

May 5, 1988

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hardy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce, through you and to the Assembly here, 75 students from the Tisdale School in Tisdale. They are accompanied by their teachers, Maureen Donald, Lois McGill, Marjorie Hanson. They also have chaperons, Mrs. Hartman, Miss Hainstock, Mrs. Mievre, Mrs. Sangster, Mrs. Wallington, and Mrs. Hunt. They have their bus drivers along with them; they have Daniel Knudtson and Tom Mowat.

They're here today visiting the legislature to see the proceedings of our legislature. I'm sure that they will find it both enjoyable and interesting. They come from the north-east part of the community, Mr. Speaker, where we call it the hub of the North-east — the entrance to the North — where tourism and hospitality is at its best. And certainly these students and their families represent that. I ask all the members to join with me in welcoming the Tisdale students here to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the House, four students from the "Quiet" high school, that is grades 10, 11, and 12. The "Quiet" high school is an alternative form of education for those returning to high school. Congratulations on returning to high school.

They are accompanied by Wayne Sawka. They work out of Miller Collegiate, and it's delightful to have you here today. I'll have an opportunity to speak with you — have pictures and speak with you — in the Speaker's board room. I wish that all members would join me in welcoming these students from the "Quiet" high school.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to all the members of this House, a young gentleman and his cousin. This happens to be one of my wife's relatives, Reg Argue. He's with the Canadian forces and he's stationed in Calgary. He's in the city at this time, Mr. Speaker, visiting his grandmother who is gravely ill.

Would all the members of the House join me in welcoming him to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Policies Affecting Saskatchewan Residents

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my caucus, I have to say that.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, yesterday the voters in Regina Elphinstone and Saskatoon Eastview took a careful look at your government's record, and I think it's safe to say they rejected it, and rejected it overwhelmingly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this: Mr. Premier, in view of your destructive changes to the health care system, the high imposition of taxes on individual people and not corporations, the lack of jobs for our young people, the inattention to our small-business people, and perhaps more importantly, the lack of hope for Saskatchewan people — in the light of those by-election results, will you tell the House today, definitely, that you're prepared to abandon these reckless, harmful policies which affect our families so badly, and adopt a new set of programs in line with the wishes of the people of our province, and if so, what your timetable for doing so will be?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would first say congratulations to the Leader of the Opposition on the success of the by-elections. I have experienced both sides of by-elections and general elections, and I would say to the hon. member that I can appreciate the fact that this might have been his turn and he'd earned a chance at a little success, and I congratulate him — and I mean that.

With respect to policies as a result of by-elections, Mr. Speaker, I can say to the hon. member two things: one is, we are obviously working extremely hard to modernize the various kinds of facilities that we have in Saskatchewan and, indeed, across the country, and that applies to technical school, that applies to education, it applies to new hospitals, it applies to the prescription drug program and several others.

I can understand why people might have some concerns as a result of changes. Obviously our concern, whether it's for senior citizens or families or those that are in cancer facilities or others, is to provide the best facilities we can. That takes some change, and as I'm sure that you know, we want the best technology that we can use any place.

We are going to do that, and you ask me how fast we are going to do that — as fast as we can. You will see a technology with respect to health care in terms of prescription drugs and others be brought in as fast as we can make sure that it will do the job for people and be effective in reducing things that might have been an irritation, and I grant you that with respect to rebates. But also we want to make sure that we can address the incidences of drug abuse, and we're going to look at that very carefully. So our policies will be initiated here as quickly as we can.

Finally, just let me say, you know, a by-election is a by-election. There would be, I think it was 63 percentage of people, 63 per cent voted in Regina and 69 per cent in

Saskatoon. Obviously there's a large percentage of people who just frankly decided to stay home and not vote at all. You can say, well they were all yours; I could say, they were all mine. It's probably neither one would be true. But obviously by-elections are a reflection of a point in time.

I'll take it seriously; I'll look at it very carefully and look at ways that we can implement the modernation of all kinds of programs and policies here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary question to the Premier. I listened with special care to his answer, and to be quite frank with you, Mr. Premier, I hear you telling me and the people of Saskatchewan that you're going to stay the course with these so-called changes. You describe them under technological reasons and for other reasons, but it's staying the course.

The answer, Mr. Premier, means programs which will continue to hurt people who need, for example, the drug plan to be restored back to the way it was; to hurt our students. What in the world does it take, Mr. Premier, what more does it take, short of a general election to make you and your government understand and accept the fact that people in the province of Saskatchewan — to use but one example, the drug care plan — don't equate the universal drug care plan with your condemnation — rightly so — in a different area about drug abuse. What in the world does it take to convince your government that what the people of Saskatchewan want is a caring, compassionate government first and foremost?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I would think that the hon. member would acknowledge that the efficient and effective prescription drug program that would provide good health care services to the public is important, as well as an address on drug abuse, because young people will tell us across Saskatchewan, indeed Canada, that drug abuse is a problem. And the police tell us it's a problem. Young people tell us, health care officials tell us it's a problem.

So both of them . . . Mr. Chairman, I would say to the hon. member, both have to be addressed by this legislature — both do, and we will. The new technology that we're looking at can provide very efficient, effective, low-cost service to the public, and I believe that you would understand that — without rebates, without rebates. And that's exactly what you're asking for. We can do that and, mark my words, we will. And it's going to take the courage to get a hold of it, and we have — at some cost, granted — but we're going to take a hold of that.

At the same time I will ask for your co-operation on addressing the whole question of drug abuse because young people today are facing the problems of drugs and crime, and society is. And we're going to have to address that. And I'm sure you're aware of it. If you read any newspaper any day of the week you'll find it across North America and right here at home in Regina and Saskatoon, and in our cities and towns and villages.

So I can say to the hon. member, I've listened before to by-election results, and I have responded. The same happened in Regina North East, and I listened carefully, and I did respond. I've been through by-elections myself, and you watched me lose a by-election, and perhaps maybe your interest today is just reflected in what you learned at that time.

I'll say, I'm going to listen; I will respond. We will be thoughtful, we'll be careful, and we'll provide the best health care and the best education and the most competitive society we can to build the kinds of jobs we want for people of all ages.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, I must tell you frankly that your answer is discouraging. I understand the circumstances that you're under this morning after the by-elections, and I don't say this in any sense of victory. I know what by-elections mean. There's a general election to be fought. But even you, sir, must admit that the massive vote from two ridings which are so disparate in their ethnic and economic and social background, convey a serious message to you.

And your answer today, sir, is discouraging, to put it mildly, because you confuse two issues and you've told the House that you're not going to change your policies.

You talk about courage. My question is this, Mr. Premier: if you say courage, why don't you have the courage, why didn't you have the courage to tax the oil companies, \$2 billion of which, by the way, they have escaped with by free money? To tax the oil companies, that would have been courage. Instead of picking on the ordinary farmer and the labourer and the working person, tax those oil companies to finance the drug plan that the people of Saskatchewan had before and want today. Now that's courage!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker, we can see why a general election is a lot different. It's one thing for you to stand in your place after winning in downtown Regina and Saskatoon and condemn oil companies. Across rural Saskatchewan people work in the oil patch, and it's not their fault we have drug abuse. It's not their fault that we have problems with respect to health care. Okay? So don't blame them.

What I'm saying is that we have to address the problem across society, and I can only point out to the hon. member, we will address it, and you mark my words, with respect to the prescription drug program, we will address it as quickly as we can and you will see the new technology.

But if you want to quickly revert to the old political battles that we've got to blame the oil patch for everything, I'll tell you that's one of the reasons that you just might not win in rural Saskatchewan where we have resources and people who are just as much part of Saskatchewan as you

are, sir — just as much.

You can't just keep picking on people. Everybody in this province has the right to have access to health care and the right to education and the right to participate, and they don't need you picking on them any more than they need me picking on them. So between the two of us, if we want good health care, we want good education, good prescription drug programs, and good resource development, and, Mr. Speaker, if we want jobs . . . okay?

Why would you blame the oil patch when we've got the largest job creation project in Regina's history here, and it's oil? And you stand up there and say, well if you just took from the oil companies. I'd say, sir it takes the entire community to build, and that's our attitude over here, and clearly it's not yours over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — I believe we're getting into somewhat of a debate forum and I would ask the hon. members to recognize that.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, I don't blame the oil companies. If they can get a \$2 billion deal from your government or any government, that's their business. I blame you, sir.

If you're talking about jobs for farming people and for business people and for working people in the cities and a drug plan that everybody needs, and you're saying at the same time, this is a period of restraint, I blame you, sir, and your government for giving away — you didn't have to raise that tax one penny — for giving away \$2 billion.

My argument to you, Mr. Premier, is this. Forget about even . . . and my question to you is this, sir — forget even about the drug plan for the moment. What about redirecting your policies in all of the other areas: the \$34,000 a day in wasted government office space, the tax increases, the flat tax increases, the sales tax increases? How about bringing this house of yours into order and start having an efficient, properly run government that's competent and compassionate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I just say to the hon. member, it didn't take you too long before you shifted onto blaming the oil companies, and now it's on . . . then that didn't last, so you went on to space.

I would say to the hon. member: he knows that almost half the space that we have in government, extra space, is for a new drug rehab centre for young people — long overdue, long overdue. And we bought that facility, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, we bought that facility from the federal government to address the drug and alcohol abuse problem in this country and in this province. It will be the first centre in western Canada for drug rehabilitation for young people. And he condemns us for that.

See, Mr. Speaker, he has one thing on his mind — one thing. It's like the member from Saskatoon Nutana — one

thing again. He forgets the rest of the public; he forgets the young people. He forgets the fact that if you address that prescription drug program and ask people to think, that you can reduce abuse, and they'll acknowledge that. Many will come up and say: but I want a system without rebates. But they say, thank goodness somebody got us to think about the abuse, and we will address it.

I'm saying to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members opposite: we will have new technology; we will have a brand-new drug and rehabilitation centre in Yorkton. Those facilities will be the finest you'll find anywhere in Canada. And the people will be proud of them, and the people of Yorkton, the people of Regina, and the people of Saskatoon, because that takes courage to address that kind of problem, not just rhetoric, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have one last final question in this area to the Premier. Mr. Premier, it's a little bit hard to know how one can accept the description of office space when one has to simply walk in downtown Regina or Saskatoon to see the special lease-back arrangements, which we'll discuss in Executive Council estimates, that have been arranged between your government and private developers, lying empty.

But my question to you is this, Mr. Speaker . . . to you, Mr. Premier, is as follows. I don't mean this in any personal sense. I frankly think you're too busy as Premier and as Minister of Agriculture; you do not have control of this government. Your factual answers display that today, the very last one. You don't have control of it.

Look, my question to you, Mr. Premier, is very simple. Why don't you do everybody a favour, including yourself and the farmers of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan; appoint a full-time Minister of Agriculture; become a full-time minister of the Executive Council or the Premier so that you can find the solutions to the real problems of real people and ordinary families. How about doing that, as a positive suggestion.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, you can see why the results in a general election might be different than a by-election. Those are the issues that you ran in in 1982 and you ran on in 1986 — hit the oil companies; we're going to run on the Crow; we don't know anything about agriculture. You put those three things up.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the hon. member, we have to look at all of society. We are going to address agriculture. We're going to encourage people to invest in oil. We are going to encourage people to make changes and have modern education and health care facilities and technology. And we're going to do that.

And I will say to people both in Elphinstone and in Saskatoon Eastview and across the province, we will respond quickly and fairly and accurately to the concerns they have with respect to health care or prescription drug. At the same time we will be building brand-new facilities for young people, for drug and rehabilitation. We will be building brand-new facilities for people in education and health care across this province, the finest you'll find any

place in the country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cut-backs in Health Care

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, throughout two by-elections people in Saskatoon Eastview and Regina Elphinstone expressed concerns to us that families have been expressing to us across Saskatchewan. People feel betrayed by your cut-backs in health care. Your elimination of the school-based children's dental program and your destruction of the prescription drug plan have caused severe hardship and were wrong. The long hospital waiting lists are wrong and cut-backs in health research is wrong.

You've hurt Saskatchewan people, Mr. Premier. You've caused hardship to Saskatchewan people and you've imposed a heavy and stressful burden on people who need health care. Mr. Premier, have you heard the message and are you prepared to stop your cut-backs to health, all cut-backs to health?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we heard yesterday that it was all the government's fault because there was line-ups at our cancer facilities, and obviously we found out that's not the case.

Today the hon. member raises the fact that the school-based dental program was the issue in Regina Elphinstone or in Saskatoon Eastview. And it's not, and she knows that. And there are more and more dentists going into rural Saskatchewan. We fully fund the program, as she knows, fully fund it. And people can take their children from ages five to 13 to any dentist they like and we pay for it. It didn't come up as a campaign issue. So she can raise it if she likes. If she wants to campaign in rural Saskatchewan, fair enough.

And with respect to the drug program, I've already said, Mr. Speaker, we're going to find the finest — and we're going to design and implement the finest drug prescription . . . prescription drug program and technology here in the province of Saskatchewan that they can look to any place in North America — no rebates, fast turn around, low cost, and address drug abuse at the same time. And I'm sure even the hon. member will be proud of it when we initiate it here in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Premier, if you think the school-based dental program is not a problem in urban ridings, you're wrong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Sir, your health care policy has failed. There's absolutely no question about that. And the people of Saskatchewan don't trust you when it comes to health care, Mr. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — They don't want rhetoric. They don't want gimmicks. They don't want more studies, Mr. Premier, and they've sent you that message and it is clear.

Do you now have the compassion and the determination to change your health care policies and change them immediately?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker, I would only say to the hon. member, she knows that the amount of money that this administration is spending on health is very, very large, and it's up over 68 per cent above what the NDP spent.

I would also say, Mr. Speaker, if she would look . . . She says that there's this massive change in public opinion. I would only say to the hon. member that it looks like the NDP picked up 14 percentage points in Saskatoon Eastview and they picked up 6 in Elphinstone, and that's, Mr. Speaker, when 40 . . . almost 40 per cent of the people don't even participate in the by-election, don't even participate at all, and she's saying that the whole issue was the school-based dental program.

Well, Mr. Chairman, obviously if you want to extend your case from two by-elections to the general population, and particularly the rural Saskatchewan with respect to the dental program, I'd be very surprised.

And if you ask people, are we spending money on health care or building hospitals or new facilities, I think they know that we are. And I said the new prescription drug program is going to be implemented as quickly as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Confidentiality of Patient Information

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Health. Yesterday the member from Nutana, on page 1058 of *Hansard*, alleged that she obtained information from the cancer clinic in Saskatoon in regards to a patient.

As a current patient of the Canadian Cancer Society, I would like to ask the Minister of Health to assure me and my fellow patients that no information will be given to that member or any other member of the public about my treatment schedule, the number of times I visit, the drugs I take, or anything else.

And I would just like that assurance from the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, that that information is sacred and is between me and my physician and the people in the Canadian Cancer Society.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that the information, the kind of information, personal information that patients have in any part of the health care system obviously — obviously, I say — must remain

and must be of confidential nature.

I took note of the . . . I watched with interest as I was reading the page 1058 here of yesterday's *Hansard* where the member said, "I spoke to the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic this morning about this case," and all I will say, Mr. Speaker, after reading that I asked my officials to look into this matter and to investigate the matter.

I have nothing more to report than that, Mr. Speaker, but it is serious and it does merit some investigation by the people in the Department of Health. I would like to assure the member and all cancer patients in this province, indeed all patients in this province who access health care facilities, that their information deserves to be confidential and will be confidential, Mr. Speaker.

Tax Reform

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to also address a question to the Premier. And from your answers, Mr. Premier, I think the by-elections have taught you nothing; it's the same old lines.

I want to refer, Mr. Premier, to your government and your office continuing indicating . . . talking about tax reform. But for ordinary people in Saskatchewan what that has meant to the farm families, to working people, your tax reform has meant increases: property tax increases; the PC gas tax which you said you wouldn't reimpose; your 40 per cent increase in the sales tax which you said that you would eliminate; your PC flat tax — a double taxation in personal income tax.

Mr. Premier, it seems to me that the people of Saskatchewan sent a message yesterday, and what I want to ask you; will you acknowledge that they sent you a message, and in fact that they're sick and tired of being abused with excessive taxation at the same time that corporations are given tax relief?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the hon. member I will just remind him of a couple of things. First is that we are the second lowest taxed province in all of Canada. And it is published in the budget and obviously, Mr. Speaker, we don't charge health care fees and other jurisdictions do. And when you pull this together — all the taxes that are in there — we are the second lowest taxed province any place in Canada, and we're proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, we're the only province, the only province in this country that does not tax gasoline, if you save your receipts. In Alberta there's a five cent gas tax, in Manitoba it's seven or eight cents, no rebate mechanism, and all the rest of the country does; but Saskatchewan, you can get your tax refunded with a rebate.

We have no tax on clothes under \$300, Mr. Speaker. We have no tax on utilities like power bills and we brought that in. You'll see that most, most employees will have a benefit, an increase in their take-home pay as of July 1 because of tax reform, Mr. Speaker. And you'll also find out that we are generating more tax from industry and

from the private sector and from resources than the previous administration.

So you put that together, and the fact that we have increased our expenditures in health care from 700 million to 1.2 billion as a result of what we're doing in industry, Mr. Speaker, I would say I am very happy to report to the Canadian public and to Saskatchewan people, we have very competitive tax levels here in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you need a new line. And I'll tell you what you need more than that, you need a new philosophy, a philosophy of respect for the people of this province — that's what you need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Premier, are you aware that every time that you've talked about tax reform, what has happened is that the taxes have gone up for ordinary citizens and corporate taxes have you cut . . . you slashed corporate taxes and you increase it on ordinary people of Saskatchewan. I ask you: are you aware that the people are trying to give you a message that they are against these vicious tax increases on ordinary Saskatchewan people.

And therefore I ask you again, I ask you . . . my question to you therefore is this: have you heard that message? Are you going to listen to the people of Saskatchewan, and will you bring in some tax relief to ordinary Saskatchewan people as opposed to the corporations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, let me make two points: the first is that it is a little interesting that the member from Quill Lakes just hopped on the band wagon of the leader of the NDP and said the same old thing, that it must be those corporations and it must be the oil patch and it must be some other things that have caused the problem. They've done that in two general elections and . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, order. Order!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just say, you can't blame — please don't blame the small business or oil companies or resource people for the problem. You tried that in '82 and '86 and in the 1984 federal election. So don't blame them. And you tried that before.

The second thing, let me point out, Mr. Speaker, is that we have provided lower tax

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. The Premier can't answer if he's interrupted, and I ask for the co-operation of the members.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for putting the opposition in its place. They're gloating a little today and I can understand that. I will give them their day for their smiles.

Let me just add to the hon. member that we have reduced taxes for low income people. They will see further reductions as of July and further reductions next year in 1989, so the combination of tax reform will show up July 1 and well into 1988-89 for low income people particularly, as a result of tax reform.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 16 — An Act respecting the Licensing of Persons who Perform Work of Gas Installation or Sell Gas Equipment

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting the licensing of persons who perform work of gas installation and sell gas equipment.

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

Bill No. 17 — An Act respecting the Inspection of Gas Installations and Gas Equipment for Consumers

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting the Inspection of Gas Installations and Gas Equipment for Consumers.

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

Bill No. 18 — An Act respecting the Inspection of Electrical Equipment, Installation and Material

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting the Inspection of Electrical Equipment, Installation and Material.

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

Bill No. 19 — An Act to amend The Statute Law

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Statute Law.

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

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I rise on a question of privilege pursuant to rule no. 6 of the *Rules and Procedures* of this Assembly. And in accordance with that rule, I have sent notice to you setting out the substance of the allegation of breach of privilege, and as a courtesy I have copied the opposition House Leader as well as the alleged member in breach.

Mr. Speaker, I will briefly set out the facts in question, and I will also address the issue of promptness in my raising this issue.

Mr. Speaker: — Before the minister goes further, I would

like to just point out to him that this is not an opportunity for a debate. And I will have to ask the minister and the opposition critic that they speak narrowly to the question of privilege raised by the minister. It is not an opportunity to debate the entire issue.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief in my remarks. You will know, Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week a motion was argued in the Court of Queen's Bench in this city. The action involved the member from Regina Victoria as plaintiff and the Government of Saskatchewan and the hon. members from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden and Kindersley as defendants. On Tuesday afternoon the presiding judge dismissed the action and, to illustrate the frivolous nature of the action, ordered the member from Regina Victoria to pay court costs.

In arguing the motion the member in question claimed a special status, claimed a special status, Mr. Speaker, to bring this action in capacity, in his capacity as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the member opposite had no such authority to bring this action before the courts, Mr. Speaker. I am advised that no motion was passed by the Public Accounts Committee to that effect. And, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit that the member from Regina Victoria is in breach of the privilege in bringing this matter before the courts. He has misrepresented his authority to the court in representing that he took court proceedings under his office as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the member attempted to use his authority given by this legislature for purely personal and political reasons. In this regards, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that the judge, on page 10 of the transcript, called that member's actions deplorable in attempting to use the courts for cheap, political purposes.

It is unfortunate . . .

Mr. Speaker: — The hon. member must stick to the privilege itself which reads:

that the member has committed a breach of privilege in usurping or misusing the authority given to him as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

That is the narrow issue being discussed.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker, and I will reduce my comments to just a very few. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite had no such authority given to him by the Public Accounts Committee, and that was a breach of his position, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is indeed a prima facie case of privilege, and I would ask you to rule on it accordingly.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this matter that has been raised by the minister, and I want

to make a few brief points on the question of privilege that he has attempted to raise here today. I must say that I did get an advance copy of the letter, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly appreciate that.

I want to say at the outset that I believe that all members of this Assembly share my view that a question of privilege is a very serious matter and ought to be addressed as such by this House.

The issue of privilege has been developed over the years by parliament and by this legislature, and has been defined by the learned parliamentary authorities. And *Beauchesne's*, Fifth Edition, article 16, to which I refer to you, Mr. Speaker, as you consider the minister's comments, defines privilege in the following way:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively . . . and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions . . .

Beauchesne's goes on to say, in the same article that:

The privileges of Parliament (and I quote again) are . . . enjoyed by individual Members . . . and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

And moreover, the same authority at article 76, Mr. Speaker, to which I again refer you, says that a breach of privilege in committee may only be dealt with after a report from the committee.

And so I therefore submit to you, sir, that there are three basic tests that must be applied in a case such as this, and only if one of those tests has been met is there a case for a point of privilege. I submit to you that not one of those tests has been met.

First, the minister has failed to demonstrate that his ability to function as a member has in any way been reduced or even affected.

Secondly, the minister has failed to demonstrate that the authority or dignity or capacity of this legislature has in any way been affected or weakened. And third, Mr. Speaker, the minister is not, himself, a member of the Public Accounts Committee and has failed to demonstrate that the integrity or the capacity of the committee has in any way been affected by the actions of which he complains here today.

And so I therefore submit to you, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that the minister has failed to establish that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege in this instance.

I have one brief further point to make, sir. The minister alleges that the member for Regina North somehow wrongly identified himself to the court as the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of this legislature. The facts are these. My colleague for Regina Victoria is a member of this legislature and so identified himself to the court. He is the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and so identified himself to the court. In identifying himself to the court, he did so accurately,

correctly, and properly, and at no time did the member claim or imply that he was acting on behalf of the committee or with its authorization. And the minister has failed to demonstrate otherwise.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, keeping my remarks brief, I find it extremely regrettable that a government that has resolutely refused to provide the *Public Accounts* of this legislature for more than a month now . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I would just like to also remind the member for Regina North East, as I reminded the minister — as I reminded the minister — that the remarks must be addressed specifically to the issue of privilege which has been raised.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall do so, although the member opposite did not. And I simply say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the argument provided and the efforts by the government opposite is ill-founded, undefensible, and is simply a desperate attempt at trying to cover up the fact that the *Public Accounts* have not been tabled in the House.

And so I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has failed to establish that there is any question of privilege here, and I would therefore ask you to rule accordingly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1445)

Mr. Speaker: — I thank the hon. member for the notice of his point of privilege which was received in my office this morning.

I refer all members to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, page 11, paragraph 16, as follows:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

(And) The privileges of Parliament are rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers". They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members; and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

The role of the Chair is to decide whether sufficient evidence has been produced to show that the House or its members have been, or will be, impeded in the performance of their duties, and whether the point raised by the member is so urgent that the House must set aside all of its business in order to debate this point.

I rule that the hon. member has not presented sufficient evidence to convince me that a *prima facie* breach of

privilege exists.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

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

Item 1

Mr. Chairman: — Would the minister introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce my officials to the House. Beside me is Peter Van Es, the deputy minister of Environment and Public Safety; directly behind me, Randy Sentis, the assistant deputy minister; beside him Rick Knoll, the director of administration and communications.

In the back row we have Nick Surtees, close to the door, executive director of public safety division; Michael Hegan, executive director of the Emergency Measures Organization; Bob Walker, director, environmental assessment branch; Don Fast, director, the water quality branch; Larry Lechner, director of air and land protection branch; and Ron Barsi, director of the mines pollution control branch.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few remarks in opening these estimates. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the mandate of Saskatchewan Environment and Public Safety.

The department mandate, in recognition of the transfer of the technical safety services branch from Saskatchewan Labour, and the Emergency Measures Organization from Saskatchewan Urban Affairs is now threefold.

First, the environmental protection: to protect and enhance the environment in a manner that promotes the physical, economical and social well-being of the people of Saskatchewan today and in the future.

Public Safety is to provide and maintain safety standards for industry and the general public in the fields of boiler and pressure vessel, gas, electrical and elevator installations, amusement rides, fire safety, and building standards and accessibility.

Emergency measures: to develop and maintain an effective emergency response capability at the provincial and municipal levels of government to ensure the survival and recovery of our citizens and communities from a peacetime emergency or disaster.

It is under this mandate that our 1988-89 *Estimates* have been prepared. Before I describe some of our new initiatives and major programs, it is very important to clarify that the reductions shown in *Estimates* for the

department, of 885,000 and 6.8 positions, does not reflect the reduction to current programs. The reduction is mainly due to the deletion of one-time expenditures that were in the '87-88 budget for early retirement positions, salaries and severance, and projects for Newcore arsenic clean-up and Operation Recycle, which were completed in 1987-88.

Also there was six months provision for operations of the electrical and gas inspection program in '87-88, for which only three months provisions will be required in '88-89 due to its proposed transfer to SaskPower.

The total of these one-time expenditures that were deleted from our '87-88 budget was approximately 1.6 million and 10.8 positions. Therefore the department actually received a total of \$715,000 and four additional positions in increased funding for '88-89.

This increased funding will enable us to implement the following new initiatives: the closure of abandoned mines — this is a new program with 200,000 and one position to initiate closure of abandoned mines. We will identify public safety problems, develop remedial action alternatives for known mines near high-population areas and implement a limited awareness campaign in the media.

Policy research and strategic planning section: we will establish a policy research and strategic planning section with \$150,000 and two positions. This section will monitor and respond to comprehensive multi-sectoral environment and safety issues, as well as address the recommendations coming from the national task force on environment and economic report.

Regina ground water monitoring: this will involve initiation of a three-year ground water monitoring program with annual funding of 50,000 to assess water quality of the Regina aquifer. This program will be done in conjunction with the city of Regina and other interested parties.

The boiler and pressure vessels inspection: a new boiler and pressure vessel inspector position with funding of \$50,000 has been established to undertake federal boiler and vessel inspections. These inspections will be in accordance with an inspection fee for service contract with the federal government which will more than recover our costs.

The emergency measure organization: provision has been made for a contractual national emergency agency co-ordinator with funding of \$35,000. These costs will be 100 per cent refundable from the federal government under the joint emergency planning program.

Toxic chemical management: this program, with funding of 130,000, has been established to develop and administer the hazardous substance regulations under The Environmental Management and Protection Act. The program also provides information to the public regarding chemical safety and undertakes environmental studies aimed at assessing the impacts of chemicals on the environment.

A \$200,000 annual grant is also provided to the Toxicology Research Centre at University of Saskatchewan to provide financial assistance for their operational costs and enable them to co-ordinate provincial resources for toxicology research on effects of toxic substances on human health and the environment.

The pesticide container disposal program was implemented in 1983 to collect discarded pesticide containers and associated residues that could severely damage the environment. Since that time, approximately 80 per cent of the rural municipalities have established collection sites which are serviced by crushing and collection contractors retained by the provincial government. In 1987-88, 273 collection sites were in operation and approximately 700,000 containers were crushed; 74 barrels of residue were collected and destroyed at facilities in Ontario. Crushed metal and taken to mills in Manitoba.

Fire inspection and fire-fighter training. The fire commissioner provides fire inspection of buildings in rural and small urban centres, and is responsible for the development and presentation of fire-fighting training programs to volunteer units, and the examination of plans and specifications for regulated buildings.

A complete level one training program of fire-fighters consisting of 17 modules has been completed. During 1987-88, 58 fire schools and 48 certificate modules were conducted with a total of 1,669 fire-fighters attending these courses. In addition, a training module dealing with fire prevention, evacuation and emergency procedures for institutional occupancy was delivered to 108 institutions, with 2,451 persons attending.

During 1986-87, 5,432 building inspections in 331 communities were conducted by fire prevention officers, and 861 orders were issued to remedy hazardous conditions. In addition, 122 fires were subject to investigation, and 1,380 plans and specifications reviewed. Funding for this program is continued at 989,023 positions.

The institution chemical collection program: this program was initiated to remove the backlog of unwanted or deteriorated, potentially hazardous chemicals from schools and hospitals. Since January of 1987, over 300 institutions were visited and approximately 15,000 kg of chemicals were removed and disposed of. The program was completed in March of 1988.

The Clean Air Act was passed in the last session of the legislature to replace and improve upon the existing Air Pollution Control Act. New regulations under The Clean Air Act are being finalized. The new Act and new regulations will be promulgated in the near future.

Uniform building and accessibility standards: the Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Amendment Act received assent in 1987, and certain administrative sections have been proclaimed. Further sections of the Act are scheduled for proclamation in June of 1988, which will bring into force the building and accessibility regulations for construction and alterations to buildings throughout the province. These regulations

will provide standards for the design, construction, use and occupancy of buildings, and will ensure an appropriate range of buildings will be accessible to persons with physical disabilities.

The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act and regulations adopt the National Building Code of Canada and provide for uniform standards throughout the province. The Act and regulations will extend control of building construction to many areas where control is lacking, and impose responsibility for the administration of these standards to urban and rural municipalities.

Environment impact assessments: the environmental assessment branch reviewed an unprecedented 77 development proposals during the '87-88 fiscal year. Of these, 55 were received as new proposals and 22 were carried over from previous years. Of the total 77 proposals: 49 were allowed to proceed without assessments; 6 are still undergoing screening to determine the need for assessments; and 20 were required to undergo formal assessments and reviews; 2 proposals were withdrawn by their proponents before reviews were completed. Environmental impact statements for eight of the proposals required assessments, were submitted, and their reviews completed.

(1500)

Ministerial approvals were then granted for them as follows: Prairie Coal Ltd.'s relocation of Poplar River Coal Mine near Coronach was given on September 21 of 1987; Cigar Lake Mining Corporation's construction and operation of a test mine for the Cigar Lake uranium development was given on October 21 of 1987; Saskatchewan Power Corporation's construction of a 230 kilovolt transmission line to provide an Alberta-Saskatchewan interconnection was given on December 7 of '87; Simpson Timber Company's construction of a winter haul road from Sturgeon-weir River to Highway 9 on December 7 of '87; Eldorado Resources Ltd.'s expansion to its Rabbit Lake uranium development on January 4 of 1988; Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation's construction of Highway 41 in the Melfort region was given on February 1 of 1988; Souris Basin Development Authority's development of the Rafferty and Alameda dams and reservoirs on February 15 of 1988; and Saskatchewan Power Corporation's construction of the Shand thermal generating station on February 16 of 1988.

Comprehensive reviews of the environmental impact statements associated with these proposals were completed before ministerial approvals were granted to ensure the developments were environmentally sound and able to proceed in an environmentally sensible manner. It is important that the people of Saskatchewan do not find themselves burdened in the future with unnecessary and unavoidable costs of environmentally unsound development decisions.

In conclusion, I want to state that our government remains firmly committed to the protection of our environment and the protection of the people of our province. With these comments, Mr. Chairman, I open

the estimates for questions from the opposition. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to join the minister in welcoming the officials of the Department of Environment and Public Safety to this Chamber, and to say, Mr. Minister, that I've been looking forward to these estimates and looking forward to a time where I hope we can enjoy a co-operative approach to the estimates and to the issues that face the department and our province as they relate to the environment and public safety.

I had hoped that through our estimates we could spare each other long speeches. I don't particularly, therefore, appreciate the precedent that you've just set with the opening remarks, but we'll overlook that, Mr. Minister, and hope that that isn't a pattern that's going to continue in these estimates. We've spent the last four days listening to long, rhetorical speeches from the Premier in his estimates, and I'm hoping we can avoid that kind of thing in ours.

Mr. Minister, I think we can certainly agree initially that the material we deal with, the area of responsibility of your department, is an area of deep concern to everyone in Saskatchewan. We're talking here about the very environment in which we live. Some of those concerns, Mr. Minister, I'm sure, are beyond any partisan politics, and we'll want to approach them seriously together.

I would like to begin, Mr. Minister, just with some more or less general observations and questions in regard to your total budget for this year. As I study the proposed budget, it appears to me — and past budgets — it appears to me that funding for the Emergency Measures Organization up until 1985-86 was done through the Department of Labour. So that the \$400,000 we're now spending in the Department of the Environment was formerly, up until 1985-86, budgeted through the Department of Labour.

As well, the \$3 million that is now budgeted under the combined Department of Environment and Public Safety, at one time was budgeted under the Department of Labour. And also I see in your budget for this year, a figure of \$1,022,200 as a payment to the property management corporation, again an addition to your budget. Are my assumptions and those figures correct, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm advised that comparable figures were in our last year's estimates, since the transfer of Emergency Measures came to our department for all of the last calendar year and they would be included. For all of those programs the figures are in the budget last year and this year. So you do have comparable figures then.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What I would like to say therefore is that each of these categories have been added to your department, not in this current year but since your government came to office in 1981-82 — that these are new items in the department's budget.

So, Mr. Minister, if we take that \$1 million or plus that's now going to the property management corporation, the \$3.1 million that now is budgeted under your department for Public Safety, and the \$400,000 that's now budgeted

under your department for the Emergency Measures Organization, we have seen over the past number of years, a transfer of \$4.5 million to the Department of the Environment.

Now, Mr. Minister, my research tells me that in 1981-82 the Department of the Environment had a budget ... the Department of the Environment, alone, had a budget of \$10,170,500 in 1981-82. Here into 1988-89 we have a budgeted figure for the Department of the Environment and Public Safety of \$10,785,100. And so, Mr. Minister, if you subtract those items which have been added to your budget, the property management payment, the Public Safety, and the EMO (Emergency Measures Organization), we have actually therefore seen, since 1982, a significant cut-back in funding to the Department of the Environment. In fact, a funding cut from 10.2 million in essence, then, to \$5.7 million.

And so, Mr. Minister, I guess simply: why this huge downgrading of concern for the Department of the Environment?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I know that the hon. member was not in the House prior to '86, but at the time that the water corporation was formed and the staff that were transferred and the budget that was transferred to the water corporation from Environment, it amounted to 58 positions and \$3,722,960. So that would account for a lot of the discrepancy that you're seeing is the period when that change occurred.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, my quick calculation tells me if about \$3 million has gone over to the water corporation — 3.7 — I'm still left with almost \$2 million unexplained. The difference between your budget now and in 1981-82 is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$5.5 million. If 3.7 has gone over to the water corporation, I'm still left with almost \$2 million less funding today for concerns in the environment than we had in 1982. So I'd really like an explanation.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — When the hon. member tries going back and relating to 1981, I would have great difficulty because I was not Minister of Environment. I can't give you all the figures back that far since there was a different government in power. I went back as far as the time when the major change took place under our government in 1984, but I don't believe that you could expect me to go back to that period.

You know, just as an example of trying to make these comparisons that the member is making, if you took just the chemical can collection program that was brought in since we were government, or if you took the scrap vehicle collection, each one of those changed this program by millions of dollars. And each year there are different needs in our province, so we bring in programs that address those needs.

Like an abandoned mine program is new this year, as I indicated to you. It was perhaps not needed as seriously a few years ago, but it is needed now, so we have ongoing changes. And I cannot relate the figures of '81 to today's figures; it's most difficult.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I don't have the same difficulty. I simply look up the budgeted amounts for the department over the years, and I see that the Department of the Environment is suffering in its funding. The figures I've used have not even taken into account inflation over those years, and we're spending less today in the Department of the Environment than we spent in 1981-82. And I find that very difficult to understand, Mr. Minister, other than to say it reflects a certain lack of priority, lack of concern with your government. I don't say this of you particularly as an individual, but certainly a lack of concern of your government for issues in the area of the environment.

Mr. Minister, I would like some further explanation of, without using inflation, of the 2.2 million that is clearly missing now from your budget that was there when your government took office.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, as I indicated to the hon. member, I have the overall budget figures the same as you do going away back. And I don't believe that you can compare budget figures going back because of the difference in the programs that are under the Department of Environment today and what was under the Department of Environment at that time. Changes have been significant, and there will continue to be change. In 1981-82 you had \$10 million; in 1988-89 you have 10.785 million. I don't think that we're too far off in actual dollars.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, you were here today as I was, when the Premier was quite anxious to compare budgeted figures from one year to another year, to past years. He seems to do that quite freely. He talks about increases in health care spending that again are reflections of transfers of other items into the health care budget. We've seen a number of items transferred to the Department of the Environment.

That which is being spent on the environment, I submit, is less today, significantly less today, than when your government took office. Clearly an addition to your budget has been this payment to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation of \$1,022,200.

Mr. Minister, I sent to you a letter last week, which I hope you received, asking for some very specific information in regards to the property management corporation portion of your budget. Do you have that information prepared, and if so, could I get a copy of it, or do I need to ask those question here?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm going to send across to you a list of the office space that our department uses, and when you mention the letter that was sent, I received it yesterday and we haven't had an opportunity even for the department to begin to answer it, so I hope that these figures meet the requirements you have.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I would ask you to review the questions that I have put in the letter. I anticipated you would only just receive it, and I certainly will wait for the response. But I would appreciate the specific answers to the questions which are asked in the letter that may not be contained in this document.

Mr. Minister, if I could just get an undertaking from you that you will have your staff look at my letter. And the response that I've been provided here, if there are questions here that are not — I haven't got time just now to look at this thoroughly — and if there are questions left unanswered, if I could get that information, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I believe that most of the questions that you asked are answered in the document that I sent to you. If there are other areas, I have sent the letter across to the department for them to pull the necessary information. It wouldn't be here today, but it will be mailed to you in the future.

(1515)

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you for that undertaking, Mr. Minister, and I'll watch for the arrival of that information.

I'd like to turn just for a moment, while we're still looking generally at the budgeted figures here, to the administration branch of your department. And I'm going to go back again, Mr. Minister, to the 1981-82 *Estimates* book. And I note from that document that the administration branch of your department had 40 person-years of employment assigned to it, and the budget for the branch was \$983,710. By 1986-87 the administration branch had been cut to 20 people, half the number of people in the administration branch, and yet its budget still remained in the \$900,000 area, somewhat lower at \$932,310. Only \$50,000 less, but only half the number of employees.

And then I understand that you combined the administration branch with the communications branch, adding a total of three people. So now I see in the new *Estimates* book there are 23 person-years indicated beside the administration and communications branch, and a figure of 1,259,200 . . .

So in essence we've got half the people in the branch that we had in 1981-82, and yet we're spending an additional \$300,000. So I would like an explanation, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is an awkward question to answer because the method of operating in the department has changed completely from '81 until now; you come with . . . different deputy ministers do things differently.

At the time that you speak of, the secretariat staff were all in the administration division, and all of the drafting staff were in the administration division. Many of the drafting staff, or maybe even all of the drafting staff, were transferred to Sask Water when that change occurred, and the secretarial staff now are assigned to the branch that they serve. We don't have a steno pool that everybody draws from, but rather we have secretarial staff in each branch of the department.

We've also added computer systems to the administration side, which changes the costs, and the communication people are working under administration. So when you get all of those, you have a

number of changes.

And don't forget that from 1981 until now, there have been salary negotiations that impact on how many dollars an individual would earn, and inflation has continued to escalate the costs of government. I think if you were to go back and look at the total cost of government, the total budgeted cost of government in 1981 and compare it to today, that is a significant change as well, and something that needs to be taken into consideration when you make these comparisons.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, just precisely, precisely in the administration branch of your department now, administration and communications, we're spending a little more money for almost half the number of people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Precisely. I understand that some have been transferred to the water corp, and the secretarial pool no longer exists, and you've brought some new people in and there's been inflation, precisely.

I go back then to my first question about your total budget: how is it that we need to be spending, in essence, twice as much for administration, but the total budget picture is down at least \$2 million in the same interim?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, I might just say to the hon. member that you're trying to compare apples and oranges, and it's very difficult to do that. There have been significant changes, as I indicated to you, in the kinds of people that make up the administration branch of the department. Secretarial wages are much different than computer operators' wages. So the different people that we bring in necessarily mean that the total cost of that area is different, but they do different work as well.

You can't talk about communications as just one person's salary; communications go much beyond that. They go to the computer type of printing that is done, and all of the technical type of people that you have in any department. In 1981 you weren't doing those things; it was entirely different. So the comparison is difficult to draw because there basically is no comparison between the two.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, just one further comparison in this area. As I look back on the 1981-1982 *Estimates*, I found that there were nine people in the Department of the Environment working in the area of policy, planning and research in that branch, then an allocation, in those days, of \$428,000.

In the first budget of your government you cut the spending in that area of planning and research by a figure of 13 per cent, and then in the second budget — at least the way I looked at it — it seems that that branch of your department disappeared altogether.

So can you tell me today, now in your department, how many people there are working on planning and research and policy matters, and how much financial support they're given, and where in your budget we find that financial support?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — There is no specialized group at this point. The work that you speak of is being done by the director and his staff in each division, so the operation of

the department has changed. The work is still being accomplished, but it's being accomplished by the people in each section. Each director and his staff of the different programs, the different areas of Environment, now do their own work.

Now we are setting up, as I indicated to you in my opening remarks, a new division that will have two people in policy and planning, and those two people will be working to a great extent on the task force implementation. So I think that we're still doing the work; it's just not set up in the same manner so it doesn't show the way it did in 1981.

Mr. Calvert: — Let me say, Mr. Minister, that I feel, personally, and I think others would share this opinion, that it is important for a department like yours to have people who can be exclusively involved in policy planning, future thinking, and so on.

I heard you say that you're going to establish at least a two-person policy and planning division related particularly to the task force reports. Mr. Minister, where are they to be funded from? What kind of budget will they have for their work?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — There'd be \$150,000 of new money in the budget to handle that division. There'd be two salaried people in the 100,000 figure to cover the two, and 50,000 for the expenses of the operation of that division. So that's the new part that's just coming in. The hiring hasn't taken place yet but will in the very near future.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, can you direct me to the place in the blue book where I would find that figure?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'd refer the hon. member to item 3, Environmental Assessment. You notice that the number of person-years changed from seven to nine, and the amount of money changed from 427,900 to 579,000.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm just a little bit disappointed. My assumption, having studied the *Estimates*, was that you were devoting two more people to environmental assessment.

As you indicated in your opening statement, the call upon your department for environmental assessments is growing and growing and growing, and I thought that to meet that need that's indeed why these two people had been added to that budget item. So I'm frankly disappointed to hear that in fact there is no more money going to environmental assessment, but in essence you've slated these two policy and planning people under that category.

Mr. Minister, would you consider making that new initiative a separate budget item and leave environmental assessment with its two extra people as indicated in the blue book, and create a new category for that special initiative?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I think it's important to allow a department to set up in the best manner possible for the needs of the department.

We have the environmental assessment branch with a capable director. There's no problem with these two people working from that branch and doing their job.

Now of the 479,000 that was there in last year's budget, some of it would have been used for planning and priority; you have to have that. And so when we come this year with an additional amount of money and two more people, it still will provide that option in that division. I believe it can do a good job for us in the manner that it's set up.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, now if we can just move away somewhat from the budgeted figures and so on, in the blue book, into some of the issues that your department has dealt with or not dealt with over the past 12 months.

And I would like to begin with what clearly is felt by the people of Saskatchewan to be one of the most serious environmental issues facing our province just now, and being dealt with by your department, and I refer to dioxin contamination in the North Saskatchewan River around the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill. And I would like us today to review some of the events of the past year because, Mr. Minister, I believe that as we review the events of the past year those events will indicate, let me say, almost a negligence on the part of yourself and your government.

(1530)

They indicate to me that you have moved on this issue only when forced to, when public pressure has been there to force you to move. They would indicate to me that you seem willing to allow this problem — this environmental crisis as it's described by some — that you're willing to allow this problem to grow without taking some substantive steps to deal with it.

And I suspect, Mr. Minister, of course you're going not to agree with my assessment of the year's events. And so I propose that we spend some time this afternoon reviewing those events because of the concern over this issue being expressed by workers at the pulp mill; being expressed by residents of Prince Albert and other communities along the river that are clearly affected; and being expressed frankly by people across our province, and indeed our nation. And they will want to hear the exchange, I think, that we have on this very significant issue.

Maybe, Mr. Minister, just so that we have some common basis for our discussion, may I just first of all ask you as Minister of Environment of the province of Saskatchewan, do you consider the dioxins that have been found in settling pond and in the fish, do you consider these to be extremely toxic and dangerous chemicals?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, the member made a number of statements when he was asking his question. Let me first say to you that we were never forced to act.

The department has probably been one of the forerunners as far as monitoring dioxins in our province compared to

any other province across Canada. The types of dioxins, as you may know, are . . . there are about 75 different types and of those, one is extremely toxic.

When the department checked the settling ponds in 1986, they did not find in their tests that they had done that there were any of the very toxic dioxins in the settling ponds at that time.

The outflow from the Weyerhaeuser mill into the Saskatchewan River was checked in 1987; the effluent that comes back into the river was checked. And at that point, when we had the results back in March — and I gave you those figures in the House here — it was found that none of the very toxic waste was coming through the system and into the river. There was some of the very toxic dioxin found in one settling pond on Weyerhaeuser's property this year, but that is not released on into the environment. It's left there in that settling pond — this is the sludge.

So though there were traces of dioxin found in fish — and particularly they were suckers that were found at the bottom of the river — and they did have traces, even the traces that were found in those suckers were within the allowable amounts by the Government of Canada or the Government of the United States. Like, we don't set those figures; those are set outside of our boundaries. So we were within the range, well within the range.

I believe that what we are seeing basically is a flare-up of this issue because of at least some media reports that were not factual and were written in an inflammatory manner. And when that happens, it's bound to get people nervous. If people had been told the truth all the way through, I don't think we would have had that difficulty.

I believe the department has acted responsibly in this issue. And we cannot say to you or to the public that Weyerhaeuser has been the cause of any dioxins in the river, because the checks that we have made of their effluent coming back into the river system did not test that there were dangerous dioxins in the effluent. And that test was not done by Saskatchewan, it was done by laboratories in Ontario.

So I believe that we have as fair a test as anybody could get, and the figures that came back would support the position that the department has taken.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, we're going to review, very carefully, many of the things that you have just said. This is a very significant issue to the people of Prince Albert, the workers at the pulp mill, and the people of this province, and we are not going to go quickly through this issue.

We, Mr. Minister, have, I think, some agreement therefore that that one form of dioxin, the 2,3,8,2 — whatever it is — 2,3,7,8-TCDD is indeed, as it has been described widely, an extremely lethal chemical. Mr. Minister, you said a few seconds ago that it was back in '86, I think you said, that the tests were first ordered. At that time I'm assuming that you and your department would be aware of the this TCDD, dioxin. How is it, Mr. Minister, that when you did that initial testing that you

didn't discover that dioxin which is clearly there?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I think that's a very strange question for the member to make. Remember the plant is an ongoing operation, and in 1986 when samples were taken from the settling pond and the samples were tested in the laboratory, they did not find that they had the dioxins in the samples; there weren't any. In 1987 traces were found, so there was a change in what was flowing there and what the residue was. And we monitor on an ongoing basis because things do change and I would expect that we will see change again. Whether it will be up or down . . . I hope it goes down.

Weyerhaeuser has indicated that they are very concerned that there any traces of dioxin and they're working on that. And I think they have been a responsible company and will do exactly as they said. So for you to say you're surprised that there's a change, I'm not surprised when things change. I hope that sometimes we're going to see the change go the opposite way. But in '86 the tests showed that there was no dioxin, and we did not do the sampling . . . like, we took the samples, but we didn't do the lab tests, the lab test was done by others.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, are you saying then to this House today that the presence of that most dangerous of the dioxins, that has now clearly been identified in the settling pond of Weyerhaeuser and in the fish, was not there in 1986 — that the 138 parts per trillion appeared there in one year? Is that what you're saying, Mr. Minister — that it wasn't there in 1986, and it was there in 1987, and that it appeared in that one year?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — That's what the test showed. Now the testing, that's a very, very delicate test that we're talking about. If you were to have tried this test probably 10 years ago, you couldn't have tested it. It's such minute quantities that the equipment just was not available, but it is available today. We don't have it in our labs here. We can't even get this test done in Saskatchewan, so we have to send out.

I think we tread on very dangerous ground when we try to attribute the dioxins that were found in the fish to Weyerhaeuser. That dioxin source, we are not able to say where it came from. It could have come from a pulp mill; it could come from the city of Prince Albert. I am advised that that dioxin can even come from water running across areas where forest fires have burned.

So there are many sources, and for the member to try to make accusation that any one given source caused the problem is extremely dangerous, and I know that, as a department, my staff would not make that assumption.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I have not yet got to that accusation. What I'm accusing, if I'm accusing anything just now, is that in 1986 you and your department did tests for dioxins. You came up with a finding that said there were certain dioxins in that settling pond, but not those of the most lethal nature.

I'm saying to you, Mr. Minister, what a variety of groups from across Canada have said, that in fact your tests were inappropriate; that you in fact didn't use the correct

equipment to test for the most lethal of the dioxins. Would you accept that as at least a possibility?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — No, I wouldn't accept the member's statement at all. We sent the samples to the best labs that are available in our nation, and I believe that the sample results that we got back would be the best that you could get anywhere.

It's very simple to stand here and make that accusation, but when you send them to a scientist who is working in a well-equipped lab and then say he didn't do a good job, I hope that you have a lot of background in chemistry to back up what you're saying.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I equally hope that you have a lot of background in chemistry to be able to assure this House that the TCDD that's in the settling pond at Weyerhaeuser appeared there in one year; that it had not been collecting there for years and years, but that somehow in the course of less than 12 months, appeared in the settling pond at Weyerhaeuser.

Now, Mr. Minister, you have admitted in this House today that you knew about the dioxins, of one form at least, in the Weyerhaeuser settling pond in 1986. How, Mr. Minister, did you make this information available to the public at that time?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm advised by my officials that the samples that were taken in 1986 did not show any dioxin of the 2,3,7,8-TCDD. They were clear when that sample came back.

You asked about the method of communication. That was done through a press report in the fall of '87. As you can appreciate, you take the samples and it takes a good part of a year to get the results, so that's what happened. And when the press people had the report that there was no showing of the dioxin 2,3,7,8-TCDD, they weren't even interested in going forward to publish.

(1545)

But it was when Greenpeace or other organizations in British Columbia started to make the commotion that the issue flared up again and became more of a press type of issue. I don't believe that the press did a good job, confidentially, of reporting this one. I don't know whether it should be confidential. When you say it here I guess it isn't . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I don't agree with their reporting at all on that issue, but I guess press have the right to report as they see fit, and we can't write their stories for them — sometimes I'd like to help.

The staff advised me that you could take two samples on the same day and they could show somewhat different in their analysis at the end of the complete test. So whether there was something that was missed in that one, I don't know. But they took sludge samples and sent them away and had them tested, and that's the best that anyone can do. You can't go and look in the pond and say there's dioxin there and know where to pick it up. You go and take a sample of the sludge, and that's what we've done, and I believe that the samples were as representative as you could get.

Mr. Calvert: — So, Mr. Minister, then you admit the possibility that the 2,3,7,8-TCDDs may well have been in the sludge in 1986, but somehow you just missed them. Well I'll let the minister respond.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — No, I don't buy that at all. What I'm telling you is we took a representative sample, we sent it away, and the sample came back clear — that there was no 2,3,7,8-TCDD dioxin in that year. And when we took the tests in '87, likely the same people took the tests of that sludge, and it came back that there was a very small trace. Things do change, as I indicated to you before.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, when it was announced by your department that dioxins had been found — and if I may say so, I think appropriately highlighted in the press — what reaction did your department receive from the residents of Prince Albert, the residents of Nipawin, others whose lives were affected by the North Saskatchewan River? What was the response?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm advised that when the press reports initially came out, there were two letters that came that were registering a concern that they had taken wrong information from what they read in the press. They didn't realize it was in the settling pond; they thought it was in the river. Once they had that clarified, we've had no more concern expressed from that area.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, is it not rue, is it not true that particularly residents of Nipawin and others asked the question that if the Department of the Environment knew there were at least . . . there was at least one form of a dioxin present in the sludge, they were asking the question: why, therefore, has the Department of the Environment not been testing the water and not been testing the fish to that point?

I ask the same question. When you realized there were dioxins there, why is it that the department was not immediately out there testing the water and testing the fish?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I could advise the hon. member that there was concern expressed by the city of Nipawin at the time that the fish were tested, and that test was done by the fisheries branch of the government; it wasn't done by our department.

The traces that were identified in the fish — though they were low, there were still traces of dioxin — and that was a concern to Nipawin and, I guess, to anyone, and that was the reason they raised the concern.

We have monitored the river water and we've monitored the P.A. Pulp mill and the flow that comes back into the river from that pulp mill, and I believe that the reports that we have at this point would indicate that there is no major concern.

We have gone a step further. I've contacted the federal Department of Environment. I've asked them to work with the Department of Environment in Saskatchewan on a joint study and to jointly do tests of the river and of the area to try and find what the dioxin source has been that

the fish were in. We haven't had a response at this point from the federal government. I'm anticipating that I will get a response soon, but I haven't heard a reply to my request up to this point.

We do face another serious issue in the testing of water or effluent or sludge for dioxin, and that is that the numbers of labs that are available are very few, and so you have to stand in line and wait to get your sample tested. If we could speed up the turn around on that it would be of considerable advantage, but it hasn't been possible up to this point. Maybe in future we can establish something, but it's a very costly process and not something that you can do quickly.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Minister, I have very carefully saved all of the press and the public reporting of this issue. When the presence of the dioxins were announced, there was a hue and a cry from a variety of people for testing of the fish and the water. At that time an official from your own department is quoted as saying, "I guess it's something that should be done, but at this point we haven't."

Mr. Minister, I fail to understand, when you as minister in your department were aware of the presence of dioxins, why you did not immediately seek to have the testing of the water and the fish done. Why was there this period of delay? And indeed I recognize the fact that it takes many months to get these tests done because of the availability of testing facilities. We could be ahead of the game now if you hadn't been so slow off the draw. So why the delay?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I think the article that the member reads from was the article that was written after the fish samples had been done by the fisheries department and dioxin was detected. If I'm right, I believe that's the article.

An Hon. Member: — November 30, 1987.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Yes, that's the article. That was after the fish samples had been taken and the dioxins were identified in those fish in very small traces. And remember, these are suckers who are bottom feeders who would get far more than surface-feeding fish.

The fisheries department has indicated that they would test sports fish, and it will take some time to get that response back. For you to say there's a hue and a cry, and then the first person you quote is a person from my department saying that yes, we should do some more sampling — that's not a very big hue and cry. That's a person responding to a concern after it has been identified. And I think that's a fairly normal reaction from a department official.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, are you saying to this House today that the tests on the fish had been conducted and were in your possession before November 30, 1987?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I am advised that the fish were taken in approximately October of 1987, and the results were not out until March. I'm sorry. So the article you have — you didn't give me a date of when that was. Perhaps you'd like to do that.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, then let me refer to a variety of articles that appeared in provincial press across the province all around that time. On November 30, 1987, in the *Regina Leader-Post*, an official of your department is quoted as having said — referring to the testing of the fish and the water:

I guess it's something that should be done, but at this point we haven't.

December 1, 1987, from the *Regina Leader-Post*, a quote from the mayor of Nipawin who said:

It's ridiculous that the provincial government isn't testing the North Saskatchewan River for dioxin after traces of the deadly chemical were found at the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill.

On December 2, 1987, in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, you are quoted, sir:

The minister confirmed tests have been ordered to check for dioxin contamination in fish from the North Saskatchewan River.

You were confirming that the tests had been ordered, not conducted or completed as you've just indicated to this House. Mr. Minister, I submit that you only ordered these tests after the pleas and the hue and cry that came up from Prince Albert and Nipawin, and from across the province.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — The reports that would have been out in the fall of '87 would have been reports of dioxins being present, but not 2,3,7,8-TCDD, which is the dangerous dioxin. I don't believe that anyone knew that there were dioxins in fish until after the samples were tested and came back.

When the scare came that there could be some of this very dangerous dioxin in the river, that's when we took the river water samples, and they were tested after that. We gave you a report in March that what was flowing from Weyerhaeuser back into the river did not have that toxic dioxin in it.

(1600)

So I believe that we've followed a good program as far as the department is concerned. What you're reading from November, when you speak about the town of Nipawin, was a scare that was put in the news by people, I think, originating out of British Columbia and then working across the country, and really did not have any basis of fact. So maybe you should get a little new research going for yourself and come up with fact rather than fiction that you're getting from the news media.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, you want to blame environmental organizations. You want to blame the media. Mr. Minister, you've said in this House today that by the fall of 1986 your department was aware of the presence of dioxins.

Now for one reason or another, for one reason or . . . by the fall of '87, I'm sorry, for one reason or another, you

didn't detect the TCDD, but you knew there were dioxins present. You did not order the testing of the water and the fish on that knowledge. You waited until there were tests showing that the TCDD was present. I believe that's what you just said to this House. Now that's just not acceptable.

With the presence of any dioxin, it seems to me a responsible government and a responsible Minister of the Environment would have ordered immediate tests. That's what the people of Prince Albert and the people of Nipawin and others along the North Saskatchewan would have expected, and they said so in the press. It was only after they protested to you and protested publicly, expressing their shock that nothing was being done, that you ordered the tests on the fish and the water.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I think that when I spoke to you before I told you that when the tests were taken of the sludge ponds in Weyerhaeuser in 1986, that they did not show that the dangerous dioxin 2,3,7,8-TCDD was present. And I told you that the samples that were taken in the fall of 1987 did show that there were minor traces.

The samples of fish were taken by the fisheries division of the Department of Parks in October. The article you read from was in November. So I didn't instruct them to take those samples; they had taken those samples on their own.

What I did do was to ask the department to take tests of the effluent that was coming back into the river from the pulp mill, and to test the sludge pond a second time in '87. And that was done. The river itself has not shown that it had these dangerous dioxins in it, but as you can appreciate, the dilution that would occur in the river compared to what you find in a fish that would eat time and time again in the same place would be quite different.

So to detect the minute quantities that would be in the river would likely be very difficult even with today's equipment. If there are dioxins in the river, then we would have very, very minute traces that are much below what is considered dangerous by Canada.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Minister, maybe we should move along just a little bit. Mr. Minister, you will admit, I'm sure now, that the most lethal form of the chemical dioxin is, in what I would describe as a high level, present in the sludge at the Weyerhaeuser mill. I would describe 138 parts per trillion as being a high level of dioxin. You will freely admit, and have publicly, that there are levels of that very lethal dioxin present in the suckers along the North Saskatchewan River.

And so, Mr. Minister, I'm going to ask you then very simply: what are you doing to stop it? What are you doing to prevent further contamination, either of the sludge or of the fish in the North Saskatchewan? What are you doing currently?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the levels that were found in the sludge showed laboratory levels of 42 and 138 parts per trillion of 2,3,7,8-TCDD. Whether or not that is higher than average I really don't know. My staff advise me that that's quite within the

recorded requirements in sludge ponds at pulp mills across Canada.

I believe the important part to remember, when we speak of the tests of the sludge, is that this sludge is not released back into the river or back into the outer environment; it's contained on the pulp mill property in a waste disposal area. It's not put back out into the environment as such.

There have been changes in the type of chlorine that's used on the bleaching process at the pulp mill. And I'm not really a chemist that can tell you the entire change, but there is chlorine dioxide now that's being used which should cut considerably the amount of 2,3,7,8-TCDD that would likely be generated by that pulp mill.

So it is a step in the right direction. I understand that there have been meetings between the staff of Weyerhaeuser and the union that works . . . the management and the union at Weyerhaeuser. They are making some recommendations, but they haven't finalized any direct change of process other than to change that one chemical.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, then, very directly: will you, as the Minister of the Environment, insist, and with legislation if necessary, that processes at the pulp mill be changed to lower the level of the most toxic of the dioxins? Are you prepared to insist that this happen, and not just hope that it happens?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Up to this point in time we haven't found what we considered to be a very dangerous problem occurring at the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill, so we wouldn't at this point be taking that kind of punitive action. We will continue to monitor very closely what's happening at that mill, and appropriate actions will be taken as time goes along if there is a change in what we find.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I guess I know what our Prime Minister feels like when he goes to Washington and talks to the President of the United States about acid rain. The President of the United States always seems to find a way to say, well we need to . . . we're not sure it's a problem, we're not sure that the problem is of a magnitude that we need to deal with; what we need to do is some more testing. And that's kind of the feeling I'm getting from you, Mr. Minister.

I would ask you to respond to this article which appeared in the *Regina Leader-Post* on March 5, 1988. It is a report that was from an interview with John Sprague, who is, as you may well know, a toxicologist employed by the province of Ontario studying the toxicity of pulp mills. John Sprague says, quoted in the article:

The answer (to the dioxin problem) is not more government studies and expensive tests for dioxin contamination of fish.

He goes on to say:

Why study it for 20 years when you can do something about it? . . . People are spending

\$1,500 a crack for every set of dioxin measurements and are tying up whole labs and completely ignoring anything else. We (scientists) think this is an unprofitable (decision).

You're aware Mr. Minister, that in other parts of the world, a different bleaching process is used. Every indication is that the oxygen bleaching process reduces, if not eliminates, the presence of the dioxin of the most lethal kind.

Mr. Minister, are you at this time, through your department and in consultation with Weyerhaeuser, are you looking at that as an option for the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — If the hon. member has the article that he was reading from in front of him — this is Saturday, April 16 in the *Saskatchewan Star-Phoenix*, and it says:

By using chlorine dioxide instead of chlorine, dioxins and other waste products will be reduced immediately, Sprague said.

That's what has happened at the Prince Albert pulp mill, is exactly what he has said here. So I think that our department, in working with the federal government and others, has been encouraging that change, and I'm advised that that change has taken place in Prince Albert.

(1615)

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, then I thank you very much for that assurance. And be sure that many in this province will be watching that situation very closely.

The record of your department over the past year, frankly, has left some folks less than sure that you've been right on top of this. And so a variety of people will be watching to be sure that processes are being changed at the Weyerhaeuser mill, that in fact we're not faced with an environmental time bomb here on our hands.

Just one further question, Mr. Minister, in this area: this sludge that currently exists in settling ponds, what is the long-term plan for the sludge? What is the plan for the long-term disposal of this sludge that now contains this high level of the very toxic dioxin?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm advised that this sludge is retained on site in the land fill, not to be taken off of their site.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, that, I guess, doesn't quite satisfy me. What is the long-term plan, then, for the material that will be standing in a land fill? Is it just to stand there for ever and for ever and for ever? Is there not some plan in place for the disposal of this material?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — That product will be maintained on that site, on Weyerhaeuser's site, on their property in a land fill. Maybe in future time if we had hazardous waste incineration capabilities you could burn it, but we don't have that kind of capability now in Saskatchewan. To haul it to Ontario or something may be possible in the future, but at what cost?

So we don't have immediate plans of moving it. It's to be held on the site, the same as it has been through the years that the NDP were in government and the pulp mill operated. The method of handling sludge was established and it's ongoing, and that's the proposal that we're making today, is that it will be ongoing until some future time.

Mr. Calvert: — Well there is something new about the situation, Mr. Minister, as you well realize. Now we have the presence of dioxins of the most lethal kind in that sludge, and so there is some urgency, I think, for you and your government to be dealing with the whole question of hazardous waste that will include that sludge.

And I want to pursue that question, as a matter of fact, Mr. Minister, with you in terms of the disposal of hazardous waste in our province before we're through these estimates. I believe my colleague from Athabasca has one or two questions he'd like to ask right now, so I'll just defer to him.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to ask a few questions on the new program that you have on abandoned mines. I know it's a new program. I looked under public safety, which I assume it would be under that subvote, and I . . . it's not under that, right? Okay.

But, Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could just explain what has taken place in the last year, or since you have created the new program of checking into abandoned mine sites? And I wonder if you could explain to the committee whether . . . or to the legislature whether you have expanded that into northern Saskatchewan, into the abandoned uranium mines, or is it strictly into the coal mining areas of southern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I would advise the hon. member that this will be under the abandoned mines, or the mines section, not under public safety. And the program is brand-new; it was just implemented at budget time this year. So we're in the process of putting staff in place and we are, to some extent, utilizing the staff from our Prince Albert office to get the program up and running now.

We're just in the very initial stages, but we will be covering the coal mines in the South, but we'll also deal with mines in the North; so it will cover mines all over. And I believe that if you are aware or you hear of mines that are causing difficulty or are a danger to the people in the area, that we would appreciate it if you make the department aware of that so that we could deal with it.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In your response, I wonder if you could indicate how much staff you plan on putting into this program and when they will be starting to work? I fully agree that if there are any mine sites that I hear of, I would most certainly pass that on to your department.

I'll just wait for that answer, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — It's a little hard yet to give you an exact figure on staff, but it'll probably amount to about two person-years, but it may involve more than two people or

parts of people, because it'll be more of a summer-time kind of activity.

But the actual filling of an abandoned mine would not be done by the department, but it would be done by contract. So the identification and the method of dealing with any individual situation will be dealt with and developed by the department, and then a contractor would be employed to carry out the work as designed by the department.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would urge your department, under your direction, Mr. Minister, to have your staff go out and take a look at the mine sites that we have in northern Saskatchewan. As you are aware, there are many mines that have closed down, and I can think of some of the earlier ones, the Vista mine, and Gunnar and Eldorado just lately. But there are many smaller mines that have operated in northern Saskatchewan, and I would think that they should be looked into.

We would never have this agency in the Department of the Environment if it wouldn't have been for the tragic accident that we had in Estevan. That's how it was created, and it's too bad that that had to happen, but now action has been taken.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you would also consider expanding the program not necessarily using the staff from the Department of the Environment, but utilizing other government agencies, such as conservation officers and the like, around the province and expanding that to not only abandoned mine sites, but I think if we took a look at some of the abandoned farms, that you would probably find that there are a number of wells that have become dangerous.

A lot of wells were filled in in the earlier days with logs and types of garbage that 10, 15, 20 years later have decayed and are starting to cave in or will cave in with weight. I have personally seen wells such as this, and what it does, not only is it a danger, for an accident like we had in Estevan, but it's also a danger to many of our wildlife animals such rabbits and coyotes and deer who can fall into these abandoned sites.

And I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you would just consider expanding the program and using other departmental people to take a look at some of the sites where you might find an abandoned well that has started to decay and cave in — and take a serious look at that, because I think what we don't want to have happen is another accident like we had. And it could happen in an abandoned well just as easily as an abandoned mine shaft.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I can appreciate the concern you have with water wells. They may be a problem, but in most cases they're on private property, and it would be most difficult for the department to be involved in identifying or dealing with them. I think that there is a responsibility by individuals to address that. I know as a farmer myself I've had water wells; I've had to fill them and sometimes fill them two or three times. And I believe that we're going to have to depend on the general public to do some of that.

The mines themselves have been mined by people who no longer are in the area. In many cases they're closed and the company has disappeared, so you can't go back to them and ask them to fill it, even though we would like that.

I think in today's method of opening a new mine, a method of closure at the end of the mine is also developed, so it's a little different circumstance and I hope it's going to deal with the issue you raise.

Now I'm advised that all of the mine sites in northern Saskatchewan have been identified by the people who have been working out of the Prince Albert office in programs that we had in prior years. They aren't all closed or anything like that, but they are aware of them and will likely be working with them as funds are available.

The southern area of the province, which is going to be the first one zeroed in on because the population areas are heavy there, we will be looking at utilizing the assistance of the rural municipalities and councillors to identify some of these. We're also looking at aerial maps that will provide much of the information and show the danger areas.

My staff have worked just a few days in that area now. They're just putting the program together, and the staff is still not completely hired — we're using existing staff at this point — but are making a beginning on addressing a very serious problem that has occurred from the disaster that occurred last fall near Estevan. We don't want repetition of that, and that's the reason for the program.

It will likely be an ongoing program, and we don't believe that anybody should expect that all of these problems will be addressed in one year, but they will be addressed in the next few years as we work with the people of the province, both in the North and the South.

(1630)

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was not speaking of any wells that would be on private property when we talk about abandoned mine sites. I also speak in those terms as far as wells — it's abandoned property or farms where no one lives any more, and you'll see these old buildings that are caved in, and that's where you will find this type of a situation.

And I would think that if it was advertised through your department, to make your department aware of any such problems, I would appreciate if you added that to the problem. Because I think that it can become serious, and if we found one or two wells in the whole province that were dangerous, it would be very important.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — The program was set up basically for mines, as you're aware, and we do intend to do some media advertising to get public awareness and public assistance to identify the dangerous mines that are out there. So the beginning will be made, and as the program goes forward, if there is need to go beyond mines to other dangerous wells or whatever, we may look at that. But it isn't intended in this first year.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would urge the department to also add the wells into your program.

I want to just ask a few question, Mr. Minister, on the inspectors that you have working in the Department of the Environment that inspect the tailings ponds and the uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan. I wonder if you could just indicate how many inspectors that you have on staff, and also if you could indicate how many times — I should know the figure — but how many times a year do your inspectors go into . . . and let's just use the one site as example; they would all be the same. But how many times a year do the provincial environmental inspectors go into Amok to inspect the tailings ponds and where they empty out into the environment at Cluff Lake?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — We have four inspectors and every uranium mine is treated the same. There's a minimum inspection of once per month. And if there's a spill occurs or there's any problem detected when they are there, then they may go back many more times until the problem is corrected. So a minimum of once a month, but it might run 15, 16 times or more in a year if there's been a spill or any other reason that they go back.

Mr. Thompson: — And, Mr. Minister, I'm assuming that they work in close conjunction with the federal Department of the Environment. Is that right? I'm assuming that they work closely with the federal Department of the Environment. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — There would be overlapping of inspections done by the federal Department of Environment and our department, but they're not joint inspections. And a minimum of once a year there is a surprise inspection where they have no idea that you're coming, because I think you can't have everything cleaned up just for inspection day. You want to see things as it is and as it operates day after day. So they do go in by surprise at times just to have a look at what a day-to-day operation looks like and to be sure that it's satisfactory.

Mr. Thompson: — A final question, Mr. Minister. Are you satisfied with the levels and the readings that you're getting from Amok? Are they below the provincial standards and the federal standards on a continual basis, on a month-to-month inspection? And could you just indicate if you're satisfied with the way it's been going?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm advised by the chief inspector that the levels are well below our requirements in not just Amok but all of the uranium mines, and the inspector advises me that in his opinion they are doing an exemplary job of controlling the levels of emission, keeping them much below what we even require.

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to talk this year again about public safety, if I could, Mr. Minister. We had a session on this last year, as you'll recall, in which I explored with you how it was possible that your public safety branch would have a staff reduction of some 38 or 39 people, I think it was, last year, and we went through the details of the number of the work-load of the various branches that you have.

I don't propose to go into it in that kind of detail this year, but I do notice that they've zapped you again, Mr. Minister, in the sense that you're now . . . your staff is now being reduced from 81 to 71.2 person-years. Now will you advise us how these reductions fall across the public safety division and what that means in terms of the program that you're delivering in this public safety sector of your department?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — In response to the hon. member's question, a lot of the difference that shows here is that in this year's budget we have only included the gas and electrical for a three-month period; in last year's it showed for six months.

I told you last year we were intending to transfer that to SaskPower. The legislation was before the House, but the House closed before the legislation passed. The intention is still the same, is that that will transfer as soon as the legislation is through, and it's back before the House now.

So what we had last year was a six-month budget. We had 43 positions but because it was a six-month it shows as 21 — like a half a year for each one — this year we're looking at three months. So again, you divide that in four instead of in two and that shows a lot of the reason — like you're down to 10.8, approximately.

Mr. Mitchell: — Could I ask you to be specific, Minister, as far as the various branches are concerned in this division. Can you take us through the ones that will remain with your department, such as boiler and pressure, and elevator, and the fire commissioner's branch, and detail for us the cuts to these particular branches.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I'm advised that there are no cuts to any branch, except that change in electrical and gas inspection. I could give you the numbers of people working in each, if that was what the member wanted. I'm not just sure what you're looking for.

Mr. Mitchell: — Well that's fine, Minister, I know how many are in each branch. I just wondered if, in the spending plans, any of this reflected a cut in any of those services. I think that you and I agreed last year that the work-loads in these branches were not reducing, were remaining constant or increasing, and that it just wasn't appropriate to have any cuts.

I've been made aware, Minister, of a problem, and I would like your response to this particular problem area. It concerns natural gas leaks which have been detected but not repaired, and these are leaks outside of buildings. My understanding is that when you have a natural gas leak within a building, within a residence, your people get right to it and it is repaired, but that there are a number, a significant number of leaks which have been detected outside buildings.

And I'm informed that you do have record of these, that they have been compiled and that, indeed, they have been increasing. They are detected, I'm told, they are detected by a hand-held halide detector — that's h-a-l-i-d-e — halide detector and the gas leak is identified

and the location is recorded.

But while you've been, or while the leaks that are detected inside buildings are being tended to at once, these outside leaks — either above the ground or below the ground — are not being attended to. Now could I know, Minister, if my information is correct, and if it is correct, what the position of the department is with respect to these leaks?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — We would not have record of leaks outside of buildings. That would not fall under our purview; it would be the job of SaskPower's inspectors. I would be most surprised, if it is true, that you would allow gas leaks to be happening. For one thing it's costly, and for the other side it's very dangerous. I'm very pleased to hear that the leaks inside the buildings are responded to right away by my staff, because that's the way it should be.

(1645)

Mr. Mitchell: — Another area that I would like to ask you about, Minister, concerns stationary steam engineers. And in the past, in the department as it then was, we renewed those certificates every year, and the advantage of that was that the department or the branch was able to keep in close touch with the engineers involved and keep track of them. There were certain advantages we saw to that.

Now about a year ago, as I recall, this policy was changed to permit renewals every five years. I wonder, Minister, if, on behalf of your officials, you could respond as to how that experiment is working in terms of the department's policing of steam engineers.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Chairman, I just report to the hon. member that the new regulations only came into effect in mid-April. There will be an ongoing inspection of the facilities that most of these engineers are in, so a monitoring of how effective they are would be done regardless of the five-year licence.

And I'm advised that we also pass on a 20 per cent savings to them by having the licence owner renewable every fifth year, and most of them are responding well to that idea, and it cuts down considerably on the work of preparing certificates and new licences and so on, on an annual basis.

I believe the move was well received up to this point, but it's so new I couldn't give you much history.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I'd like again to move our attention to a different area. This time, let me just refer to two headlines that appeared in today's *Leader-Post*. You'd be aware of these headlines, the first being the "New turf campaign canned," referring to the fund-raising project being conducted by the Saskatchewan Roughriders which is now being put on hold because of the delay in the legislation regarding canned beverages in this province.

The second headline I'd want to refer to is one that is a quote from yourself saying that the law allowing cans is

coming soon — is coming soon. This is an important area of your jurisdiction for a variety of reasons; one, because there's a great deal of public interest and concern in what precisely is going to happen in terms of the aluminum cans, and because this aluminum can issue takes us into the wider subject of recycling in our province, and so I'd like us to spend some time on that.

Mr. Minister, if I may ask a very specific question. You say that the legislation is coming soon. How soon? When will we have the legislation?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I don't know how well aware the hon. member is of the process of putting legislation in place but it's not done just instant. There are many hoops that it has to jump through. There's the drafting process and the legislative review committee and cabinet and caucus and then the House and the debate time that it takes here, so the time frame that I anticipate is approximately 10 days, two weeks, something like that. Ten days, I would think, is reasonable to be expecting to have it pretty much ready for the House.

The debate time, I really can't control that. The opposition, to some extent, controls how long any Bill is debated, but I would expect that this one could move through the hoops of the debate in reasonable time and we may have to give approval to put the cans in place and backdate the legislation to meet it, or something like that. But there are a lot of those details I can't give you yet because we're just not far enough.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, we, in the last session of this legislature, passed the amendments to The Litter Control Act; that was at least November of last year, if memory serves me correct, or October or November. It's a long time since then. Surely you have been working on this legislation. I realize that there is some time required, but we're looking at month after month after month. I simply don't understand why the legislation wasn't all drafted and ready to go as soon as this session began.

Can you explain to me why the delay? Why wasn't it being prepared? Why wasn't all the drafting being done? Why wasn't it ready to be delivered to our desks before May 1 when your minister responsible for the Liquor Board was going around the province saying and assuring people that it would be all ready to go in the month of May? And on the basis of his remarks and others from your government, people in our province were planning on that basis. Why wasn't the legislation ready to go when this House was called?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well I wish it were as simple as the hon. member says. But since the legislation went through the House in November, there's been much consultation with the industry, with the retailers, with the consumers' association, with the brewing association, and the bottlers' association. Through that consultation was established a fairly major study that was done by the Saskatchewan bottling association.

That study was not completed. They said it would be ready in mid-January; we got it at the end of February. Following that, it takes time for us to review what the study said. It took time for the bottling association to

review, and then the recommendations of our department went forward to cabinet in that process.

So it's not a fast process, but it's been a steady process and one that I've been satisfied with. I think we've been working as quickly as anybody could expect to accomplish. It's not a simple issue; it's a fairly major issue. And I believe when we bring forward legislation that likely you, as opposition members, and the general public will be quite pleased with the outcome. I can't give you the details of that until the legislation is finalized and comes forward to the House, but when it does, I believe you'll be satisfied.

Mr. Calvert: — Well we're certainly not going to argue that you've done this in a hurry, Mr. Minister. And I tell you, I've had a number of phone calls just within this past week from business people and others, concerned about the delay in this legislation. So let me just pass that on to you that there is a concern out there; people want to see this go ahead as soon as possible. I heard you say a few moments ago that perhaps you could make the legislation retroactive or something and let people go ahead. There is a concern out there. I want you to know that, Mr. Minister.

Now I know you're not about to disclose any of the specifics of the legislation, at least I expect you won't. But then will you answer a few questions of a general nature around this legislation and the issue of the aluminum cans. Do you, Mr. Minister, as the Minister of the Environment, do you favour a deposit on all aluminum cans, on some aluminum cans, or on no aluminum cans?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I believe that the member is coming into very specific questions on policy that I can't give him answers to at this time. When the legislation comes forward, I think it will address some of these things, but I couldn't deal with it now.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, I'm not asking about your legislation. I'm asking about what you think, as the Minister of Environment in this province, and surely you have an opinion on this. Do you as an individual, as a minister, favour a deposit on all cans, or some cans, or no cans? I'm just asking your simple . . . your opinion.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Chairman, my same answer stays. I don't believe that I can answer that type of question at this point. I would ask you to wait until the legislation comes. In the very near future I think you will have the legislation and likely it will answer those questions.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, will the legislation answer the question of the strategy, if there is going to be a deposit on some cans or all cans, will the legislation address the matter of the collection of cans?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I believe that the legislation will address your concerns on those issues.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, you believe the legislation will — or the legislation will address the collection of the cans?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — The legislation will.

Mr. Calvert: — Whatever, Mr. Minister, the specifics of the legislation are — and again I encourage you to let the people of Saskatchewan know what these specifics are going to be — whatever the specifics of the legislation are in terms of cans, I think it is widely recognized that jobs in this province are going to be affected by the shift, particularly to canned beer. Clearly jobs in this province could be affected very, very significantly.

And so, Mr. Minister, have you and your government dealt with the question of job loss as it can be related to the aluminium cans?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I think that when we start talking of job loss, it's an issue that has been of concern to all of the people that work in the bottling industry. We have met with the union, with the companies that work in the brewing industry. And we've met with the companies in the soft drink bottling industry. I'm hopeful that when the final program is in place that there will not be a loss of jobs; there may even be a job enhancement.

Mr. Calvert: — When the final program is in place, Mr. Minister, is that something that you expect to have in place within a matter of weeks and months? Or are we talking about a program that you hope to have in place in a matter of years and maybe a decade? When will the final program be in place?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I would expect that the final program will be in place through the course of this summer. It will start probably by early June, and by the fall of this year will likely be pretty much in place. Nothing starts instant, but it should pick up speed very quickly and be in place this summer.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, are you then assuring this House and the people of Saskatchewan that the program that you have designed, and will have in place by the end of the summer, will in fact preserve the jobs that we're concerned about that may be lost . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, please. Order. It's getting to be kind of difficult to hear what the old estimates are about. Estimate seems to be superfluous to the conversation. So let's get back on the theme.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, before the interruption from members opposite, I was asking you when the program is in place, then you are assuring this House that there will be no job loss because of the switch to aluminum cans. Are we getting that assurance today?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I can't give that kind of an assurance. What I am saying to you is that I believe that by the time the whole program is in place, there may be job enhancement, there may be more jobs. But that wouldn't mean necessarily that they would be the same jobs. You know, there may be people on a bottling line that won't be working, and there may be other people in the collection side that weren't working before who are now working.

So there may be different jobs, but I believe there will be more jobs. That's the intent. I don't think that in the

brewing industry you can attribute the change in the number of people on a bottling line strictly to the aluminum can issue. There are many outside influences that affect that.

I think the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations have had considerable impact on that industry, and so there may be changes in jobs whether or not there were aluminum cans coming in. At least that's what I'm advised by the industry itself.

So during the course of this summer I would expect that likely there will be more jobs rather than less jobs.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Minister, there is another group of people in this province who are looking at some of their livelihood being affected by whatever the legislation is that's going to finally appear, and that's the small-business person that's in the bottled pick-up business. And that also involves a number of young people and students in the summer-time.

Through your new program and in the legislation, will they be offered some protection? Do you feel that they will be able to continue in the kind of work they've been doing, and it may be small industry in our province, but it's not an insignificant and particularly not for the people involved.

Can you give us some assurance that they will be able to be involved in that business in our province?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — I believe that I can assure the hon. member that any charitable organizations or individuals who wish to collect containers will still have the opportunity to do that the same as they've always had.

Mr. Chairman: — Order please. It being 5 o'clock this committee stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.