Members opposite seem to me to be obsessed with the idea of means tests. It seems to me that this is a most inappropriate place to apply one and I am disappointed that Members opposite feel that it ought to be done.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. J. G. Lane (Lumsden): — Mr. Speaker, we are just a little surprised at the about-face of Premier Blakeney. First of all he talks about the \$72 being a benefit to the employees, and has been considered such. If that is the case we are then saying here that this \$72 is:

- (i) salary;
- (ii) we don't need the provision that it is going out because it has been permanently negotiated and there is no way that this matter is up for renegotiation again.

It has already been decided, this is your argument, that that \$72 should be considered salary, or has been considered salary, and, therefore, that this whole question of the \$72 is a redundant argument, the matter has been decided between the employer and the employee and you know — why bother having a Bill. It has already been negotiated. We don't need the piece of legislation for that purpose.

Secondly, I am very curious about the Premier's suggestion about a means test. He says 'only \$72 a year', which is a little surprising. Only \$72 a year justifies hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent for a letter from the Premier to all the Medicare holders telling him where he is getting the money, because the people in Saskatchewan were very concerned about who is going to pay for this particular program. He says we shouldn't have a means test for this little sum of money and he is surprised at our position about means tests.

I just happen to have on my desk a copy of a means test that the Government opposite has sent out. It's an application for the day care subsidy to parents under the day care regulations. Now they are required, under the new regulations to have a means test — to complete a means test. It's very

surprising and in light of the stand of the Party opposite that means tests are demeaning, degrading and shouldn't have any part in the social programs of the Government opposite, and here we get one. We get one out for the day care centres. Parents are now required to list the monthly income of themselves, both husband and wife, rental from property, numbers of roomers, number of boarders, training allowance, separation alimony payments, unemployment insurance, business income, family allowances, Saskatchewan Assistance Plan pension, superannuation, farm income, workmen's compensation, all these. A means test. He is in favor of a means test for application under the day care centre, surely, Mr. Speaker, when the Members opposite have gone on record as being in favor of taxing the rich and ability to pay, there is every justification for the principle and that's what we are talking about here this afternoon — the matter of principles.

You are the ones who are supposedly on government record of taxing the rich and helping the poor and yet you are the very Party that has increased the taxes on the lower income levels in the Province of Saskatchewan. You're the Party that has a lower tax rate for people on higher incomes than those of lower incomes and you're now the Party on record of giving this supposedly only \$72 to the people that can afford to pay.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's the principle that we are talking about here and we are surprised at the stand of the Government opposite. This should be decided on income — it's one of your policies and it certainly is now ours.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. W. E. Smishek (Minister of Public Health): — Mr. Speaker, when the Hon. Members for Moose Jaw North and Whitmore Park and the last few minutes the Members for Albert Park, Lakeview and Lumsden . . .

Mr. Grant: — I didn't speak on it.

Mr. Smishek: — You did speak the other day. I referred to the Opposition Members who have taken part in this debate on second reading of this Bill. They use some very interesting phrases — such as “this Bill is window dressing; it is not necessary; it is not a Bill that is required; political ploy and cheap politics; arbitrarily imposing further costs; setting dangerous precedents; and that this Bill is somehow unfair and inflationary.” The Hon. Members by using these phrases have clearly stated that they will vote against Bill 49.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Whitmore Park (Mr. Grant) went so far the other day as to suggest that this Bill will somehow discourage investment in the Province of Saskatchewan.

Ever since March 8 when the Budget was introduced the Liberals have been arguing that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Robbins) should have cut taxes. Here is a Bill which proposes to confirm a tax cut of over \$15 million, Mr. Speaker. If the Opposition is so anxious for tax cuts, they should welcome this Bill, not oppose it. Yet, prior to the introduction of the 1974-75 Budget they said they will oppose this Bill. Again today they said they will oppose the Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, during the last few days we have heard the word “hypocrisy” repeated by every Member of the Opposition. If they now vote against a \$15 million tax cut when just last week they introduced a motion for a tax cut, this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, will witness a new height in political hypocrisy.

The Hon. Member for Moose Jaw North (Mr. MacDonald) said that he can't vote for this Bill until we tell him how we propose to pay for the health plans. He referred, Mr. Speaker, to an eminent American statesman of our time, Ronald Reagan, if you please, the Governor of California. Mr. Speaker, he is one of the most right-wing Governors of modern times. Let me refresh the memories of the Members opposite of what he said, and let me quote him:

Other people at other times, and notably Governor Reagan of California, have made the suggestion that when governments introduce legislation for giveaway programs, they should also be forced to introduce legislation that would show how they intend to raise the funds to pay for these giveaways.

We, as a Legislature, have to face this ultimate question of raising moneys and the public has the right to understand how the public will be asked to pay for our health plans.

Further he said:

The public has the right to know how the Blakeney Government intends to tax us, how much will income taxes rise, and how much will the corporation taxes be raised?

Mr. Speaker, the Blakeney Government made its position clear on March 8th when the Minister of Finance introduced the Budget. There is no increase in income tax to pay for the health plans; no corporation taxes have been raised. A more buoyant provincial economy has greatly increased government revenues, compared to those depression-like days of the Liberal Government. We are getting better returns out of our natural resources because of the firm stand of this Government. Compare that with the Liberal giveaway of resources. We have shifted from regressive poll taxes to taxes more closely related to the ability to pay.

This Government has kept faith with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

When the Premier announced the elimination of the hospital and medical premiums on September 21st, he said there would be no new taxes imposed because of the elimination of the premiums. The Minister of Finance reaffirmed this on March 8th.

We are not Liberals, Mr. Speaker. We keep our promises, we keep our word.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Smishek: — And it's all on record for anyone to see. No, we're not like the Liberals when they, back in '64 and back in '67 told the people of Saskatchewan they will maintain and improve health plans. Well we recall what happened in 1968 when they imposed

additional tax burdens and deterrent fees on the people of Saskatchewan and thus undermined greatly the health plans that we established in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Members from Moose Jaw North and again from Albert Park, have taken issue with Section 5 of the Bill. Let me put it in a different kind of a way than what the Premier has said on what this Section 5 will do:

- (1) Where an employer has been contributing to the joint tax payable by employees under a collective bargaining agreement, or other agreement with the employees, that agreement will be deemed to be amended to provide that the amount of the contribution will be payable to the employees on and after January 1st, 1974. (This contribution as such would probably disappear when the collective bargaining agreement was next revised).
- (2) Where the contribution by the employer was not made pursuant to an agreement, the amount of the contribution would be added to the employee's wages or salary as of January 1st, 1974.
- (3) The manner and basis of making payment for these purposes would be determined by agreement between the employer and employees.
- (4) Where no such agreement is reached, payment to the employees would be made in six equal monthly instalments commencing February 1st, 1974.
- (5) Provisions similar to these are made with respect to the medical component of the personal tax that has been levied in the Swift Current Health Region.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw North (Mr. MacDonald) answered his own inquiry about Section 5, when he spoke on February 27th and he said:

This Bill is before us really for the sole purpose of forcing employers to pay to employees the amount that would otherwise have been paid to the Government had the premiums not been dropped. Well, this would be a fair and equitable objective of the Bill. After all, either by binding agreements or some other forms of agreements or by actual practice, employers have been contributing up to \$72 on behalf of their employees.

I would like to remind this House that it is not in all cases, but only in some of the cases where such agreements (either by collective bargaining, or by practice have been in existence). It does not apply universally to all employers. Mr. Speaker, he went on and said:

This \$72, in fact, has been part of the wages of the employee, or he likely considered them as part of his wages, and this provision in this Bill also appears fair because it does not appear to require the employer to pay more than he did last year.

Mr. Speaker, he is correct when he states this \$72, in fact, has been part of the wages of the employees. It must be reported by the employer on the employee's T-4 slip. The

employee must pay income tax on the premium paid by the employer. The Government of Canada considers this as part of wages. If we had not protected the continuation of this payment by the employer to the employee, we would have in effect, legislated a wage-cut. Surely the Opposition cannot logically argue that an employee's wages ought to be cut during this period of inflation, yet this is what we have heard them say in this House a few minutes ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw North also argued when he spoke on February 27th that this "sets a dangerous precedent". Mr. Speaker, that precedent had been established a long time ago when Medicare was first introduced. Let me refer him to the then Section 31 of the Medical Care Insurance Act. This Section states that where an employer has contributed in any manner towards the cost of insured services on behalf of his employees, the employer shall pay to each employee an amount equal to the amount contributed by the employer on behalf of that employee. Mr. Speaker, even when the Liberal Government took the meat axe to the hospital and medical care plans in 1968, they did not do away with this established principle.

May I advise the Hon. Members that since this Bill was tabled in the House on December 14th, of last year, I have received only one complaint from an employer about this provision. In view of this, I can only assume that the employers and employees alike consider this to be fair legislation, as I do, Mr. Speaker.

On the question of why hospital and medical cards will be issued every six months, (it was raised I think by the Hon. Member for Whitmore Park), I want to tell him and the House that this is considered necessary to keep abreast of the many changes in the registrations which do occur. When you realize that something on the order of 400,000 cards must be mailed out each year and when you realize that almost 10 per cent of that number were returned because of incorrect addresses, name changes and other reasons, you will see that the job of keeping registration up-to-date, is a large one. In addition to changes in the address, there are additions to the card because of births, marriages, deletions because of deaths or people moving to other communities. If we issue cards only once a year, the number of changes will be so large as to seriously hamper the work of those who are responsible for keeping our registration files up to date.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to this, under the federal-provincial agreement on cost sharing, the cost sharing is related to the number of beneficiaries and it is important to keep an accurate and correct record so that we may benefit completely from the federal-provincial cost sharing.

We hope that by mailing cards out every six months, we will be able to cut down on the inconvenience which might otherwise be caused to beneficiaries of our health plans.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Moose Jaw North, in his comments on this debate, suggested that hospital operating grants were being cut back. He said, and let me quote him:

Thereby necessitating hospitals to give less and poorer service.

He went on and said:

If money is available to discontinue premiums, why is not adequate funding available to the hospitals?

Mr. Speaker, I reject that implication. The Budget speech clearly shows that we have increased our grants to hospitals. We have also made it possible for many rural hospitals to expand services through our new Level IV policy. This makes it possible for rural hospitals to assign a certain number of their beds to the care of Level IV patients, and these patients might otherwise have to be moved to regional Level IV centres. Mr. Speaker, I fail to see how the Hon. Member can contend that we are reducing operating grants when the Budget clearly indicates that we are increasing the budget under the Hospital Services Plan from \$116 million in 1973-74 to almost \$128 million in 1974-75.

The Hon. Member for Moose Jaw North made some kind of allegation with respect to the physiotherapy and chiropractic services. We have offered the physiotherapists a 13½ per cent increase in fees. I have also attempted to place some limitations on how much will be paid out in total on the physiotherapy services. However, I do not apologize for that in view of the substantial increases in utilization. This increase has been in the order of 13 per cent per year compared to an increase of 4 per cent per year on doctors' services.

Is the Liberal Opposition suggesting that we should allow this type of increase in utilization to go unchecked? With respect to chiropractors, I am at a loss to understand what the Hon. Member is driving at, when he claims that "our chiropractic plan is being eroded in the name of fiscal responsibility." Certainly the chiropractors do not appear to feel that the plan is being eroded in any way. We have reached an agreement with the chiropractors and all but seven have signed agreements with the Medical Care Insurance Commission. I really cannot understand what the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw North is driving at — unless this is simply another attempt to smear by innuendo as he has attempted to do with our dental care plan that we have proposed, and others have joined with him in the same kind of innuendo.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Smishek: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell him in case he is not aware, that the chiropractors in their own statements do confirm and state that the chiropractic insurance that we provide in Saskatchewan is the best coverage provided anywhere in the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I was doing to deal, briefly, with the Means Test proposal put forward by the Hon. Member for Lakeview (Mr. Malone) but perhaps the question has been dealt with adequately by the Premier. Certainly we do not propose to resort to means testing any longer.

Finally, I should like to deal with the question of whether or not this Bill is necessary.

The Hon. Member for Moose Jaw North contends the Bill is not necessary and is window dressing. He has been joined by others of his colleagues a few minutes ago, repeating that same

argument. Mr. Speaker, it may well be true that premiums could have been abolished without legislation. However, I think there is a very good reason for proceeding as we have. If, at some time in the future, a government feels it is necessary to reinstate premiums the steps we have taken will mean that such a decision would require legislative action, Mr. Speaker. I think this is an important principle to establish. If a government in the future, finds it necessary to reinstate premiums it should have to justify such a decision in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

In closing I should like to repeat, the decision to abolish medical and hospital premiums was a sincere step taken by this Government to directly reduce the impact of inflation upon the people of this province. It may be a small step to those whose incomes are high and that \$36 or \$72 in their case, isn't noticed a great deal. But it is a move that many of the people in the low income brackets, both families and individuals in the low end of the scale of incomes, will greatly appreciate and they do appreciate it by the kind of response that I have received from them.

We saw an opportunity to abolish a tax which was not based on the ability to pay and we did so, Mr. Speaker. We did so because we are firmly convinced that taxes should be related, as much as possible, to the principle of ability to pay. We were not committed to this step by our election promise. We abolished premiums because we were able to do so and we believe that it is right and correct.

Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan, in fact I know, will support us in this move. The Liberals said that they will oppose this Bill, I invite them to commit political hara-kiri. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time on the following Recorded Division:

YEAS — 32

Messieurs

Blakeney	Pepper	Owens
Meakes	Byers	Mostoway
Smishek	Whelan	Gross
Messer	Kwasnica	Feduniak
Snyder	Carlson	Comer
Kramer	Engel	Lange
Thibault	Cody	Oliver
Larson	Cowley	Feschuk
Kowalchuk	Taylor	Kaeding
Brockelbank	Matsalla	Flasch
MacMurchy	Faris	

NAYS — 11

Messieurs

Coupland	MacDonald (Milestone)	MacDonald (Moose Jaw North)
Loken	Gardner	Wiebe
Guy	Weatherald	Malone
Grant	Lane	

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Messer that Bill No. 26 — **An Act to provide Assistance for the Promotion and Development of markets for Agricultural Products produced in Saskatchewan** be now read a second time.

Mr. E. F. Gardner (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, we will not be opposing this Bill on principle. I don't think that anyone would object to the idea of promoting markets for agricultural products. We are concerned, of course, that the committee is obviously going to be government dominated. You will notice in Section 5 of this Bill the committee is made up of either civil servants or government appointees.

Once again, there doesn't seem to be any provision for producer input to this particular committee and this appears to be a place where producers could serve a very valuable function and we are disappointed that there is no provision for producers to be elected or to appear on this board.

The Bill, once again, is also rather vague and appears that much is to be done by regulations. We are not really sure just what is contemplated in this Bill, we do hope that it will not be used as a vehicle to provide world tours for friends or the Government. The Department of Agriculture, in the past year, has done pretty well providing trips for people from the Department to various parts of North America and various parts of the world. I mentioned the other day that in the first 11 months of 1973 there were something like 182 trips outside the province to such places as Los Angeles, Charlottetown, Denmark, Scotland and England, Europe, Waterloo, Iowa, Wisconsin, many to Vancouver, Winnipeg, Brandon and quite a number to Tucson, Arizona for some reason. There are about five in a row, I believe at something like \$400 to \$600 a piece to Tucson. I presume these weren't in the hot summer months. We would hope that the Government is not going to use this Marketing Development Fund to provide further trips of this nature.

We will be supporting the Bill but we will be watching it very closely to see that it does provide the function that it should, to promote markets of our agricultural products, but not to merely provide tours for either civil servants or people from various groups in the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. T. M. Weatherald (Cannington): — Mr. Speaker, I just wish to say a few words regarding this Bill.

Like some of the other things the Government has done, the idea of market development, in principle, is a good idea, but unfortunately the wastage that is creeping into the Department of Agriculture is an absolute and utter disgrace. We have, for example, a number of instances and I hope the Minister will tell us. Last week he was on a tour of, I think, North America and in fact he attended the National Farmers' Union meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I have the clipping here. I hope that he will tell us precisely who paid for that because it says here, in the clipping:

A greater role of government in agriculture is needed, says

John Messer, Minister of Agriculture, in remarks prepared for a convention of US National Farmers' Union. Mr. Messer said that greater government involvement is required for long-term agricultural planning.

This was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I think that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan have the right to know precisely for what reason we dispatched the Minister of Agriculture from our province to Milwaukee. I think that the National Farmers' Union of United States would be quite capable of paying his way. I hope they did and I would be most pleased, when he closes debate to learn that they did pay his way. I will be most disappointed if he tells us that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan paid his way because I don't think we got much for our money if we did pay his way.

This is just one example that the Minister can clear up when it comes time to close debate.

My colleague from Moosomin, of course, has a long list here that was tabled in this Legislature, of people travelling to and fro across North America, overseas and just about everywhere else you can imagine and, again, we are not getting much of an explanation of what they do there.

One that I think was quite amazing was an educational conference and I forget precisely which state in the United States they attended for this. It was one of the southern states and I think the cost to us was about \$400. I think that the Minister should give us an account of precisely what some of his officials are doing on these grandiose trips, and he has gone on some himself. He went over to Roumania to see about tractors and we didn't hear much more about tractors. He is doing a lot of travelling himself. Intercontinental involved a trip to California which would have saved a lot of money if he had not gone travelling on that business.

We find more and more that Government expenditures are being incurred and little accountability is being given to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan precisely what we are getting for it.

I think another typical example is that the Department of Agriculture has given substantial amounts of money to farm organizations. We find that some organizations are receiving a substantial amount of money and we have a question in the Order Paper as to what those amounts are, which haven't been answered yet. We will be wanting to know precisely what the criteria is for being the beneficiaries of such contributions, such as \$20,000, etc.

The reasons seem highly open to question at this time and I think the criteria for many of these trips are highly questionable. So we will support the principle of dispatching persons to other parts of the country, Mr. Speaker, and because it is obvious that many of the questions that we have been asking in this regard have not yet been answered, that we should now like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Brockelbank (Minister of Government Services) that Bill No. 60 — **An Act respecting Government Purchases be now read a second time.**

March 18, 1974

Mr. H. E. Coupland (Meadow Lake): — Mr. Speaker, we have looked over the comments of the Minister since adjourning this Bill and want to say that we will be supporting this Bill. It is a clean-up and rewrite of The Purchasing Agency Act. As the Minister said it allows them to relocate the funds and not necessarily have them go back through the consolidated fund.

A lot of the Sections of the new Act are pretty well the same as the old Act, but it seems they deleted the Advisory Committee sections so if there is a criticism I would have to make it would be that there is more direct control going into the hands of the Minister himself. Other than that we will be supporting the Bill.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Brockelbank (Government Services) that Bill No. 62 — **An Act to amend The Rural Telephone Act be now read a second time.**

Mr. J. Wiebe (Morse): — Mr. Speaker, just a few brief comments this afternoon regarding this Bill. As I indicated the other evening when I adjourned debate I was quite unhappy about the fact that the Government is asking the rural telephone companies to absorb the interest rates above 8 per cent. Although it is a necessary move that has to be made, it is costing the rural telephone companies, throughout the province, a considerable amount of money to continue with the operation of their companies. Interest rates are considerably higher and it is pretty well impossible to find money nowadays at 8 per cent. However, I feel that the Government could have made money or should be making money available to the rural telephone companies at a lower rate than 8 per cent to help them over some of their difficult periods of time.

This winter of 1973-74 is just one of those times. If you go back to the spring of 1973, the ice storm, that affected many of the rural areas throughout the province, there were many people who were without telephones for over two weeks. This winter, as well, has been a very drastic winter on our rural subscribers throughout Saskatchewan. Some telephone companies have been unable to provide service for over 2 months and it looks as if a lot of these areas will not receive telephone service until spring.

One of the ways that this could be solved, of course, is through underground cable. It is my understanding that at present the Provincial Government or SaskTel does have a project underway around Saskatoon involving 19 rural telephone companies with some 700 rural subscribers. I must congratulate them on this. However, I am quite dismayed by the remark which the Minister made at the last Rural Telephone Company convention and I quote:

The availability of capital to proceed along the lines of the Saskatoon project appears to be an impediment to extending this approach on a province-wide basis.

Here again we are talking about priorities and where our money should go. It is my understanding that the Government is

planning on spending considerable funds on cable television. Fine and dandy, I have no objections to that. But, here again, we are looking after the people who live in the cities. Certainly the people who live in the cities have got a lot of goods and services which makes life in the cities very attractive.

We have a problem in this province, Mr. Speaker, regarding our rural areas, our farms and the small towns. Part of that problem is because we do not provide the goods and services in rural areas as compared to what the people receive in the city. Because of this the people are leaving our small towns, farmers are leaving the rural areas and are moving into the cities.

It is going to be an ambitious project to put cable to every farm in the province as there are something like 50,000 rural subscribers, something like 800 rural telephone companies. The Province of Alberta was able to do it and this year they were able to announce that every farmer in the Province of Alberta has cable laid to his home and there are not more than two subscribers on each line.

Here, in Saskatchewan, we still have over 47,000 route miles with 100,000 circuit miles servicing farmers who rely on above ground telephone lines. As I mentioned earlier there are many of them that have been without telephones for two months and it looks as if they won't be connected up until spring.

With the type of age we are living in now communication is very vital and especially vital to our rural areas, especially in terms of sickness and operations of the farm units which we have. I think that an adequate communication system for our farmers and rural people in this province is much more important than possibly cable TV is at this time. I think here again it is a matter of priorities as to where the Government wants to spend its money. The last four years have shown fantastic profits as far as SaskTel is concerned. We have \$178 million extra dollars to spend this year which we didn't have last year. We are going to be getting fantastic revenues from oil which could be upwards to \$100 million. And the Government, I hope, will direct some of these moneys towards our telephone companies.

It's going to cost money. There is no doubt about this. Roughly figuring, according to the Rural Telephone Company Association of Saskatchewan, it would cost around \$60 million to bury every telephone line in Saskatchewan. Besides this, outstanding debentures of the 800 rural telephone companies amount to about \$1 million. Here again, I must point out service that must be required. The rural telephones in the province amount to about 25 per cent of the total phones in Saskatchewan. And yet 75 per cent of the trouble calls that were received by SaskTel last year were from rural subscribers. Trouble calls mean that the phone isn't working. So here, again, is where should the emphasis be placed?

I hope that when the Minister closes debate on this particular Bill that he will give some inkling to this House that the present Government is going to change its direction in terms of rural telephone companies and hopefully start a program such as the Province of Alberta, which will bury telephone cable throughout this province and allow our rural people the same benefits and the same communication availability that we now have in our cities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. J. E. Brockelbank (Minister of Government Services): — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to close-off second reading debate on The Rural Telephone Act.

I was aware the other day when the Member adjourned the debate on this particular item that he was concerned about the interest rates that rural telephone companies had to pay for their money in order to facilitate construction of rural telephone systems and to repair and refurbish rural telephone systems in Saskatchewan. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Saskatchewan through SaskTel is making more money available now than has ever been made available before to rural telephone companies in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — I think, Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that the pilot project in the Saskatoon area is a serious attempt to find out what the problems will be in putting in a completely new telephone system into place in rural Saskatchewan. I won't for a moment attempt to compare our situation to the Province of Alberta because quite frankly it is a different situation. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if SaskTel's system is by mileage quite a bit larger than the Alberta Telephone system. I would say that the estimate of \$60 million is a very conservative estimate of the cost of doing in Saskatchewan what has been done in the Province of Alberta.

The Member who just spoke on this item is attempting to draw a "red herring" across this Chamber when he talks about cable television in the same breath that he talks about rural telephone companies. That is exactly what he is doing, drawing a red herring across this Chamber. There is in fact no connection whatsoever between rural telephone companies and cable television in the Province of Saskatchewan. They are two different programs. They will be financed each on a separate basis. If in fact, at a later time he desires to draw that red herring again with regard to SaskTel, I will tell him again that the cost will be identified and the programs will be kept separate. It's not our intention to use the rural telephone companies in Saskatchewan to put a cable television system into effect in the cities of Saskatchewan. Never at any time has this impression been left except by the Member opposite who implied that this may be the case. There is no relationship, Mr. Speaker, between the costs of the rural telephone project and the cable television program.

I think, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like repeat that the rural telephone companies in Saskatchewan give their entire support to the amendments that have been brought forward in support of this Bill, The Rural Telephone Act, I therefore, have great pleasure in closing debate on it.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

SECOND READINGS

Hon. E. L. Cowley (Minister of Mineral Resources) moved second reading of Bill No. 65 — **An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act.**

He said: Mr. Speaker, the Bill for which I should like to move second reading, is a very simple Bill. It is an amendment to The Crown Corporation Act which does two things: One, where it refers to the Provincial Treasurer it strikes that out and replaces it with Minister of Finance. The second thing is that now, by legislation, the Government Finance office is assigned to the Minister of Finance. This will change that legislation to read that it will be assigned to the Member of the Executive Council to whom for the time being is assigned the administration of this Act. So it does two things. It changes Provincial Treasurer to Minister of Finance and it allows for someone other than the Minister of Finance to be the Minister in charge of the Government Finance office. As Members opposite will be aware the responsibility for the Government Finance office was transferred with myself when I moved from Finance to Mineral Resources and this is to enable that to take place legislatively.

It can be done now under the Executive Council Act, so there are no problems legally with it, this is just to tidy up this Act.

I would move second reading on An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

Hon. G. MacMurchy (Minister of Education) moved second reading of Bill No. 55 — **An Act to amend The Department of Continuing Education Act, 1972.**

He said: Mr. Speaker, there are two amendments proposed in The Department of Continuing Education Act. One is housekeeping and the second is significant.

At present every educational grant paid by the new department requires a special Order-in-Council. The amendment will allow the department, that is the Department of Continuing Education to pay grants directly under a set of regulations that will be approved by Cabinet. This is common practice. And it confers on the Department of Continuing Education the same powers as The Foundations Grants Act, 1970 conferred on the Department of Education.

The change in Section 5 is more important. It will allow the department to produce and distribute educational information in the areas for which it is responsible.

Educational broadcasting in connection with this program has always been a part of the Department of Education's responsibility. With the rapid growth in the field of technology and educational communications, the term broadcasting has become obsolete. It is no longer adequate to cover the media.

As a result of this we introduced an amendment of The Department of Education Act last year which applied a more comprehensive term. It allowed the use of options beyond the conventional use of radio, broadcast radio and television for educational communications related to its program. One of the most obvious and valuable of these is cable television. The amendment simply provided for the use of this and other appropriate media in educational communications.

March 18, 1974

The amendment to Section 5 provides the same authority for the Department of Continuing Education in respect to its programs.

In addition to its necessity for the instructional programs at the institutes, this amendment will be particularly important with respect to the Saskatchewan Community Colleges.

At present the colleges rely on word of mouth and print to provide instructional resources and communications with respect to their programs. This amendment will allow them to use other media, radio, film, video tape on an organized basis. We also foresee in the immediate future a greater use of the contracted time on commercial radio and on the CBC. Production of educational resource material could be contracted for under this clause.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly simple and straightforward Bill, it will give adult education many new channels to work through. I am pleased to move second reading.

Mr. C. P. MacDonald (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, just a few words on this Bill. First of all I want to say that we certainly support the concept of the expansion of the media in the field of Continuing Education, the same as the Department of Education.

If the Minister recalls last year when this Bill was introduced for the Department of Education there was some discussion about cable television. I won't get into that now, as to the control, whether it be operated and controlled by the Saskatchewan Government or whatever. But in the field of education I might suggest that perhaps the modern media would be more valuable in community colleges even than in the conventional school system. I am thinking particularly of northern Saskatchewan where there are many, many adults in various communities who could take the advantage of the television in particular, where they could have all kinds of opportunities that would not be made available to them by the conventional teaching methods. When I think of community colleges, and I think it is the concept that the Minister and the Department is attempting to project, when I think of a community college, I think of the college itself going into the community and going out into a variety of communities to provide a variety of needs. Certainly television and the modern media will improve the opportunities of people in various parts of rural Saskatchewan and particularly in the North to get the kind of variety and types of educational opportunities that they would not have by the conventional means. I think it is a good amendment and, therefore, we will support it.

The second amendment I do have a couple of comments about. It is a principle that I objected to, if the Minister recalls, the last time an amendment of this kind was brought in. What the Minister is asking for in this amendment is that the Cabinet of the Province of Saskatchewan, or pardon me, the

Minister, by regulation, can pay out to a community college a \$500,000 grant or any sum and there doesn't seem to be any limits placed on it whatsoever. He indicated that The Foundation Act of 1970 had the same powers, and I objected to it at that time. I know that most departments of government have a limit and they provide ministerial authority to pay grants up to \$1,000 or \$2,000 but anything over and above that must go for an Order-in-Council and for Cabinet approval.

There is a reason for it. Because an Order-in-Council is a public document, and as a public document it is available to the Press, to the Opposition and to the general public to determine where the funds of the department are being channeled to. If this particular amendment goes through there is only one way that the Opposition and the public and the Press can find out where the grants have been directed to, it will be in Public Accounts a year or a year and one-half later. This is a kind of an unfortunate situation. I think there is a responsibility for accountability. I don't think an Order-in-Council is that much work for any department. And certainly for that reason I think this is a bad amendment. I am not going to oppose the Bill but I should like to have the Minister's comments on this. I think accountability of financial grants is a very, very important part and that is the reason for the Order-in-Council system that has been set up so that there is a system of accountability and it does become public knowledge. Those are the only comments that I have to make, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MacMurchy: — Mr. Speaker, I'll not comment on the second amendment on the educational broadcasting but with respect to the amendment on paying grants, it will basically apply to community colleges, since that is the program for which we pay grants to autonomous boards. Those being the community college boards in the various communities around the province. Perhaps there is a good point being raised by the Member for Milestone. I think it has been a practice of the Legislature which Members opposite started following the establishment of The Foundation Grants Act, which permitted the Department of Education to pay grants to school boards without an Order-in-Council, to distribute the amounts of those grants to the Members of the Legislature for their perusal before the grants were — or about the time the grants were sent out to the boards. It seems to me in carrying forward the sort of general practice that applied in the Department of Education to Continuing Education, this is the sort of thing we would follow and perhaps we should follow, that when the grants go out to the Carleton Trail College and the Parkland College and so on, we distribute to the Members of the Legislature, the amount of those grants as we do for the Milestone unit and the Board of Education in Regina and the Separate Board in Regina and so on. While this is not as open as the Order-in-Council or not as available to the public, I think by practice it can be available and that can cover the concerns of the Member for Milestone.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

Hon. J. R. Kowalchuk (Minister of Natural Resources) moved second reading of Bill No. 66 — **An Act to amend the Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, Recreation Sites and Antiquities Act.**

He said: Mr. Speaker, the reasons for the amendments to The Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, Recreation Sites and Antiquities Act, will be outlined to show worthwhile benefits for the changes. In my opinion the changes are important and necessary.

Mr. Speaker, today in Saskatchewan there are more tourists on the roads, there are more tourists in our parks. More use of our recreational facilities by our own Saskatchewan people is being made and the need for more protection for these parks and recreational sites makes amendments necessary to the parks Act.

The visits to our parks and protected areas are going up from 15 to 20 per cent every year, Mr. Speaker. Not only is it important to give the maximum amount of protection to property against vandalism and carelessness but it is also necessary to stabilize the provincial parks and protected areas just as The Forest Act has done for our Saskatchewan forest reserves. And only by legislation can any deletions be made from our forests as you well know.

This Act will do the same for our specified provincial parks and specified protected areas. These amendments bring us directly into the new age of concern in which we are living, concern for the geographic existence of parks so that any undue pressure, either by individuals, Mr. Speaker, or groups, even political groups, will in no way affect these park boundaries, except through legislation where changes can be discussed and debated.

Now, these changes in The Parks Act put us in line with B.C. and the rest of Canada in the management and the operation of our parks and recreational sites.

Briefly, I want to go through the amendments to this Act and comment on what the changes do to make the Act acceptable and necessary to our travelling society.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to this Act are necessary in part because of the proposed Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources. And this change was announced clearly in the Throne Speech.

The first amendments relate to definitions. Redefinition of the words "Department" and "Minister" will meet the changes respecting the new Department and provide flexibility in the assignment of responsibility for legislation. And the definition of words "Historic sites" and "Municipal authorities" is required to aid in administration of assistance programs that are being planned.

In Sections 3 and 4, of these amendments, provincial parks and protected areas can be created or disbanded and the boundaries expanded or deleted by Order-in-Council. Remarks made in a number of recent public hearings indicate considerable public concern over such a provision. The amendments to these sections, Mr. Speaker, 3 and 4, will prevent alterations to protected areas and provincial park boundaries, with the exception of additions, unless it is in the form of an amendment

to the Act. This will provide a permanency to the protected areas in provincial parks which is favored by the great majority of people.

The amendment to Section 5 will allow for additions to parks and protected areas by Order-in-Council. Thus when additional areas are acquired they can readily be subjected to provisions of the Act and regulations for administrative purposes.

At present, Section 19 allows for limited financial assistance to appropriate local organizations, local residents and municipal authorities for the development of areas for recreational purposes. This amendment, in Section 19 will change the wording from 'local residents, appropriate local organizations and municipal authorities' to 'municipal authorities, organizations or persons', thus making the wording less complicated and of course, taking out the word 'limited' as well.

Also the words 'historical sites' are included to facilitate financial assistance to these programs and as I just said a moment ago the word 'limited' is deleted to permit financial assistance in accordance with the size and the scope of the program or project to be developed.

Section 20, subsection (a) provides for the protection, control, administrative and development guidelines for provincial parks. With the addition of 'historic sites' and 'recreation sites' in the wording, these areas will also be provided with the necessary control, development guidelines and protection.

The amendment to Section 21 will expand the scope of the staff authorized to enforce the Act. The amendment will include the majority of the key personnel employed in park administration. As the Act reads now only a conservation officer is authorized to enforce the Act and, in most cases, he was not involved in park administration. This made it very difficult, to say the least, in administering parks and recreation areas.

In Section 22, subsection (1), clause (a), only the pollution or contamination of water and soil is provided for. The amendment to this section will also include the pollution of air, Mr. Speaker.

Clause (c) of this section will be expanded to provide protection for all buildings, their fixtures and furnishings. The term "any tree" was deleted as trees are protected under The Saskatchewan Forest Act.

A new clause (d) is being added and subsection (2) of Section 22 has been included in the amendments to provide a broader authority to the park staff and to members of the RCMP. This includes control over rowdyism and vandalism, which is fast reaching critical proportions.

The amendments to Section 23 will add strength to the penalty section. In the Act and Regulations, references are made to the compliance with certain directives given by an officer. The amendments will make it an offence to fail to conform to a directive.

Although it may seem a great deal of faith is being placed in the judgement of the park officers, Mr. Speaker, it is the only way they will be able to maintain control over the conduct

and operation of the park.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalchuk: — The amendment to Section 23 removes the minimum fine thereby leaving that decision to the discretion of the magistrates.

Briefly, summarizing the important changes, Mr. Speaker, they are these: (1) to provide for a more comprehensive provincial participation and restoration of items of historic and cultural significance within the province; (2) to include all personnel involved in administering and enforcing the Act, including the RCMP and thus have better control over rowdyism and vandalism in our recreation areas; (3) to provide stability and permanency to provincial parks and protected areas. Only by legislation, as I have said before, can parks or protected areas be done away with or even partially deleted.

Highway picnic sites and the other smaller recreation areas can still be added or subtracted as has been done formerly. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion these amendments to The Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, Recreation Sites and Antiquities Act, are sound and positive factors that will contribute to better care and protection of physical assets of these places of sight-seeing and recreation by our Saskatchewan people, as well as the ever increasing tourists; and furthermore, will add permanency and stability to these places of recreation, beauty and historical significance. I am hopeful that all the Members of this House will support this Bill, the amendments to this Bill. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to amend the Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, Recreation Sites and Antiquities Act.

Mr. T. M. Weatherald (Cannington): — Mr. Speaker, first I should like to commend the Minister (Mr. Kowalchuk) for giving a very solid outline of the changes in this piece of legislation. I think his comments are to be applauded in that respect, because I think he did a very good job of outlining what the changes were.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that we in the Opposition will support the changes in this Act. Most of them are changes that have been requested and asked for by many conservation groups and people interested in their provincial park system.

The concept also of taking measures against some of the vandalism and bringing about a little better enforcement I think are commendable.

I would just pose a question to the Minister in this respect, that there is a small change in that regard, as regarding enforcement. I am just wondering if park personnel will have the power or if he envisions them having the power of simply reporting acts or actually apprehending individuals on the spot? I'm not certain just how this will work as far as a park employee finding a person, committing a vandal act, in the provincial parks or giving him more power to be able to do something, which I think is quite commendable. I don't see anything wrong with that because I know that we are running into a lot more vandalism in the provincial park system and the

enforcement system has been very lax, simply because the RCMP and other officials have not been able to spend all of their time there during the summer, with their other obligations that they are regularly assigned to.

Also, I think that we can fully support the idea of bringing the park boundaries into provincial legislation which I think is certainly overdue and a good step in the right direction. It simply means that before any changes can be made that it would have to be done here in the Legislature and I think that that is a step in the right direction.

So basically, Mr. Speaker, I believe we in the Opposition will be able to give full support to the changes that the Minister mentions.

Mr. K. R. MacLeod (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I have only one or two things to say and I support the principle of the Bill as indicated by the Hon. Minister (Mr. Kowalchuk).

The problem of glass and breakage in the parks stems partly from the fact that the Government has not instituted a program to recover bottles — except for coke and soft drink bottles — but has not instituted a program to recover liquor bottles and other types of bottles.

Of course, the Minister may well inform me that liquor bottles and other bottles should not be brought into the park. I think, however, that we've got to recognize the reality that people nowadays do, in fact, bring all sorts of bottles around including coke bottles and other kinds into these parks and I am not one, frankly, to voice opposition to this. If a man drives into the park with his camper trailer and he treats that as his home and his residence and has a liquor bottle or a dozen bottles of beer, I must say that as long as the law says you can drink liquor in this province, it seems to me reasonable that he should be able to take it with him on his holiday. And consequently, I say that there are going to be bottles in the park and I probably have to commend the enforcement officers for not becoming silly about their enforcement in this respect. I think that the park officials and others have, in fact, not been overly concerned with the presence of liquor in the park.

I have on occasion observed that people who are out in rowboats and people who are out in motorboats and things like that, take some liquor along with them, perhaps a bottle of beer for a nice, hot, sunny day. They are however, reasonably nervous about the presence of these bottles. I can't say that I know anybody personally that would do such a thing, but it has come to my attention that people do these things.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. MacLeod: — I would think that if the park were to establish a policy and make it clear that if there were no abuse of privilege there would be no attempt to enforce the regulations unreasonably a lot of the bottles which now are dropped into the lakes would be returned to the shore. But I have, on occasion, while I'm out in my boat, observed nearby boats with people consuming alcohol and then dropping the bottles over (at least I assume it's

March 18, 1974

alcohol) and then dropping what appear to be beer bottles and other bottles over the side presumably to avoid detection. I would suggest that if the Minister would give some attention to this and establish a policy, he might well find that there is a greater willingness by people who use the parks to bring back to shore the bottles which apparently are empty in any event.

Mr. Kowalchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure how the enforcement is going to be carried on, but I am hopeful that enforcement will be carried out a lot better than is being carried on now. The changes suggested by the Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) in regard to the use of the parks and recreational areas and even on lakes in regard to liquor, I don't intend to get mixed in this argument at all at this present time. I think that is in an area for other people, probably somebody should look to The Liquor Act for those changes.

Our problem is going to be to maintain these parks, clean, against pollution as much as possible, against litter, to make it possible for a family and people who want to stay overnight or do fishing or whatever, under the best kind of circumstances.

It's been found that up until now the vandalism, the rowdiness, has been just a little bit too strong and therefore these are the reasons for the changes to make it possible for better enforcement and I am sure it is meeting approval, because I'm very glad to hear that other Members of the House, from the Opposition side as well, are saying they are going to vote for this Bill and I think this is a step in the right direction. As I said before, we are thinking, not just of the fellows with the liquor bottles, but we are thinking of the people who may stay in the park with some baby bottles and milk in them as well.

In regard to the comments made by the Member for Cannington (Mr. Weatherald) I really cannot say. I'm hopeful that the enforcement will be done with common sense and with prudence. I think that in most cases that is being done with common sense and prudence. There may be a time when some enforcement is being over done, but I think otherwise whatever enforcement has been done, has been done quite well.

Therefore, with these last few remarks, I say I am pleased to hear that the changes that are being suggested and are being introduced here by me today, to The Parks Act and The Recreation Act, are acceptable to Members of this House.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:32 o'clock p.m.