

July 9, 1987

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTIONS

Closure of Hospital Beds in Saskatoon

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health, and it has to do with the fact that over 10,000 people are on the hospital waiting list in Saskatoon. That situation, Mr. Minister, is critical, and has been made even worse by your government's underfunding of hospitals. This underfunding has forced the closure of 308 hospital beds this summer.

Mr. Minister, how can you justify the closure of 308 hospital beds, including a number of surgical beds used regularly by cancer patients, at a time when the waiting list is at more than 10,000. How do you justify that?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, as I have said to the hon. member, and to others on previous occasions, there's no question that the hospital . . . that the surgery waiting list in Saskatoon is of extreme concern to us, as it is to obviously a good number of people in this province.

An Hon. Member: — By your actions.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — That's true.

The point also needs to be made, Mr. Speaker, that the solution to that problem as, I believe, the member's suggestion of a solution is that more money just needs to be pumped in there again — as it has been for a good long time, and that's the case. But that is not the long-term solution.

We have . . . Two solutions we have to have. First, the long-term — or first, a very short-term solution, and we're looking at that, and we're working with the hospitals right now on that. I'll give the member the assurance of that. And the long-term solution is for a more of a rationalized system in Saskatoon . . . and some of the other things which we're also working on with Saskatoon, the hospital boards and the presidents of those hospitals.

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, we're very concerned about it as well. We'll continue to be, and we'll continue to work very diligently on the specific problem the member mentions.

Ms. Atkinson: — Supplementary, Mr. Minister, there are patients with cancer, there are children with tracheotomies waiting to get into hospital beds, and the situation is urgent and the situation is critical. Yesterday morning a Saskatoon doctor stated that it's taking from four to six weeks for patients who are on the urgent list to get into hospital. The Saskatoon hospitals define "urgent" to include cancer patients and other patients for whom excessive waiting lists may result in deterioration of their

condition.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me, in light of such delays, why didn't you provide Saskatoon hospitals with funding so that we wouldn't have to close those 308 hospital beds. Why didn't you provide them with funding?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, as I suggested to you earlier, the member suggests that the hospital waiting list problem would be solved by one thing only — the very simplistic answer of that member is just send more money.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is not the only answer. There is no question that more money has been sent, more money will be sent to deal with the waiting list problem. We are working on that problem specifically with surgeons in Saskatoon and with the hospital administrators and the hospital boards presently.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Saskatoon myself yesterday at the University Hospital . . . We will work on that. We will continue to work on it. We do not deny that there is a problem with waiting lists in Saskatoon, but we do not admit as well that this is the first year that there have ever been waiting lists in Saskatoon hospitals, Mr. Speaker. The point needs to be made how hospital waiting lists in Saskatoon have been a problem through good times and bad times, Mr. Speaker. and in good times there were waiting list problems in Saskatoon as well.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, I refer you to a document that a group of Saskatoon doctors gave to you a few weeks ago and their report states: "over the past several . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, please. I'm assuming that the member is asking a supplementary because she didn't indicate whether it was a supplementary or a new question, so I must assume it was a supplementary. And since I'm assuming that, I cannot permit you to quote.

Ms. Atkinson: — New question. This document states very clearly that the hospital waiting list in Saskatoon has deteriorated over the last several years, and there are many patients waiting in excess of 12 months for surgery. With each summer closure the problem has worsened, and we know of no other major Canadian city in Canada where the hospital waiting list is so great and the hospital waiting times.

Mr. Minister, that is not uninformed rhetoric and it's not inflamed rhetoric. That's fact. Those are the words of the doctors. Why do you choose to ignore people who know their patients and have the information? Why do you choose to ignore them?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, we have not chosen to ignore them. That is not so. We have not chosen to ignore the problem. I have said to you, said to the House, said to the hon. member on several occasions, and to the people in Saskatoon involved with the hospitals, we have not chosen to ignore them. We will be addressing the problem. We are addressing the problem.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is a very complex one. We are addressing that problem. We'll continue to address the problem. Some of what we see, Mr. Speaker, some of what we see in terms of some of the stories that are out there in terms of in the news media and so on, are stories which are certainly having an effect on people and saying, well, can that possibly be true, and so on.

There was a story in the newspaper yesterday, Mr. Speaker. There was a story in the newspaper yesterday in Saskatoon regarding one lady's circumstance. As it turns out, that lady has been . . . and the request from her doctor in University Hospital for surgery came to University Hospital yesterday. That patient has been booked for surgery on the 20th of July. That request came to University Hospital for the first time yesterday, after the newspaper story was there. I would suggest the right order would be a request to the University Hospital, and then perhaps a newspaper story.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the Premier. On June 23, sir, in the legislature you made it clear that you felt that a wait of five or six weeks for urgently needed medical treatment was far too long.

At page 638 of *Hansard*, and these are your words:

. . . we have long line-ups in Manitoba; it's running five or six weeks. I'm concerned about the health of the patients in Manitoba.

Now those are the words. When, Mr. Premier, are you going to be equally concerned with the health of people in Saskatchewan who are similarly waiting five or six weeks?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — And how many people's lives have to put at risk before you understand the urgency of the situation in Saskatoon?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, as the hon. member knows, our expenditures on health care are the highest any place in Canada, and we don't charge, Mr. Speaker. I note that Manitoba's largest hospital has closed beds for the summer. And I can refer to Edmonton hospitals, and I can refer to hospitals across the country.

Now we have the most beds per capita in Canada. We have the most money per capita going to health in Canada. We don't charge premiums as they do in other jurisdictions in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is right, and the hon. member knows, and this

former minister of Health would stand here and say, line-ups are a source of efficiency. That's what the NDP said.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say nobody's happy with line-ups, but the line-ups are not the same in Regina; they're not the same in regional hospitals. And there are things that we can do with respect to administration, Mr. Speaker, that would make a significant difference. And that's precisely what the Minister of Health is going to do.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Premier may have heard Dr. Scharfstein on the radio this morning, indicating that in his judgment there were twice as many beds closed this summer in Saskatoon hospitals as there were in previous summers, when waiting lists are at least double what they were five years ago.

Now, Mr. Premier, in the fact of those facts — which come from Dr. Scharfstein, who was the president of the medical society and not in any way biased in this regard — in the face of those facts, why are you not acting to reduce the bed closures this summer, at least to a normal level, rather than doubling the number of beds closed this summer in Saskatoon?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the health care budget used to be 25 per cent of the total; now it's up to over 30 per cent of the total, Mr. Speaker, and we have more beds per capita than we've ever had. And, Mr. Speaker, on top of that you will find that the unique situation in the city of Saskatoon is addressed, and is being addressed by the Minister of Health.

He met with the doctor you mentioned yesterday, and he's aware of the concerns. He's also aware of some of the reasons why it's only happening in Saskatoon and is not happening in Regina, nearly to the extent, or is happening in North Battleford. And those reasons are the very things that the Minister of Health and the medical profession and hospital administrators are addressing now, because we're saying there were line-ups five years ago.

Why this year? Why this year? It's a very good question. Why this year, when the health care budget is higher than it's ever been in our history, higher than it's ever been in any place across Canada, is all of a sudden the line-ups in Saskatoon that much higher? Now that's a very good question, and we want to get to the bottom of that question.

We're putting more money on it. We've got more beds, and we've got approximately the same population; we're spending more than anybody else in the country, and the line-ups, interestingly, Mr. Speaker, are going up in Saskatoon. Now we have a unique situation in that city, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to address it.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, Mr.

Premier, the combined actions of your government, and the actions forced upon the university by your government have meant an exodus of specialists from Regina — a sharp movement of patients from Regina to Saskatoon. Is this your way of solving the bed problem in Saskatoon? And why don't you take the rational step of retaining specialists in Regina to relieve pressure in Saskatoon?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member's question, the rational step as he refers to, in terms of retaining specialists and doing everything possible to retain specialists in the various areas in this city of Regina for southern Saskatchewan, are being taken. Those movers are being taken.

There's no question in some of the sub-specialties that were related to the university teaching program here that there is a problem here. There's no question that that's the case.

Some doctors — once that has been referred to in the House before — Dr. Bactor, I believe now is to be going to Saskatoon, I believe that's the case. Dr. Bactor will be practicing for some portions of the week in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the decision by the University of Saskatchewan to consolidate their teaching and the academic side of medicine at the College of Medicine in Saskatoon, where the College of Medicine has always been, is a rational decision by the College of Medicine has always been, is a rational decision by the College of Medicine. That's a rational decision by the College of Medicine.

The decision, as it affects the availability of specialists in the city of Regina and, therefore, for southern Saskatchewan, presents some problems to the hospitals here and to the medical care here in southern Saskatchewan. Those problems are being addressed, and I will say to the member and to others, in the area of neonatology for example, that's been solved. The General Hospital has its program that's been solved by the General Hospital. Those areas have been solved. There are other areas — ophthalmology for example — where recruiting is going on in a very active way and new people will be here.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary to Mr. Minister. You tell me that the movement of specialists from Regina to Saskatoon to the College of Medicine was rational. And it was, on the part of the College of Medicine, because their obligation is to teach. It is not rational on the grounds of providing medical services in southern Saskatchewan and that, sir, is your obligation.

I ask you, sir, how can you say that it is not putting pressure on Saskatoon hospitals to move specialists from Regina to Saskatoon, as you admit has happened, and provide service to Regina on a "flying doctor" basis like the Australian outback?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Two or three points, Mr. Speaker. The member says it's a rational decision by the College of

Medicine. It is something . . . it's the first time they have admitted that. So that's good. It's a rational decision by the College of Medicine because their obligation is to teach. I admit as well, admit. . . I accept the responsibility for the delivery of health care services in all parts of this province, regardless of how remote or how much of a major city it is. The city of Regina has an excellent system. This city of Regina is now, as a result of that decision by the College of Medicine, this city of Regina is short in some sub-specialist areas. There's no question that that's true.

Mr. Speaker, we are addressing that in conjunction with the hospitals. There is active recruiting going on and there is success in some of that recruiting. As we all have, Mr. Speaker, those specialists in place in the near future.

Medicare Coverage for Chiropractic Care

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, on Tuesday last we presented a petition to this legislature, signed by over 3,000 Saskatchewan residents, urging you not to proceed with your plans to limit medicare coverage for chiropractic care. Your government has proposed a cap of 10 to 12 insured visits per patient per year for chiropractic care, a move which would hit chronic sufferers the hardest.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is this: in light of this public reaction, have you reconsidered this decision, and will you now assure the people of Saskatchewan that you will drop these plans to limit medicare coverage for chiropractic care?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Well, Mr. Speaker, an example of . . . just an example of . . . just a couple of things, a couple of points prior to answering this specific question. The member . . . and as I have said as well to a couple of his colleagues earlier, there has been no reduction in chiropractic care. That's number one.

Contrary to what that member and others in that caucus over there have been saying to people, openly saying to people in the province, that chiropractic care is no longer there. Okay. They've been openly saying that. There has not been a change. Mr. Speaker, we are actively discussing with the chiropractic profession a way in which we can change, and there may well be changes in chiropractic coverage, ways in which that change can take place.

It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to note the members opposite do not change anything — do not change chiropractic coverage; do not change dental coverage; do not change any of the supplementary programs; the drug coverage; do not change any of these things. At the same time send more money to Saskatoon. At the same time send tremendous hundreds of millions of more dollars to Regina . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. order. Order. Order, please. Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, on May 27 the president of the Saskatchewan Chiropractic Association confirmed in the press that your government has proposed a limit of medicare on chiropractic care. And just three days later, Mr. Minister, you had indicated that we haven't announced anything yet, but that we are thinking of putting a cap of 10 to 12 visits per year on chiropractic care.

Why not, Mr. Minister, be honest with the people of Saskatchewan? Don't follow the lead of your Premier. Be honest with the people of Saskatchewan and tell them now that there will be no limits on chiropractic care per year per patient. Would you tell the people that now?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I'll say to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, there is one province in Canada where there is no cap in terms of the number of visits to a chiropractor allowed — one. Okay. That is the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I have said on many occasions when we went through this budget process, when we go through this budget process, it's extremely important that we look at every service provided; the way in which that service is provided; the rationale for that service, in every case. And that's what we have done.

As it relates to the specifics of chiropractic service, I have said that we are discussing this and continue to with the chiropractic profession, as we are, I might add for the next questioner, with the physiotherapist profession. We're discussing that with both of those professions. And if there are changes, they will be announced at some future time.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, I get a clear indication that you are thinking of limiting chiropractic care. But you simply don't want to be honest with the people of Saskatchewan. I want to say you, Mr. Minister, in the budget that has just been presented, is there sufficient funds for unlimited chiropractic care for people in Saskatchewan? Or have you already taken into account a limit of 10 to 12 visits per year in this year's budget. Which one is it? Is it a limited number of visits, or is it unlimited? Which one is it?

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be very pleased to go through when we go through a line by line in the budget in estimates, to go through with that member or any of his colleagues. The estimate number that's in the budget for various services. I'll be pleased to go through that in estimates, and that will be the appropriate time.

Meech Lake Accord

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier, respecting the Meech Lake accord on the constitution. And, Mr. Premier, there seems to be a discrepancy between the full Meech Lake accord which you signed on June 3 on behalf of Saskatchewan, and the

specific motion which is now on the order paper at this legislature.

The motion that we have before us does not include the preamble that was a part of the accord which you signed. And in that preamble there are certain very specific matters referred to in respect to immigration and population.

And my question, Mr. Premier, is this: by approving this motion, which is more limited than the accord itself, will this legislature, by implication, also be approving the preamble to the full Meech Lake accord? Will we be adopting the Cullen-Coulter formula? And will we be restricting the potential growth of Saskatchewan's population in proportion to other provinces? Because that is one of the implications of the preamble contained in the accord, but not contained in the motion that is specifically before us.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I will be addressing the motion before the House after question period, and I will be going through it in some detail, as I am sure others will be at that time. The changes in the constitution that apply to the preamble will have to have the appropriate recognition by Canadians, Mr. Speaker.

So I could only say, in response to changes that would affect Saskatchewan's population, we will all have the same powers over population. And I point out to the individual, the hon. member, that when you're in Canada, there's nothing restricting you from moving anywhere else in Canada. So any assumption that you couldn't move into Saskatchewan or you couldn't move out of Saskatchewan would not be accurate.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary. The Meech Lake preamble says Quebec is guaranteed its proportionate share of population growth plus 5 per cent, and other provinces can effectively have the same deal if they want it. Now, Mr. Premier, doesn't that say to you that Quebec will, for all intents and purposes, forever be seven times larger than Saskatchewan; Ontario will for all intents and purposes forever be about 10 times larger than Saskatchewan; B.C. about three times larger than Saskatchewan; and so forth. And it doesn't imply the federal spending on . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. It's a supplementary and you're getting very long on your supplementary. I would like you to put the question immediately if you have one.

Mr. Goodale: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, indeed I will. Does not the language preamble, Mr. Premier, specifically imply that Saskatchewan will be restricted for all intents and purposes to the same proportion of propulsion that we have today in relation to other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — No, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't imply that at all. As I mentioned, that when you're looking at immigration, people can come into Ontario or into Quebec but nothing prevents them at all from coming into western Canada or the province of Saskatchewan.

So we have the same rights with respect to immigration as

does the province of Quebec. And if everybody in Canada wants to move to Saskatchewan or people want to move into Alberta or they want to move into Quebec, that's fair ball.

So I don't read into it at all that it limits Saskatchewan's growth on our right to have immigrants or the opportunity for French-speaking people to move into the province of Saskatchewan or Irish-speaking people or anybody else.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Why is the member for Weyburn on his feet?

Variable Grain Rate Benefits

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I took notice of a question, I think it was two days ago, and I'd like to report to the House on that now.

Mr. Speaker, I took notice on a question from the member for Quill Lakes on a question relative to variable rates. The opposition had suggested Cargill will not be passing on all of the \$1.50 per ton savings of the variable rates to producers taking advantage of a variable rate point. The question was something to the effect of: will the government be doing anything to discourage farmers from using these services?

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is this: that Cargill will in fact be passing on to farmers all of the \$1.50 per ton rate discount received by Cargill. The discount of \$1.50 per ton only applies to grain moved to 18-car blocks from one origin to one destination. Cargill has announced that it will accumulate all the savings generated from shipping 18-car blocks in a special performance rebate fund.

Then when a producer delivers grain to an elevator . . . rather, when a producer delivers grain to an elevator, it is not known at that time where the grain will be shipped out as part of an 18-car block. Therefore, for every 18-car block of grain delivered, Cargill will put the \$1.50 per ton discount in a special discount in the special account. Once Cargill determines how many 18-car blocks were shipped out, they will then divide the accumulated discount in the special account among all producers who delivered to that point. Each producer will receive a minimum 25 cents per ton rebate, presuming 17 per cent of Cargill's grain handlings are shipped in 18-car blocks.

The Saskatchewan government will not be doing anything to discourage cost savings to our financially hard-pressed farmers. This, Mr. Speaker, sounds eminently fair. Other companies may choose different methods but, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, the farmer will be the final judge.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Constitution Amendment, 1987

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak to a matter which is of paramount interest to the Government

of Saskatchewan, as well as to all people of Canada.

Today I am introducing in this Assembly the resolution to authorize the proclamation of a new amendment to the Canadian constitution.

This amendment represents a major achievement for Canada. The text of the constitutional amendment which I am presenting to you today was the subject of unanimous agreement by all first ministers in Canada. This agreement was forged at a meeting of the first ministers on June 2 and 3 of this year, in which each first minister participated in a constructive and co-operative spirit of accommodation. This meeting was a testimony to the fact that through open dialogue and a willingness to participate constructively, even such important and complex matters as changing this country's constitution can be the subject of unanimous agreement in Canada.

To succeed in dealing with the challenges of the future, Canada must be a strong and united country. However, the constitutional exercise that resulted in the Constitution Act, 1982, left Canada with a difficult legacy. Although the Prime Minister of Canada of the day, and the premiers of nine provinces came to an agreement about an appropriate constitutional text for Canada, one jurisdiction, the province of Quebec did not assent. This was a major problem, because to a large extent, it was the calls from and promises made to Quebec for constitutional change that were the impetus behind constitutional reform. Without the agreement that has recently been negotiated, the constitution would have been a source of discontent and division in Canada and this, in turn, would have hampered our ability to deal with the major issues which we will have to face as we prepared for the 21st century.

The constitutional talks that resulted in the text which I put before the Assembly today began with the conference at Mont-Gabriel, Quebec, in May of 1986. It was at this conference that the Province of Quebec indicated that five topics for future discussions were impossible. These areas of concern reflected a strong belief in the future of Canada, and of Canadian federalism, by the government of Quebec. In the months following Mont-Gabriel conference, a series of meetings took place between governments to attempt to find a basis for agreement. These discussions took place at both the bilateral and at the multilateral level, and involved officials, ministers responsible for constitutional issues, and first ministers.

Saskatchewan participated in these discussions with the objective of finding a set of constitutional reforms which would be beneficial, not just for Quebec, but to all Canadian provinces and to Canada as a whole. I feel that the amendment agreed to by first ministers on June 3 achieves this objective. As I mentioned in my speech at the first ministers' conference on June 3, I believe that this constitutional agreement is an indication of the maturity that our country has achieved. This maturity is reflected in our increased capacity to give official recognition to the existence of two major linguistic groups in Canada and to take measures to meet the needs of each. This maturity is also seen in our recognition of the interdependence of the two orders of government, and the need for increased levels of consultation between the two orders of

government in order to facilitate and attain national objectives.

A word about Quebec as a distinct society. Section 2 of the new amendment recognizes the existence of French-speaking Canadians, located primarily in Quebec, but also present elsewhere in Canada; and English-speaking Canadians, concentrated in the other nine provinces, but also present within the province of Quebec. This linguistic reality is recognized as a fundamental characteristic of our nation. It is also recognized that Quebec constitutes a distinct society within Canada. Affirmation is given to the role of Canada, as well as that of every province, to preserve the linguistic duality of Canada. Finally, Quebec's role to preserve and promote Quebec as a distinct society; within Canada is also affirmed.

This provision, in my view, is a fair and a reasonable one. It has the very important consequence of not making the province of Quebec the sole protector of the French language in Canada. This was introduced into the amendment in order to protect the interests of French language minorities living outside of Quebec. It also has to effect off assuring the protection of the English language minority living within the province of Quebec.

The role of Quebec to preserve and to promote the distinct identity of that province was included to recognize the fact that Quebec is the only jurisdiction in Canada and, for all practical purposes, in North America, where the French language is spoken by the majority of the population. In view of this, Quebec may need to perform a role with regard to the French language and unique culture in that province which is not necessary for other provinces.

In terms of the division of powers, however, this section does not take away any powers from parliament or from any legislature in the country, including Quebec. In fact, a clause was included in this section, stating that this section does not derogate in any way from federal or provincial powers, including any powers related to language.

I also think it is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the inclusion of this section in the new amendment does not affect the constitutional rights of aboriginal people, nor the right of Canadians whose heritage is neither English or French. In fact, section 16 of the amendment states specifically that the new section which I have just described does not affect those parts of the constitution dealing with aboriginal rights, nor those parts of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms relating to the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.

Immigration. Section 3 of the new amendment deals with matters relating to immigration. Under this provision, the federal government commits itself to negotiating with any province that so wishes an agreement on immigration that is appropriate to the needs and circumstances of that province. These agreements, once negotiated, can be given the force of law by the constitution.

In these agreements, the federal government would

maintain the power to set national standards and objectives relating to immigration, including the establishment of general classes of immigrants to Canada, and the identification of categories of individuals who are inadmissible into our nation. The federal government would also maintain the power to set the overall number of immigrants which would be admitted to the country. Furthermore, the agreements negotiated between the federal government and a particular province would not affect the continued application of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This section of the new Act is a recognition of the fact that the provincial interests can be affected by immigration policies. Its significance is in the fact that it makes available arrangements by which a particular province and the federal government can assure that the specific needs of individual provinces in this area are represented, while at the same time preserving the powers necessary for the federal government to protect national interests in the area of immigration.

The Supreme Court of Canada. The next significant change to the Canadian constitution deals with the Supreme Court. Under the provision included in the constitutional amendment, the Supreme Court of Canada is formally entrenched into the constitution of Canada. Furthermore, the provision sets the minimum criteria necessary for a person to become eligible for appointment to the Supreme Court. It also deals with the very important issue of how to make appointments to the Supreme Court. The legal requirement that three judges from the Supreme Court must be from the bar or bench of Quebec, which is already part of the Supreme Court Act, has not been constitutionalized. This is in recognition of the fact that Quebec is the only Canadian province that operates under the civil law system, and that this legal system just be represented on the Supreme Court.

Furthermore, the new Act will allow provincial governments to participate in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court. This is the first time, Mr. Speaker, in Canadian history that provincial governments will have this opportunity. As a result, when the amendment has been proclaimed, governments of each province will be able to submit the names of individuals they consider appropriate for appointment to the highest court of the land, and the federal government will make its decision from those names submitted.

I believe this is an important step forward for Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada, as the final arbiter of the Canadian constitution, which of course now includes the charter, should not merely be a creature of the federal government. Because it is a crucial actor in the way our federal system works, it is entirely appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that provincial governments should have a role in selecting the individuals who will sit on this body and who will, by virtue of their position, play a major role in determining how Canada will evolve as a nation. The new provision, in my view, represents another dimension to the recognition of the federal fact in Canada, which is present in so many parts of this amendment.

The amending formula. By virtue of the amendment to the constitution, the amending formula has been altered.

Some issues, which previously required the consent of the federal government, as well as at least seven of the 10 provinces, with 50 per cent of the population of the provinces, will now require the unanimous assent of the federal government and all provinces. The matters to which I refer are changes affecting the principle of proportionate representation of the provinces in the House of Commons; the powers of the Senate, as well as the method of selecting senators, and the method of determining the number of senators each province is entitled to; several matters dealing with the Supreme Court of Canada; the extension of existing provinces into the Territories; and the establishment of new provinces. I hasten to add, however, that the general amending formula, which I mentioned earlier, of the federal government and at least seven provinces, consisting of 50 per cent of the provinces, will continue to apply to most amendments to the Canadian constitution.

Another change to the constitution that will be brought about by this amendment is that, where an amendment is made which transfers provincial powers to the federal government, provinces will be able to receive financial compensation if they decide to opt out of such changes. In the past, provinces were eligible for compensation only in cases where education and other cultural matters were involved.

I believe that the revised Canadian constitutional amending formula will now contain the proper balance of protection, protection to the vital interests of all provinces, with the flexibility required to respond to rapidly changing environments. The general amending formula will still apply to most constitutional amendments. However, each province will receive a veto power over changes to central institutions which play a vital role in the function of Canadian federalism.

The fact that each province will have a veto power over the creation of new provinces is quite appropriate, in the light of the effect of new provinces on federalism as a whole. The introduction of new provinces would affect the operation of the amending formula, the arrangements by which some provinces receive equalization payments from the federal government, and a wide variety of other matters which go to the core of how this country operates.

However, the requirement that each province and the federal government must assent to the creation of a new province does not preclude new provinces from coming into being. The present agreement amending the Canadian constitution is ample proof that the unanimity is indeed achievable, even where very complex issues are involved.

The same point could also be made in relation to the reform of the Senate of Canada. The difficulty of arriving at a consensus about what the form the future Senate should take should not be minimized. At the same time, however, there already exists significant consensus that the role the Senate is presently playing is unsatisfactory, and that ways must be found to make it more suited for the modern Canadian federal system. I'm quite confident that, given this firm basis on which to work, intensive discussions between the federal government and provinces will be open and constructive and will indeed

lead to an agreement on how this institution — the Senate — can be reformed to meet contemporary needs and circumstances of the day.

Federal spending power. Another change to the constitution which will be introduced by the present amendment relates to the federal government's ability to initiate shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. In the past, the federal government has used its spending power to involve itself in areas of provincial jurisdiction. Of course, provinces have always had the opportunity of opting out of shared-cost programs established by the federal government in these areas. However, no arrangement was present to provide any financial compensation to provinces deciding not to participate in these programs.

The new amendment will provide a much fairer arrangement in such circumstances. In the future, where the federal government wishes to initiate a new shared-cost program in an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction — the legislative authority of the province — the province will receive financial compensation if it chooses to exercise its constitutional right to opt out of such programs, provided that it establishes a program or initiative which was compatible with national objectives.

The provision in no way implies that the federal government will be inhibited in its role of providing leadership at the national level in the provision of new services to the population. This role will continue to be an important one. However, the practical effects of this new section will be to ensure that a high level of consultation between the federal government and the provinces precedes, Mr. Speaker, the initiation of such national programs. The availability to provinces of financial compensation, if they choose to opt out of these programs, will be an incentive for the federal government to insure that the program does in fact respond to the circumstances in all provinces, not just to the most populous ones.

On the other hand, should a federal government decide to proceed with a new program which is not sensitive to the needs of all provinces, an important safeguard has been made possible as a result of this amendment. A province such as Saskatchewan would then have the opportunity of establishing its very own program, compatible with national objectives, but which would be more effective in responding to its specific circumstances here at home. Because of the availability of financial compensation, provinces will be able to make this decision without subjecting their citizens to paying taxes twice to receive the same benefit. The only alternative to this without the new provision, was to have the taxpayers of a province contribute toward a federal program that was not sensitive to the specific needs and circumstances of their own province.

Some other sections. In addition to the five subject areas which I have described, the new constitutional amendment also contains significant sections on other matters. Perhaps the most important of these is the creation of permanent new forms for federal-provincial consultation. As a result of this amendment, a first ministers' conference on the constitution will be held on

a yearly basis. At that time governments will have the opportunity to discuss mutual concerns which relate to constitutional issues. The first issues on the agenda are Senate reform, as well as the role and responsibilities related to fisheries. Both are important subjects and I have no doubt that they will be resolved once they have been extensively studied and discussed by all jurisdictions. Moreover, issues will be added to the agenda as deemed appropriate by the 11 jurisdictions.

Furthermore, a first ministers' conference on the economy will also take place on a yearly basis. This is not a new departure since such conferences have been occurring annually since 1985. However, it is significant that this conference will for the first time receive constitutional recognition. These two annual constitutionally mandated conferences, one on the constitution and one on the economy, create institutions which will address the need for an enhanced level of consultation between the federal government and provincial governments on a wide array of issues that face Canada today and will continue to face Canada in the foreseeable future.

Finally, the new amendment provides a mechanism for provincial participation in the appointment of senators until such time as an amendment of Senate reform is passed.

Let me conclude, Mr. Speaker. I have described in detail the various aspects of the new amendment because it is important for everyone in the province to understand how the new amendment will alter the functioning of governments in Canada. I also think it is important to explain why I believe that the proposed changes are good for this province and for Canada as a whole. However, the impact of the new amendment is best appreciated when one examines the amendment as a whole. This amendment signals the recognition of realities brought about as a result of changing national and international conditions. The complexities of the modern world make the rigid distinctions between federal powers and provincial powers anachronistic.

(1445)

Although our legal jurisdictions remain, we must come to terms with the fact that initiatives taken by one order of government will very often have important implications for the other order. To be effective, national policies need to evolve as a result of the sharing of information, Mr. Speaker, and insights between the federal government and all provinces.

There are some who will say that what we have done by virtue of this amendment is to provide increased opportunities for discord in Canada. The argument is that, since there will be more participants in decision-making at the national level, then necessarily more conflicts and delays will characterize government in Canada. However, Mr. Speaker, this is not my view and not the view of the first ministers. I believe instead that this amendment will lead to increased dialogue which will in turn result and improve understanding between the different parts which constitute this country.

Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians could look to this achievement with pride. Through our efforts of the past several months, we have greatly solidified the Canadian federation. We have succeeded in finding a way to allow the province of Quebec to take its rightful place in the Canadian family. Furthermore, we have seized this opportunity to take measures to adopt our federal institutions to suit changing circumstances. Our success in this venture will allow us to prepare for the challenges of the future, united and confident in the belief that we are capable of resolving some of the most daunting problems of national well-being. In all respects, we have made important strides towards a stronger and indeed a better Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore move, seconded by the Minister of Justice:

Whereas the Constitution Act, 1982 came into force on April 17, 1982, following an agreement between Canada and all the provinces except Quebec;

and whereas the Government of Quebec has established a set of five proposals for constitutional change and has stated that amendments to give effect to those proposals would enable Quebec to resume a full role in the constitutional councils of Canada;

and whereas the amendment proposed in the schedule hereto sets out the basis in which Quebec's five constitutional proposals may be met; and whereas the amendment proposed in the schedule hereto also recognizes the principle of the equality of the provinces, provides new arrangements to foster greater harmony and co-operation between the Government of Canada and the governments of the provinces and requires that conferences be convened to consider important constitutional, economic, and other issues;

and whereas certain portions of the amendment proposed in the schedule hereto relate to matters referred to in section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982;

and whereas section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982, provides that an amendment to the constitution of Canada may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General under the Great seal of Canada, where so authorized by resolutions in the Senate and the House of Commons and of the Legislative Assembly of each province;

now therefore the Senate, House of Commons, Legislative Assembly resolves, and this Assembly resolves that the amendment to the constitution of Canada be authorized to be made by proclamation issued by the Her Excellency the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada in accordance with the schedule hereto.

Mr. Speaker, attached to the motion is a schedule containing the certain amendments to the constitution of Canada to affect the constitutional accord. I also, Mr. Speaker, move the identical motion in the French language, also seconded by the Minister of Justice, as it is contained in the motion no. 3, contained in the orders of the day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the House on this motion this afternoon, and then, in the conclusion of my remarks, ask for leave to adjourn the debate, since I'd like an opportunity to study more fully the Premier's remarks.

May I say at the outset that I thank the Premier for his remarks which dealt with the resolution before us, highlighted the content of the resolution, and highlighted the serious nature of the resolution that is before us, because there are few more important laws dealt with by any legislature than the constitution.

Prior to 1982, Mr. Speaker, constitutional changes were brought about in this country by a process which did not involve provincial legislatures in a formal way. It was done by sorts of agreements between governments which sometimes, but certainly not always, involved legislative action. The constitution which was patriated and varied in 1982 changes this process and gave this legislature, and the legislatures of all the provinces, a formal role to play with respect to constitutional amendments. And we are now discharging that constitutional responsibility which came to us in 1982, and it is an important responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I want first to . . . and I may say, Mr. Speaker, that this is the first major change in the constitution which has come before the legislature of Saskatchewan since 1982 since this process was put in train; and accordingly, in the first such debate since 1905, since this is the first time our role has been out of participating in a formal way in amending the constitution.

I want to address a few remarks to the question of the process. The Premier has put the resolution before the House, as I think is the only process open to him, but that leaves the House with the ability only to debate the resolution than deal with it. We don't appear to be moving forward with any process whereby the resolution would be referred to a committee of the legislature where, in a much less formal way, questions might be directed and members might get more insight into what these changes mean. Nor is it proposed at this stage to have public hearings.

It will be the view of the members on this side of the House, represented by my party, that there should be public hearings, and we will be putting forward in all likelihood this proposal to be dealt with by the House.

A number of other jurisdictions, including the federal government and the Government of Ontario and the Government of Manitoba, are having a course of public hearings, and we think that this is entirely fitting since, in

our judgment, the public should know the terms of the constitutional changes which are being offered for their governments.

It is in no sense analogous, I agree, Mr. Speaker, but in the previous proceedings which led to the patriation and the very major changes of 1982, there was a process which went on almost interminably, but at least for 18 months or so, in respect of which there were lengthy hearings at Ottawa. There were many commissions, committees, and the like, putting forward opinions. And as a result, there was widespread and lively public debate on the content of the constitutional changes which were proposed.

I would think, Mr. Speaker, that while it is unlikely to generate the same level of debate and of public discussion, steps ought to be taken to see whether or not we could not engage the public in considering the proposals which are being put forward by the governments of Canada to the various parliaments and legislatures of Canada.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we would do a disservice to adopt the view that because the motives which are behind this resolution are worthy, that we can ignore the content of the resolutions and that we can move ahead without the public understanding in a broad way, what the content of these resolutions involves.

Because what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker, are changes in the constitution which, if I may so, will undoubtedly do a national service in 1987. But what we must ask ourselves is whether they're going to do a similar national service 50 years from now in the year 2037, or 100 years from now in the year 2087.

The Premier spoke of the Meech Lake accord being arrived at through open dialogue. In a sense that it true, but the number of participants in the dialogue was a handful, and the public have not in any way been involved in the open dialogue. and I think that we ought to address ways in which we can widen the ambit of the open dialogue and have the public involved.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the proposal to have, as the saying goes, Quebec brought into the constitution, is an entirely worthy one. It's interesting that we find ourselves using those terms, because in a legal sense Quebec is every bit as much a part of Canada as is Saskatchewan, and the constitution governs Quebec in precisely the same way that it governs Saskatchewan or any other province. so we're not talking law here, we're talking a precedent and custom and understandings. But it's none the less important on that account.

Our country is built partly on law, but partly on precedents and understandings between the various groups and among the various groups in this country. and it is fitting, if not strictly legally accurate, to say that we are acting to bring Quebec into the constitution. Because while it is undoubtedly legally binding, the government of the province of Quebec had not declared their adherence to the constitution, and in that regard it lacked the support of the custom and precedent that led to the first confederation being a deal between the governments

of the various colonies involved, the three colonies involved that turned out to be the four provinces. And we have carried that tradition with us, that it is appropriate that provincial or colonial governments be involved when there are major changes in the constitution.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are consequences which might well flow from this resolution and they're not all good. They're not all bad by any means, but they're not all good. And the proposal which is before us has benefits and dangers for the future of Canada. I would like to think that Canadians understood the benefits and understood what I perceive to be some of the dangers.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us proposes a number of major changes, and the Premier has alluded to many of them. The role of Quebec; appointments to the Senate; agreements on immigration and aliens; constitutionalizing the Supreme Court; appointments to the supreme Court, shared cost programs under the spending power; and the analogous provision dealing with the transfer of legislative jurisdiction from the provincial governments to the federal governments; annual federal-provincial conferences on the economy; the amending formula; the expansion of the unanimity rule to cover the powers of the Senate; method of selecting senators; and new provinces; and one or two other items referred by the Premier.

Then the annual constitutional conferences are provided for. And then there are some special provisions at the end of the resolution, as the Premier alluded to, would say that the earlier provisions dealing with the role of Quebec are not designed to abrogate from treaty or aboriginal rights or multiculturalism or the second provision in the constitution, the section 35 dealing with treaty and aboriginal rights, or with the section 91 provisions dealing with Indians and Indian lands.

(1500)

And I think it's useful for us to review briefly some of these provisions. I deal first with the question of the role of Quebec. And in many ways, Mr. Speaker, this is the core of the resolution before us. Because the reason why it is before us because there was a desire on the part of the parliament of Canada, or the Government of Canada I should say, and the provincial governments to get an arrangement whereby Quebec could be said to be in the constitution. And however nebulous that is as a legal concept, it's a good, solid reason for acting because it is a political reality in Canada.

In some ways one could say that the history of Canada has been a history of relations between Canada and the United States, and relations between French and English in Canada. That's an incomplete list, but it covers a great number of the crises which we have had in our nation, and we are now dealing with one aspect of that relationship between French and English. And when I sue English, I am talking about Anglophones, not people of English ethnic origin.

And the role of Quebec is one, in the resolution before us, is one which provides for the recognitions and existence of French-speaking Canadians centred in Quebec but also

present elsewhere, and English-speaking Canadians concentrated outside Quebec, and indicating that this is a fundamental characteristic of Canada.

And I may say, Mr. Speaker, that the words of the resolution are a great improvement over the words which were in the Meech Lake accord, which talked about a French-speaking Canada and an English-speaking Canada. That offended me, and as it turned out, I think offended a good number of other Canadians . . . and I think was probably an error in drafting rather than an error in concept and has now been corrected, as I would say, by the resolution before us which talks about French-speaking Canadians and English-speaking Canadians — all of us Canadians. Not sort of one Canada and then another Canada over here, but all Canadians, some of whom speak French and some of whom speak English — and that's a fundamental characteristic of Canada. And as I view it, that is akin to agreeing that the sun rises in the east, because it seems to me that that is a fundamental characteristic of Canada, and we lose nothing by recognizing it.

We go on from there to say that the parliament and the legislatures are to preserve this state of affairs. That has certain mild dangers because none of us will know, I suppose, in the next 100 years whether or not Quebec will continue to be essentially a French-speaking jurisdiction. But I suspect it will, and it doesn't trouble me to say that the governments of Canada are directed to seeing if they can make that happen. And the resolution deals with the role of the Government of Quebec in preserving this distinct identity.

And then it goes on to say that there's no derogation of language right. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have some problem with what I regard as the underlying assumptions built into these types of provisions in the constitution. I have no quarrel with declaring that Canada is a country of two languages, because in every real sense it is. There are other languages, either aboriginal languages or heritage languages, which are used by some significant number of people. But overwhelmingly Canadians speak either French or English in their homes and in their businesses. So I have no problem with declaring that Canada is a country of two languages.

It goes on to say that Quebec is a distinct society. That, I think, is a recognition of fact. What I wouldn't want anyone to assume is that the rest of Canada is another distinct society. That is sort of suggested but not quite said. And I would not want it said, because in my judgment the characterization that came in the late '60s of Canada being a bilingual and bicultural country was an inaccurate characterization.

It is certainly a bilingual country, but I think it is not bicultural. And in many, many speeches in the past I have said that bicultural is the wrong term. It's either one-cultural or many; but two is the wrong number. And it depends thereon on how distinct you're going to draw lines before you say that it's a separate culture. Because I am not at all sure, not at all sure that the Anglophones in Ottawa have more in common with the Anglophones in Whitehorse than they have with the Francophones in Hull. I'm not all sure of that.

Therefore, I think that we are a country of several cultures. This is not denied in the resolution, and in a sense this is extraneous except to the extent that we are saying we've got two languages and Quebec is a distinct society. I would not want anyone to conclude that that means that there's another distinct society, meaning the rest, because that is not so.

Harkening back to what I call, if I may be allowed to digress a moment, Mr. Speaker, the Laurentian view of history, where the history of Canada has been characterized as the tugs and pulls between what are now Quebec and Ontario, you can read many bits of Canadian history which seem to be based upon that supposition, that somehow Canada came into being when Quebec and Ontario joined in 1867; and at that time they annexed Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; and they later took the Hudson Bay lands; and then they made them into bits of provinces. And what we have here is Quebec and Ontario joining together and expanding and creating the hinterland, of which they represent the heartland.

And you can find many, many instances of that in the writings about Canadian history. It used to always be bitterly represented by Nova Scotians who took the view that they were building the best ships in the world and sailing the seven seas when those people were hoeing the "back 40" about 20 miles north of what is now Toronto. And they didn't feel that somehow they were annexed.

And I sense, if I may say so, the same view with respect to western Canadians who feel that Canada is something more than Quebec and Ontario and its hinterland, which has been acquired. And I think that we would not want to see anything in the resolution before us interpreted in any way to suggest otherwise. So when we say that Quebec is a distinct society, we're not suggesting that the rest is Ontario and the tributaries.

I want now to turn to the provisions with respect to the Senate. That's section 2 of the resolution and also section 9 of the resolution. And that deals with appointment to the Senate. And it provides that the powers of the senate and the method of selecting senators is subject to a change only by the unanimous vote of parliament in the 10 legislatures. So we're dealing with two provisions here; how the Senate gets appointed, and how we can change those rules.

And what the resolution proposes to do is to change the method of appointment from one whereby the federal cabinet makes the appointments from lists provided by the provincial cabinets. We here convert what has been, unquestionably, a chamber of federal patronage to one which will be a chamber of federal-provincial patronage.

This country has shown in the last 40 years that we can do almost anything, or at least attempt to do almost anything, on a federal-provincial basis. And we can virtually do nothing else, except on a federal-provincial basis. And we've gone one step further — I wouldn't have thought it possible — we have found a way to make Senate

appointments a federal-provincial matter.

One remembers all those hoary old jokes about the elephant stories, about what is the nature of an elephant — Americans are bigger and better elephants than the French in the love life of an elephant. And the Canadians . . . That the elephant . . . Is it a federal or a provincial matter? Now we must say; the elephant, is it a federal, provincial, or joint federal and provincial matter? We seem to have got another category, and we have placed the appointment of senators in that category.

We shouldn't suppose, Mr. Speaker, that much will change. When the federal and provincial governments are of the same political hue, senators will be appointed in the same ways they've always been done — by the appropriate consultation between the people of the same political hue and, doubtless, an appointment in the public interest being made.

When the federal and provincial governments are of a different political hue, I suspect not much will change. The provincial government will put forward names, and, if the federal government doesn't like them, there'll be no appointments.

And, of course, there's no great impetus to appoint senators. No irreparable damage to the body politic is likely to happen if there's a vacancy in the Senate. There are those who are unkind enough to say that there are vacancies in the Senate now, even though people are sitting there. And I don't, therefore, think that much is going to change. I don't think the federal government has given up much since, as I say, if they got a recommendation from, let us say, the Premier of Manitoba that they didn't like, it may well be that there would be no appointment. And they're at no great impetus to making appointments, so that in that regard not much has changed.

But some things have changed, Mr. Speaker. What I feel has vanished is any realistic hope of Senate reform. The Premier suggests that we are likely to be able to convince the Parliament of Canada, including the Senate — subject to some qualifications which I won't now go into — and the 10 legislatures, to some formula for Senate reform. But I feel that that is undue optimism.

Can any advocate of, let's say, an equal elected Senate really believe that any government in Quebec, or Ontario for that matter, will agree to, let's say, six elected senators in substitution of the 24 appointed senators they now have? I think the answer is no, and I think that's sad. I don't think it's tragic, since I don't think that the Senate is doing much harm. I think it's not a case of something that's really going to cause us problems. It's a case of an opportunity for change, constructive change, which I think is being foreclosed. But that's perhaps a price we have to pay.

I think we can recall that also most all the studies on Senate reform — the Pépin, Robarts, and the Canadian Bar Association, and the Government of Ontario studies — they all had proposals for a Senate which played an effective role. And I'm afraid it's going to be very, very difficult now to bring those about.

Everybody's idea is to have a Senate which would adequately represent the regions at the centre. That's the theory of federalism. The theory of federalism is that the second Chamber represents the regions or the states or the provinces or the land — whatever the regional jurisdictions are called. And we don't have that in Canada because for 75 years anyway, people have laughed at the senate as a representative of the region.

And so we've developed another one which is the federal-provincial conference. And I'm sure in the last 40 years, since World War II, the greatest growth industry in Canada has been federal-provincial conferences of first ministers or of ministers or officials, or as the case may be — all essentially because the people of Saskatchewan has doubts as to whether Senator Argue and Senator Balfour represent them. And I don't cast aspersions on those two senators except that it's pretty obvious they're not thought of as representing Saskatchewan in any effective way at Ottawa.

So we have, in the past at least, thought of some idea for a new senate, and now I think that that's going to be very, very difficult to bring about.

(1515)

The next item covered by the Premier deals with agreements on immigration and aliens, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that we need focus a little bit of attention on the point raised by the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, because it's by no means an academic point.

I read the resolution, and it is clear from the resolution that the federal government and the provincial government can enter into agreements on immigration, with which I have no quarrel. They've been around for a fair while, and I suspect the government, which I had the honour to lead, signed some agreements on immigration with the federal government, the terms of which I do not remember, since by and large Saskatchewan allowed the federal government to operate in the field of immigration, more or less as it saw fit, and that has continued to this day. But the discussions not included in this resolution, but in the discussions at Meech Lake and in some of the preambles, it is suggested that the agreement with Quebec is going to be of a particular kind, one which to over-simplify, says that if 100,000 immigrants come to Canada, and Quebec represents 30 per cent of the population of Canada, then 30,000 of those immigrants should come to Quebec.

Now no one, I think, quarrels with the desire of the government of Quebec to have immigrants. I fear, however, Mr. Speaker, that the government of Quebec will, in exercising its jurisdiction on selection of immigrants, will want Francophones, or will want a preponderance of Francophones. Let's put it that way. And I would very much disagree with an arrangement whereby immigration from non-francophone areas of the world to the provinces of Saskatchewan and B.C. and Ontario, to pick three, would be in effect barred because it wasn't possible to get enough francophone immigrants to meet what I call the Quebec quota.

I don't mean to use any pejorative terms here. But that's a real issue that ought to concern Chinese families, Italian families, or people who are interested in getting political refugees as immigrants into Canada — and I think of Ukrainian families. And it's not clear, therefore . . . and it's not clear to me, Mr. Speaker, whether or not an agreement with Quebec, and I will use Quebec because it's the most germane case, but an agreement between the federal government and a province can, in effect, govern the number of immigrants which are likely to come to another province.

I think I've made the point, and it's one that I hope members opposite will turn their mind to when they enter the debate. It's a matter of some considerable importance if you are a person in Canada who is hoping to be joined by a friend or a relative, and who are facing quotas and would like to see Canada's gross number of immigrants expanded, and would not want to see that number contracted because of the difficulty of getting the appropriate number in each province.

I turn now, Mr. Speaker, to the question of the Supreme Court, and I applaud the resolution to the extent that it includes the constitutionalizing of the Supreme Court. Everyone agreed during the 1970s and early '80s, when we were talking about constitutional reform, that it simply didn't make sense not to have the Supreme Court as part of the constitution — didn't make sense to have it simply a federal statute, and we'd have to get around to that. But it was one of those things which was put aside as being part of the second wave, and I'm very happy to see it here.

It is appropriate that Quebec . . . let us say that three of the nine judges be common law lawyers. You could say it should be two, it should be three, but I don't think any problem arises in having it three. One can envisage situations a hundred years from now where the common law might govern less than 20 per cent of Canadians, where that might be an interesting problem. But let's worry about this year, and this decade, and the next decade, and not perhaps a hundred years from now.

So that seems to me not unreasonable. It's operated; that's been the law. I don't know whether fully the law, but it's been the law in the practice now since the Supreme Court was set up in 1875 or thereabouts — no problem there.

It gets a little more difficult to deal with when the method of appointment is dealt with. Because it's pretty clear that, on the basis of the resolution, the Government of Quebec, as I view it, can nominate three judges to the Supreme Court, and they have to be accepted by the federal government. You can say, oh no, they have to be acceptable to the federal parliament or the federal cabinet, but it doesn't quite work that way. You couldn't have vacancies in the Supreme Court for a long time. There will be enormous pressure to make appointment.

I think, therefore, that this represents something which ought to be considered. It may be the best compromise we can make, to arrive at what is undoubtedly desirable, and that is federal and provincial participation in the appointment of judges.

With respect to the other nine provinces, the situation's a bit different. Because as I read the resolution, even though it's "Saskatchewan's turn," to have a Supreme Court judge, if the Government of Canada doesn't like the name put forward — name or names put forward — by the Saskatchewan government, they can take one put forward by the Prince Edward Island government. And that obviously will mean that the matter will be the subject of some federal-provincial consultation. Some hard-ball consultation, as I say, is entirely appropriate.

But I'm not quite sure that, just as the federal government shouldn't have had the absolute right as they've had in the past to ignore all provincial concerns, I'm not quite sure, with respect to Quebec, we should reverse the process, as I suggest we have. That may not be entirely accurate, and the lawyers can puzzle on whether or not the Government of Ontario could nominate a Quebec judge and that this would qualify — a member of the Quebec bar. But that would be thought of as a breach of faith in any case.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to complete all of my remarks this afternoon. I did want to touch on a few other things which the Premier had alluded to.

He referred to the amending formula. And I think that while this is an arcane piece of business for the public, if we could say that we have two or three ways to amend the constitution, one way applies to one list of changes and one way applies to another list of changes, I think we make the thing clearer. And we have the big list which is covered by the general amending formula which requires the consent of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population — the 7 and 50 rule — and a shorter list in respect of which all the provinces and the federal government had to agree.

And, Mr. Speaker, just for the sake of speeding up the presentation, I won't say each time that it's the parliament and the legislature that have to agree, but that's what we're talking about. I'll say the federal government and the provinces.

We've moved some things over from the big list of 7 and 50 to the little list requiring unanimity. And one of them is the amendments to the Senate, and I've already said I think that's sad.

The other has to do . . . certainly one other has to do with the Supreme Court, and that's appropriate. We didn't move it. We put it in because the Supreme Court wasn't there before. That's appropriate. We shouldn't allow people to be changing the referee, and that's what the Supreme Court is, without a very wide measure of agreement.

With respect to the entry of new provinces, I understand the Premier's arguments, but I think that is really very difficult for the territories of Newfoundland . . . correction, of Yukon and Northwest Territories, to be in a position whereby they simply cannot enter Canada unless all provinces and the federal government agree.

Now that rule wasn't applied to anyone else. It certainly wasn't applied to Newfoundland, the last entry, and

indeed no provinces agreed to that. And there was some question as to whether the Government of Quebec would have agreed, because of a number of reasons, but one of them was a long-standing border dispute as between the province of Quebec and Labrador. And it certainly wasn't true of Saskatchewan. Hard to know whether yet we'd be a province. And it seems to me a very, very tough test to make Yukon and the Northwest Territories meet.

I will say a little more about shared cost programs. But I want to dissent from the Premier's comments saying that now the Government of Canada will have to come forward with shared cost programs which meet the requirements of all the provinces, not just the most populous provinces.

Well that's not history's lesson to us. You can hardly think of a shared cost program where the most populous provinces were the first in — certainly not true of the hospital plan, and certainly not true of medicare plan, and certainly not true of the Canada Assistance Plan. The most populous provinces, for the most part, have not been the first in. And it is the smaller provinces who have enjoyed the benefits of shared cost programs, notably Saskatchewan. We must have got more money out of shared cost programs per capita than any other province, perhaps not because of the formula that applied to Newfoundland, but because we were in so much earlier. We were first in on hospitalization, first in on medicare, and in as soon as any other province on virtually every shared cost program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of the other aspects. And you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that I outlined them in some detail at the outset. And I will deal quickly with the annual federal conferences on the economy and the like, and I think they're of no great consequences, one way or the other.

I do want to say something at a little more length on two subjects: one, the shared cost programs, and I think they're very key, particularly to provinces like Saskatchewan; and secondly, on what I think are the omissions from this agreement, notably omissions dealing with the aboriginal peoples.

But, Mr. Speaker, because I want to prepare my remarks a little more fully with respect to these, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

(1530)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Environment and Public Safety Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 9

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to an item we were talking about yesterday. And I want to say to the minister that I still am kind of upset about his remarks

yesterday, accusing the elected people of Saskatoon of copping out on their responsibility of providing a sewage plant for the city of Saskatoon.

And I want to say to the minister, although there aren't any grants in his particular department, but as a member of the Executive Council he bears some of the responsibility that his government makes as they affect any city or any particular centre in the province of Saskatchewan. And I want to say to the minister that his remarks are uncalled for. I think they were unfair. They were irresponsible, and you owe us an apology. When I say us, I think you owe the city of Saskatoon an apology.

And I say that, Mr. Minister, because if you look at the way you have treated the city of Saskatoon, I mean your government, in financial assistance, then not only should you make an apology to the city of Saskatoon, you should say to the city of Saskatoon; will you forgive me, as the minister responsible for the Environment, for not being able to defend my position in the cabinet and for the cabinet being so meagre with the finances we have provided you - that's the responsibility you should take.

And, Mr. Minister, I want to show you today how uncalled for your remarks really were. If we go through the financial situation, and all we have to do is just go through revenue sharing for example, we go through the revenue sharing -- had your government kept up with the financial assistance to the city of Saskatoon, we wouldn't be in the predicament today, and you as minister could hold your head high.

But had you kept up just with the inflation rate, the city of Saskatoon would have received ninety-five million, four hundred and some-thousand dollars in revenue sharing alone. Over those years that you were the government, it received 87 million. In other words it lost over \$8 million -- \$8,354,000 because your government didn't keep up with the cost of inflation in the province of Saskatchewan. You cheated the city of Saskatoon out of over \$8 million in revenue sharing alone.

Let me now turn to some of the other assistance programs. You're saying the city of Saskatoon is copping out. I say to you, Mr. Minister, you are the one that was copping out. Your government was the one that wasn't carrying it's responsibility. That's why we are in the mess that we are in in Saskatoon.

On the other financial assistance programs, again, Mr. Minister, I did a quick calculation this morning. Had you only increased the grant by 3 [per cent per year from 1982 to 1986 on all the other urban assistance programs, the city of Saskatoon would have received in the neighbourhood of \$95 million. However, you didn't do that. Instead you cancelled whole financial programs and we lost in the neighbourhood of \$45 million -- \$45 million. Now add that on to the \$8 million we already lost and we lost \$53 million.

You admitted yesterday that a secondary plant would cost between \$40 and \$50 million, I believe. The moneys that we lost because you made the decision, not to finance or put the moneys into

the cities of Saskatoon and Regina, but particularly Saskatoon as I've been talking about now, we lost in the neighbourhood of \$50-some million -- that would have paid for the whole plant, the new secondary plant. I think it's irresponsible on your part to accuse the city people in Saskatoon, the elected people of Saskatoon, saying that they're copping out.

You're putting your whole comments on, and I read from *Hansard*, from yesterday. The minister said yesterday, and I read ... he said:

And now to say that because the grant isn't there (that means the 10 per cent grant), that's the whole reason that we haven't moved, that's not fair.

I say to the minister, no one, no one in this House, no one from the city of Saskatoon, ever said that we couldn't proceed because the 10 per cent grant was cut. That was an added insult. That was an added insult. But certainly because of the grants that were cut over the years that you people were the government, plus the 10 per cent, forced the city of Saskatoon to delay again a secondary sewage treatment plant. I say, Mr. Minister, the responsibility lies on your shoulders and the executive members of this government, not on the city of Saskatoon and the elected people there.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to give you an opportunity to apologize to the people of Saskatoon, and then we can go on to some other items.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- The member draws a very long bow today when he goes through all the figures. It doesn't happen that this department is responsible for all the grants that are being talked about, so he's off in a different realm altogether.

The comments in the newspapers by the aldermen in the city of Saskatoon dealt only with the 10 per cent grant that normally would have come through the water corporation, and that's the area where I considered it was a complete cop-out. And I do.

And I can advise the hon. member that the city of Saskatoon last year accessed that program and got \$396,000. And going back quite a few years, in 1972, they got \$500,000. So they haven't been entirely missed. So the concern that you're raising, I don't believe, is a real concern.

Grant programs come and go in all departments. Every user of those grant programs must access them at the time that they are in place. And usually they are in place over a long period of four to five years or whatever, and then they're gone. And something else takes its place.

The city of Saskatoon had that opportunity over a long period of time. They didn't choose to proceed to get their sewage treatment upgraded at that time. Now, as soon as it's dropped, even before they've made application for it, then they're complaining. And that's why I said it was a Copt and I have no intention of apologizing.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, you are misleading the House as to what you said yesterday. You said, and I

quote ... you said, and I quote (inaudible interjection) ... You said ... Would the member from Weyburn just keep his mind out of this, Mr. Chairman. We're doing fine over here. I don't need his help, and the minister doesn't need his help either. He has messed up enough departments already to stay in the Department of Education. We'll get to you later.

Mr. Minister, yesterday you said, that's the whole reason that we haven't moved. That's not fair. No one in the city of Saskatoon said that that was the whole reason for not proceeding with a secondary sewage treatment plant.

What I'm saying to you today, and what the people of Saskatoon have told you and your government and the Minister of Finance ... And I know you don't have the grants in your department, but you are a member of the Executive Council ... (inaudible interjection) ... I know. But you cannot then turn around and say to the city of Saskatoon, it's a Copt on your part.

When the other members in the Executive Council cut some 50-million dollars over the last five years out of assistance for the City of Saskatoon ... And I am saying to you that that is not a fair statement for you to make. It's not a fair statement for you to make as the minister responsible for the environment.

It is your job to go into the Executive Council, to fight for your programs, and to see to it that sufficient funds are provided to the cities -- and I'm talking now about the city of Saskatoon -- so that we can proceed the secondary plant, a sewage treatment plant.

And I'm saying to you that, again, you owe an apology to the city of Saskatoon for your irresponsible statements and see to it that you became an active member and a forceful member in the Executive Council to defend your budget and your program so that we in Saskatoon don't have to suffer because of the irresponsible statements made and decisions made by members in the Executive Council. That's your responsibility, to defend your programs and the city of Saskatoon.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I answered the same question just a moment ago and I don't see that I can change that answer. Some of the comments that were made in the city of Saskatoon. It says:

Saskatoon has been holding extensive talks with the provincial government on the kind of sewage system that should be installed, Ald. Pat Lorje told the meeting.

Now to be told in some high-handed fashion by some bureaucrat in Regina that there will be no funds, it just boggles the mind.

There's only one 10 per cent grant that had changed. And she goes on to say that because of those standards they weren't able to follow. Then there are comments by others. I don't think I should read them all into the record. Everybody's had the newspapers. We can all read them.

I don't believe that those comments really cover the detailed work that our department has done with the city

of Saskatoon, and the number of times we have encouraged the city of Saskatoon -- the department has encouraged the city of Saskatoon -- starting back as far as the time that the department was first formed, and right up to the present. So we've been encouraging them over a period of time, under the time when you were government, and under the time that we have been government. We still haven't had the movement.

So, you know, to say that we've changed the rules and regulations ... Somebody had better have some regulations for what sewage emissions can be, otherwise downstream there's going to be a very serious outcry. Those regulations have been in place for some time. We're just asking for the city of Saskatoon to comply. I believe that we have treated them entirely fairly, and it's their move.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, would you not admit that cutting grants in other areas by your government to the tune, as I said, accumulated cuts over the last four or five years of \$50 million, will you not admit that that will have an effect on the decisions made by the city of Saskatoon to which programs they can proceed with and which programs they cannot proceed with. And in this particular case, the last straw was probably the 10 per cent grant. Will you not admit that those cuts by your government over the last four or five years, and the final straw, the 10 per cent grant, probably had a dramatic effect on the decisions of the city of Saskatoon? Will you not admit that?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- The hon. member is reading a bunch of figures and making calculations and telling me these are the millions of dollars that were cut from the city of Saskatoon. I don't always accept the figures that you read out like that, and the calculations that you make.

(1545)

And I believe it would be more important when it comes to the Minister of Urban Affairs who has all of the facts at his fingertips and has his staff there, that's the time you address those grant figures. I don't have them before me today. I'm not going to admit to anything at this point, because until I have the figures and have the department to defend those figures, I don't believe that it's my job to do so.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, you are reneging then on what you said yesterday, that you would bear responsibility for the decisions made by the Executive Council. I heard you say that yesterday. As a member of the Executive Council, you said, I bear that responsibility.

What I'm saying to you is that if you isolate yourself from decisions that are made by the Executive Council, you're either very naive of the whole procedure or the effect that those decisions of the Executive Council have on your department.

What I'm saying to you is that if the Executive Council makes decisions to cut in all other areas for the city of Saskatoon, and they have to provide emergency services in other areas, what you're saying to them is, to the city of Saskatoon: you make the decisions as to which items you

will have to cut, because we were not going to provide you sufficient funds, you know, to do all of them. So you set up the priority.

And that's exactly what they did. And then you come along and say, now we're also going to cut the 10 per cent grant. And what I'm saying is, that was the last straw. And if the minister doesn't want to accept responsibility for the Executive Council or defend his department, I suppose that's his decision, and the people will have to make their decisions in the years to come.

Mr. Minister, I'm going to leave that now, and I want to go to another area. A number of studies, Mr. Minister, have been done on acid rain. And there have been some concerns expressed for northern Saskatchewan and the effects that the tar sands are having on northern Saskatchewan, particularly on the lakes. I'm not so concerned about the forests because I think that they will probably survive, unless the sulphur nitrate contents increase dramatically. But I am concerned about the lakes, and I am concerned about the fish in the lakes.

Could the minister tell me what studies his department has done, or what studies he had commissioned to do in northern Saskatchewan on the effects of the tar sands, the emission of acid rain -- and I know the term "acid rain" isn't the appropriate term but everybody uses that. So I think the minister knows what I'm talking about. The effects of acid rain on northern Saskatchewan. Where are we at, at the present time?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised by my staff that we have been involved with LRTAP, which is ...LRTAP. It's a long range transportation of air pollutants. It's a group that involves the provinces of western Canada. We've worked with them in detailed studies.

We've also had monitoring equipment throughout the area in the northern part of Saskatchewan that would be most susceptible to acid rain damage. The indications that our monitoring shows -- and we monitor air, rain, and snow -- and the monitoring at this point reveals that we have really have no problem as yet.

I'm not saying that there couldn't be a problem. There is the possibility of a problem, but at this time our testing shows that it hasn't happened yet.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, could you answer for me: does Larry Lechner still work for your department?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- Yes, he's sitting right here behind me.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Okay, thank you very much. Mr. Minister, I want to refer to some of the studies that he himself did on acid rain, and maybe we can get some answers there.

Are you saying that those are the only studies you did on northern Saskatchewan as far as acid rain is concerned? My understanding is that you have been involved in some other studies, concerning the Tar Sands particularly. Are there any other studies?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that the department did a

different kind of study, and it's called the Sensitivity of Saskatchewan Surface Waters to Acidic Inputs, and this was done by Larry Lechner and Gary Howard. It was released in February.

There was a lot of news at the time that it was released, and it was the news media, basically, that sort of connected this with the Tar Sands. But the study itself did not deal directly with the Tar Sands. It dealt with the area in the pre-Cambrian shield that would have been opposite the Tar Sands area, and it showed that they would be susceptible if the pollutants were allowed to come across. But at this time we're not registering that.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, could the minister tell me what the pH .. On the pH scale, what were you measuring as far as the rain and the snow is concerned in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that the monitoring levels that they're finding at this time run between 5 and 5.6. And 5.7 is considered neutral as far as acidic is concerned.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Since when is 5.7 considered as neutral? My understanding, and certainly I have to take the advice of your experts, but my understanding is that the scale runs from zero to 14, and 7 is considered as the neutral. How can 5.7 be the neutral? In fact, there are some experts that say that if you are at the 5.5 level, you should really start being concerned. And I'm just asking, when did the experts make the decision that 5.7 is neutral?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I think that I have to correct my previous statement to the hon. member -- 5.7 is considered average for rainfall, and that's considered neutral for rainfall; 7 is the neutral level. Sorry, I was off on that. I was talking to two people at the same time and I guess I drew the wrong conclusion.

Mr. Rolfes: -- In the Lechner-Howard study, they indicate that I think thousands of lakes up north are not only in the moderate sensitivity, but in the high sensitivity areas.

Can the minister tell me, was there any indication in that study that we should be concerned about those lakes becoming dead lakes like we have presently in Ontario? Or are we ... I am told by some of the experts who -- fishermen up there -- that the fishing up north is adversely being affected by the acid rain coming from the Tar Sands.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that there is no affect on fishing from acid rain in northern Saskatchewan. There may be other things that are affecting fishing. I wouldn't say that the fishing isn't down. Maybe there's been too many fishermen; a variety of things could affect that. But it would not be from acid rain because there is no indication in the lake levels as they've been measured, that it has changed. So you know, we have many people who go fishing and if you don't catch fish you could blame it on acid rain, but you know there really is no fact to it.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, let's jump to the other side of

the province. Have you done monitoring at all on the Hudson Bay smelting firm, or whatever you call it, there in Flin Flon? Has there any monitoring been done there and could you tell me what the pH there was?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that the smelting is done actually in Manitoba, but we do do some of the monitoring on the Saskatchewan side. And there's no indication in the rain that we're having any problem, but in the snow it measured 4.8, which would show there was some change there. But it didn't show in the rain.

Mr. Rolfes: -- All right, Mr. Minister, I appreciate that answer. But 4.8 is getting, I think, enough to get a little concerned about it, particularly here in Saskatchewan and particularly since it's northern Canada and the pre-Cambrian shield is very, very sensitive to any pollution. And I think we all know that ... not so much the forestry; I'm not talking about that. But I am talking about the pre-Cambrian shield and it is very sensitive.

I'd like to ask the minister -- again, Mr. Lechner made a statement some time ago, and he's quoted as saying, and I will read it so I make sure I do it right. It says:

Mr. Lechner, director of the departments air pollution control branch stated that with the focus of federal research efforts in the province in eastern Canada, there is a danger that research expertise in the field of federal government will not be available to address western concerns.

(1600)

I have two questions. One, has the federal expertise not come to Saskatchewan or been available to Saskatchewan because of concerns of eastern Canada? And I know that pollution is much more severe in eastern Canada. Secondly, what were those concerns that Mr. Lechner was talking about, if they weren't the concerns of acid rain in northern Saskatchewan? Thirdly, have you had discussions with the federal minister or the federal department on getting that expertise to look at problems here in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- The concerns that were indicated in the report, I'm advised were made a meeting in 1980. And since that time the operation of that committee has expanded, and we do have some federal funding being made available for research here. And the federal committee has indeed put some of it's expertise here in Saskatchewan. I don't have the details right here at my fingertips of how much has been spent, but there is some.

Mr. Hagel: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one question, Mr. Minister. On Monday I requested information regarding the revenue realized from the transfer from SGI on the assessment to license plates that was transferred to your department. And I note on page 960 of *Hansard* that you had indicated that I would receive it yesterday. And I was simply asking, Mr. Minister, if you could provide me with that information today.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I would like to send this across to the

hon. member. The figure that's indicated here is \$835,000. But I want to advise you the revenue does not come to my department, it goes right into the general treasury of government. So we only use the amount of money we need. But that particular revenue goes to the general fund.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I was wondering, on the federal funding, whether you could provide me as to how much federal funding has been -- and it doesn't have to be now -- how much federal funding has been provided over the last three or four years, and for what purposes and what studies that federal funding was spent on. Could you provide that for me? It doesn't have to be today, as long as I get it during the sitting of this session.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- My staff say yes, they will get that information and we'll provide it to you. I don't know just how long it will take us but soon.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to just very briefly, I hope briefly, turn to the area of coal. And I know you don't ... this doesn't directly relate to your department, but the use of coal does and the pollution of coal.

I am told -- and I may be wrong in this area and I hope that your members will correct me on it -- I believe that Saskatchewan coal burns fairly cleanly compared to coal that is imported from Ontario and Pennsylvania. In fact, it's about eight times as clean, I'm told.

Can the minister tell me if you have had any discussions at all with the Department of Energy in Saskatchewan in the area of trying to get the federal government and the Ontario government to import more coal from Saskatchewan from Saskatchewan, for two reasons: (1) so that the acid rain will be reduced in Canada, and consequently -- and I think we're all concerned about the acid rain in Canada; and secondly, to provide much more employment for our people in the Bienfait and Estevan area.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that we do have low-sulphur coal in the southern part of the province, but it takes very specialized equipment in power plants in order to burn that coal. We do ship coal at this time to the head of the lakes, and it's burned in that power plant. Before they would use it in the main Ontario power plants they would have to make major modifications.

There's ongoing negotiation between Saskatchewan and Ontario to try and increase the amount of coal that we do ship. And if they decide to remodel those plants to bring them into a position where they could burn that coal, I'm sure it would be beneficial to them and beneficial too us in providing more export and more jobs.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, I appreciate those comments. I do hope that you can use your influence here with the federal department to convince them that maybe grants should be made available to the Ontario people there in order to convert those plants. Because, you know, to Saskatchewan alone, and to -- well not Saskatchewan, but western Canada -- it could mean an increase of over \$1 billion a year if we would no longer be importing coal

from the United States and be bringing the coal from western Canada to eastern Canada.

I know that there are transportation costs involved and they would have to be subsidized. But if it means thousands and thousands of jobs then, for Saskatchewan and Alberta and partly B.C., it may be worthwhile to look at that. I will pursue this in more detail with the Minister of Energy when her estimates come up, so I will leave that for now.

I want to turn now, Mr. Minister, to reclamation of contaminated oil. My first question to you, sir, is: have you and the Department of Energy resolved the problem as to who is responsible in this particular area?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I believe that that area falls under the Department of Energy, and so I guess we'll have to refer you to the Minister of Energy when her estimates come.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, we do have a problem here. We have a problem here, Mr. Minister, because the Department of Energy doesn't agree with you. And I know . . . This is why I asked before whether or not you had resolved that problem. Because a Mr. Gossard . . . I want to read part of a . . . This is in regards to the Kinder Brothers, as you probably well know. It says:

"The Kinder Brothers, who established Star Valley in November, 1985, six miles northwest of Kisbey, say oil companies in the Weyburn-Estevan area are burning contaminated oil in pits without burning permits, (and that's your department) and also claim those permits are too easy to get.

However, Jerry Gossard, director of the petroleum development branch of the department of energy and mines, says, "regulations at this point are satisfactory."

Mr. Gossard said his department has nothing to do with burning permits, which are under the jurisdiction of the air pollution control branch of the department of the environment.

However, (this name will sound familiar to you), Larry Lechner, director of the air pollution control branch, said at first that the permits are under the jurisdiction of the department of energy and mines.

Later he said both departments are responsible for burning permits, but energy and mines handles most requests unless there is a problem.

Now that's why I had asked the question whether or not you've resolved the differences as to who is responsible for issuing those permits.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I think when tomorrow's *Hansard* comes out, I would ask the member to read what he asked the first time. You were talking about the reclamation of contaminated oil and, you know, that's a different subject.

So the burning side of it, it's under The Air Pollution

Control Act. But we have an agreement with the Department of Energy and Mines that they police that, because they work with most of the issues within the oil field and it becomes a bit of a confusion. The only time that it comes back to us is if there is a major concern raised by anyone. Then we deal with it. But on the ongoing basis for small burns of diesel fuel or gas or whatever they have to burn off, or oils, that is handled by the Department of Energy, but it is through agreement with the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, who has to accept the ultimate responsibility? Some department has to. I am told that the disposition reports are not always issued or made. Now if that is true, then how can you, as the Department of the Environment, monitor the situation to make sure that the contaminated oil, for example, is not burned off unduly and polluting the air? Now am I correct on that, or is that a false impression that was left by the media?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I am advised that there are no written approvals given. But the Department of Energy and Mines have offices throughout the oil fields. And when there's a company wishing to burn in a given area, they seek permission from that office. That office in turn advises the Department of Environment. You asked who's ultimately responsible. It falls squarely in the Department of Environment, and I guess I'm responsible.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Isn't there a concern on your part through that . . . I think the Department of Energy has a conflict of interest here, obviously. Therefore we've got to have, we must have the Department of the Environment fully informed as to when these burnings take place, and how much is burned. I can fully understand why the Department of Energy is not responsible for this, but how can you monitor it if no disposition reports are made? And secondly, how do you know that you are being informed every time that oil is being burned?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- The Department of Energy and the Department of Environment have been co-operative on this type of relationship for a long time, I think, ever since the Department of Environment was first formed. Two departments working closely together, I suppose we must trust one another to give accurate information back and forth. That, I think, is the least we could expect. But I believe if I were not working, likely the letters would fall on your desk. And we'd certainly be informed.

So, you know, there are two ways of controlling. If our departments are not doing their job, then somebody is going to complain either to me or to someone else in the government -- in the government or the opposition. So we do have that kind of control.

We would not have enough staff to monitor all over the province of Saskatchewan in every energy field. We just don't have that kind of staff out there. The Department of Environment does have staff in some places, but not everywhere. Energy, of course, would have people involved where there are major oilfields. So it seems proper that they do the monitoring for us and report to us

on a regular basis.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I can understand you don't have people to go out to every oil pit that there is to see whether or not they are meeting your regulations. But if you at least had them . . . forced them to present you with a disposition report, you would then know when the burning had taken place, how much was burnt, and where it was being burnt.

And I don't ask you to have a person at every pit; that is asking too much. But certainly if that was done, then maybe your regulations would be lighter and wouldn't be quite so lax, and we wouldn't have the complaints that we have right now.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- We did get notification from the Department of Energy by telephone of the location, the approximate amount of the spill that occurred, and when the burn will occur. So it's just a handwritten note that's made, and it's kept for a period of time. But after the burn is complete and the problem is taken care of, then it's not maintained over a long period of time. It's maintained on the short term but not on the long term.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I certainly have to take your word for that, that that is being done. But I think if I were the minister responsible for the Environment, I would want to have those reports in my possession just as long as I possibly could, so that when a critic on this side of the House says to you, look, I don't believe that you had that report from the Department of Energy; you could say, Mr. Critic, here they are; which one did you want? If I were you, I would keep those disposition reports, and I would have them more than just handwritten.

I think maybe the fear that is out there is unjust, but we have no way of proving that they are not just in what they are being critical of. So I make that suggestion that maybe, for at least a year or two, keep those on file and then if you wish to destroy them, all right, fine, destroy them. But I think for your own protection . . .

Mr. Minister, I would like to have your opinion on whether or not you think it is . . . as the Minister of the Environment -- I'm not asking you an individual, but I'm asking you as the Minister of the Environment -- whose responsibility it is to protect the environment of Saskatchewan. Where do you stand on the burning of contaminated oil as opposed to reclaiming it?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- Well, it depends on what the contaminant is. I think if you look at the smoke and the fire that come out of most refineries, you realize that we have a burning going on in every refinery. When we speak of contaminated oil, in most cases on an oil field, the contaminated oil, in most cases on an oil field, the contaminant is earth. So when you burn the oil, the earth is left. So you know, we have still just basically the burning of oil. And I'm not saying that's good. But the quantifies that we burn are not that significant. If there were a major spill of oil, the company would be most anxious to reclaim it. If it's enough to be financially a viable reclamation, then they would reclaim it. But smaller quantities, I believe the burning process has worked satisfactorily up to this time.

Now I know the complaint that you've had was from a company who has a reclaiming operation. And naturally they're interested in business, and I can't blame them for that. But on small quantities I would think that that reclamation is likely not thoroughly justified, dollars and cents wise, for the company. Even for the person who's doing the reclaiming, the company that would do the reclaiming, the earth handling likely would not be that profitable an operation.

So I think you have to look at it realistically on the quantities involved and what the contaminant is. When it comes to more serious types of contaminants, like PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and so on, that we do have in oil at SaskPower, we go the other route and indeed have an operation to take the PCB contaminants out and to make the oil reusable.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, I can appreciate your answer, but . . . I really don't want to ask this question, but I'm going to anyway. Could you tell me, approximately, since . . . But you don't keep records, so I don't know if you can or not. Can you tell me approximately the amount of oil, contaminated oil, that was burnt last year? I didn't think you could.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I couldn't give the hon. member the gallonage that would have been burnt in the last year. The staff member that works in that area advises me that, on average, would it be in the neighbourhood of one barrel of oil that's involved in any one burn. So it is small quantity. There's be quite a bit of smoke, but it would last a short time.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, I just give notice that next year I will be asking that same question again. And I hope that you will be able to keep records of the amounts -- and I'm not asking a precise amount, obviously -- but of the amounts that are burnt of contaminated oil. And I hope in next year's estimates, if you are still the minister, that you can provide those answers for me.

Mr. Minister, I recognize that, as you said, that the Kinder Brothers are concerned about their business, and therefore they have a concern here. But I do think you also have some responsibility -- I mean your government. You gave them \$100,000 from Sedco; I believe \$100,000 was given from Sedco and that the former minister, the now member from Weyburn, is reported to have said that he would give them 100 per cent support. Now how can you justify the former member saying that, the former minister, that he would give them 100 per cent support and now I have you saying that, well, you can understand that they are a business but, you know, we have to do what we have to do in our area.

But what I'm asking you: is there any way that you can satisfy your department by not polluting the atmosphere, and also not making a dishonest individual out of the former minister of Energy and Mines, by changing your policy and maybe reclaiming more of the contaminated oil rather than burning it off?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- As I indicated to the hon. member, I

doubt if it would be a viable objective to reclaim small quantities of oil in the neighbourhood of one barrel. You know, to send a truck and a person or whatever it takes to go out and gather it up and then take it to a plant for reclaiming would be a very expensive process for that quantity of oil. Maybe when oil gets high-priced again they could do it.

I don't believe I have to support the former minister of Energy. I think he's done a good job of any department he's been in. He's doing a good job of the department he's in now, and so I think his record will stand on its own.

Some Hon. Members Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, there is one area that you and I will certainly have to disagree. He reined the Department of Energy and he ruined the Department of Agriculture and now he's wrecked the Department of Education and that will be borne out. The Department of Education is borne out by many educators in this province. The sooner we get rid of him in Education, the happier I'll be as an educator, and so will the people of this province.

Mr. Minister, I do want to . . . I'm not talking about the one barrel procedures. But the Kinder Brothers have been in this business for a number of years in the province of Alberta. I think they know their business and they know which spills are profitable and which are not. All I'm asking from you, and I will be asking the same thing from the Minister of Energy: is there any way in which you can change your policy to some extent to make sure that, if you can assist their operation, that we will do so? And that might mean that you've got to put some pressure on some of the oil companies, because it's much easier for them to burn it, and it's cheaper for them to burn it rather than having them reclaim the oil.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I believe that the responsibility for directing business to any one reclamation company would fall with the oil company involved with the spill. There are a number of companies in the province who do that type of work. I think it would be wrong for my department or the Department of Energy to be the one that would direct business to any given firm. So it would be better if they were to seek the business from the oil companies. If they're doing good work for them, they'll likely achieve the increase in business that they're looking for.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, that has not stopped your government from directing particular business to particular companies in this province without tendering or whatever. That's not the point, Mr. Minister. The point is that any reclamation, any reclaiming business -- I'm not just simply saying the Kinder Brothers; in this particular case the Kinder Brothers, but any reclamation -- I think it's preferred to reclaim the oil rather than to burn it. And I would think that as the Minister of Environment you would support that position.

Mr. Minister, I have one further question in this area, and that is in regards to surface rights of farmers. And in meeting with surface rights people, they are very concerned of the pollution that's taking place of their

lands in the oilfields. Have you had any meetings with surface right individuals in correcting their concerns about the polluting of their farm lands by oil companies?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- We've had some meetings, but not extensive. I believe most of that has been handled by the Department of Energy and Mines. If the people are having a concern, I believe that they should register that concern with us and then we can take a look at it. But really we haven't had a great public outcry on that subject.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, I don't think you will hear a public outcry, but when you do meet with surface rights people that's one of the things they always have on their agenda, is the destruction of farm land beyond the area that is needed for the producing of the oil.

Mr. Minister, I want to turn to another area, and that's asbestos, and that will be the last area that I want to deal with. Can you tell me, Mr. Minister, are you aware or can you tell me the number of buildings in Saskatchewan, have you done any investigation as to the number of buildings that still have asbestos in them -- that still contain asbestos?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that our department doesn't have any registry of buildings or any court of the numbers of buildings that would have asbestos.

We deal with the disposal of asbestos that is taken out of buildings, but really that would not fall under our department to have a registry that would keep track of the number of buildings that have the asbestos insulation.

Mr. Rolfes: -- I can appreciate that. I assumed that would come under the Department of Labour, possibly. It has been changed -- is it Labour, possibly? Well, all right. Let me . . . I will have to track that down as to which department we ask that question on.

Okay, would you tell me, Mr. Minister, on the methods of removing asbestos, I know that . . . maybe I should backtrack just a bit. The former minister of Labour, the hon. Lorne McLaren, set up a committee on the . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. Order. I've asked members not to refer to other members by their name -- by their seat or position.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, this was not a slip of the tongue because how would I refer to a former minister of Labour? There are a number of them -- there are a number of them. The former minister of Labour -- which one?

An Hon. Member: -- The member from Yorkton.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Well, all right, the present member from Yorkton. All right? My apology, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to identify which minister of Labour it was. Okay?

Mr. Chairman: -- The former member from Yorkton is fair enough.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, I offer you my apologies. I didn't mean to abuse the rules.

All right, the former Minister of Labour, the present minister of Yorkton, set up a review committee to study asbestos. Could you tell me how many of those conclusions that were brought in in that study has your department implemented now?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that that would still be under the department of Labour. The occupational health and safety division of Labour would still handle that subject. It hasn't been transferred to us.

Mr. Rolfes: -- All right. I can appreciate that. Mr. Minister, you do monitor the removal of asbestos, do you not? Does that come under your department?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- No. The monitoring of the actual removal would still be done under the occupational health and safety. The only area that we would get involved in is to be sure that the disposal of the product, the end product, is done properly. And we do give directions on what is required, how deep it needs to be buried in a landfill area, that sort of things. But we aren't on sight to see that the removal is done properly.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, you're telling me then that if I want to have the information as far as asbestos is concerned, I need to ask those at the Department of Labour, safety and health committee. That would come under there. Is that correct?

Mr. Minister, could you tell me on the disposal of asbestos, could you give me the guide-lines? For example, what are the guide-lines for the disposal, who enforces these guide-lines, and when and how is disposal done?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- Our department would supervise to be sure that it was handled properly if there are large quantities. We require it to be double-bagged in 6mL polyethylene bags, and that it must be removed to a landfill and covered to a depth of at least two feet. And it's to be covered with a product that will not damage the bags in the process. I think we have an extra copy. I could send one across.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, am I also correct in saying then that the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and the removal of asbestos in school buildings and gymnasiums comes under the Department of Labour, and you have nothing to do in that regard, so any information I want, I can get estimates under the department of Labour. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- Yes, I believe that would be correct. The only area we handle is the actual disposal site.

Mr. Rolfes: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. That is all the questions that I have. I will now turn it over to my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Yes. Mr. Minister I want to go back to PCBs. And I want to thank you for sending some of the

information over that I had earlier requested. In terms of the number of PCB spills that have happened in the last 12 months, you've indicated that 44 such spills have occurred between July 1, '86 and July of '87. I'm wondering if you could give me the names of the companies or the municipalities that were involved in those spills.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that that request would take a considerable amount of research to pick it out, but they would be willing to do it; but I don't know if we could do it immediate. It would be done soon, though.

Most of the spills that occur would likely be with Sask Power because they're the largest user of PCB-contaminated oil. So you could expect that that would likely be the main cause at this time.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Then am I to presume if most of the spills were created by Sask Power, that Sask Power is storing the material? And the other thing I'd like to ... if I could, Mr. Minister, I would like the names of those companies and municipalities at some stage in the next couple of weeks, that were involved in the PCB spills.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- Yes, my staff will provide that information as soon as we can. It will take some time to go back and pick it out of the records, but we will provide you with that.

Ms. Atkinson: -- But, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you've had any discussions with the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and municipalities as to a time-table for the phasing out of PCB-filled equipment. Have you had those discussions?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that through the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers that there has been ongoing discussions on the phase-out.. There is a time-frame, but it's a long and sort of uncertain end to it. It's as the transformers and other equipment that the power companies have used, as they come to the end of their useful life, then they are replaced. I don't think that anyone really has a time frame they could put on that. Much of the equipment that uses PCB-contaminated oil is very, very expensive equipment. Some of it is long life, some of it is short. As it's replaced, it's replaced with other equipment, but the time frame would be fairly long.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, I noted in a document that you sent over that there had been a conference held between the federal Minister of Environment and the various provincial Ministers of the Environment. This meeting had taken place in May of 1985. One of the things that this document commits itself to is evaluating different options and timetables for the phase-out of remaining PCB-filled equipment. When you say you can't put a timetable on it, I'm wondering why there would be a commitment to some sort of timetable when you're now telling me that there can't possibly be a commitment?

Going back to my earlier question, I'm wondering what sort of discussions you've had with the Sask Power Corporation to talk about the phase-out of that equipment?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- The meeting that you spoke of was the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers, and they meet on an ongoing basis once or more per year. The discussions they entered into indicated that there is need for a phase-out period. It's an ongoing discussion, but they really have never arrived at a time when that final decision should be made, whether it should be the year 2000 or what year.

I might tell the hon. member that I haven't gone to my first meeting of that organization. The last one they had that would have dealt with something like this was during the election. I was not the Minister of the Environment at that time but I do anticipate, if time allows, to go this year.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, I'm wondering what sort of resources the Department of the Environment has put in to providing the public with information on PCBs. That's one question.

The second question is: what sort of information have you provided for fire-fighters and other workers who might be in an emergency situation where they have to do deal with a PCB spill?

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- The development of the material that I sent across to you, the pamphlets and the larger booklet, was part of the funding that we provide to the Canadian Council of Environment and Resource Ministers. So those were developed under that format, and I believe our contribution in that year was in the \$4,000 range. Now these brochures are available to the public ... that's the main contribution that we make to advising people, but the Power Corporation itself is in the training program, I believe, make them very well aware of the need to be extremely careful in the handling of PCB-contaminated oil.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, what sort of procedures do fire departments undertake in order to handle a fire where PCB-contaminated equipment may be involved? I'd be interested in knowing that. And I'm wondering, in light of the fact that we do not have a list of temporary or temporary storage sites, how would the fire departments in this province know whether or not there was PCB-contaminated equipment stored in a particular facility.

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I'm advised that as it relates to firemen, they are municipal employees, and it's part of their training. There also, part of the training in most fire departments is the identification of dangerous goods storage sites. So in their training they would be given many of those locations.

Now almost every place that you see a transformer is a possibility of a contamination of PCBs. So I would think that any time that firemen come across a fire, in almost every circumstance there would be a transformer of some kind. They would have to be extremely cautious about that subject. We don't keep a list because it would be so extensive that it would be meaningless, I think. But if each city and each fire department in its training does that

work, they probably covered it as well as could be expected at this time.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, the Department of the Environment is responsible for PCBs, I understand. You have jurisdiction over the handling and storage and that sort of thing. Your department has undertaken an action plan with other federal ... or with the federal minister and with the provincial ministers, and you tell me that firemen are municipal employees, and that's correct; that somehow, someone has to get the list of storage sites and give it to them in their training. Who's supposed to get that list — the municipality, the fire department — and where are they supposed to get the list from? Because they certainly don't have jurisdiction over PCBs in this province.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — The statement that you make that we're responsible for PCBs is not entirely right; it's partially right. We assist in the disposal of contaminated oils, like moving them out of the province for burning or for reprocessing; like hiring a firm to do the reprocessing. We monitor the methods of handling, but we're not directly responsible. PCBs are handled under the Dangerous Goods Act, which is a federal Act which we fully support. So in that respect we do have some responsibility.

Now when you deal with the fire side of it, in cities like Saskatoon or Regina there are fire stations and fire districts that each station covers. And in the training that the firemen undertake when they're hired and when they go into a district, they are given very careful training on the actual location of many of these areas where dangerous goods are stored. So in their work they, on an ongoing basis, monitor and study to find out where these things are, because it's very important to them in their work.

Our department has been very peripherally involved in training of firemen and people who work with fire. But it's on a limited basis, and mostly the people that are involved are the rural fire departments, where they don't have quite as sophisticated training programs as the large cities. But we are doing some of that work, and the program is ongoing. We hope to get better at it. It's still fairly new.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, who's responsible for the protection of the environment in this province, and therefore safeguards the people of this province from PCB contamination, as an example? Who is responsible?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — The Department of Environment takes that responsibility, and we take it very seriously, but we cannot be all things to all people. People have to protect themselves up to a point ... (inaudible interjection) ... If the hon. member has a question, he might like to stand and ask it. I haven't heard him asking any yet.

We monitor, as closely as possible, the handling of PCB-contaminated oils. The power corporation is also a government-owned corporation which is responsible for its own actions. But if they are doing things with transformers that are beyond their jurisdiction, of course, we step in and make suggestions for doing it differently.

We inspect the sites where the goods are stored and see that the permanent storage sites are properly developed and properly cared for. So we take it very seriously.

But for the hon. member to indicate to the House, and to me, that we're responsible for every action of every individual, I think, is a little bit unrealistic. It would be most difficult to do. But we do take it very seriously, and we do the best that I think any department could expect to do under the circumstances.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, obviously you're not responsible for the action of every individual in this province. However, I do think you're responsible for the public safety of this province, and I do think that you do have some responsibility when it comes to the environment in this province and protecting the environment from PCB contamination.

I also think you have some responsibility when we have emergency workers going into situations where they could endanger their lives, not only by fire but by the possibility of some sort of chemical contamination.

Mr. Minister, I think my point in this is that we have a situation in Saskatchewan where we have a number of temporary storage sites around the province, which you can't tell me where they're located. We have a situation where we could have a fire, and you know what happens to PCBs when we have a fire -- and not at high temperatures; and you know what happens to the health and safety of those workers if we put workers in those kind of situations. So I'm wondering what sort of action plan you're prepared to develop in order that the people of this province and, in particular, emergency workers in this province have access to information when they're going into a dangerous situation?

I'm interested in knowing what your action plan is, to not only protect the environment but also protect those emergency workers.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- We have some responsibilities for the handling of dangerous goods. In the case of the actual workers, I guess the responsibility there would fall under the Department of Labour, and that particular part we would not have jurisdiction over.

I believe our record stands very clear and very strong in Saskatchewan as it relates to accidents involving PCB-contaminated oils. We haven't had any serious accidents where people have had serious problems from PCBs. We have had some spills which have been collected and disposed of.

Federal Pioneer had a major spill a number of years ago -- a very costly spill for Federal Pioneer, but it was our department that supervised the clean-up of that spill. And many, many tons of earth were removed and taken out of the area so that the area was clean again -- so that we can still live beside it without contamination. Any time there is a spill our department goes immediately to see that it is cleaned up properly.

When you say that you don't know where every little storage site is, almost every power pole in rural

Saskatchewan over the years had a transformer with PCBs. You couldn't begin to identify them all. It's up to the company that owns the equipment to keep track of those items. And when a company like the Power Corporation is responsible, I think that they take their job very seriously. And they do a good job of it.

So gradually we're moving into a position where those transformers are being replaced -- sometimes because they've come to the end of their life, other times because there's a larger transformer needed. And when one is removed and a new one is put up, they are not filled with PCB-contaminated oil. They were filled with other types of oils.

So I think we've done a good job. And our department, I believe, is doing an excellent job of policing any time when there is a spill. So we're quite confident that people can rest comfortable that their environment has been in good hands for a long period of time.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, this report of the PCB Action Plan talks about improving co-ordination of existing emergency response capabilities and evaluating existing training programs related to spill response, as well as the handling and storage of PCBs. I'd be interested in knowing how your department, and how you, have responded to this particular recommendation of the ministers of Environment across this country.

Hon. Mr. Swan: -- I can advise the hon. member that we have a spill line that operates on a 24-hour basis, and that spill line is there to pick up any calls dealing with the spills of PCBs. Our staff have been trained to respond and what to do in the case of a spill, and they can respond on very short notice. We do have some regional offices around the province -- six regional offices that put some of our people in a position to respond to almost every corner of the province in a reasonably short period of time. And I think they've done a good job with that. They do respond quickly, and they're trained to know what to do when they arrive at the site.

So that's the process that's been put in place, and I think that's exactly what was required from this action that was taken at the meeting of...

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. Being 5 o'clock the committee is recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed at 5 p.m.