

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mrs. Smith:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today on behalf of the Premier, the hon. member from Estevan, who is unable to be present today . . . He extends his regrets, but he also extends a welcome to 15 students and three adults seated in the Speaker's gallery. Mr. Speaker, these young people are grade 11 students in the Lampman High School in the Estevan constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Wayne Medwid, as well as two chaperons, Aldyth Fleck and Bernice Mitchell.

Mr. Speaker, I will be meeting with this group shortly after question period, and I look forward to entertaining some questions from them and hope that they find their visit to the gallery education, to say the very least. And I would ask all members to welcome them.

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

**Mr. Currie:** — Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, two very special guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. I introduce Mr. Jay Attarian, who is accompanied by his wife, Virginia. Mr. Attarian is the Optimist International president which includes membership from United States, Jamaica, and Canada. He heads 4,000 Optimists clubs with a membership of over 150,000 people. The Attarians have three children and they hail from Woodland Hills in California.

Our American guests are being hosted by the governor of the Optimist International District of Alberta, Montana, Saskatchewan, and northern Wyoming. I speak of a Reginan, and Mr. Jim Ursu, who is here along with his wife Jan, as well as with the district secretary-treasurer, Mr. Gary Cross.

On behalf of the members of this Legislative Assembly, I extend to you, Mr. and Mrs. Attarian, a very special welcome to Canada, and to Saskatchewan in particular. Americans and Canadians have a great deal in common, not the least of which is a strong belief in the concepts of promoting self-improvement, community service, family life, and a devotion to working with youth. As citizens of these two great countries, we share the belief that the international Optimists have, which is a commitment to these ideals. We commend you for the significant contribution that you have made over the years, and we wish you the best in your visitation to Saskatchewan.

I ask the members on both sides of the House to extend a very warm welcome to our American guests.

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

**Mr. Lusney:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly, 10 adult students from the Key reserve, north of Norquay.

They're here on a little visit to Regina, and I'm sure they're going to enjoy the proceedings in this House this afternoon. We appreciate them coming in. I hope that you'll find question period and the time that you spend here this afternoon interesting and informative. I'll be meeting with you after question period for some questions and some refreshments. I'd like all of you to welcome them to the Assembly this afternoon.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Recent Visit of Minister of Health to Ottawa

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. It has to do with a meeting you had earlier this week with your federal counterpart. And during estimates last week you indicated that you were going to Ottawa to convince the Mulroney government to end the vicious cut-back in health care that was proposed in the Michael Wilson budget earlier this year. I wonder, Mr. Minister, whether you can inform the Assembly and the people of the province whether or not the \$9 million that was to have been cut out of the transfer payments to the province for health care has been reinstated by the Mulroney government as a result of your trip and meeting in Ottawa?

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Well thank you very much. I'm pleased to be able to report on my very successful meeting in Ottawa with my fellow ministers and the federal minister, the Hon. Jake Epp. As you recall, Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of things that we went down to discuss. Certainly one had to do with the Patent Act, the changes in the Patent Act which would have repercussions on the . . . Mr. Speaker, I will explain to the member, if he would be quiet, the outcome of the meeting. We put forward our position on the Patent Act, and I'm proud to tell the people of this Assembly, the people of the province, that because of these initiatives, led by Saskatchewan, that the Patent Act is on hold, and I don't think it will be introduced. And there's going to be more consultation on the matter.

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — And I am pleased to see that we could work in that co-operative fashion with the federal government. On the matter of EPF (established program funding) funding . . . If the members care to shout from their seats, it will take me more time to explain. On the matter of EPF funding, Mr. Speaker, I, along with a number of the other Health ministers from across Canada, pressed the federal member to have a meeting, to call a meeting, of provincial and federal Health and Finance ministers. The minister did not turn that suggestion down. At the same time, we said, at such a meeting we would like to look at future directions coming from the Nielsen report that will affect health care across Canada. I want to say I feel very positive about the dialogue that took place at that meeting and am very pleased that the changes to the Patent Act have been put on hold.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Minister, I had asked you a very specific question, and if we could cut out the long-winded speeches which ministers are being given for the last number of weeks in this Assembly, I would ask you whether or not the \$9 million that is proposed to be cut from the transfer payments to the province of Saskatchewan for health for the coming year, whether or not you got that 9 million reinstated.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — If the member would listen to the answers, Mr. Speaker, I indicated to him that I, as well as other provincial Health ministers, asked the federal minister to convene a meeting of Health and Finance ministers to discuss the future of health care funding in Saskatchewan. And that has to have more vision than the type of suggestion that's coming from the opposition.

I believe it's important that we sit down and we look at how the dollars in health care in Canada can be spent the most effective and efficient way possible, and that's what we asked for. And I feel that we will get a meeting of that type where we can all sit down — all ministers from across this country — sit down and say, look, health care is costing a lot of money; it's something that is a priority of our people; how are we going to address that to best serve the needs of all Canadians and maintain a standard service across this country?

Those are the kind of things that we sit down and discuss, and that's what we did with the drug . . . the patent Act. And I'm proud to see that the federal government and the Hon. Jake Epp listened, and action is being taken that will be to the betterment of health care for all Canadians.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — New question, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Minister, in the Assembly, you told the Saskatchewan people you were going to Ottawa to convince the Mulroney PC government to drop its plans to cut transfer payments. You said, and I quote: "I will stick up for Saskatchewan health care. I'm going to see if I can carve a better deal for Saskatchewan people." That, Mr. Minister, was your description of your trek to Ottawa.

Do I take it from the minister's answer that you come back empty-handed and without any commitment to anything from the Mulroney government?

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Well certainly you don't take that inference. I don't know how he gets that idea, when I said I was going there for two reasons: the patent Act and EPF funding. I came back — I came back — with the patent Act held off; it isn't going to hit the floor of the legislature till more consultation is worked out with the provinces. That's the word of the federal minister, Michel Côté. He said, they have convinced us that we need to have more consultations. So I think we won — in Saskatchewan we won big on that.

Secondly, to look at the whole area and to say that there's cuts in EPF is simply not correct. The member's trying to mislead again. This year's EPF haven't been cut; it's slowing the rate of growth, is the thing that we were talking about. And we are saying, let's sit down, let's sit

down with our colleagues, the Finance people. Because you know, and I've explained in this House time after time, that the EPF arrangements are basically done between the Finance ministers.

But because health care is so important to the people of Saskatchewan and to the people of Canada, we said to the federal minister, our federal minister, we said, let's call together a meeting so that we can all address that situation. I supported that, and I should indicate also it was supported by Mr. Desjardins, the NDP Minister of Health in Manitoba.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Minister, you failed to convince the Mulroney government to reinstate about 9 million in health care payments to Saskatchewan this year. It was this year's cut. And Mr. Minister, the Canadian Hospital Association has looked at the Mulroney proposals and has forecast that Saskatchewan will lost \$154 million in the next five years.

Mr. Minister, will you tell this Assembly, since you've come back empty-handed with nothing from the federal government, will you tell this Assembly whether you're going to cut programs or raise taxes?

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Well certainly, I suppose, if we look at raising taxes, the NDP are the people on record. I remember just a while ago when their leader said, we may have to raise taxes if we get in in power, I want that to be understood — well spelled out what they would do. What we will do is maintain services, and we will work for a better deal with the federal government. And I believe, when I was able to go down there and lead the discussions — that they should withhold the changes in the patent Act that could possibly cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan \$15 million, \$15 million per year — I think we certainly gained for Saskatchewan from those discussions.

#### Salaries of Crown Corporations Executives

**Mr. Koskie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address a question to the minister responsible for Crown management, Crown Management Board. Yesterday the Premier confirmed that at a time when the Saskatchewan families are seeing their taxes increased by your government, that your government has provided salary increases in excess of 3 per cent to all cabinet ministers' political aides, not professional public servants, but to the political hacks, and that these increases have been made retroactive to October. That was confirmed. My question to you, Mr. Minister, has to do with the salary increases for the executives of the various Crown corporations. Have the salaries and other benefits of the top executives at the various Crown corporations been increased in recent months, and if so, what was the general rate increase approved by your board?

**Hon. Mr. Andrew:** — Well, I think the observation by the Premier yesterday was that the various staff people were treated exactly the same way as our contract that we negotiated with the in-scope sector, the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) sector. And that is around 3 per cent. It's much the same as the Minister of Health has been able to negotiate. I see in the

paper today an agreement, or tentative agreement, with the nurses of Saskatchewan, and I think he should be commended for that type of action.

With regards to the specific question, Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite might know, the salaries of any of the chief executive officers of various Crown corporations are, in fact, set by the boards of those various Crown corporations. The tradition in this Assembly has been for a long period of time to ask those specific questions in the Crown Corporations Committee. Those Crown Corporations Committees are sitting at this point in time. We broke with tradition, Mr. Speaker, when we took office in this province, of detailing many of those salaries that were always held back before, and certainly any salaries that the particular chief executive officer does not negotiate with regard to his contract would be kept in confidence. So that many of those salaries have been, in fact, released. They have been, in fact, established by the various boards of the Crown corporations.

With regard to the Crown corporation that I am responsible for, Mr. Speaker . . . the particular Crown corporation that I am responsible for, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Mr. Speaker, I thought that the hon. members would like to hear the answer to the particular question.

The particular Crown corporation that I am responsible for has, in fact, reduced the number of people working in that Crown corporation by over 50 per cent, and the salary increases have been zero for this particular year.

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

**Mr. Koskie:** — Well I'll ask another question, Mr. Speaker. And I would expect that the minister will address the question. And I would hope that the Speaker will also call the member to order if he doesn't answer.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, please. Order. If the member wants to ask a point of order, he can do it under orders of the day after question period, but this time is not the time.

**Mr. Koskie:** — Thank you. I will want to do that later then.

I want to ask a supplement to the minister. But you have said that there is no agreement entered into whereby Crown management, in fact, sets or increases the general executives of the Crown corporations and controls their fringe benefits. I want to say, are you in fact concerned when you look what is happening in the Crown corporations in respect to the senior executives in SaskCOMP; they have received a 6 per cent jump in total salary benefits. And in SMDC (Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation) the executives have seen 7 per cent increase in salaries. and in Sask Housing, not only have they increased them, they have increased the size of the top executive, Mr. Minister, plus their remuneration. Sask Housing has in fact increased the salaries by 17 per cent in the last year.

I ask you, Mr. Minister: being the holding company in respect to all the Crown corporations, do you think it's fair that the executives of Crown corporations, the highest paid of the lot, should get 17 per cent while others are

held to 3 or less than 3 if they're government employees?

**Hon. Mr. Andrew:** — Mr. Speaker, we have learned some time ago not to take the members' opposite figures at face value. I don't know exactly what the increases are for the various Crown corporation chairmen. I can indicate to you that those figures are probably wrong, as is obviously the case usually.

But I will undertake, Mr. Speaker, to find out whether or not those figures are, in fact, wrong and report back to the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, please. The first man up was the member for Regina North West. I now recognize him.

### Flat Tax on Net Income

**Mr. Sveinsson:** — Mr. Speaker, thank you for your consideration. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday in this House we had some confusing debate on the flat tax that has been implemented by the government in Saskatchewan. The NDP have offered a platform suggesting that they're going to eliminate the flat tax in Saskatchewan.

The confusion arises, Mr. Minister, from an Alberta promise that the NDP have made in Alberta to initiate the flat tax in Alberta. And there are several people in my constituency who have requested some . . . the confusion that's been created by the party in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Can you answer the question, Mr. Minister: is the flat tax that your government presently has, is it an ongoing situation that will lead to a flat tax offer by Mr. Pocklington which will give you a flat tax across the board of 17, 18 or 20 per cent, or is it a flat tax as the NDP have offered in Alberta — simply a tax on the rich? Can you please outline to the people of Saskatchewan and clarify that confusion?

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — I cannot speak, Mr. Speaker, for the confusion within the New Democratic Party. The confusion that runs from their various positions on the gas tax, the P.A. pulp-mill, the paper-mill . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — Nor can I speak for the further confusion in the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, when on the one hand their leader says that they are prepared to raise taxes if they're elected to government.

With regard to the flat tax . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — I would ask the minister to stay on the question.

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — I, of course, was asked about the confusion in the New Democratic Party, but the question about the flat tax, we have made it clear that . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — I'm going to ask for order in the Chamber. It's impossible to hear the questions or the answers with the amount of yelling in here.

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — The pure flat tax has the benefit of simplifying the tax system for all Canadians. And secondly, it has the advantage of taking away those tax loopholes and making sure that those who can afford to pay, that have been avoiding tax, will in fact be paying the tax. And that was the thrust, as the government has made it abundantly clear.

I again repeat what I said yesterday, so that there is no confusion as the hon. member indicates, that people making less than \$20,000 in Saskatchewan pay less to government than any other place in Canada, and that does not include the recent removal of the sales tax on clothing under \$300; that people making \$30,000 pay less to government than any other place in Canada, except the province of Alberta; and thirdly, that those making less than \$40,000 pay less to government in the province of Saskatchewan than any other province in Canada except Alberta, and that does not include the new initiative of removing sales tax on clothing for a value of less than \$300.

### Salaries of Crown Corporation Executives

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Minister, not only do you not want to answer questions on salaries of executives in the Crown corporations, but in the annual reports for the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and for Sedco and for SGI and the crop insurance corporation, it is not even stated, or is it shown, what the annual remuneration is paid to the top executives. It's not even shown, Mr. Minister, and that's got to be a Saskatchewan first.

Can you explain why not? And since Saskatchewan taxpayers are the ones who pay for these salaries, will you undertake to report to this Assembly on the total compensation paid to the top executive group at each of these public companies in 1984 and 1985?

**Hon. Mr. Andrew:** — Well as I understand those type of questions, when I've appeared before the Crown Corporations Committee, and as all my colleagues appear before the Crown Corporations Committee, those particular questions are asked, and that particular answer is supplied.

And for the hon. member to indicate and to try to chastise this government for not providing information with regards to salaries, they wrote the book on keeping things quiet, whether it was salaries or PCBs or whatever you want to talk about.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the reason we have to ask these questions is because you have not come before the Crown Corporations Committee since the 1983 report, which is yet to be considered by the Crown Corporations Committee. What are you trying to hide?

Mr. Minister, another area related to this subject, which I want to ask you about, is the remuneration for the boards of directors of each of these Crown corporations. The

boards of directors. There has been a general rate increase that has been approved. And I'm asking you: has there been a general rate increase which has been approved for directors of these public companies?

And if not, Mr. Minister, can you explain the 98 per cent jump in remuneration for the board of SaskCOMP last year, the 70 per cent jump for the board of Saskatchewan Housing, and the 15 per cent increase in payments made to the board of the directors of Sask Minerals?

One would think that they dine on caviar at lunch breaks. Why this kind of increase, Mr. Minister, in payments to these various Crown corporations directors?

**Hon. Mr. Andrew:** — You asked a question with regard to SaskCOMP. I'll have the minister of SaskCOMP respond to those particular questions, and I believe he was before the Crown Corporations Committee this morning.

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — And responding to the hon. member's question, I wish he had been there this morning because he would have had the answer to the question. The situation is: one, there were more meetings — there were more meetings of the general board; secondly, SaskCOMP, as I made it clear this morning, there was no change in the per diem remuneration; finally for SaskCOMP, SaskCOMP got into a concept called videotex. We're trying to increase the data bases available to rural Saskatchewan. We're increasing the agricultural data bases available to the farmers of Saskatchewan, and we are increasing the data bases to enhance those in rural Saskatchewan's access to information.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, please. I'm going to ask the members to listen when the answers are being given, rather than shout all the way through.

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — I'm very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition would criticize the efforts of SaskCOMP to try and enhance rural life and, secondly, enhance the ability of our farmers to have access to information, which is the reason for the increase in expenditures to the board. And I think that that money is very well spent for the people of Saskatchewan.

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

### Distribution of InfoCentre Network Materials

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the minister in charge of Supply and Services. Can the minister confirm that under the terms of a recent contract signed by your department, Saskatchewan taxpayers will be shelling out \$85,000 a year to a former employee of the PC party to distribute government propaganda to grocery stores and shopping malls around the province?

**Hon. Mr. Schoenhals:** — Mr. Speaker, I can't confirm that, obviously. If he could be a little more specific, I can maybe find out what we're talking about.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I thought the minister would never ask. I have a memo here dated Tuesday of this week which details something called the InfoCentre Network. It's signed by your deputy minister, and it is addressed to 31 government departments and Crown corporations who will be placing brochures and other PC propaganda in grocery stores and shopping malls at taxpayers' expense.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker . . . and it lists Associated Business Consultants as the firm responsible for the distribution of material. Now Associated Business Consultants is the registered business name, and the sole proprietor is one Ronald Ryan, a former employee of Dick Collver and the PC Party of Saskatchewan, and the business associate of the Premier's former principal secretary, Dave Tkachuk. Does this jog the minister's memory? And can he tell the taxpayers of Saskatchewan why shelling out \$85,000 a year to a Tory hack to distribute government brochures at corner grocery stores and malls is in the best interest of the taxpayers of the province?

**Hon. Mr. Schoenhals:** — Mr. Speaker, the concept that we are trying to pursue has nothing to do with shopping malls or centres. One of the things that we learned when our consultation process . . . when we toured the province talking to business men, primarily small-business men around the province was that much of the information, outside of Regina and Saskatoon, that the government had on programs was not readily available, and they wanted some improvements.

One of the things we will be doing is moving our business resource centres into a mobile form in the fact that information will be taken to these various communities.

Another effort will be to make the information that we have available in the departments more readily available to the public, and I believe that is the program or the concept that the member speaks about. I think that the intent is to put it into government buildings where people go to pay bills and so it is readily available. I suggest very strongly to the member that it will be information that deals with government programs. If he wishes to suggest that is propaganda, I would suggest that he go and view that before making that accusation. I think that he will be very satisfied. I know he is a very honourable member and would not want to slander the effect of this program, to make information available to the public.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Information Assist Line on the Situation in the Ukraine

**Hon. Mr. Lane:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement today regarding Saskatchewan's interest in the nuclear accident which has occurred last weekend in the Soviet Union.

All of us are well aware that many residents of Saskatchewan have relatives or friends living in the Soviet Union, and more particularly in the Ukraine, the area where this nuclear accident took place. Others may have friends currently visiting the Soviet Union. Naturally

these people are concerned about the whereabouts and well-being of their relatives and friends in the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet Union has made it difficult for everyone in the West to gather accurate information about this situation in the Ukraine. Ordinary citizens who have tried at all hours of the day and night to reach their relatives in the Ukraine have been stymied. The Government of Saskatchewan shares the concerns of its residents who are desperate for information about their friends and relatives now in the Soviet Union.

In order to assist them, Sask Telecommunications has established a toll-free line to the protocol office in Executive Council which will compile a list of people trying to learn more about the status of their friends and relatives in the Ukraine. The protocol office will pass these names on to the Department of External Affairs which is already employing its diplomatic resources to assist all Canadians who have personal concerns stemming from the nuclear accident in the U.S.S.R.

Saskatchewan Telecommunications established this toll-free line in very short notice and had it in operation yesterday, Mr. Speaker. The number is 1-800-667-7150. I wish to commend the people of SaskTel for their swift reaction to the government's request that this information assistance line be established. And I also wish to thank the protocol office for taking on this important service to the people of Saskatchewan on such very short notice.

I'm sure that all members of this House join me in expressing the wish that the heavy loss of human life has not resulted from what appears to be a terrible nuclear accident.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the minister, and I say in advance, I appreciate getting a copy of this. Sometimes we don't, but I do appreciate joining, being able to join with you in expressing to the families who may have people who were, in fact, injured or killed in the accident — the terrible accident that happened in the Soviet Union near Kiev — wishing the very deepest sympathy to the families in Saskatchewan who may have been affected by the tragedy that occurred, either in terms of contamination or injury or otherwise. I think the idea of having a toll-free number is, in fact, an excellent idea.

I think the whole issue of the terrible disaster that occurred points out very clearly — once again it brings close to home the importance of having international regulations and controls over the use of a very potent type of material that is used to produce power. I think it points out yet once again that the need for safety regulations at existing power plants that are fueled with nuclear power, that the importance of carrying on, every short time, serious reviews of the safety component of those operations, it brings that very close to home.

I think that what we are seeing happening — where the United States government and Italy have proposed and offered help to the people in the Soviet Union — I say that I hope the same offer is being made by Canada and the Atomic Energy of Canada, because we do have

professionals in that field who know a great deal about it. And I would just wish with the minister that the very best would come of this attempt to allow members of families to contact their people in that area.

### Student Assistance Initiatives

**Hon. Mrs. Smith:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education, the hon. member for Meadow Lake, I am pleased to be able to announce today details of the student assistance initiatives that were announced in the budget this spring.

Mr. Speaker, for some time now students and parents have identified restrictions that have limited access to funds under the existing Canada student loan, Saskatchewan student bursary program. As well, they have identified that the Canada student loan program has not kept pace with increasing costs.

This initiative has two components, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, effective May 1, 1986, the following changes will be made to the existing program: (1) the assets of parents will no longer be a factor in the assessment process; (2) the required contribution from parental income will be decreased; (3) single parents, Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, will be eligible for the special incentives program and therefore will be eligible for increased funding in remission of loans borrowed for schooling; (4) the interest rate on all loans authorized after May 1, 1986, will be reduced, Mr. Speaker, from the current rate of 12 and one-quarter per cent to 6 per cent.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, effective May 1 of this year, the Saskatchewan supplementary loan program will be implemented. This needs-based program will provide additional funding to those currently eligible for assistance and will provide assistance to some students previously ineligible under the current system. The maximum loan available will be \$3,000 per year. Mr. Speaker, these loans will also be provided at a rate of 6 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this government is particularly pleased with the changes to the student aid program as they pertain to single parents, for the majority of single parents are women. More opportunities for training and employment have been identified as one of the most important factors in meeting the needs of women in our province. The revised eligibility criteria will mean greater opportunities for both women and men who are single parents, or who need to upgrade skills in order to re-enter the work-force.

As well, Mr. Speaker, more money will now be made available for those women and men who have special needs or additional costs, such as child care or other family responsibilities. Single parents will, for the first time, be included under the special incentive program which offers bursaries to people with special needs. This program offers up to \$110 per week to eligible full-time students in addition to support available from the Canada student loan and our own provincial bursary program. Mr. Speaker, the government projects that up to 1,000 single parents will take advantage of this program in this year, 1986.

Previously many married women and men were not eligible for student aid because the combined net income of the couple was used to calculate their eligibility. Mr. Speaker, this factor will no longer be as important because spousal contributions based on income will be reduced. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, more married people will be eligible for student assistance.

With the increased access to student aid it will encourage those people who otherwise would not have the resources to continue their education and, in fact, improve their job prospects. Mr. Speaker, these initiatives simply reaffirm our commitment to make post-secondary education more accessible to a greater number of students. We are providing the opportunity for individuals to invest in their future and, Mr. Speaker, the return on that investment will be tenfold, not only for Saskatchewan but indeed Canada.

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

**Mr. Koskie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few comments with respect to the Minister of Education's statement on behalf of her colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. I want to first of all indicate that we welcome any assistance in the expansion of the availability of student loans and funds for students. I certainly welcome it because it has been a very difficult impediment to student assistance, and that is taking into consideration in determination of student loans the parental assets. I want to say that it was basically very unfair because what had happened is that particularly on the farms, farm land had appreciated very significantly, and even though farm families may not have a significant amount of money to send their children on, they had a significant amount of assets.

And I know as a fact, I had one in my constituency where a family had three children in university and they farmed three and a half quarters of land — good land, mind you — but they couldn't get any qualification of student loans whatsoever because the asset disqualified them.

So I welcome the initiatives taken by the government. I certainly think that parental assets — exclusion of those — is in line. I think one step further that they might have looked at, and that is when a student is entitled to be qualified as independent of his parents. Students at universities have indicated to me that they feel that one year out of high school, if they attended one year of post-secondary, university, that then they should qualify on their own, independent of their parents, rather than as it is at the present time.

I guess the other comment that I make is that, while I welcome these initiatives that are announced here, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with the province's ability to continue to make the promises and the province's ability to pay for the promises that they're making. Because at the present time what you're doing, I say, is to take the people's credit card, and you're running up a huge further deficit on every program that you're promising. So people are saying, so what? They're offering new programs, but they're running it up on our credit card with a further deficit.

The crux of what is missing here, Mr. Speaker, in this statement, is that in fact what the Minister of Advanced Education has failed to address is indeed the fact of continuing contribution by the federal government. They have allowed the federal government off the hook in its continuation to pay for post-secondary education, and accordingly I say that the provinces across Canada are not going to be able to sustain a high quality education without the commitment of the federal government, and that is not addressed in this statement.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 31 — An Act respecting the Provision of Home Care Services

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Chairman, I move first reading of a Bill respecting the Provision of Home Care Services.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### SECOND READINGS

### Bill No. 24 — An Act respecting the Licensing and Inspection of Amusement Rides

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 24, An Act respecting the Licensing and Inspection of Amusement Rides, now be read a second time.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the minister would have had a speech to give on the Bill. But I want to say a few words on second reading of the Bill and maybe ask the minister whether or not he would like the opportunity to say a few words of explanation. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the minister wasn't on his feet and probably does want to say a word on the Bill.

(1445)

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — I apologize. I was a little slow to be on my feet or a little fast to be off my feet.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I apologize for my error. I'm not perfect and I try to limit my errors to small matters of this nature. I hope I don't make any large errors.

Mr. Speaker, this Act, in my opinion, is long overdue. Every province has an Act of this nature except the province of Ontario. And I expect that they will soon be following the lead of other provinces. This proposed Act was proposed by the Western Canada Fair Association, and it adopts the Canadian Standards Association safety code for amusement rides.

Now there is a clear need for safety in amusement rides. In 1977 there was a fatality at Cumberland House. In 1981 there were three injuries at North Battleford. And

since my appointment as minister I've given considerable priority to bringing this Bill before the House. And the reason for this Bill, Mr. Minister, is to protect the public and establish safety standards for amusement rides. These are primarily the rides that you see at fairs, the rides that my children and other people's children ride on, the rides that adults ride on, all the rides that you see around this province.

As a result of this Bill there will be a duty on the operator and owner of all rides to make them safe. There will be a requirement for licensing of these rides and liability insurance. There will be one exemption and as minister I will have the power to make other exemptions, but the one exemption that I will allow at this time is that the kiddie-operated rides that you see in the malls — the little helicopters that go up and down, the coin-operated rides — these will be exempt from this legislation.

It will also require that the operators of rides file an itinerary with my department so that we can have an inspector making inspections of the rides throughout the province.

And should there be an accident, the Act provides that there will be an investigation of these accidents to determine the cause and to prevent future accidents.

We anticipate that this Bill will cover, during this summer, about 400 rides. There will be enforcement by means of an inspector. One additional person will be hired in my department for the purpose of inspecting these rides, at a cost of about \$55,000 a year, which includes the travel expenses of this individual.

This inspector will have the power to revoke licences, to seal or shut down rides and to initiate prosecutions for contraventions.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this Act, safety will be improved, and it's quite likely that this summer some rides will be ordered to make improvements in order to continue operating.

I am pleased, therefore, Mr. Speaker, to introduce this Bill for the safety of the people of Saskatchewan and, in fact, for my very own children. Therefore, I so move.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, I want an opportunity . . . This Bill arises . . . I first heard some discussion of this Bill some years ago when there was actually an accident on an amusement ride in Saskatchewan involving injuries. I'm not sure if it was a loss of life. It was involving some injuries.

It was suggested then, some years ago. It is now coming before the Legislative Assembly. Members of this caucus will want, Mr. Speaker, to review the legislation in the light of the minister's comments.

I may say, Mr. Minister, I dearly wished we could induce ministers in question period to be as brief as you were when you first moved second reading of the Bill. If you could impart some of that to other ministers, we'd be doing well.

But nevertheless I want to consider it in the light of your more extended comments later. I therefore beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Taylor that Bill No. 1 — **An Act respecting the Establishment and Operation of the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre for the Provision of Rehabilitation and Extended Care Services in Saskatchewan** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I just want to add a few words to the second reading of this Bill, and only to say that we're disappointed, to say the least, that after four years, or into the fifth year of this government, we are just now getting around to setting up a board. And I say that this Bill deals only with setting up a board of the Wascana Hospital.

And as you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, the Wascana Hospital rehab centre, which was planned and ready to go in 1982, should have been built and being used by injured people from around the province in terms of rehabilitation, is only now being built. And I might add, as well, at a much less scale than what was planned in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

At that time the facility was going to be built adjacent to the Plains Hospital, as I recall. The planning had been done. Everyone was in agreement. When this government was elected, it was put on hold. And not only put on hold, but the whole plan was changed and a much down-scaled hospital, I might add, is being built.

I'm not arguing that it isn't an improvement. Obviously it is. But what I'm saying is that the priorities of building a full-fledged rehab centre adjacent to the Plains Hospital, where all the studies at that time indicated that it should be, where the health care givers, the people who were involved in rehabilitation, were indicating that it should be built. This government chose to do something different.

I don't have a great deal more to say, other than to say we're getting something better than nothing. But it certainly isn't what was needed and what was planned at the time of the 1982 election, and the promises that were made at that time and the agreements that were made at that time with the injured workers, as well as the Department of Health and the care givers in the province, that that facility was cancelled. The project didn't go ahead. And something at a much lesser scale is now in the process of being built, and the workers, or people who are injured, who need this facility, will still have to wait some time before the facility is completed and in use.

And I just say that while we agree that this is a step in the right direction, that it falls far short of what was planned and what was available and agreed to at the time of the 1982 election.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think I have explained on a number of occasions the new Wascana rehab centre that's being built. I just want to correct some of the statements of the member opposite.

Certainly this centre, when it is completed, will be, I think, state of the art for all of Canada. The planning that went into this took people on the board and people in the design, right across Canada, to look at some of the best rehab centres in existence. And many of those components are going to be in place in the new Wascana rehab.

As far as the change of location, certainly we changed the location from beside the Plains Hospital out there in a rather windy and dismal part of Regina to the very pleasant surroundings of the Wascana Centre. And that was done with considerable negotiation with the Wascana Centre Authority. And I want to thank them for allowing this to take place, this expansion to take place here in the park, where I believe the aesthetics will do a great deal towards people who are in there having rehabilitative services.

The member says it is not designed to what the need is. I question that assumption. It will have outreach services for handicapped children across southern Saskatchewan, something that has been lacking in this province for many, many years. And I think that will be a wonderful addition to the care of people in the southern part of the province.

I want to also point out that it was brought together with the consultation and co-operation of the Workers' Compensation Board and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. And I want to thank those people for their co-operation in having input into the design and now the construction.

Certainly we're well into the construction phase. The necessity of course now is to have a board. It has previously been under the South Saskatchewan Hospital Board. I think to leave it under the management of a hospital board would be taking away from the whole aspect and the whole concept of rehabilitation — because that's what it's going to be — and it's also going to provide services for long-term care.

So I think what we have brought together is certainly a great improvement over what was designed previously, and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you will recall, but just for other members of the Assembly, I know very well just on the eve of the last election in 1982 there was a frantic call over to the Department of Health to design a rehab centre because they thought they should promise it to win votes in Regina. You can obviously see that that hasn't been the case.

We have been in planning over a number of years. We've been in construction all through the last winter, and the piles are in, the excavation has taken place. Within a very short period of time you will see some of the steel going up, Mr. Chairman, and mark my words, when it is completed it will be a facility that certainly all of Saskatchewan can be very, very proud of and will



certainly improve services, rehab services, in this part of the province.

With that, I move second reading of the Bill.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Dutchak that Bill No. 15 — **An Act respecting the Application in Saskatchewan of the United Nations Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Koskie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have only a very few words to say. As I indicated last day, we are in agreement; we have no objections to what is the principle of the Bill and will be supporting the provisions therein.

I take it — and the minister might want to clarify this — that all of the supporting provinces will have to first of all, in fact, pass the necessary legislation that we're doing here, I take it, and then the federal government is then in a position to make the final acceptance of the enforcement on behalf of the entire country.

(1500)

I take it that is, and in fact I would appreciate — we can get into it when we deal with the Bill — but I take it that's the procedure that is going to be used because I note in the remarks of the minister, you indicate that once all the jurisdictions have passed implementing legislation, the Government of Canada will formally accede to the convention. So I take it that it's necessary to get all of the provinces to accept it, and then the federal government can accede to the convention. Not an important issue, but I just want that clarification, if he could. We will be supporting the legislation. I think it's well intended.

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

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Urban Affairs Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 24

#### Item 1 (continued)

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, yesterday we left off with my colleague, the member from Regina Centre, asking you some questions about assessment. Can you confirm whether you have decided as a government to establish an independent assessment management agency or a commission? I think you did mention that. Is that the case?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Yes.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you. I understand that in the consideration of the establishment of this, the government did establish a committee of some MLAs, and if I recollect correctly, there was the member from

Nipawin, that is Mr. Sauder, and the member from The Battlefords, Mr. Morin. Was this committee established that studied the whole question of assessment in the province? Was there such a committee?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I understand that there was an urban study directed by one of those individuals which you mentioned; a rural study directed by the other individual. The Local Government Finance Commission, in its interim report, I guess, recommended the establishment of a single independent agency.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was not aware that there were two separate studies, so I appreciate that information. Can you tell me when these two members began their study? Was it started a year ago, or two years ago? And having done the study, when was the report finished?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I understand that the individuals completed their work some time in mid-'85. The Local Government Finance Commission released its recommendation for an independent assessment agency some time in September of '85. And it was about this same time, in that general time-frame, that both SUMA and SARM were talking about the need for some form of independent assessment agency.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Yes, I know that SUMA and SARM had been considering this, and that's why I'm quite interested in this subject because . . . and I'm sure the minister will agree that the whole question of assessment and reassessment has not been without its difficulties. Can you tell me, Mr. Minister, was the expense of the work done by these members, whether they had staff — obviously they must have had some assistance — but the cost of the study, was that paid for by your department in the case of the rural . . . in the case of the urban study, or were the costs borne by some other agency or other department?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I understand the assessment authority funded the rural and urban, and of course the Local Government Finance Commission would have been funded out of the Department of Finance for its activities.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — So therefore any expenses incurred or costs incurred as these members did — I assume they were legislative secretaries — but any costs that they incurred in the process of their work would have been paid by the Department of Finance. Is that what you're telling me? Because the only reason I want to know is I want to know where to ask the questions about the cost.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — For those particular individuals the costs would have come out of the assessment authority, and the question should be appropriately raised at the time that the authority is discussed in estimates.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you. Therefore, I won't . . . (inaudible) . . . that aspect of this, because I will take your word for it and pursue it in the Department of Finance estimates.

I have one other question, regarding the structure and the organization of the proposed assessment management

agency. You will no doubt be aware, Mr. Minister, that at the present time, under the arrangement as it exists, the cities of Regina and Saskatoon have their own assessment agencies, or whatever they call them. Is it proposed in the new arrangement that Saskatoon and Regina would become part of this independent provincial management agency, or would they still continue to operate their independent agencies?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — The issue of where Saskatoon and Regina's assessment functions would come into or relate to this particular independent agency has not been finalized yet, in the sense that a Bill has not been presented to the legislature. Obviously that would be dealt with at that time, although we have had discussions with them, and consideration is being given for them to have the option to stay as they are, to run independently, or to opt in to an agency, should they wish to do that.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — I assume the Bill will be brought forward in this session. Can I ask you when that might happen?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — In due course it will be here.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Good answer. I won't pursue that further. I don't suspect you will give me any further indication.

But I do say, Mr. Minister, I really think it's important that it be brought forward early. I mean it's no secret that there may — and some people might say there may not — but there may very well be an election. And I think that this issue is of such magnitude and such importance that it really would be quite regrettable if the government chose not to deal with it when you know, as well as I know, that municipalities out there are concerned about it — and so they should be — and that they are wanting to know what that legislation will be.

I accept your word that consultation is taking place, although we certainly have evidence that in some cases — and I'm not directing this at you, yourself, personally — but in some cases when the government has talked about consultation, it has been found that that consultation really never took place.

But I would urge you to table that legislation quickly and early. It's been like you said, the final report came in and the recommendation came in in September of 1985. Surely it's not unreasonable to expect that the work since that recommendation to be completed by May of 1986. It's not unreasonable to expect that that work should not have been completed by now. So I will leave it at that.

(1515)

I want to deal now, Mr. Minister, with another issue, briefly. You will be aware — and, if you're not, I'm sure your staff will be able to inform you — that the provincial government made some amendments to The Urban Municipality Act which did, among other things, permit the province to, I suppose I could call it, shift some portion or quite a large portion of the cost of prisoner escort services back to the major cities. That was an amendment that I recollect reading about in the

newspaper some time ago. And the major shift was to the cities of Regina and Saskatoon. Can you tell me, Mr. Minister, in the House, how much additional cost the cities of Saskatoon and Regina, each individually, will have to bear because of that amendment, if I'm correct in that the amendment has been made?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well I think it can fairly be argued that in fact there has not been an increase in cost to the cities. If you will recall, the cities of Regina and Saskatoon used to provide prisoner escort services. There naturally was a certain cost associated with the provision of that service, and that cost of course was shouldered by the city. They unilaterally decided to no longer provide that prisoner escort service. In so doing, that cost is no longer incurred by them. And then they, of course, had additional revenue — because they were no longer spending it there — to spend somewhere else.

In essence, of course, that cost was now put unilaterally on to the province. It was a cost that the province was not willing to bear, and the decision was made, therefore, that the revenues would not be returned to the cities, in a commensurate amount, so that in fact there would be no change then in terms of the revenue or cost to either of the governments. And I hope you understand that particular reasoning. The city did have a cost. They no longer had a cost. They are spending that revenue somewhere else now. So as a consequence, there's a balancing out.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — I'm not sure, Mr. Minister, that I can agree with you that there is a balancing out, because the statistics that I have, and I remind you that this was a matter that was raised by the city of Saskatoon police commissioners of the mayor of Saskatoon, Mr. Cliff Wright, who I think was, and is, the chairman of that commission. And they expressed some concern about this. I am told, and I quote from what the mayor had to say. He said:

It is basically and fundamentally wrong. The cost of prisoner escort services are all related to Criminal Code offences from which the city receives no revenue at all.

And I think he had a good point.

In the case of Saskatoon, Mr. Minister, the new arrangement will allow the province to withhold 18 per cent of the \$1.1 million levying fines annually by Saskatoon courts and use it to pay for security costs associated with transporting prisoners from jail to court or back. The revenue loss will be \$300,000 per year to the city of Saskatoon, according to the mayor and the police commission. And in Regina's case, 39 per cent will be withheld, or close to \$400,000 annually. That surely cannot be considered an insignificant amount of money.

And I once again repeat what the police commission said, that most of the people paying fines for breaking municipal by-laws like traffic or zoning by-laws require no prisoner escort or security of any kind. I'm sure you will agree with that. The kind of people requiring a security escort are those with criminal charge or Criminal Code offences. And so therefore I ask: why have you decided that since they are Criminal Code offences and

could have happened anywhere in the province, not in just those two respective cities, does your government feel that it's the responsibility of the cities to pay for the escort services in those cases?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — The cities have historically paid for these services, and they chose unilaterally to no longer provide those services. The province therefore has to bear the burden of providing the services. To cover the cost of so doing, we have simply made the decision to withhold a commensurate amount of fine revenue to now cover off the costs that we incur in providing those services when the city previously provided those particular services.

So I think that's a reasonable balancing act in response to the unilateral decision taken by the cities.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Since the cases in question, Mr. Minister, are Criminal Code cases, can I ask you to give me the explanation for why you think it would be reasonable when the cities, strictly speaking, have no responsibility in this matter. By-law infractions, yes. Traffic violations, yes. If you, Mr. Minister, get picked up tonight because you are speeding through Wascana Park — and I know that's not possible to happen — but if you were picked up, the fine levied, the city of Regina would get some revenue.

But under Criminal Code charges, I would like you to tell me what's the rationale to have the cities bear the cost of escort services. And I ask that because I really don't understand. And since you have your officials there who can help me, maybe you can help me understand.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Back in 1982 the province took over the municipal court operations in the cities of Regina and Saskatoon, the costs of facility and court staff and so on, and that resulted in an annual saving to each city of about \$340,000. So the cities are now saving significant amounts of money because of the action taken by the province back in 1982.

Then the cities unilaterally decide to no longer provide this escort service. I understand the Department of Justice attempted to negotiate with them, but that was not possible. They simply unilaterally chose to make that decision. In other words, they unilaterally chose to foist a cost on to the shoulders of the senior government. It was felt that we had no option but to cover off the cost of that extra burden, which has now been shouldered on to the provincial government, by withholding a commensurate amount of fine revenue to cover off that cost.

So the cities saved 340,000 each as a result of the province already taking over some particular services. Now the city decides unilaterally that the province should take over more services. We felt that that was not appropriate, attempted to negotiate, were not successful, and consequently took what we believe to be the reasonable decision, to withhold the fine revenues in order to pay for those particular services.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — I think with your preoccupation with unilateral, Mr. Minister, you forgot to answer the question. I'm quite aware that in 1982 the changes were made, and the province took responsibility for, I think it

was the provincial court. That's not news to anybody.

And I'm quite aware that the cities are no longer responsible for that. My question simply is: what's the rationale in the government's minds for asking the two cities to pay for escort services for criminal code offences where the city really has no responsibility; where the city really gains no revenue because of fines levied, as I understand it? I ask you again the question: what's the rationale behind it?

Whether the cities decided unilaterally or not, and I would really question that, that's not the point here. The point here is the question of this being an unfair imposition on the cities of Regina and Saskatoon. Both cities have expressed concern about it. The police commission and the chairman, Mr. Cliff Wright, in Saskatoon, has expressed concern about it. And I think it's only fair for the government to be able to tell them what the rationale is for continuing to have the cities bear this cost.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well as I indicated, Justice attempted to negotiate and were unsuccessful. Perhaps something could have been worked out if negotiations had taken place. But the rationale is simply a cost rationale. The decision was taken unilaterally to foist the burden upon the provincial government. It was felt that that was not appropriate that the provincial government was going to have to cover these costs somehow, and therefore the decision was made to withhold a commensurate amount of fine revenue so that the costs and the revenue balance out to both the provincial government and to the municipal governments.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Mr. Minister, I'm not going to pursue it any longer. I think I've made my point. I don't agree with you. The cities of Saskatoon and Regina don't agree with you. The police commissions don't agree with you. It's the usual story, as everybody is wrong and you're right. I mean, whether we're talking about this question, or whether we're talking about the property improvement grant, or whether we're talking about no formula for revenue-sharing pool, or the distribution of the revenue-sharing pool, everybody who's expressed a concern to your government, you say, is wrong, and you're right.

I'm saying in this case — without wanting to get into a debate on it further, and I will drop it here — I believe you're wrong. Because I consider this, as do many others, that this is nothing more than another example of the tax shift from the provincial level to the municipal levels. There are many more glaring examples involving a great deal more money, such as property improvement grant, which is a tax shift of \$80 million in Saskatchewan.

We disagree. A New Democratic government would change that. You choose, in your government, not to deal with it, but simply to say, they're wrong and you're right. We'll agree to disagree, and I won't pursue it any more. But my colleague, the member from Shaunavon, has some questions that I know he wants to ask on the legislation involving Urban Affairs, and I will give him some time to do that.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions here, Mr. Minister, and it's in regard to a Bill that was dealt with last May 17th, I believe it was. I'm reading from a photocopy of *Hansard*, and maybe it would be worth our while if I got it copied for you and sent it across, and I'll do that.

But it deals with a Bill, an Act to amend The Local Government Election Act — some changes that took place at that time, but other changes that took place in a previous amendment to the Bill by your government after the '82 election. And I'm sure the staff in your department are well aware of it, because it's been going on and burning in a number of rural communities for some time. And it has to do with the issue of people who are not residents of towns in the province, or villages in the province, being able to vote in municipal elections.

The scenario, and I'll use it only as a scenario, goes something like this. A small town, on the appropriate day when everyone has an election, prepares the voters list, and on the voters list can be anyone who has property in that town. You don't have to be a resident. You can be a resident in Regina and vote in Ernfold, for example, if you have your name on a piece of property. In fact, you don't even have to own the property; you can have an agreement for sale. There's no limit on the number of names that can be on the agreement for sale. You could have 40 people who are buying a lot worth \$1 in Ernfold, on the voters' list. They could come out from Regina and affect the election in that town.

(1530)

Now what I would like to do here, Mr. Minister, is if you would give me a background on this issue and tell me what led up to this change; what happened as a result of it; how much problem it has caused; and what is your solution to that problem.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — If I could just take a moment for the member, Mr. Chairman, if I could just have the attention of the member for a moment.

I'll just give you the historical or chronological sequence here. Prior to '82 all non-resident property owners could vote in municipal elections. In 1982, at the request of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Act was amended so that non-resident property owners could not vote — in '82.

The ensuing concerns on the part of electors and the pressure put upon SUMA, and SUMA communicating back to us, as a consequence the Act was amended in 1984 to bring it back to the state that it was in in 1982, or prior to 1982, so that non-residents could, in fact, vote. That's the way it was for a number of years prior to this government being in operation. I think you'll recall that that was the situation under your administration, that non-residents could vote.

So then in 1984 the amendments were made that once again non-resident property owners could vote. The situation did arise in one particular municipality which you mentioned. If I remember correctly, the Ferland situation which made it very clear that for many years

prior to '82 and since 1984 there has been a loophole which permitted this kind of unfortunate situation to arise. And officials from my department and the Department of Justice are attempting to come up with the most reasonable legislative solution which will satisfy everybody, if that is possible.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Minister, I understand what you're saying, and I now understand, at least with a very broad brush, the background. What I would like to know is that when the proposed changes took place, and when I say proposed changes, I'm talking about moving away from the property owners who are non-residents not having a vote and then the amendment that allowed them to have a vote; you say that pressure came from Urban Affairs for the change — or from SUMA to Urban Affairs — that the change would take place.

What correspondence took place at that time? Was there memos exchanged between SUMA and the department, and you will have to ask your officials because you weren't the minister, and I'm not laying that on you. But can you indicate how that exchange took place and who initiated the changes. Was there an exchange of letters and proposals or what took place?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — As I understand it — and I was not in this particular responsibility at that time — but as a consequence of the amendments passed in 1982, that at various local levels around the province dissatisfaction was being expressed. That dissatisfaction was communicated to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association; they passed a resolution at their convention requesting a change, and consequently department officials will have had discussions with them. I'm not aware of any letters or memos that you're referring to actually having taken place.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I guess what the minister is saying then is the pressure that was coming on the department was coming as a result of a resolution passed at an annual SUMA convention?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Can the minister indicate which year . . . Do you have the resolution handy, the wording of it?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I don't have the resolution here. But it was put back in the Act in 1984 in response to a 1983 SUMA resolution.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I wonder if the minister can explain — have you had any communities writing to you or meetings with communities, or your predecessor, on the issue of the non-residents voting in small communities? Can you indicate how many communities it was a problem in? I know I have one in my constituency, and I don't know whether it's widespread or not. I can see how it could be, and I'm sure the minister can understand how it could become a major issue if we allow non-residents, but property owners, to vote in small communities.

Let's say, for example, in a community where there's 99 people, 99 voters who are resident, and there's a close race. All you have to go to is the next town down the road

and they can come in and buy a lot. They don't even have to buy it, just have an agreement for sale, put 20 names on the agreement for sale, and you understand how ludicrous this can become. The campaign then, to win the election, doesn't become who's going to do the best job for the residents, but it becomes an issue of going to different communities around and about, get them to put their name on a piece of the property, and theoretically you could have hundreds of people voting in an election in a community where there are only 50 to 60 people.

And if you could inform me how many people have approached you with this problem; do you have any idea how many found it to be a problem in the last election?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I think the fact that only one community has actually had the problem and has expressed the problem is an indication generally of the integrity and, I suppose, the fairness of the average Saskatchewan elector out there. In theory, I suppose this could have happened a long time ago and it never did. And I think we should all be thankful that it didn't. And as I said, it's likely an indication of the fact that Saskatchewan people are generally fair and want to deal with one another when it comes to elections in fair ways. So it was unfortunate that this one particular incident did take place. I'm only aware of this one.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Can the minister tell me, and this is a different theory than we have at the provincial level. You'll obviously be aware that when it comes to voting in the province in a provincial election that ownership of property does not give you the right to vote in Saskatchewan. I say to you that if you're a resident of Alberta and have property in Saskatchewan, it then does not follow that you can put your name on the voters' list for a provincial election.

And I wonder, at this time, is there any consideration being given to changing that Act, or to amend the Act, to make sure that the people who vote in these small towns are in fact residents? And I'm here just asking you, basically do you have any intention to make amendments to the legislation that would deal with this problem?

And I'm interested that it's only one community, because I had heard that there were a number of communities in the province that had expressed to the department concerns about it. And I just want you to confirm that — there's only one community that has expressed concerns about that option of people who are not residents being allowed to vote in the small centres.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Yes, as I indicated, since that election there is only that one community for which this has been a problem. Even though it was only one community, and even though it is a small community and, you know, speaking in the large provincial context, it's not a lot of people involved, nevertheless I think the problem is a significant problem. And now that it has taken place, clearly it needs attention.

The exact way in which you fix the problem up is another issue altogether. I'm not so sure you want to fix that problem up by disenfranchising a whole bunch of

people, for example, who own property and they spend a good deal of time out in other various locations where they own that property; indeed, they may live there half of the year.

So the means whereby that particular problem is ameliorated is a little bit difficult. Nevertheless, we are dealing with that, and we will be providing the House with what we believe to be a reasonable legislative solution prior to the next round of local elections.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — The minister has clearly indicated that it's a . . . And while I agree with him on the integrity of Saskatchewan voters, he will be well aware that in the heat of an election, when you have a contest in a small community, that it's got very little to do with the integrity of the people of Saskatchewan, which we both agree is very upright, but more to do with the laws of the land that allow for this to happen.

There's nothing wrong with it. I mean there's nothing wrong with going to another community and arranging for 40 people to put their name on a lot, an option to buy for a dollar, and then allowing them to vote. That's legal. I mean that's got nothing to do with integrity. Those can be people with a great deal of integrity who do that, because the law that you have allows them to do it.

And to say that if they did that, they would then not be honest people, says something about the government who passed the law and allowed it to be done. And I'm not arguing with you about it. All I'm saying is that in going into the next round of municipal elections, and I say that it's a problem now because in some of them — and you will know in the community that we've talked about — there have been court challenges to the election. And always within that realm if there are appeals of the decision, I understand the challenge was dismissed, but I suppose it could be appealed. I don't know the legal ramifications, and there could be a by-election.

(1545)

**An Hon. Member:** — Then what?

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Then what happens if we haven't dealt with the issue?

And what I'm saying that in that community, the problem that's been caused — and I don't think it was intentional, although I do say that when the amendment was before the Assembly in 1985 on May 17th, my colleague, the member from Assiniboia, clearly outlined to you what could happen, and it subsequently did happen in the fall of 1985. It's not that we were unaware because at that time we could already see the problem occurring. And my colleague from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg clearly indicated that that possibility existed in the town of Ferland where people from outside the community could prearrange to put their name on a title — they didn't have to buy the lot, I'll add there again they didn't have to buy the lot — but have an agreement for sale, have 40 names on the agreement for sale; they would then be eligible voters in the town of Ferland. And he outlined that and told you clearly that; not that he would say one side shouldn't do it or one side should, but the option was

there for them to do it. The suggestion was there that it was going to happen and that we should deal with it on May 17th of 1985.

And the minister at that time indicated that he wasn't going to do anything, and subsequently didn't do anything. Then we ended up with the problem that you and I know about where individuals who were non-residents — not business people living outside of the town, or the periphery of the town, who may have an interest in being able to vote in the community — but people from hundreds of miles away — hundreds of kilometres away — got their name on some property and then subsequently voted.

And I'm not sure whether both sides in the contest did it or not, and they may have, because it was a perfect option for them to do it. It was within your law that you allowed to be there that they should do that, and we have the strange case of more people voting in that election than what lived in the town.

Now we'd have an interesting problem if that was the case provincially where we would have more people deciding who the Government of Saskatchewan was than the number of voters who lived in the province. And we would quickly do something about that because there are ramifications that come from that that really say to the individuals who live in the town that people from Regina, who have never paid a cent of tax in Ferland, have every much right to vote and decide on the organization of that village as the person who has lived there for 40 years and paid their taxes.

Now in my mind that isn't fair.

**An Hon. Member:** — What town are you referring to?

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — The town is Ferland, and it happened in the last election. My colleague, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, clearly indicated that this was a possibility.

And if I could, Mr. Chairman, I would just like to quote from some of the relevant parts of the argument that was being made at that time, and to let you know that there was discussion going on prior to the amendments before the Assembly. And I quote from page 2443, May 23, 1985, and Mr. Engel, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is speaking. And he says:

Mr. Minister, I believe you had some guests this morning that came and visited me as well. (This) is a problem that is raised by (a) small community (and here I believe he's referring to Ferland) that have people that will . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well they don't even need to buy a lot, I understand it. They take out (an) option to buy a lot, and there'd be 20 names on that option, saying, these 20 people want to buy a lot. Would they have a right to vote in a municipal . . . election.

And Mr. Embury responds:

Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, yes, I did meet with

those people from the village of Ferland this morning. They have an unusual problem down there, but basically the rules are that if you have your name on the title, you are a property owner, and you would be allowed to vote.

Now here we have the problem being laid out to a government that refused to listen to the problem. And now we have a community that is split down the middle as a result of your government's inaction. And I say to you that the problem they express . . . And I'm not saying here that one is right and one is wrong, but obviously you've created a big problem that you knew about in advance. And I just say to you that we have the possibility of a great number of these problems occurring, and the government has to be responsible.

If it's a problem that could have happened at any time in the past, or there was a suggestion that government would have had a responsibility to deal with it, regardless of who was in power . . . It just so happens that the problem came up before the 1985 election. It was explained to you articulately, or your government, the problem that would happen if this amendment didn't take place to not allow people from outside the community to vote who had no interest in the community. And you did nothing about it.

And I'm just saying to you: what are the plans in place now, the studies that are going on? What would the general ramifications of the changes that you're proposing be to the Act as it now exists?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well, as I indicated to the member opposite, the issue has been looked at in terms of finding a legislative solution that is constitutionally correct. Because we are dealing with the ownership of property, and there are those particular individuals who may argue one way or another that by disenfranchising any particular person who happens to own even a little bit of property, you may, in fact, be doing something that's unconstitutional.

So we are trying to come up as expeditiously as we can with the appropriate legislative solution that will be seen to be constitutional, in order to rectify the problem. I do want to comment once more that the problem — you're right — the problem could have happened at any time in the past. It happened now. I think that we can certainly commend the people of Saskatchewan that they are people of integrity and that in fact they, in large measure, have decided not to take advantage of what is now seen to be a loophole in the legislation, and that they have conducted themselves with a fairness towards one another during past municipal elections.

So we are striving to, as expeditiously as possible, find the legislative solution that, as I indicated before, will be constitutionally correct and will be acceptable for all the citizens of the province.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well I understand people's concern about federal laws that may have precedence over provincial laws, and that's fair. But what I'm clearly saying here is that there was a time when the law was different, and it wasn't a constitutional problem, that it wasn't a constitutional problem. The issue here is, is what

legislation you can pass and not who was responsible for the constitution.

If you want to give us credit for the constitution, good, then we're responsible for the constitution. But the issue here is, is that it was different, where residents had a vote and non-residents didn't have a vote in Ferland, and there was no problem with the constitution.

So to try to say that there's a constitutional problem is obviously a way out of the discussion and the debate that's going on. The question that I put to you was this: what are your plans to deal with the problem?

Are you saying that you're going to leave it the way it is — and that's an option — I agree that's an option? Are you going to say that you have to own property for a certain length of time — a year, two years — that's an option? Or are you saying that you have to be a resident? Or are you saying that people who live within a radius of the centre, 10 miles let's say, because there are people who live outside and have a business in town who you may want to say need a vote, that's an option. But what I'm asking you is: which way are you leaning?

Obviously it is now a year. This debate was taking place in this Assembly May 23, 1985. We've gone through the election in the fall of '85. The problem we predicted has now occurred. You've now had about six months since then to discuss and look at it. What are the proposals that you're now looking at, and which one are you leaning towards?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well we do want to find the most effective solution which will stand the test of time. I think that is what we would all want to strive for, and the most effective solution that will stand the test of time; it may be one option, it may be another option. For example, you may put on some kind of a residency requirement or a time ownership requirement whereby a person would have to own the particular piece of property for a period of time; for example, six months, a year. I don't know what would be an appropriate ownership time-frame that you would want to apply. That may be one particular solution.

Another option that you may want to consider would be to restrict the number of individuals who would be deemed to own a particular piece of property or would actually own a particular piece of property for the purposes of the election, so that you couldn't have a ballooning of people owning one particular piece of property very shortly before an election, but that in fact it would be restricted in some way, so that you may just have a husband and a wife, for example, who would be owning a particular piece of property. It may be more.

Those are examples of the kinds of solutions that are being looked at. We naturally want to have the input of legal people, Justice people, to ensure that the legislative solution that is brought forward is in fact one that will stand the test of time and will work effectively in our municipal elections.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well I want to get the minister clearly on record here. Then you're looking at the option of

having a time limit on the length of time you have to own the property. Is that the one you're looking at? Well which one are you considering the . . . If you're preparing legislation to be ready by the next round of elections, which option are you looking at bringing before the House?

What I'm saying to you, if you don't know, then just say, I don't know. I don't understand how I'm going to solve this problem, but don't stand here and say that after a year we still don't have any decision making. I mean, that's not good enough. I mean, you're in your fifth year of your mandate, and the people are saying, why can't this man make a decision? That's what they're saying. You caused all these problems out there. You have families split down the middle as a result of the inaction on this issue, and you're saying now that I still don't know what I'm doing. That's what you're saying. You're saying, I'm confused. We're in disarray. I'm trying to get ready for an election and I don't have time to deal with this small issue. Basically that's the message you're sending out. And I'm saying that's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member from Swift Current can say "nonsense" all she wants, from her seat. And the member from Saskatoon.

But I'm going to ask questions anyway, regardless of people shouting from their seats. We've got a job to do here, and that's to deal with a problem that was created by your government. And what I would like to know is what your proposal is that will solve the problem. That's the question. Do you have a solution to the problem that I have outlined and the people from Ferland have outlined? Is there a solution at hand to the problem?

(1600)

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — You will see the solution to solve the problem when the Bill is tabled in the legislature. At that time you will know what the solution is that we are bringing forward to solve the problem.

In the meantime, we are looking extensively at a variety of options to ensure that the solution which is brought forward to the legislature is indeed the best one which will most effectively stand the test of time. Now that seems to me to be the responsible course of action to take. And you will see what it is when the Bill is tabled here in the legislature.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think you can see the arrogance of this government, the arrogance of this government, that in their fifth year, a problem that was clearly outlined to them, both by the community — and I refer again to the meeting that took place between the minister, the member for Lakeview I believe, Mr. Embury, who was the minister at that time — and the people from Ferland, who outlined to him what problem would come in the fall if they didn't amend the Act.

The minister has now admitted that he's going to amend the Act. Obviously he says there's a Bill coming. That's what he said today. There's a Bill coming. But he's not telling anyone what's going to be in the Bill. I call that arrogance to the people of Ferland.

That is a good example of the arrogance of this massive

majority government, that we presently have in the province. And it's not unlike the arrogance of other big majority governments, whether it's Pierre Elliott Trudeau, or the first Bourassa government in Quebec, or the Lougheed government in Alberta.

And I tell you that this kind of arrogance in clinging to power and telling people it's none of their business what legislation I'm going to bring forward, and that to the people of Ferland . . . Like, I don't mind you saying it to me. That's fine. We can stand the cut and thrust. We've done it for four years with you birds, and it doesn't hurt very much. Let me tell you, it doesn't hurt very much.

But you're saying this to the people of Ferland. What you're saying to them is what you just said. What you've said is, bug out. That's basically what you've said. I'll tell you my solution to the problem when I bloody well feel like it. That's what you're saying . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member from Saskatoon says, watch your language. Well I'll tell you, the language that is used in there by those people from their seats from time to time would make people's hair stand up on end.

And I'll tell you that the minister doesn't get away easily with making statements to the people of Ferland that he does not have to answer to them when they say, what are the changes to the legislation going to be? What are the changes going to be? To stand up here and arrogantly say that I don't have to tell you, is the height of arrogance.

And here we have a minister running from a little town. I don't know how many people there are in Ferland. There might be 40 or 50 or 100 voters. But here we have a minister who will hide in Regina and not deal with the problem. And we've seen this government hiding from people everywhere along the way — hiding in Swift Current from the farmers; hiding in Estevan and Weyburn from the nurses. And I say to you that a government that will hide from the people and not make decisions is one that should not be in power in this province — should not be in power.

And I say to you: this is one of the problems that happens after you have a government that's been in power for five years and unwilling to have an election. This is the arrogance that they are still showing. I think this government is more arrogant now than it was when it was first elected. I see that in their faces.

And I would like to ask you again, Mr. Minister, if you can outline what the legislation will be. What changes are you proposing to make at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite has accused me and this particular government of acting in an arrogant fashion. And I would simply respond to the member opposite that when a problem is pointed out with a particular piece of legislation, and when actions are taken to attempt to find the best possible solution that will stand the test of time, and when those various options are analysed by Justice officials to ensure that we have the appropriate legal solution, and when those options and so on are discussed with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association to ensure that we have their concurrence, that there's nothing arrogant about that. In

fact what that is is very reasonable and responsible government in action. And I think the people of the province understand that.

I suppose the member opposite can throw his accusations of arrogance any time he wants to. I'm not going to respond to those. I'm simply going to indicate that we are looking at various solutions. I have kindly given those solutions that we are considering to the member opposite this afternoon, and we are looking for the best possible legislative solution that will stand the test of time. When we are convinced that we have that solution, then we will bring forward to this Assembly the appropriate amendment, and all members of the Assembly at that time will have an opportunity to debate that particular amendment.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I want to ask the minister, on the issue of the amendments that are being looked at, do you intend that in this session you will have amendments ready to bring before the Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well, when we have received all of the advice that we believe is necessary for us to receive, and when we've had an opportunity to consult further with SUMA, when we believe that we have found what we consider to be the most effective solution that will stand the test of time, then we will bring it to this Assembly post-haste.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — The minister will know what happens from time to time is a piece of legislation is brought before the Assembly, and then it can be amended in committee, but it opens up the debate. I wonder if the minister would consider at this stage bringing forward a Bill that would deal with the problem. And I just put that forward because it's an option that governments both federally and provincially have used, and used effectively, to get input. You could use the Bill. If we adjourn when we get done — we usually adjourn as opposed to prorogue — you could take the Bill around and see what the reactions of the communities are.

I wonder if you'd consider at this time in the session to bring forward a Bill that would deal with the problem that has been enunciated by the people from Ferland.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well as I indicated, when we have determined what we believe to be the appropriate legislative solution that everyone involved is convinced will stand the test of time, then that will be incorporated into an amendment and will be brought forward to the legislature and will be debated. And we certainly want to do that as expeditiously as we can.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I wonder, have you had any lobby group from Ferland approach you to overturn the results of the Ferland election? Has your department had any application of that type or suggestions or requests that that would take place as a result of this bad legislation that you have put on the books?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I have not had anyone approach me asking for the election to be overturned, nor would I have the authority to do so. Now I don't know if that's exactly the question that you are asking.



**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Sorry if I didn't make myself clear, Mr. Minister. I had asked if you or your department officials or anyone in your department had been approached by a lobby group or an individual from the town of Ferland trying to get the election results overturned because of what they see to be a great loophole that was put into place by your government and allowed to remain there, even after the arguments that they made to your government on May 17th in 1985. Have there been any delegations or individuals come to you with that kind of suggestion?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I personally, nor did my officials ever have anybody come and say we want the election overturned. I think a better description would be that solicitors from both of the disputing sides wanted to see some kind of an inquiry into the issue. Because there were a number of points it was felt that the appropriate route to go would be to utilize The Controverted Elections Act as the means to settle the issue and, of course, it did go to the courts and the decision was made there, which you are well aware of. I do not have the authority to overturn an election.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Minister, nor am I suggesting that you have that power, nor should you have the power. The question was whether or not you had applications or suggestions that it take place.

On the issue of the inquiry that was suggested, did you have lobbying for an inquiry into that election?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — It's my understanding that there is some question as to whether or not both sides in this particular dispute in fact attempted to use the same means to win the election. The losing party did want to have some kind of an investigation or an inquiry. The decision was made, however, to go the route of The Controverted Elections Act. That was deemed to be a better route to go.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Who was it, what office in your department . . . would the decision to go with the inquiry or not to go with an inquiry have been made by yourself or by the deputy minister? Can you indicate where that decision was made at?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — The decision to not proceed with any kind of an investigation or inquiry was made at the ministerial level. And then of course the parties to the dispute have the option, which they chose, to go the route of The Controverted Elections Act.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I think I understand the minister saying that it was done at the ministerial level, and I think that's obviously where it should be done. Do you know at this time whether an option to appeal that decision is present for the parties involved? Can you tell me that, and if in fact you know whether an appeal has been started by either of the parties involved?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I understand they could appeal if they chose to do so, but we're not aware that they have done that.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I would just close off here by saying that I'm disappointed with the minister and his answers on this issue, given the fact that last May these people from Ferland were in to see your government and the minister at that time. And I don't blame you, sir, for your lack of doing something at that time because you weren't minister.

But I do say to your government and to the previous minister and to you since your appointment to the position, that I'm very disappointed that there hasn't been a solution to this problem. Because I think there can be and will be after the next election — obviously there will be. And what you're doing is simply playing politics and postponing the issue until after the next provincial election. That's what you're doing. Obviously that's what you're doing or we would have an amendment to this Bill, which you have said is coming, now, here before the Assembly.

And what you are doing is simply not fair to the people of Ferland. It is not an appropriate action of a government or a minister to say to them, look, you will see the legislation when I get ready to show you. That's what you've said here today. And while I'm not happy with it, as a member of a not very large opposition, we have to accept the decisions made by a large majority government. That's the way it is and we accept that.

But I say to you that it's unfortunate that a government in its fifth year of what is traditionally a four-year term . . . And that may sound like a contradiction of terms but that's what we see in Saskatchewan at the present time: a government in the fifth year of a four-year term clinging to power and telling yet another group in this province to never mind, we'll get around to the legislation when we feel like it, that has virtually ripped that community apart — virtually ripped the community apart.

And I find it unfortunate, sir, that you would come into this Assembly in a jocular manner and deal with this issue in a non-serious way, because we're not dealing with it in a serious way because you're saying that you will deal with it when you bloody well get time. That's what you've told us today . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, that's what he said.

And I find it unfortunate. There's nothing we can do about it because a government with your majority can ram down the throats of the people of the province whatever you want. And I know this is just a small community. And the farmers, when they met in Swift Current, that wasn't a very large crowd either and you didn't have to meet with them. And I know you don't have to go to every small town to meet with the nurses. But I say that a government that is running from the people of the province is a government that should be turfed out at the first opportunity, and I say, Mr. Chairman, likely will be.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Mr. Minister, I think my colleague from Shaunavon has made the point very well. It is really unacceptable that a problem brought to the attention of a government a year ago by the community, by people in the community, again brought to the attention of the government in this House by an elected member, goes

ignored by this government for a whole year. They call a session of the legislature last fall which could have dealt with some legislation or some amendment. We are now sitting in day 32 of this session — the 32nd day of this legislature. There still isn't an amendment. There's no amendment, and that seems to be the scenario of what we are seeing happening in this pre-election legislature.

The members of the opposition, as few as we are, are putting a lot of work into preparing for these estimates. We come to the House, ask the questions, and the ministers can't provide the answers because they've been too preoccupied thinking about an election and have given absolutely no consideration for the legislative agenda of this legislature. And here comes the question of mismanagement. There is no management of the legislative agenda by this government in this session.

This is a very serious problem that should have had an amendment. It's not good enough for the minister to say in this case, it will come in due course, because you've had 32 days of session, you've had 12 months of a year to deal with it. The same thing we see with the pension Bill, and I suspect that will be out of order, so I won't pursue it, Mr. Chairman. But there are numerous occasions where announcements have been made with no legislation brought forward to show what the true intent of the government is.

One of the excuses you have used, Mr. Minister, about not having this amendment, is that you're concerned about some constitutional problems. Well, that one's hard to figure because if we have provincial laws regulating elections that establish how elections can be held, and there is no constitutional problem how, Mr. Minister — and I would like you to answer this question — how, in your view or the view of your officials, can the establishment of municipal law present a constitutional problem when the constitution itself gives the power to the province to legislate municipal government and establish municipal government in the province? That's where the power lies — at the province — as written in the constitution. So would you explain to the House, Mr. Minister, why you're concerned about the possible constitutional implications of any amendment you might make?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well, as a government that believes in fairness, we want to make sure that no elector in any way would be discriminated through any option which would be brought forward in legislation. We want the fair decision, the fair solution that will stand the test of time, as I indicated. And for that reason, it's quite natural that whatever solution our particular department officials would propose and that I would review, that those kinds of options would naturally be presented to the Justice department and legislative review officials, as all legislation is presented, to ensure that it is indeed appropriate and that we are treating the citizens of the province fairly and justly.

I believe that certainly it is my intention and my motivation to ensure that we do have the best possible legislative solution which will stand the test of time. The members opposite can make accusations about arrogance or politics or whatever. I'm not about to get

into that particular kind of a debate. I think my responsibility as Minister of Urban Affairs is to ensure that we have the best possible legislation. I understand that the next municipal elections are held in 1988, and we do want to have the best possible legislative solution that will stand the test of time to ensure that this one particular isolated but unfortunate incident would not be repeated again in the province.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — We too would like to see the best possible legislation, Mr. Minister. Let me give you every assurance of that. We too would not like to see any elector discriminated against. We, too, believe it should withstand the test of time.

But we don't agree that it should have taken you a year of neglect — and not you personally because you have not been the minister for a year — it should not have taken a year of neglect, resulting in nothing being brought forward to this legislature up to this time, which then leads to the danger of this House being dissolved because of the call of an election and therefore no legislation in place to solve what may become another problem somewhere else.

That's the point, Mr. Minister. You did not answer the question. And the only reason I asked it is because you used it as an argument to defend the position of yourself. You did not answer the question on how could municipal legislation passed by a province which is authorized to establish municipalities possibly be in conflict with the constitution which you acclaimed was one of your leading problems in not having an amendment before us today?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well as I indicated, we are wanting to ensure that whatever legislative solution, whatever amendment is brought forward, does not discriminate against any particular person or voter. And I think that's fairly straightforward and obvious. The Justice officials will naturally want to review that, to ensure that, because this is a provincial piece of legislation, and they will want to ensure that it is an appropriate piece of legislation that is not discriminatory.

The member opposite talks about an election that may happen. He seems to imply that it would be a municipal election that would happen perhaps later this summer or this fall and that somehow this particular amendment, if it were not passed, would in fact create a problem. In fact, the next municipal elections, the next round of elections, is of course something which is slated for 1988.

Now that doesn't mean that you might not have some aberration somewhere at some point in time, where for some reason you may have to have some kind of a municipal election prior to that. But you leave the impression that somehow the entire province would be held ransom by this particular problem, and that is not the case. So I think it's important to clear that issue up. Having said that, we are moving as expeditiously as is possible to find the best possible solution that will stand the test of time. I think that's what the people of this province would expect any government to do, and that is what we are doing.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — As was once said to me, Mr. Minister, by another colleague of mine when he was referring to some other situation, if there was any sign of motion it would appear like a burst of speed. And I think that clearly applies in this case as to how quickly you have moved on this problem. You know very well that I did not indicate that there could be a potential problem around the province, but I did indicate, and I'm sure you would agree, that in some municipality there may indeed have to be a by-election like there is at a provincial level. Then you are faced with a problem.

Now I guess our little discussion here has proven again — and I hope that maybe you and others on your treasury benches will take to heart and learn — don't use arguments in defence of your negligence, which are false. And the argument you used about the constitutionality was a non-argument. You threw it out because you tried to get the thing side-tracked so that it wouldn't get to the heart of the issue. That didn't work.

Unfortunately . . . It's unfortunate that a minister of the Crown would take that tactic, but obviously that's beside the point. That's not the most important issue, the fact that you used that argument. The important issue is that no action has been taken even though the problem has confronted you for a year. Your government was aware of it. Nothing has happened. Can I ask you one final question, Mr. Minister?

**An Hon. Member:** — Sure. Go right ahead.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you. The member from Moosomin says he will allow me to ask a question. Mr. Minister, have you presented to SUMA — because if you're going to present legislation to this House in this session, I'm sure SUMA will want to consider the options that you are going to be picking your final one from — have you presented to SUMA your options?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — We have had preliminary discussions with SUMA officials. We want to, of course, have the full input from the Justice officials here in the provincial government concerning the most appropriate legislative solution, and at that time we will of course be communicating back with SUMA.

I would simply add that it is unfortunate that the member has made some of the comments that he has made today. Because what he has really done by saying that somehow there's been tardiness or there's been inaction, he has in fact called into question the professionalism and the integrity of the people who work in the Urban Affairs department who know full well that the issue is being addressed, that it has been addressed expeditiously, that an appropriate solution is being sought and will be forthcoming as quickly as possible.

(1630)

I think it's unfortunate that the member has impugned the professional people who work for the citizens of this province in the fashion that he has today. I regret to say that, because certainly after I became minister of Social Services, or pardon me, of Urban Affairs, this was an issue that was brought immediately to my attention, and it was

something that we have engaged in very quickly, and naturally a solution will be brought forward as soon as it can.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Well it's interesting that you have now indicated that when you became minister five months ago this was brought to the minister's attention, Mr. Chairman. He's indicated that. I think . . . I have no doubt that the officials of the department have been cognizant of this, because I know that they're aware of what's been happening in the Ferland case. So I have no doubt about that.

I submit to you, Mr. Minister, the problem is not one of the officials in the department. The problem is one of lack of government decision at the political level, at the cabinet level. That's where the initiative has to come for this. The officials don't decide when you bring legislation to the Chamber, Mr. Minister; you do. You and your Premier and your cabinet around the cabinet table make that decision. I have no doubt that this has been discussed in the department.

You say, Mr. Minister, that preliminary discussions have been carried out with officials of SUMA. Am I to hear you say therefore that the discussions have not considered various options with SUMA? Have your officials and the SUMA officials talked about the possible options?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I'm informed that there were preliminary, very general discussions with the senior SUMA official. Because of the detailed legal complexities in this kind of question, SUMA understandably at that particular preliminary point was not able to offer what they felt would be a legal solution. And clearly we need to find a legal solution to this particular issue because it is an issue that affects all other municipalities. That's why it is important that we find that particular best solution which will stand the test of time.

And for the member opposite to suggest that somehow you rush into this kind of an issue and immediately bring forward legislation to solve the problem, and within a two- or three-month period of time, I think is inappropriate. And I know that he hasn't suggested that verbally, but the implication has been very clear that having been minister for four or five months that you now should have solved the problem.

Well, in fact, things don't work that way when you're dealing with a complex legal issue where you want to have the kind of consultation with SUMA; you want to have the kind of consultation with the legal officials that you need to have; you want to have further consultation with SUMA officials again; that takes, of course, a reasonable amount of time. And that is why, of course, we are continuing on with our discussions with the Justice officials and the individuals in my department, and we will be bringing forward as expeditiously as is possible, as I indicated before, a reasonable solution that will stand the test of time.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — I guess, Mr. Minister, I would not consider one year rushing. One year dealing with a problem that was brought to the government's attention a year ago is not in my definition of what would be rushing

on the part of the government. As a matter of fact, even five months, in my opinion, would not be an example of rushing on the part of the minister. Mr. Minister, I think that's clear.

Mr. Minister, let's move on to something else. I simply want to ask you: can you give a commitment to this House that you will have amendments to this part of this Bill, this legislation, in this session?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well I would correct the member opposite, it's been only five months since the election actually took place. There may have been discussions about this particular kind of a problem occurring or not occurring in the past, but the election itself took place about five months ago. The court decision was rendered not that long ago. And so the course of action that we have taken to, within these past few months, investigate various kinds of legal solutions — and we will be engaging in the appropriate discussions with the necessary individuals and will be bringing forth to the Assembly the necessary amendments, in due course, as expeditiously as is possible.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Mr. Minister, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg brought it to your attention one year ago in this House through the former minister. Am I led to believe, therefore, that when you say as soon as possible, that you will have an amendment to that legislation in this session of the legislature? That was my question.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Mr. Chairman, all things are possible. Whether or not all things are likely is another question. I simply indicated that we will find the best possible legal solution that we can that will stand the test of time. Once we have found that and done the appropriate consultations, then we will bring forward, in due course, as expeditiously as possible, to this Assembly, that particular legal solution.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Okay, Mr. Minister. I will leave it at that. I can't get from you a commitment that legislation will be brought forward in this session of the legislature; that's clear.

We will move on to the next item that I wanted to ask some questions about. Mr. Minister, there has been a considerable amount of concern that has been expressed from various sources, but predominantly by the city of Regina, dealing with the question of grants in lieu of taxes. Mr. Minister, I know that representations have been made to your department, possibly to the former minister, and I believe to yourself. Can you inform the House what your government's position is on the issue of grants in lieu of taxes as has been presented to you?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Our policy today is the same as your administration's policy when you were in government.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Mr. Minister, I'm not sure I want to be complimented for having your policy to be the same as ours, but that wasn't my question. You've been the government for four years; you're now the government into your fifth year. It's an irrelevancy to discuss what may have been policy four years ago. You're responsible for

answering for your policy. And I just ask you a simple question because I think you have an obligation to state to the people who have been raising it with you: what is the government's position on grants in lieu of taxes? Will you please explain that to the House?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well as I indicated, our policy on grants in lieu of taxes is identical to the policy that you had in place when your particular NDP administration was in power, concerning grants in lieu of taxes. So there has been no change in policy over the years on the issue of grants in lieu of taxes. The member opposite knows what that particular policy is. He could have stated it quite readily when he rose to his feet and asked me if there had been any change in that particular policy. He chose not to do that. I will read the policy.

The province currently pays grants in lieu of taxes on property owned by Crown corporations, but not on property directly owned by the government. That policy is as I indicated, and for the benefit of the public watching, that policy is identical to the policy of the former NDP administration.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Does the government pay grants in lieu of taxes for all the Crown corporations?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I believe SPC pays a surcharge based on sales, but generally all other Crown corporations pay grants in lieu of taxes.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Generally all, or all?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — As I understand it, most Crowns pay grants in lieu of taxes. There are, I believe, two exceptions — I'm not aware of any more; there may be — SaskPower Corporation, which provides revenue based on a percentage of SPC revenue, and Sedco, which may negotiate special arrangements with regard to undeveloped lands, but I'm not sure what kind of arrangements they have.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — For the sake of time, Mr. Minister, can you undertake . . . Can you have your officials or yourself at some time within the next week or so provide me with an answer about those who pay and those who may not pay? Is that a fair question?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I don't have a definitive answer. It may take some time to get that. I won't be able to get it within the next minute or two. I don't even know if that would be readily available today, but we'll try and get that for you.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — That's fair enough. I know you can't get it today probably. But as long as you can tell me that you will get it for me and send it to me, I'd be quite satisfied. Is that okay with you? Thank you; it's okay with the minister.

Mr. Minister, I have information on what some provinces do. Can maybe your officials inform you, and you can inform me, whether other provinces, whether all the other provinces provide grants in lieu of taxes to the municipalities in which they have government buildings? Do you have that easily accessible?

(1645)

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — One other province does not. So two provinces, one other province plus Saskatchewan. All other provinces, to some degree, pay grants in lieu of taxes.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you. The two that I have, that I'm aware of, is Quebec, and I use the example of Quebec City, which has roughly the same population as Saskatchewan at . . . or the same population as Regina and Saskatoon at about 166,000. and in 1985, the city of Quebec City received from, I guess, the province of Quebec, \$23.9 million grant in lieu of taxes.

Another one is the city of Victoria in British Columbia, with a population of 64,000. And it received, in 1985, \$2 million grant in lieu of taxes. So I simply mention those to underline with you, Mr. Minister, the importance with which the municipalities consider this issue.

I know now, because you have said it, that your government has no intention of changing the policy. I hope you will at least take under serious consideration representations that have been made to you. And I know that the city of Regina intends to, if it has not already, make a presentation to the government, because their legislative committee has considered this issue. There has been a lot of debate on it.

The city has to provide the infrastructure and other kinds of services at great cost, to these facilities. And whether it was done 20 years ago, I think, is not totally relevant. We are now living in 1986, and like many other programs and policies of government, it sometimes . . . They always need to be reconsidered from time to time.

So I hope at least, Mr. Minister, that your government will take seriously the representations that might be made by the cities of Saskatchewan with regard to this issue.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I would just indicate for the interest of the member opposite. He will be interested in hearing this. You quoted Quebec City as an example of receiving 23 million-plus dollars in 1985. The fact is, however, that Quebec City does not receive any revenue sharing from the senior government.

So when you consider the fact that Regina receives revenue sharing from the provincial government, and in addition receives an additional 1.8 million on top of the 23.5 million, in fact Regina, with a similar population, receives more money from this provincial government — this was in 1985 — than Quebec City did. So it is important that we provide all of the information when we deal with these particular matters.

As I indicated at different times, we do not intend to change the particular policy concerning grants in lieu of taxes. I have received representation by way of letter from the city of Regina requesting, of course, a change. I would indicate for the member opposite that the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, which represents all municipalities, has not expressed support for this particular suggestion.

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — I agree with you, Mr. Minister. It's important to provide all the information and that's why, when you made your remarks, you should have mentioned that the city of Quebec, like other cities in Quebec, get other funding from the government. They may not call it revenue sharing like we have it here in Saskatchewan, but you know very well that urban municipalities in that province, as other provinces, get provincial funding under transportation programs and capital programs and so on.

So let's not play those kind of misleading games. That funding . . . Those cities like the city of Quebec have received on top of the grant in lieu of taxes of 23.9 million. I don't know why you persist in trying to play those kind of games in your estimates, Mr. Minister. All it's doing is delaying your estimates because I think it's an obligation on our part to correct your erroneous statements, and we'll continue to do that as long as you make them.

Why don't you follow the advice of your officials, answer as they give you the answers? And then we'll get along quite well here and get to the next item on the estimates.

I'm just about concluded on this. I think one of my colleagues has a few questions on this particular issue and I will let him ask the question.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — The member, of course, referred to things such as capital grants and transit grants, suggesting that somehow Quebec City received those and Regina does not. And he made reference to erroneous remarks. I think the record needs to be corrected and the public watching need to be informed that what he suggested was in fact erroneous. By implication that's in fact what he was suggesting. Regina does receive transit grants, and they do receive capital grants, and they do receive revenue sharing, and in addition, they do receive some grants in lieu from Crown corporations. So certainly the city of Regina is in a very well-off financial position, comparatively speaking, to Quebec City, when it comes to revenue proceeding out of provincial coffers.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Minister, the mayor of Regina and I seem to be making a common cause on so many issues. This is another. I report to you an article in January 31, 1986 in which . . . I direct quote from the *Leader-Post* of that date. I'm sorry, it's February 1, 1986, the next day.

Mayor Larry Schneider hasn't given up on plans to get \$6 million in grants in place of property taxes on provincial government buildings in Regina.

Mr. Minister, your colleague, your Minister of Finance, went out of his way to criticize Regina city council in his budget — some quite gratuitous comments which contributed nothing to the speech and which appeared to be nothing other than a mean-spirited swipe at Regina city council. The means by which he chose to take that swipe was by saying to the Assembly that evening that Regina city council collected something like a third of the property taxes in the province.

A couple of days ago he repeated his comment, made a comment along the same vein by suggesting that Regina's

taxes were unduly high. Well I think, Mr. Minister, one of the reasons why Regina taxes are higher is because in this city, unlike other capitals, the provincial government buildings largely sit tax free, and that makes an awful difference. If you compare this city to Saskatoon — cities of approximately the same size — the office buildings, the places of employment of people of the city of Saskatoon, all pay property taxes. In this city they don't, and that makes an awful difference in terms of this city's tax base.

One of the reasons why the taxes of this city are so high is because this city, unlike I gather virtually every other community in the country, receives no grants in lieu of taxes. I suggest, Mr. Minister, if your Minister of Finance believes that this city has been beset by inefficient and wasteful councils, he might try putting them on the same footing as other communities before he makes those disparaging comments.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, if you don't think that this is a significant contributing factor to the high taxes about which your Minister of Finance has been so bitterly critical.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well perhaps the member could clarify: are you in favour of the provincial government paying grants in lieu of taxes on all the property that it owns to the city of Regina? Perhaps that would clarify for me, so I could better understand where the debate's going to go.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The city council has spent some time on this, Mr. Minister. I cannot believe that you are unaware of their question. I am not going to allow this debate to be led into a highly detailed area. I'll be quite candid and tell you that I don't have all the information you have; nor do I have all the information the city of Regina has.

I want to know whether or not a request which appears perfectly legitimate on the face of it from the Regina city council and from the mayor of Regina is going to be honoured by this government, or are you going to go on making mean-spirited swipes at the city council for reasons that are in part beyond their control? I suggest this is one.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well here you are asking a question of a minister of the Crown concerning a particular policy, saying that you don't have all of the information. I suggest that as a responsible member of the opposition you should be taking the time to find out the detailed information from the city of Regina to decide whether or not you think it is in the best interest of the taxpayers of the province for the provincial government to pay grants in lieu of taxes. And then you should take a position and say, I believe that you should or you should not, and I am advocating this particular position.

Now I want to know whether or not you are in favour of the provincial government providing grants in lieu of taxes to the city of Regina. If you don't want to state your position, that's fine. All right?

**An Hon. Member:** — I will. Sit down. Okay, sit down. Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Well, just sit down and wait till . . .

**Mr. Chairman:** — Order, order, order. The minister's still speaking.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — I'm interested in knowing because, if I remember correctly, you represented a seat here in Regina for many years under the former NDP administration, and indeed you were a minister of the cabinet during the former NDP administration, and you likely could have had some influence in determining whether or not your NDP administration would have provided grants in lieu of taxes to the city of Regina. Now your administration never did that. Now I'm interested in knowing now whether you have changed your mind, and whether or not you believe that the provincial government should now provide grants in lieu of taxes to the city of Regina.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Answer: yes. I do now and always did, notwithstanding any action that may or may not have been taken by the former administration. Now, Mr. Minister, will you answer the question?

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — So you have taken the position that the provincial government should now provide grants in lieu of taxes to the city of Regina, even though the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association — which represents literally hundreds of individuals, indeed thousands of people around the province — is not supportive of that particular idea. They do not support the idea that the provincial government should provide grants in lieu of taxes to the city of Regina.

Indeed, I believe the city of Saskatoon is not supportive of that particular suggestion. Indeed the city of Moose Jaw is on record as stating that it would be pleased to see the relocation of provincial capital and government departments and buildings from Regina, and they would not wish to tax those buildings if only they could have that particular kind of activity and economic development that would ensue from that in the city of Moose Jaw. And of course the city of Melville is most interested in seeing some particular government departments there.

If this particular policy were to be put in place it would result in the city, in essence, imposing taxes on hospitals, which would increase health care costs. It would result in a tax bill to the University of Regina, in essence, increasing the tuition fee costs in the order of about 35 per cent to students here in the city.

So I think that clearly the people of this province, in large measure, and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, and many other municipalities, do not believe that it would be in the best interests of the taxpayers of this province for the provincial government to pay grants in lieu of taxes to the city of Regina.

Now that was the position, I suspect, that your former NDP administration took. It happens to be one of the few positions that this particular government agrees with your former administration on. We do not accept the position that we should be paying grants in lieu of taxes, and that's the way the issue will stay.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Minister, you stated that the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association had taken a position opposing grants in lieu of taxes. I'd appreciate knowing the minister's authority for that statement.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Regina brought forward a resolution, I believe it was at the most recent SUMA convention, and the resolution was not carried at the convention.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well there may be . . . Assuming that information to be correct, there may be a number of other explanations for the resolution not having been passed, besides them being opposed.

Mr. Minister, I wish you'd deal with the merits of the issue and not take refuge in the petty jealousy of other cities. And I suspect that's what the comments of the people from Moose Jaw and the officials from Melville and the officials from Prince Albert are. Those are petty jealousies of other communities; scarcely represent what I regard as an adequate response to a legitimate request, a request which other capitals have met.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister, there may not be time now, but I ask you, Mr. Minister, over the lunch-hour to give the matter some consideration and give the question a reasonable response. To suggest that Prince Albert and Moose Jaw and Melville would all like to have the Legislative Building moved to their communities is scarcely an adequate response to this request. So I suggest, Mr. Chairman, since the minister appears not to have adequately thought out the issue that we call it 5 o'clock, give him a chance to do so over lunch, and I will await a more learned response at 7 o'clock.

**Hon. Mr. Dirks:** — Mr. Chairman, just prior to the House rising for supper, I would reiterate again, for the member's edification, that the Regina proposal concerning grants in lieu of taxes was rather resoundly defeated by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association convention delegates at their 1986 convention in Regina. Obviously, it's got nothing to do with petty jealousies. The other people in the province — other municipalities — recognize the unfairness of the position that the Regina council was advancing.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.