

EVENING SITTING

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Klein that Bill No. 60 — **An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984** be now read a second time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the House was called at 5 o'clock, I was reaching the conclusion of my remarks, and that's what I want to do by simply providing the evidence for the record and for the members and for the public that may be watching and that may be following this legislature other than today.

The evidence would clearly support the need for this whole Bill to be stopped before it proceeds any further, and so that the public can have an appropriate time to have input so that their voice might be heard, and so that some rather very serious mistakes, which will have very damaging effects on many people and many businesses in Saskatchewan, are not put into place arbitrarily as seems to be the intention of the government at the present time.

I made reference to . . . I drew to your attention the open letter to all Saskatchewan MLAs, which was sent by The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, which clearly said and documented at some length, the reasons why there was a need for an all-party committee. And I simply repeat what is said in the letter by this organization, which has got members all over the province — in the South and the North and the East and the West and in the centre. And that organization said to all of us, if we are sincere enough about our responsibilities as elected members of the Legislature. And listen, they said:

. . . we urge all members of the legislature to oppose passing down responsibility for the control of shopping hours totally to the Municipal level, which experience suggest will ultimately lead to wide open Sunday shopping throughout Saskatchewan.

And they urge that there be an all-party committee to address this issue.

I also, in my conclusion, was referring to a letter from a coalition of business people and church leaders and people who work in our shopping establishments, our stores and business places in the province, which again urge that there be an all-party committee, and the Bill do not proceed. And they wrote this letter to the Premier, himself. And the reason they wrote this letter — they don't state it in here — but it's clear they wrote to the Premier because they had given up on the minister. I do not know whether the Premier has responded, but he certainly has not responded in any public way. And once again, I think that indicates something about the quality of leadership on part of the Premier on this issue, as is the case on all issues since 1986 in Saskatchewan.

Question I would ask is: if he did not reply, why didn't he reply, Mr. Speaker? Are these people who represent people throughout all of the province not worthy of a response from their Premier? And if he did reply, Mr. Speaker, what did he say? Did he say, I don't care, I don't care what you've got to say, I'm going to let the Minister of Urban Affairs do whatever he wants in spite of my better judgement? Or, in fact, Mr. Speaker, did he bother to hear the message at all? I think it's really quite deplorable when the Premier of the province will not address a letter and an issue that brought to his attention by literally thousands of business people and church leaders and citizens in the province through this kind of an organization.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also made reference to the fact that we're not exactly the cutting edge of something new by the government proposing this legislation. In the province of New Brunswick this year, they brought in legislation going the other way because they had the experience of removing the province from some jurisdiction on the establishment of a common pause day, and it failed. It failed so miserably that the government in New Brunswick has now had to bring in legislation to do something different, to put it on the provincial government's shoulders so that it bears the responsibility that it ought to have.

The city council of Toronto has just this month passed, by a margin of 30 to two, a motion in the council protesting to the Ontario government legislation similar to what this government is introducing in this House at the present time. And at the government in Ontario is paying some attention and is listening, whereas this government pays no attention at all.

And when I was finally stopping at 5 o'clock, Mr. Speaker, I was drawing your attention to the newspaper article which was in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* on Tuesday last, yesterday, June 21. And the headline, I think, speaks loudly and clearly when it says the city council, headline says, "City pleads for retention for ward system." And it's not the only city that's doing that, and I'll make some reference to all of the cities, even those who do not have the ward system, who have said to this government, "don't proceed, don't interfere, and take away our democratic rights to choose the electoral system that's best for us," but apparently it has fallen on deaf ears, Mr. Speaker. I hope that all of what's happening in the last little while will still convince the government that it is on the wrong track.

What the article said, Mr. Speaker, was that it will ask — and it refers to the Saskatoon city council — the government, through an urgent letter, not to change the ward system for the 1988 municipal election in October. And aldermen also decided to ask the provincial government to provide a common pause day; both issues which I have spoken about which are addressed by this city council elected by the people of Saskatoon.

It's interesting the strength with which the city council of Saskatoon dealt with this issue, because the article says that the aldermen attacked the provincial government's

decision to get rid of the full ward system and replace it with a system of electing five aldermen at large and five by ward, or allowing a municipality to elect all aldermen at large, without giving that municipality and our cities an opportunity to pick the ward system if they chose.

Mr. Speaker, alderman Donna Birkmaier is quoted as saying, she said, "That the government's decision flies in the face of democracy." And I think, Mr. Speaker, that is pretty clear with the feeling that exists throughout the province on this despicable move by the government opposite.

So I have here, Mr. Speaker, the letter which the city of Saskatoon wrote, and it wrote this to the Premier, it wrote this to the Leader of the Opposition, it wrote this to the Minister, it wrote this to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and all members from Saskatoon received a copy, including the Minister of Science and Technology.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the letter speaks for itself. The city . . . it says that:

The council of the city of Saskatoon in its meeting held on June 20, 1988, resolved an urgent letter be sent to the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Urban Affairs, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Liberal Party, and all MLAs representing the city of Saskatoon concerning the proposed amendments to the legislation dealing with the above matter.

The city council wishes to reconfirm (it's not the first time) its support of the present ward system.

In addition, the council of the city of Saskatoon is of the opinion that the people should at least have a local option for the ward system as it presently exists.

And I want to serve warning, Mr. Speaker, that if this Bill proceeds to committee, I will be moving just such an amendment that will provide the cities the opportunity to choose the ward system if they so choose.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Because that is the only right and appropriate thing to do, and they will have to decide whether they will vote against that amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Now that's the city of Saskatoon.

Well the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association which represents over 500 urban centres in this province and thousands of people, hundreds of thousands of people in Saskatchewan, have written a very firm letter to the Minister of Urban Affairs, with a copy to others in this Assembly, in which they address both of these issues quite unequivocally and directly.

And they say that . . . and this was done on June 17 and 18 at a special meeting of the board of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) in Saskatoon, and on

behalf of all the members of SUMA, they passed a resolution of support for a province-wide common day of rest. And also, and I quote: "The SUMA board voted to strongly support the retention for the 1988 civic elections of the existing ward system."

I found it rather interesting reading on the last page of the letter, the following words, and they said, and it's signed by the president of SUMA, Mr. Don Abel:

I trust that given the respect which you have expressed for our association, you will also give serious consideration to these resolutions of the SUMA board and thus reconsider the proposed amendments to The Urban Municipality Act.

And I would simply ask the minister, since he apparently had some respect for the views of SUMA at some time, does he still have enough respect for the views of SUMA to listen to what they're saying and stop this legislation and let the public have some input?

But it's not only those arguments, Mr. Speaker. Even there are legal arguments which show that what the government intends to do with some of the other parts of the legislation is inadequate. A legal opinion by the city solicitor in the city of Saskatoon has said that: "The cities' powers of enforcement are not significantly improved by these amendments when it refers to store hours."

So they're going to turn it over to the municipalities who are going to get caught with the domino effect, but they have not even given them, according to this legal interpretation by the city solicitor of Saskatoon, they have not given them the power to be able to enforce those decisions.

Now I tell you, Mr. Speaker, this government can't even delegate authority. It really is not interested in how this issue is solved. It is only determined to get it off its shoulders so it doesn't have any responsibility for it.

Well I say to the members opposite, you do have responsibility for it. You can pass this legislation if you want because you have the majority. It won't be easy and it won't be fast but it is your responsibility, and whether you pass it or not, everyone in Saskatchewan will consider it to be your responsibility and will judge you accordingly when the time comes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now even the so-called mad dog legislation which the minister is so proud of . . . Here we've got municipalities having to increase property taxes dramatically. Here we have municipalities that have got their infrastructures deteriorating because they don't have the funding to be able to repair them. Here we have municipalities that are not able to maintain their streets adequately, and towns throughout Saskatchewan whose sewage disposal systems are so old that they're collapsing and they can't handle them because this government has cancelled the capital grant program. And this minister spends all of his time boasting to the public about this marvellous mad dog legislation and not paying any attention to the other issues.

Nobody objects to that. It will address a problem that's there. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, cities already have that power and in this legal interpretation, the solicitor for the city of Saskatoon says that, "In our experience, the system in place in this city for dealing with complaints regarding dangerous dogs has been reasonably effective" — in other words saying we don't need that legislation; we can do it.

And, Mr. Speaker, finally, I want to just, without reading the letters, go through a list of cities who have written in support of the ward system and in opposition to the government arbitrarily removing it. First of all, the city of Regina, which has written to the Minister of Urban Affairs, first on May 13 of this year, in which they said that the provincial government is urged to respect local autonomy on this issue and let the voters and the people in the city decide the issue.

The minister has been up in this House, and he's saying, well there's all these other cities who could have had the ward system but they didn't choose to do it so it must be not any good. We're going to get away with it. Well I want to show the minister what some of those other cities have said.

The city of Prince Albert, on April 26, wrote a letter in support of the city of Regina resolution saying that the minister is wrong. The city of Weyburn did the same thing. It wrote, and I quote:

Weyburn city council unanimously supported your council's position opposing the abolishment of the ward system method of electing members to municipal councils in this province.

Unanimously, Mr. Speaker.

(1915)

A letter from the city of Melville, the same message, saying that they support the position of the city council of Regina and they support the position of SUMA. And it says the following, and I wish the minister would listen because this is something he has been arguing counter to. It says:

Even though the city of Melville does not operate on the ward system, a resolution was passed supporting your council's position on this matter (referring to the Regina city council resolution).

Here's another one, Mr. Speaker, from the city of Moose Jaw. It doesn't have a ward system either, but it supports the position of the city of Regina and of SUMA. And the list goes on and on and on, finally leading to things like a conclusion in the editorial in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* of May 17, '88, and since then in stories in the newspapers reconfirmed that the minister is flogging a dead horse — flogging a dead horse. And it says:

The ward system is favoured by a solid majority of urban voters for the perfectly sound reason that it works better than the open system, particularly in growing cities such as Saskatoon and Regina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Speaker, what more evidence is necessary to convince anyone that this legislation is bad legislation. There is nowhere that anyone in this province of Saskatchewan agrees that the minister and this government are doing what's right. The view out there, Mr. Speaker, is that this government is completely arrogant, it will not listen to anybody. It has a Premier that's got a cabinet that's out of control, and he seems to be either unable or unwilling to control that cabinet and provide the leadership in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

Now it's not too late, it's not too late for this out-of-touch government to get in touch out there. They're getting the same letters as members of the opposition. And I welcome the members opposite, I welcome the members opposite, particularly the rural members whose communities are being threatened and whose business people in those rural communities, in many cases, are going to be devastated.

I ask them to consider the motion which I am going to move now because I think this motion can do what is necessary. It's not meant to be moved in order to be critical of this government, although I have been and will continue to be. It's meant as a positive motion to try to get some positive method in which to resolve this situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And so I move, seconded by my colleague, the member from Prince Albert, the following motion:

That the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Klein have all the words after the word "that" deleted and the following substituted:

Bill No. 60 not now be read a second time because:

- (a) it undermines the basic principles on which our democracy is founded by restricting the legitimate rights of citizens to freely decide their system of representation;
- (b) it erodes the ability of citizens to make informed choices as to whom shall be their representatives;
- (c) it results in the form of representation which favours the election of the most privileged members of our society;
- (d) the abdication of provincial control over the setting of store hours is a serious threat to rural communities; and,
- (e) it will undermine the abilities of small businesses to survive and prosper while giving the corporate sector and large chain stores an unfair advantage.

I move this motion, seconded by my colleague, the member from Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion moved by the member for Regina North East, seconded by the member for Prince Albert. Shall the Assembly take the motion as read?

An Hon. Member: — No, we want to hear it.

Mr. Speaker: — That the proposed motion of the minister . . . I would ask first of all, I suppose, in the interests of the House, since the hon. member knows that we cannot use the members' names in the House . . .

An Hon. Member: — Did I?

Mr. Speaker: — Yes. If you could change the motion to "the Minister of Urban Affairs" from the minister's name.

Order. The question before the Assembly, then, is the motion moved by the member from Regina North East, seconded by the member from Prince Albert:

That the proposed motion of the Hon. Minister of Urban Affairs have all the words after the word "that" deleted and the following substituted:

Bill No. 60 not now be read a second time because:

- (a) it undermines the basic principles on which our democracy is founded by restricting the legitimate rights of citizens to freely decide the system of representation;
- (b) it erodes the ability of citizens to make informed choices as to who shall be their representatives;
- (c) it results in a form of representation which favours the election of the most privileged members of our society;
- (d) the abdication of provincial control over the setting of store hours is a serious threat to rural communities; and,
- (e) it will undermine the ability of small businesses to survive and prosper while giving the corporate sector and large chain stores an unfair advantage.

The debate will continue concurrently.

Mr. Kowalsky: — It's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to second this motion and endorse the remarks made by the member from Regina North East on this very, very mixed up Bill.

What the government has done here is propose the exact opposite of what the people of Saskatchewan and the cities of Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan are really after. What this minister has done is: he is proposing a Bill

which will outlaw democracy for the people who are interested in having a ward system. It will impose an electoral system which people do not want, it will remove their choice; and secondly, it will open up Sunday shopping, which nobody has asked.

Now what has happened is it's exactly the reverse of what the people of Saskatchewan really want. The people of Saskatchewan want the government to regulate Sunday shopping hours; they want them to take some action on it. And the people of Saskatchewan want the democratic right to be able to establish the electoral system in municipalities of their choice. That's what they really want.

What we have is a mixed up minister. He has mixed us up but it's not unusual because this government has done things like this before. They've done exactly the reverse of the Saskatchewan way when it comes to setting up the economy, on setting up the basics on which to run an economy and on which to run a social system. Instead of providing the health and education social system infrastructure in which a good business environment can flourish, they're giving money to the large corporations and depending on the trickle-down theory. Again it's a complete reversal, a complete reversal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — I want to approach this and give you a couple of anecdotal cases, Mr. Speaker. I was talking very recently with a good friend of mine, a senior citizen who lives on MacPherson street here in Regina, and when I was discussing this matter with him, when we discussed this matter of how they had mixed things up, he referred to a lack of brains on the part of the government.

And when we discussed the matter of how the cities of Prince Albert and Saskatoon and Regina and Melville and Weyburn and Moose Jaw all objected to having imposed on them either the partial ward system or the at-large system of municipal elections, when they opposed . . . When you get opposition to this Bill from the coalition against Sunday shopping, from the Canadian federation of Independent Grocers, from numerous editorials, letters to the editor, examples like the city of Toronto which are going in the opposite direction — and the minister was given all of those statements, but in his arrogance, he refuses to listen; he refused to listen. In his arrogance he refused to listen and when the evidence is presented to him on the mess-up, he refused to react.

So what my good friend said is that this minister is acting very much like a, a . . .

An Hon. Member: — Dictator.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well very much like a dictator, but I want to get his words, Mr. Speaker. And he said to me, and these were his exact words, that the minister has an ego of a Cadillac but the brains of a bicycle. Those were his exact words.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now, Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert,

three years ago we had our first election under the ward system. We voted it in; we voted it in twice, actually, to get it into Prince Albert. We voted it in once, and the council did not accept it at the time because they classed it as a plebiscite. We vote it in a second time. The citizens asked for it, got nearly a 60 per cent majority of people voted it in, and it is now in. It's been in for one term, and the people are happy with it.

And I want to tell you why they're happy with it. When we have an electoral system as we have now, Prince Albert is divided into eight wards. Each ward is big enough so that if a person . . . or small enough so that if a person wants to get elected, he can use one of two methods or a combination of both. That person can go door to door knocking, and there's enough time in a civic election for that person who may want to get elected to go to every doorstep and get to talk or, at least, get to see pretty well everybody in that particular ward. They can meet everybody in that ward, and the people in that ward can get to meet their prospective candidates and get to know them. That's method one.

The other method is to buy a lot of advertising and try to do it the impersonal way, through the television or through the radio or through printed pamphlets. Now the difficulty with restricting it just to the at-large system is that you restrict your method of campaigning only to that one method, only to the method of the television, the media — the expensive method. So what happened traditionally in our city was that there were people from the sector of the city that were well-to-do and could afford the advertising. Those were the people that had a preponderance of memberships on the city council.

And now we have a situation where we have people who are represented from a part of the city that has never been represented before. They don't even have complete water and sewer and paving facilities in Nordale and Hazeldell, across the river, but they now have a representative. And I think over time that the representative will be able to lobby more and more for that ward, and that things would even out a little better in the city.

It is for that purpose that people like the system. Now there is an argument, of course, and the minister has continually presented it, that sometimes you don't speak for the entire city. Well that argument is about as valid for a city as it is for rural municipalities, or about as valid as it is for the province of Saskatchewan. Sure, we have to look after our wards and our constituencies, but we also have to have the good of the province in mind, as well.

What I really object to when it comes to the ward system is that the minister has actually outlawed the ward system now — outlawed it. Now if he really figured and he really believed in the people of Saskatchewan, he would have put three choices to the people. He would have said, well we want you to choose again. We don't feel that the system that you now have is what you really want, but just in case, we'll let you choose again. We'll let you vote three ways: the ward system, the at-large system, and the half-at-ward, half-at-large system.

But what has he done? He's outlawed the one and he's only letting us go for one of two systems. And that I object

to. The minister is not listening, and that's an example of his arrogance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — I want to deal very briefly, Mr. Minister, on the topic of store hours. Last Sunday I was at home in Prince Albert, and on Sunday afternoon, along with 10,000 other people, we spent the entire afternoon and part of the evening celebrating what is known as Founders' Day.

Now people came to this from the city and from outside the city. We had parents bring their children. They sat on the river bank; they enjoyed each other's company and their neighbours' company; and we had a civic holiday which the city itself had proclaimed. We even had the pleasure of having a guest from the government side bring greetings.

(1930)

And you know, I would never have had the opportunity to have that member as my guest in my city if we had a tradition of Sunday shopping established in this province because I don't think that the television station and the High Noon Optimists would have been able to swing off an event of this type.

So that brought to my mind, what will opening store hours do — opening store hours to Sunday shopping — do to the fabric of Saskatchewan? Because if more people are spending time working in stores and more people are spending time shopping in stores on Sunday, then they must be doing less of either family time, or just visiting with their friends, or church time. They must be doing less of that because you can't do both; you can't be both places at once.

Now there's government that talks about family, and they made it one of their corner-stones, one of the corner-stones. But what is their action when it comes to family? Here we have a government that is going to open it up to store hours, going to open up the store hours to Sunday shopping — talks about families; here's a government that's opening up liquor outlets in all part of the province, franchising — that talk about the family. Who can believe them, Mr. Speaker? How can you believe a government who talks about families, but acts differently?

What's happened here is that they've reacted to some pressure. They've reacted to some pressure because we had people like Superstore and convenience stores opening up and the fabric of the business society changing slightly, and they don't know how to deal with it. And they've got this little key word called competition, which they feel is the be-all and the end-all for everything.

So they think, well everything will even out if we let everybody open it up. Well we know very well now from our short and limited experience of having several stores stay open over Sunday — in many cases against the law — that it doesn't generate any new wealth. It doesn't generate any new wealth; all it does is redistribute the

wealth. And after people have had an experience with it, many of the people that I used to talk to earlier and I questioned about this issue now say, well yes, it's kind of nice to go shopping on Sunday, but it's really not necessary.

And when I balance it out . . . And many people who now say, when they balance it out, know darn well that they can get along without it, and they tell me that they can get along without it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, the question of asking the municipalities to do the legislation on store hours is a phoney excuse, very phoney, because you know full well and the government knows full well that there's never going to be any way that all municipalities are going to get together and come up with some kind of a uniform scheme. And if we have it wide open, that means that every merchant in every small town, and I'm talking about towns other than Saskatoon and Regina, will have to open up their business in order to be competitive. And even then, it's not going to work for them because they will not be able to keep up.

So what we have here is another situation where the government is allowing the decisions for the people of Saskatchewan to be made in large corporate boardrooms, and I don't like that, and I don't think the government should put up with it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — One of the minister's arguments, Mr. Speaker, one of the minister's arguments was that he couldn't enforce it. He couldn't enforce Sunday closing.

You know, when I looked at this very same Bill, and I looked at the provisions, the provisions for enforcing the dog control legislation, the minister is willing to put a bite of \$10,000 on anybody who is breaking the law under that provision. A bite of \$10,000 — that's for the dog owner. But that's because that person will only be one person, likely.

But he's afraid to take on the corporations. He's willing to put the bite of \$10,000 on one dog owner, one person. That might be all right, but he's not willing to put on the bite on any large corporation. And that's I say, the real reason for them not coming up with store hour legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — In summary, Mr. Speaker, in summary I would say that the minister is mixed up on what he is doing. He is doing exactly the opposite of what the people of Saskatchewan want. He is opening up business to Sunday shopping. The people of Saskatchewan don't want Sunday opening.

He is forcing down our throats an electoral system in municipalities, in the large cities, that is not wanted. It is not being asked for by the people of Saskatchewan.

Business doesn't want this particular Bill, families have

not been asking for it, church leaders certainly oppose it, and city councils oppose it. If the government, and this minister, wants to save its skin on this Bill, it should pull this Bill immediately, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1951)

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 14

Romanow	Pringle
Shillington	Lyons
Tchorzewski	Calvert
Simard	Lautermilch
Kowalsky	Smart
Atkinson	Van Mulligen
Hagel	Koenker

Nays — 25

Devine	Hardy
Muller	Klein
McLeod	Martin
Andrew	Johnson
Berntson	McLaren
Lane	Petersen
Taylor	Swenson
Smith	Martens
Swan	Gleim
Muirhead	Gardner
Maxwell	Kopelchuk
Hodgins	Britton
Gerich	

Ms. Smart: — Mr. Speaker, it's not surprising that the members opposite would vote against an amendment to poll this piece of legislation — a piece of legislation which is just about one of the craziest pieces of legislation that I've seen in my time here in the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — The members opposite vote in favour of this kind of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and it just shows the kind of members that represent the PC Party here in this Legislative Assembly.

This piece of legislation, which amends The Urban Municipality Act, rolls all into one big ball the ward system, the shopping hours, and the mad dog legislation. And it's all under one piece of legislation, all mixed up, all higgledy-piggledy. And the member, the Minister for Urban Affairs, is just the kind of person that would put this kind of crazy legislation in place, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — The minister has stood in this House and said very sanctimoniously that he doesn't want to impose anything on anyone, and therefore he's allowing open shopping hours so that nothing is imposed.

And then what does he turn around and do, but in another piece of the very same legislation, he imposes on the cities of Saskatchewan a ward system . . . abolishment of the ward system . . . abolishment of the ward system as we know it now, no questions asked.

Every person's opposed to this ward system, representing in the groups that we've already heard about from my colleagues, they're opposed to these changes in the ward system, and the minister goes ahead and does it anyway. He's imposing something on the citizens of Saskatoon that was discussed in city council on Monday night. The city councillors are opposed to these changes in the ward system, and many other groups of people are opposed to it, as my colleagues have well demonstrated in the remarks that they've made and the evidence that they put forward here in the House. And yet you go ahead and bring it in.

And our city solicitor has said that this legislation by . . . city council will have to make a decision by by-law. If they don't, they make a decision by the by-law to disestablish the wards into which this system is divided. They have that choice before August. The city council can choose to abolish the ward system all together. That's the choice they have — one thing.

No choice as to whether they want to keep the ward system. A total imposition of a point of view that says the ward system has to go, and they can choose not to have it at all. If they choose not . . . if they choose to wait, then, as I understand it, a municipal ward commission will be set up and they will decide — they will decide.

So much for local control. A municipal ward commission will decide how the city's going to be divided into wards, how many wards, and then the at-large system comes in as well. This mixed up ward and at-large all in one, from a minister who says he doesn't want to impose anything. That is just a joke. Absolutely taking away local control from the municipalities that already have the ward system, and the municipalities across this province that see that the ward system is a good way to go.

The ward system is important because it gives people, ordinary people, a chance to run for city council, and it takes away the power of people privileged, and people with connections and lots of money to spend on their election. And that's the reason why he wants to do away with the ward system. He wants to impose his system on people whether they want it or not.

City council has written a letter, as my colleague, the member from Regina North East, has pointed out. The city council in Saskatoon has written a letter, dated yesterday, confirming its support of the present ward system and being of the opinion that the people should at least have a local option for the ward system as it presently exists.

But the Minister of Urban Affairs does not believe in people having at least a local option. In spite of what he says, these are the kinds of actions that prove exactly where this government is at in terms of local options, in terms of any choices, in terms of any democracy. This is the kind of action that shows that you're not in favour of democracy, you're not in favour of local options, you're

not in favour of consultation because you've ignored all the consultations and all the communication that you've got that says that the ward system is good and should stay.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — And the city of Saskatoon in very polite in this letter. It says: "It is respectfully requested that the views of the city of Saskatoon be considered when the proposed legislation is reviewed." A very polite request from the largest city in Saskatchewan, from the city that I'm proud to represent, respectfully requesting that you reconsider this legislation. And I am absolutely demanding on their behalf that you reconsider this legislation and that you pull this legislation. It's absolutely unacceptable to impose the ward system, Mr. Minister.

Now when it comes to the store hours, you turn around and you have quite a different argument. You want to give every business in Saskatchewan the free choice, every community a free choice on store hours, Mr. Minister. An absolutely ridiculous concept to think that rural municipalities across this province have an equal decision making in the store hours issue.

What you have said is a free choice and what you have said is local government, is absolutely a failure of this government opposite to impose or to bring into play fairness and justice and democracy for the municipal systems around this province. You've failed to do that.

You've said it's competition, Mr. Minister. It's no competition for a small independent business to be up against Superstore or Eaton's or The Bay. That's absolutely ridiculous. And if you think that's competition, you should really have a good think about what that word means.

(2000)

These businesses are not competing. And I represent the downtown area of Saskatoon and I know, and I've talked to a lot of small, independent businesses in the very heart of Saskatoon. The downtown area of Saskatoon is having a real struggle to survive against the malls in Saskatoon. And downtown we have a lot of independent businesses.

And now the minister . . . the Minister of Urban Affairs is laughing at me when I mention the malls. That's how he much he knows about urban affairs that he doesn't even understand what is happening to independent businesses in terms of control by the malls. And if you don't . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — If you don't understand how the malls control business in this province, you should go out and do some more learning before you have the right to stand up and be the Minister of Urban Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — So let me tell you about the malls in relation to downtown Saskatoon, Mr. Minister. Let me tell you since you don't seem to know and you think it's a joke.

Every independent business that is inside a mall has to abide by the rules of the malls, and the malls have big stores attached to them. It's very often in the malls that the big stores want to stay open on Sundays. It's the big businesses that want to stay open on Sundays. It's the small businesses in the malls and in downtown that are going to be hurt. They're going to be hurt and the downtown area of Saskatoon is going to hurt the most.

But you don't care about the downtowns of the cities and you don't care about the independent businesses, and you certainly have shown that you don't care about the small businesses in the rural areas. And I'm really surprised to see the members opposite who represent rural constituencies voting against our amendment and voting in favour of your legislation because it's going to hurt the rural communities badly.

And in that way, perhaps as a member representing the downtown area of Saskatoon, I should be in favour of it because the businesses will all come into Saskatoon. The business will come into Saskatoon on the Sundays and the rural areas will hurt the most. The rural areas will hurt the most.

And you had an opportunity to bring some order into this chaos. You had an opportunity to stand up for fairness and justice for the smaller rural communities and the businesses out there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — You had an opportunity to do that and you've failed. In this democratic system you've imposed something on people that they don't want. They don't want it, they don't need it, and it's going to hurt Saskatchewan businesses and Saskatchewan people very badly.

It's going to hurt the people that need to have a common day of rest, but apparently you have no respect for that concept at all — no respect for families getting together, no respect for friends getting together, no respect for people who want to have a day in church and a day with their families afterwards.

All you want to work for are big business. No other interest, no other aspect of our community life seems to mean anything to you, Mr. Minister, or to the government opposite.

For some reason you're prepared to put this legislation in place which is very, very unpopular in this province. And I can only say that there must be some vested interests somewhere encouraging you to do this.

An Hon. Member: — We're doing it for Peter Pocklington.

Ms. Smart: — You're doing it for Peter Pocklington. I'm sure you are. The Deputy Premier says he's doing it for Peter Pocklington.

Those are the kinds of businesses ... He's admitted it. He's admitted it. It's the Superstores and the large businesses that are putting this pressure in. It's not the

independent businesses. When they're in the malls, they're not going to have any choice. The businesses are not going to have the choice that you say they're going to have.

And what you call a choice is just a sham; it's absolutely smoke and mirrors. You want to talk about choice and you want to talk about democracy, and you impose no choices and you impose no democracy.

And in the middle of it all, we have the mad dog legislation. Well I can have some comments to make about the kinds of mad dogs that I would like to see controlled by this legislation, and unfortunately they're not. And I would like to go on record as saying that I'm very much in favour of control of dangerous dogs, but I want the people of Saskatchewan and people of Saskatoon and Saskatoon Centre to know that when I vote against this legislation, I am not voting for dangerous dogs. I'm voting against dangerous dogs, I'm voting against the dangerous dogs opposite, and I'm voting against them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Centre, in her enthusiasm, has uttered an unparliamentary remark, and I ask her to withdraw and apologize for that statement.

Ms. Smart: — Well I apologize, Mr. Speaker, if I've crossed the boundaries of parliamentary language, and I withdraw the statement.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Okay, thank you.

Ms. Smart: — Many of my constituents, some of whom may be watching tonight, will perhaps have been surprised to see me lose my cool like this. They've many times told me they've wondered why I haven't before now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — But on this piece of crazy legislation that rolls the ward system, the store hours, and the mad dogs all into one, I feel very strongly that this legislation needs to be opposed; that people don't want it; that it's very unfair of the minister to ram this forward like this; that the changes that are proposed are going to hurt a lot of people in Saskatchewan, a lot of working people who need to have that day off together with their families, a lot of small business who are going to have one heck of a time surviving, if they can survive at all.

And the fact that you want small-business people to work seven days a week in order to compete with the Superstores and Eaton's and The Bay is shameful. It's shameful to bring in legislation that forces that on people in Saskatchewan. And from my point of view, it's completely unacceptable. We've need that day of rest. Many working people have fought hard in the past, Mr. Speaker, for that day of rest, and now this party opposite is bringing in legislation that destroys it.

It took a long time for people to get it, but this is the government that goes backwards into the past, not

forward into the future — backwards into the past where people have to work 12-hour days, 16-hour days, seven days a week. That's what this government opposite wants. And if you think I'm joking and you laugh because you think that what I'm saying is silly, you just talk to the small businesses; and if you're laughing, it just proves you haven't talked to the small businesses. You're completely out of touch. You don't know . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — They don't know what it's like to run a small business. They don't know what it's like to be controlled by larger companies and by malls that have the kind of control over you; that say, if you're going to work these hours, you have to work these hours. You have no choice and you're a small business and you're trying to survive. And you're doing irreparable damage to Saskatchewan by bringing in this kind of legislation.

And I want to talk just briefly once more about my concern about abolishing the ward system. The ward system gives ordinary people a chance to participate in representative democracy, and by destroying that ward system, you are destroying that opportunity for people to participate who haven't got the money that the very wealthy people have.

And by destroying that opportunity, you're taking us back into the past again, Mr. Minister. This is not progressive; this is not forward-looking. Putting control of the city councils in the hands of people of privilege is regressive; it's unacceptable to us on this side of the House. It's something we feel very strongly about and that we must speak out about, in support of all the people, and the groups of people, and SUMA, and the people who are running for city council, and the other people who have a great concern about this ward system.

There's nobody that supports it. There's nobody that supports this legislation. There are a lot of people who support the ward system the way it's been because it's given ordinary people a chance to be represented on city council. And this wild idea you have that somebody who's on city council has to be elected at large in order to speak for the whole city is total hog-wash — it's total hog-wash. If that was the case, you would all have to run for election to represent the whole province, and if you did that, the two cities of Saskatoon and Regina would wipe you out. That's what would happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — And on this side of the House we believe in having a system of representative democracy where there's a division, there are local units, that it's feasible to represent, that you can go out and talk to the members in Regina Wascana or Kelvington-Wadena or Weyburn and you can talk to the people that you want to represent and you can come here and represent them.

And you're denying that at the local level. You want to go back to some sort of a hodgepodge system where only a few people can get elected because they have to cover the entire city, and they have to have the money to pay for that kind of campaign.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have said many, many important things about this legislation and we have been discussing it at length, and I know that many people have other comments that they want to make. So I am very reluctantly going to give up the discussion because I have a lot more that I would like to say on this. It's a very important piece of legislation and it's an example of the kind of muddled up legislation that this government is bringing forward.

Because I know other colleagues have things to say, I would like to move the adjournment of the debate at this point.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Klein that Bill No. 61 — **An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I want to say a few words on this piece of legislation. Some of my colleagues have tried to address and reason with the Minister of Urban Affairs over this matter. This is, as members will know, consequential to The Urban Municipality Act and has some other sections in it as well, but that is the primary thrust of it and that's why the Bill's being brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what it takes to make an impression on members opposite. I cannot imagine a more forceful presentation of public opinion, from a variety of sources, on the amendments under The Urban Municipality Act and the ward system in particular. We have had the public express their views; we've had the cities express their views; SUMA has expressed their views. My colleague from Regina North East read a number of comments from people, some of whose . . . most of whose political affiliation I don't know; some of them I know to be of NDP persuasion, some of them I know to be of Conservative persuasion — all of them saying, don't take away the ward system.

If they're getting this from our supporters and their supporters and those who are neutral in the middle, I'm just not sure what it takes to make an impression on this government. I'm really not sure what this government thinks it's doing. Some have said that this is the final solution to the quarrel that the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden and the member from Regina South have had with the Regina city council. This is their way of bringing it to an end.

Well I say, Mr. Speaker, that it's going to come to an end, but not quite in the fashion that this government thinks. I will make a prediction that most of the current members of city council will still be alderpersons long after these people are hustling trying to find themselves another job after the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — And indeed this piece of legislation will form an important part of the final solution to the

argument but not quite in the way you think.

Mr. Speaker, there is a good deal more I want to say on this Act. There is more I want to say on The Urban Municipality Act, and the two should be dealt with together. I therefore beg leave to adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Klein that Bill No. 64 — **An Act to amend The Tax Enforcement Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to say that this Bill is not consequential to The Urban Municipality Act. It does not deal with the ward system. It does not deal with the devastating store hours legislation. There are some questions of clarification that need to be asked.

Generally I see a lot of merit in this particular Bill. It gives municipalities certain powers which are in the modern day required. It updates some of the old legislation, so I do not have anything to say on second reading other than we're going to let it go to committee and see if the minister, at least on this one, can provide some appropriate answers.

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

(2015)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Klein that Bill No. 72 — **An Act respecting the Saskatchewan Municipal Board** be now read a second time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I am going to let this Bill proceed to committee as well, but I do want to make some brief comments on it because although it may, on the outside, seem to be very straightforward legislation, it does have some rather serious implications. Clearly the Bill consolidates the powers and the responsibilities of three current agencies, the Local Government Board, the Provincial Planning Appeals Board, and the Saskatchewan Assessment Appeals Board.

That is argued by the minister who spoke for the Bill as being a more efficient way of doing things and making a bigger operation than it is now, in each case, independently. The argument is made that it will eliminate the duplication of services and will be more efficient. That's the arguments that are made.

The question though, Mr. Speaker, that I think everyone should ask is: will in the end this be the creation of an ineffective monster because of its bigger size, which gives a lever for developers and financiers to get their way at the expense of the public good and what is in the public interest? I'm not sure that this government is capable to addressing that kind of question, or whether they care to, but I think it's a question that has to be seriously addressed.

I know that the Saskatchewan urban municipalities is addressing it and, although they are supporting the Bill, have some of those reservations, as do municipal councillors.

As I studied the Bill, I discovered that it's modelled on the Ontario Municipal Board which has not, I might say, distinguished itself in the provision of rationality or fairness in municipal decision making. There are a lot of hookers with the Ontario legislation and the Ontario board that I wish that the government opposite had looked at . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well a member opposite laughs. The Minister of Urban Affairs laughs as he laughs at every business man in Saskatchewan who is saying to him that his store hours legislation is a disaster.

And I want to say to the minister opposite, that if he'd laughed less at the people of Saskatchewan and listened to them more, that he might be able to do a better job than what he's done and what he continues to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the Ontario situation. In that province the board is an extremely influential body which has developed the reputation of second-guessing local democracy. Developers and people with money are by-passing municipal councils and municipal decision making by taking their case to this municipal board. And they have the money and the backing, legal backing to do this. The average citizen does not have the money or can afford the legal backing to do it.

Now the other aspect of this Bill is the appointment of the board members, 10 of them. The government is going to appoint those board members. We saw today in question period why that is such a dangerous situation with this government.

Who is going to be appointed the chairman of the Legal Aid Commission? When asked in the House, the Minister of Social Services refused to answer because he didn't have the courage to stand by his patronage appointment in which there would be supplementary questions. But outside in the hallways, when asked by the press, he admitted that he's going to appoint the former campaign manager for the former Conservative candidate in the constituency of Saskatoon Eastview as the legal aid commissioner, while he is firing some other people who have been recommended and appointed by legal aid bodies throughout the province.

If the government appoints members to the board for political reasons, Mr. Speaker, rather than people who have the required expertise, there is every possibility of decisions being made in favour of individuals and organizations or big business based on political favouritism instead of on what is right and what is in the public interest.

And the Minister of Urban Affairs, with the way his attitude has been throughout to the public of Saskatchewan, is quite capable of doing that, Mr. Speaker. This is an important consideration and one that

will need careful watching by municipalities and by the opposition. And you can be assured, Mr. Speaker, that we will be watching with great interest when appointments are made and how the decisions are then disposed of.

Another point to be made briefly, Mr. Speaker, is that with the absorption of the Local Government Board into this new organization, there is a danger that it may be diluted. And I hope this doesn't happen, and I say that to the minister sincerely. Municipalities in the province will tell you, every one of them, although they have had arguments with the Local Government Board, they will tell you, in spite of that, that it has done an excellent job, and has in many instances prevented municipalities from getting themselves into serious financial difficulty and has assisted other municipalities in getting out of financial difficulties.

If its role, if the role of the Local Government Board is weakened because of the creation of this large organization, the loss to Saskatchewan municipalities would be a very serious one. Municipal people have expressed their concern about this even though they generally support the legislation, which is a credit to attribute to them. And so I urge the minister and the government to keep this in mind and to make sure that the functioning of the Local Government Board is not diluted by its amalgamation. Making one larger organization of bureaucracy, I say, Mr. Speaker, is not always the efficient or the most effective way of doing things.

With those reservations, which I will be asking the minister about in committee, I will conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, and indicate that the opposition is prepared to let the Bill go to committee.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hodgins that Bill No. 83 — **An Act respecting the Operation of All Terrain Vehicles** be now read a second time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, we've had, since my colleague, the member from Regina Centre, adjourned debate on this, we had an opportunity to look at it, and we are prepared to let this proceed in committee so we can deal with it clause by clause where we can get clarification and answers.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Berntson that Bill No. 93 — **An Act to amend The Ambulance Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, another one of my colleagues, the former minister of Health, wishes to speak on this, and so for now, I will adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the

proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 88 — **An Act to make Certain Changes in the Statute Law with respect to the Investment of Moneys Held pursuant to Certain Acts** be now read a second time.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few more remarks with respect to this particular Bill, and start by saying that historically the investment management for various pension funds in the province and those that implicate public funds is so far as Government of Saskatchewan moneys, that the investment management of those funds has been handled by the Department of Finance.

The legislation before us, in concert with other legislation before this House, proposes to sever this relationship. And the question must be asked who will now provide the investment management function that, at this time, is being provided by the Department of Finance; but it is proposed to be curtailed. The legislation would appear to leave this question up to the individual pension funds, but it would also appear that behind the scenes the government is encouraging the relevant funds to come together as a private corporation, as a client-owned private corporation, that would then provide the investment management function now being provided by the Department of Finance.

It is our opinion, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance has not offered a sound explanation as to why this change is required. No reason has been advanced as to why the Department of Finance could not and should not continue to provide this service.

Now we know that the investment management function will need to be expanded in order to meet the growing demands of the various funds. It's known that, even as the funds now approximate total some 4 to \$5 billion, in the next few years that size, the size of those funds will escalate rapidly, and therefore the investment management function needs to be upgraded, needs to be expanded in order to meet the demands of those funds.

We also know that this government will use any and every opportunity to shift responsibilities and functions from government departments and agencies to private agencies, to outside of government control. That is their very clear, ideological, philosophical direction. And it's no surprise that it should come in this fashion because it comes in concert with many of the legislation that the government has proposed. It comes in concert with the many actions that the government has undertaken in the last few years where they have made it clear that if there is something that is being done by government, that they look for a way for that to be done outside of government. And that is their philosophical, ideological direction. And I would say that no good reason has been advanced by the government why, in this particular case, the Assembly should support their direction, their leadership, in this matter.

And in the absence of good cause, we are not opined, Mr. Speaker, to support the Bill. We think that the government needs to give more than vague assurances about complexities of the investment market, the expanding needs of pension funds; needs to give more reason than

simply that to say, that is the reason we are curtailing the involvement of the Department of Finance, curtailing the involvement of the investment management unit — and one which I might say is generally recognized as having done a very good job for the pension funds in Saskatchewan.

There has never been, there has never been, Mr. Speaker, any criticism of the Department of Finance when it comes to handling the investment management of the pension funds in Saskatchewan. There has never been any criticism. So I guess one might ask: if it ain't broke, why fix it?

But again, as with so many other aspects of this government's activities, it's a matter that they have their ideological blinkers, they have their philosophical direction. That is the thing that sustains them, that is the thing that carries them, and that is the reason, I would submit, in large part for the Bill that we have before us today.

(2030)

Now related to this, I feel that — and feel it strongly — that the government owes the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan an explanation as to what exactly it proposes to do in the way of an investment corporation of Saskatchewan, what it proposes to do in lieu of an investment management function being handled by the Department of Finance.

We feel that the Minister of Finance should be tabling for full discussion all of his plans before asking the Assembly to improve, in the form of the legislation before us, only a part of his plans.

There have, in the last few months, been documents circulated to the media, to the opposition, which purport to be an analysis and study by a James Marshall outfit from Toronto, who's been contracted by the government to review the options available to the government, to tell the government whether it should expand the investment management function within the Department of Finance, whether it should go the way of an investment corporation of Saskatchewan, as proposed — that is to say, a private corporation incorporated under the business Act — or whether it should be an independent Crown corporation, much the same as the type of relationship that exists in Quebec for the reporting of the investment management of public sector pension funds to the Quebec legislature.

We feel that the minister has an obligation and a responsibility to table those documents before the House so that those documents can be discussed fully. He should be outlining the options to the course that he is now pursuing, and we say that in the very least that he has an obligation that, even if he is fixed on a particular course, to lay that before the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan, and all those pensioners that are involved in these decisions. And again, this involves many thousands of people in Saskatchewan because many pension funds are implicated

We feel that he has a responsibility before we proceed

further, before we proceed further, to come to this House and to say, here is the alternative that we have to the Department of Finance. The minister has been very vague — very vague. All we have is reports that have been leaked to us, leaked to the media. We are to assume that the direction that is offered in those reports will in fact be the direction of the government. We feel that there should be an opportunity to debate that point. There should be an opportunity to debate the constitution of an investment corporation of Saskatchewan, whether that should be a Crown corporation of some sort, whether that should be a private business corporation. It apparently is the direction that the Minister of Finance favours at this point in time.

The minister says that all of the pension funds support his proposals, support the legislative proposals that are before us, and relatedly support the proposals that he has for an investment corporation of Saskatchewan. He says that they support that, but we're not quite sure what it is that they're supporting. He won't bring the information before the House. He won't tell the Assembly just what it is that he is planning. He won't tell the people of Saskatchewan, and especially the many thousands who have pension funds that are implicated in this, exactly what he is up to.

And he says that all the pension funds support his proposals, that all agree with his proposal for an investment corporation of Saskatchewan. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that judging from the minutes of a recent supervisory board meeting of the public employees' superannuation plan, that agreement is less than unanimous.

And I have with me the minutes of a meeting of the public employees' superannuation plan from Thursday, March 3, 1988, and there was a discussion between the members of the board and those representing the investment corporation in the person of the deputy minister of Finance, and an Andrew Smith of James P. Marshall Consultants of Toronto.

And it's indicated that the board had a wide-ranging and free-wheeling discussion regarding the proposed investment corporation of Saskatchewan. And the following represents a summary of the key points raised by the board. And among the points that are listed by the supervisory board is the following, and I quote:

It is not true that all parties are in agreement with the principle of the investment corporation. Many members of the plan feel that when the plan was instituted (that is to say, the superannuation plan), there was a guarantee that no administration fees would be charged to the plan. Many members would prefer to have the investment and financial service division of the Department of Finance hire more staff rather than to create a private corporation.

And they go on, Mr. Speaker, to say:

We must be given the opportunity to discuss the investment corporation with our members and other parties. The timetable for creating the

corporation is too tight, adding to the unease.

And even if the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, stands in this Assembly and assures us glibly that there is complete and full agreement about this proposed investment corporation of Saskatchewan, that everyone agrees, I would say that there is unease, that there is concern, that not all share his opinion. We feel again, that given the billions of dollars that are implicated in this legislation by his actions, and given the thousands of Saskatchewan people that are implicated in this, that he has a responsibility to the Legislative Assembly to put all of his plans before the Assembly before we should be asked to approve of only a portion of his plans.

I want to turn, Mr. Speaker, to the question of accountability. Now ostensibly the role of investment managers is to invest funds subject to the guide-lines of those who are responsible for administering the respective funds. But you know, and most in the investment community know, that in reality investment managers take on a far more proactive role than that. That is to say, they do more than simply react to the guide-lines set forward by the various pension funds; they will tend over time to give advice on investment strategies, and increasingly, the funds become captive to the expertise, become captive to the kinds of advice being offered by the experts that they have hired to do their work, that they have been chartered to manage the investments; and that we have, in effect, a somewhat of a reversal of the roles and we find the pension funds becoming captive to those investment analysts.

And we say that inasmuch as that is recognized, and that is something that the Department of Finance would in the normal course of events have been doing and now has proposed, or we understand it is to be proposed to be done by a private business corporation, we feel that therefore there is less accountability of the Legislative Assembly in this particular matter. There will be less opportunity for public scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly when it comes to the billions and billions and billions of dollars of pension funds that involve public dollars for the Legislative Assembly, and we feel that is a step backwards.

Also on the question of accountability, I want to point out some words that the minister indicated. He said that the Bill also exempts a number of funds from the authority of the investment board. The current legislation permits the investment board of cabinet to determine investment policy to be followed by these funds.

Now he says that it's important that linkage be eliminated and that the investment authority be clearly vested with a plan sponsor for its board. Now that may well be the case, but we feel that there were good reasons that, in some instances investment management decisions had to be cleared by cabinet, because we're talking about billions of dollars — billions of dollars that have implications for the economic health of this province. And therefore the cabinet had its say, at least in terms of some of the funds, as to how that money was to be invested.

We think that there are probably good reasons to retain that kind of control, to retain that kind of supervision of

investments. And I just might point out, the good example of that, Mr. Speaker, is the latest example that has been floated by the Premier of Saskatchewan. And even though members on this side of the House and many in the financial community have grave misgivings about the Premier's proposal — and I speak of his proposal for equity financing — even though many have grave misgivings about the Premier's proposals, supposedly, supposedly there is an opportunity given the existing legislation for the cabinet to exert some influence on at least some of the funds, to be able to say that this is a worthwhile investment for the people of Saskatchewan and therefore some of the pension funds should be invested in that.

Now in this particular case I disagree with the Premier, and as do many in the financial community, because they think that the Premier's ideas, and frankly the ideas of the Tory MLAs' report on equity financing, is a half-baked idea; has little or no appeal for the people of Saskatchewan; will not solve the farm debt crisis.

And I'm pleased to hear, Mr. Speaker, that for once the Deputy Premier, the member for Souris-Cannington agrees with me that the idea of the Premier for equity financing is a half-baked idea — should not be proceeded with. And even if it's a bad example, even if it's a bad example, Mr. Speaker, it nevertheless provides an example of where there might be a congruence, potential congruence between the objectives of the province, the Legislative Assembly, the people of the province on the one hand and the billions of dollars that we have in pension funds on the other hand. This legislation proposes to remove that; proposes to remove that linkage; proposes to remove the accountability that is there in the current legislation — not only to the government, but I would submit to the Legislative Assembly as well.

And in speaking of accountability, there are other ways to proceed in this, as I indicated earlier. As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, the experience in Quebec is something different where there is a Crown corporation that reports to the Quebec legislature. In fact, the report that was done by James Marshall indicated that, in terms of alternative investment management structures:

The first alternative is that of an Independent Crown corporation. In essence this is the reporting relationship that the Caisse de Dépôt has to the Quebec Legislature.

(And) This structure would offer the following unique features:

The Corporation's Board of Directors would be accountable to the Legislature through a Minister.

Accountable to the legislature through a minister. Now it goes on to say that:

An independent Crown Corporation can be established relatively quickly . . . would be unique to Saskatchewan, the general concept is well established.

But the other alternative:

The second alternative is that of a Client-owned corporation.

And it talks about what that concept would involve. But nowhere, nowhere, in this report, in the advice that was offered to the minister, does it suggest that there would be any type of accountability to the legislature through a minister.

So therefore we stand opposed to this Bill because it limits accountability to the Legislative Assembly. That is something that we need to guard against. That is something that I would submit, Mr. Speaker, has been so wrong with this government. They have become so power hungry that they have sought any and every opportunity to limit the authority of the legislature, to limit the accountability to the legislature.

We think those are regressive measures because, after all, the legislature is the people of Saskatchewan. The government is accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, and it needs to be more than accountable every four or five years at election time. There also needs to be accountability between elections. That is the function of the Legislative Assembly, and again we see a limitation on that accountability, and that again is a good reason for us to oppose the Bill.

(2045)

I want to just make a further comment and that is that we understand that the alternative, the alternative to the present arrangement — that is to say that investment management being handled by the Department of finance — the alternative will be an investment corporation of Saskatchewan which will be a private corporation, a private corporation which will not be answerable to the Legislative Assembly. And the minister will in no way, the Minister of Finance will in no way be answerable to the Legislative Assembly because this is a private, private business corporation. That is what's being proposed.

Now among the various proposals for this private business corporation is a suggestion — is a suggestion, and I would suspect it will become a recommendation and will be acted upon — is a suggestion in the reports that have been given to us that the Minister of Finance, for the first couple of years, will have virtually all of the say, that the say will not be given to the various pension funds for a period of two years. And it's called an interim period.

And it's suggested that this might ease the transition from investment management being handled by the Department of Finance, by the province of Saskatchewan, to a wholly-owned client corporation, a private business corporation, is to ease the transition. But it also sets the stage, and it's clearly indicated as such, for the Minister of Finance to give great direction and control in a private business corporation that is not answerable to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

And among the things that the minister will be able to do is to appoint the first chief executive officer of that

corporation. Now if that were a Crown corporation, if that were a Crown corporation, we would at least be able to take the minister to task in the Legislative Assembly; we would be able to take the minister to task in the Crown Corporations Committee; we would be able to ask him and his officials about the handling of that corporation. We have no opportunity to do that under the proposals that are being quoted by the Minister of Finance, and that is regrettable. And I say it's doubly regrettable because of the kind of government we have and because of the kind of minister that we have.

This, Mr. Speaker, is not a government that is known for its careful financial stewardship when it comes to the fiscal affairs and the public moneys in this province. This is a government and a Minister of Finance that is known far and wide not only for incompetence, but clear, clear misdirection when it comes to fiscal management and spending of the public purse. That's what the Minister of Finance is noted for, and that is one of the things that this government is noted for. Because you have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that contrary to all of history, this is the Minister of Finance, this is the government, that one year projected a deficit of \$400 million and came in at \$1.4 billion after the election campaign, in less than a year later.

So, one, there is a real, real question, a real question not only about the competence of this government when it comes to fiscal matters, but there is a question also about the misdirection of the government, and I would submit, its less than honest purposes at times when it comes to financial matters.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, this government is known far and wide — far and wide — and has established, I think, a sound reputation, a sound reputation for incredible patronage, incredible patronage. This is a government that has appointed former cabinet ministers, Paul Schoenhals to head up the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, has appointed other Tory friends, Mr. Hill, George Hill, the former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, to be the president of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation.

Now at least in those instances, those two gentlemen, with all of their Tory ties, have been appointed to be presidents or chairmen of a Crown corporation. And at least those Crown corporations are answerable in some way to this Legislative Assembly. And the ministers in charge of those Crown corporations and the officials concerned in those Crown corporations must, at some time, answer to the people of Saskatchewan through this Legislative Assembly, whether it's through the Assembly directly, or whether it's through the Crown Corporations Committee. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, whatever they do, they have to answer the questions, at some time, to the people of Saskatchewan in this Assembly.

But in this particular case, there is no requirement for the Minister of Finance to do that, and I fear gravely. I fear gravely, given his record of fiscal incompetence, given this record of misdirection, given his record of patronage, to turn this person loose with a private corporation, answerable to no one, involving billions of dollars in Saskatchewan. That is just simply not acceptable to us.

With some other government, with some other minister, that might be an option for us. But I tell you, with this minister and this government, that is simply not an option for us. We cannot support the Bill on those grounds as well.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, finally, Mr. Speaker, there is a great fear, a great concern on the part of the many pensioners in Saskatchewan whose funds are implicated by these actions of the government, who are simply concerned and are fearful, fearful that there might be some investment reversal at some future time, but that there is no more tie to the Government of Saskatchewan, as such.

They are concerned that in the past and up to now, investment management has been handled by the Department of Finance, and if there were to be an investment reversal, at least the Government of Saskatchewan should claim some responsibility, should claim some obligation to assist the pension funds that might have gotten into trouble as a result of the investment decisions made by the Department of Finance.

Now luckily, that hasn't happened because the Department of Finance officials have acted wisely over the years to ensure a good return on pension funds. But there is a great fear, Mr. Speaker, a great fear, notwithstanding that record, that that may not be the case in the future. We know the kind of stock market crash that occurred last fall. We know that there are residual fears out there.

The Minister of Finance has said nothing, has done nothing to assure the people of Saskatchewan as to that particular problem; that there might be an investment reversal in the future. And he's proposing to very clearly sever the relationship between the Government of Saskatchewan, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, and the pension funds; and that is something that is of great concern to the many thousands of people who have their deferred wages invested in the various pension funds.

And it's for all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we stand opposed to the legislation before us. We do so on the grounds that no good reason has been advanced by the government as to why we should depart from the traditional practices that seem to have served us well. We don't know why they want to fix it if it ain't broke, and they won't tell us.

Secondly, we don't know very much, at least in the way of an official statement from the Minister of Finance, just what the alternative will be. And in most cases, that when there is a departure or some change in legislation before use that affect the Legislative Assembly, that affect the province, we are presented with an alternative. In the case of Sunday shopping, we know the alternative is that the municipalities shall handle it. In the case of the ward system, we know the alternatives are at-large elections or some hybrid system. But in this case there has been no clear explanation by the government as to what the alternative is. We can only surmise.

And on the basis of what we surmise, we have grave concerns, grave concerns about accountability and very grave concerns, Mr. Speaker — given the record of this government when it comes to fiscal management; given the record of this government of its less than honest direction of the financial stewardship of this province; and given its very sound record, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to patronage — that something will go wrong, given the temptation for the Minister of Finance and the government to indulge themselves in a private business corporation that will not be answerable to this Legislative Assembly; will not be answerable to the people of Saskatchewan, will only be answerable to their own consciousness; will only be answerable to their own practices. And on the basis of their record, we fear that greatly and it is for that reason, all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we plan at this point to propose the Bill.

We think that we would say that if the government were to come forward with more information, were to come forward with more reasonable proposals, give us an opportunity to debate the alternatives, we may come to the conclusion that what they have to offer may in fact be a good thing for pension funds in Saskatchewan and we recognize at this point that those pension funds say they support it, even if there is unease and lack of support.

But I tell you, Mr. Speaker, based on what's before us today, there is no way that we will support this Bill. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 45 — **An Act to amend The Department of Revenue and Financial Services Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, this Bill is essentially consequential to the previous Bill and we would also stand opposed to this particular Bill.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 46 — **An Act respecting Certain Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of The Department of Revenue and Financial Services Act, 1988** be now read a second time.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 101 — **An Act to amend The Revenue and Financial Services Act** be now read a second time.

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

(2100)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Legislation — Ombudsman Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 21

Item 13

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Yes, I have with me tonight Earl McKeen, the assistant Ombudsman, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to welcome the assistant Ombudsman to the Assembly this evening and thank him for his co-operation. I've had the opportunity to be over to the Ombudsman's office and meet with the Ombudsman, and talk about some of the challenges and issues facing that office. And I appreciate the co-operation extended to me during that visit.

And I would like to wish that office well in a tough job, but a fundamentally important role. I would also like to commend the staff of that office for continuing to — very good staff — for continuing to do a very good job over many years, under very difficult circumstances, some of which I'll talk about in a few minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a few comments this evening, and then I will ask a few questions. I regard the Ombudsman's role in the province as an extremely critical function. The very office is a symbol of integrity, of impartiality, and of fairness. It's an office where all citizens can turn if they wish to address any grievance of a policy or a procedure or a service nature against any government department or agency of the government.

So I view that office as a citizen advocate, if you will, and one that's above the political system. In this day when government decision making and functioning so profoundly impacts on the lives of people, the opportunity to appeal and seek resolutions of issues and problems must be strengthened.

In other words, the role and the mandate of this important office must be preserved, and I would argue, even expanded as an appeal mechanism for citizens of the province. This is why I was very upset last year to hear our Premier and the member from Melville talk about or question whether or not this office is necessary in the province of Saskatchewan.

I was particularly concerned that the Premier, as leader of the government, and the Minister of Social Services, where the majority of complaints were against that department — and I realize that a number of those complaints are by the nature of the department — particularly concerned that those two individuals would question the need for that office and be somewhat critical of the role it was playing.

I'm very pleased that these two members are not talking that way this year. I think the very fact that our Premier and our Minister of Social Services have been so critical

of minority groups in the province reinforces, in my view, the need to strengthen the Ombudsman's office. Indeed, it's the very policies and unfair practices of this government, particularly over the last year and a half, that makes the Ombudsman's office so vital for the protection of ordinary citizens in the province.

And while I'm thankful that this office has survived your incredible surgical cuts — at least in terms of being preserved and thus allowing the office to function — I am concerned, Mr. Minister, as I examine the budgets of the so-called watch-dog agencies in the province, including the Ombudsman's office, since 1982. As one analyses the budget reductions since 1982, in other words over the longer term, over the six and a half year period, by the actions of this government, one notices the erosion of staffing and operational funds with all of the watch-dog agencies, not just the Ombudsman's office.

Specifically, just in passing, I'll refer to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. Last year staff took a 10 per cent cut in order that no one would be laid off, which is a decision they made to try and deal with the work load. Since 1982 they've lost positions and operational funds. It's well known that the staff are not able to respond without long delays in terms of human rights concerns, and I know that the staff there are extremely overworked and overtired. That's one of the offices, the watch-dog agencies that is being eroded by this government.

Provincial Auditor as well, another watch-dog agency that has been concerned about not being able to get information from this government about lost positions and lost operational funds. Of course the Ombudsman's office, in fact, this government has been hostile to that office in the past. I think that would be fair to say in your usual "kill the messenger" approach to things. The Minister of Social Services, recently in his personal vendetta for some reason — a minister who likes to push his weight around — still continues to be critical of the former person in that office.

When you look at the budget reductions of the Ombudsman's office, along with the criticisms of ministers of the Crown who are supposed to be responsible, and you look at the cuts to legal aid, another agency where people turn to for help — when you add all of those up, the political agenda of the eroding rights for Saskatchewan citizens is very clear, Mr. Minister.

Your government has not filled the chairman of the Legal Aid Commission vacancy — at least publicly. And that may have changed today; we didn't get answers to that. Your government has not filled four of the seven vacancies at the Human Rights Commission which signals a lack of commitment to that watch-dog agency — lack of minority representation on that commission. Your down-sizing, deleting of positions, delay in filling positions at the Ombudsman's office and your refusal to recognize the budgetary requirements of that office indicate to me your strong lack of commitment to preserving the rights of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

What other conclusion can the public come to other than that: (a) you're eroding the role and importance of the

watch-dog function in the province; and (b) that you do not want to be publicly accountable to the people of the province? You're afraid of the people of the province. By decreasing the staff available to the Ombudsman's office, in a sense what you're doing is you're muzzling the agency, because they cannot perform the duties and responsibilities in a timely fashion as required to under the Act. And I can tell you, Mr. Minister, from the by-election in Saskatoon Eastview, the public does not trust your commitment and ability to protect the rights of citizens in the province.

Mr. Minister, a further evidence that you're eroding the credibility of the Ombudsman's office is in the manner in which you have appointed this particular Ombudsman. And I wish to be clear, Mr. Minister, I'm not being critical of the Ombudsman; my comments are directed at you. I do not wish to rehash the details of that appointment, but only to put on the record that as a way of eroding this office, you have placed this Ombudsman in a very awkward position, starting his term without consultation with, and without the support of the official opposition in this province — unprecedented in Saskatchewan and no doubt the country.

You broke the long-standing tradition, Mr. Minister, in this House of all-party input and agreement, and you've tinkered with the principle of impartiality and the principle of independence, independence from the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — And I won't repeat the comments . . . the public comments of that day, but you have placed a cloud over the head of the Ombudsman, and this was unfair to Mr. McLellan.

For future reference, I would plead with you to follow the proper procedure, although you won't have to worry about it, I just realized, because you won't be in government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — I can assure you that if there's . . . I can assure you that if there's anyone left, we will make a commitment now to consult with you and have your input in the next appointment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Minister, regarding . . . I'd like to switch focus a little bit. Regarding your lack of commitment to this public watch-dog agency, I would like to just quote, if I could, a comment from the *Star-Phoenix*, April 22, 1988. And I know that you've said in this House you don't read the *Star-Phoenix*, so I'll read it to you. The headline is, "New Ombudsman revives old complaints about money." And I quote:

While the face is new in the provincial Ombudsman's office, the complaint is the same — not enough money. The office has higher expenses and is operating with two fewer workers; the case-load has remained constant with the

previous years.

And between 1982 and 1987, Mr. Minister, there was a 10 per cent increase in the number of complaints registered with that office; yet in the same period there was a 20.2 per cent decrease — or from 16.8 to 13.4 positions — a 20.2 per cent cut in staff. So an increase in six years of 10.2 per cent of complaints; a cut of one-fifth of the staff, 20.2 per cent.

I would ask, Mr. Minister, first of all, if you would acknowledge that that, in fact, is the case.

An Hon. Member: — What?

Mr. Pringle: — Well listen, okay? They don't listen. I repeated that twice . . . Okay, I'll repeat it again, Mr. Minister, a third time. Between 1982 and 1987, the 10.2 per cent increase in number of complaints registered with the Ombudsman's office; yet there was a 20.2 per cent decrease in staff. And I'm asking, Mr. Minister, if you would acknowledge that this to be the case.

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I don't know that that's the case, and I don't have numbers with me tonight that go all the way back to 1982. And I know that the member doesn't really expect me to have numbers that go back to 1982 in my hip pocket. I'd be very happy though to pull those numbers and forward them to the hon. member.

And the hon. member did touch on the appointment of the last Ombudsman, and I know that he didn't, at any time, question the credentials or the credibility of that particular individual. And I'm happy to hear that, because public opinion will indeed be his licence. And public opinion as it relates to that particular individual, I think has been . . . You can argue process all you want as it relates to how the appointment was made; but you cannot question, I think, that person's credibility or credentials.

And as it relates to how the appointment is made next time, when I am responsible, when I am still responsible for the Ombudsman's office — and remember it's a five-year appointment with a one-term renewal, so that'll be about nine years hence. When I'm appointing the next Ombudsman, I will make sure that all of the bases are covered up in advance so that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And Mr. Speaker, in an effort to be . . . I'm going to make a serious, serious effort to get through this evening in a very humble fashion so that we can deal with . . . And the member for Regina Centre will be one of the very first that I will consult with. And I already know that he will recommend Don Cody, and we may have some difficulty with that.

But in any event, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, I will be happy to pull the numbers, both the budget and positions, from 1982 to date.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, those are the figures that I have, and I would be happy if you would just confirm those. The point I was trying to make is that, that I tried to make in my earlier comments, is that since 1982,

you've continued to undermine that office and restrict its ability to do its job because you cut the staff in those six years by 20 per cent. That was my point. And I'm sure you'll find that those figures are accurate.

And, Mr. Minister, in the year 1986 to '87, two positions were cut from that office. In other words, a 13.5 per cent decrease. And what I'm concerned about is that obviously this is a reduction in service. It's a reduction in service to the public; it's a concern that the work-load demands on staff mean that they're not able to perform at their peak; and thirdly, of course, it must result in delays in terms of investigations.

An Hon. Member: — Delays? No delays.

Mr. Pringle: — Well I would like to ask . . . that's my next question, if I could ask you: from the time a complaint is received and there's a decision to investigate, what is that time period, please.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — If a formal investigation is indicated, there is an investigator assigned within five days of the original complaint.

Mr. Pringle: — Okay. Could you tell me, Mr. Minister, how long before the investigation is dealt with — before the investigation starts — before the investigation begins once it's assigned to an investigator?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — In the normal course of events, once an investigator is assigned to a case, the investigation begins, normally, that very day. You can appreciate that an investigator in the Ombudsman's office, on average, would carry about 60 files at any given time. A priority-type file . . . if it's considered to be a priority-type file, of course it would move faster than a file with less of a priority.

I don't know if we could, with the stats that we have here, could come up with an average time period for you. I don't know that. I suspect that we could calculate that and get it to you.

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Minister, I have here some case examples. And I'm not suggesting that this is the situation on all occasions, but nevertheless, these are important examples: where a family contacted the Ombudsman's office in July of '87 and it was mid-October before the investigation began. So that was three months. And this was an issue with a social assistance concern. In their point of view, it was a crisis, and it was not dealt with . . . the investigation did not begin for three months.

Two other examples out of Workers' Compensation Board, where these people were not happy with the decisions there and approached the Ombudsman's office in the fall of '87. And these were independent examples of each other, but both were told that it would be three months before their case would be taken up.

Again, I'm not suggesting that's typical, but there's three examples that have come to our attention and my concern . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I doubt if they're the only ones that would come to our attention, and I think that's kind of an arrogant comment, to say that.

These were legitimate concerns that people brought to our attention.

At any rate, that's bound to happen when you cut 20 per cent of the staff and your case-load does not decrease. And that's my concern, that in these three examples, it was three months before the investigation started. And I would suggest that . . . And I'm not criticizing the staff, but when you delete positions and you freeze vacancies, as was the case last year as indicated in the report — frozen positions, and you lose positions — it hardly instils in the public a sense of confidence that their grievances will be addressed.

Mr. Minister, on November 5, 1987, you reaffirmed your government's position that the Ombudsman should get around to rural Saskatchewan, should get to the North, that outreach and travel within the province, around the province, is a priority and we certainly supported that.

The Ombudsman talked of his desire to do that in the report. On page 1, I quote:

The office will, during the middle months of 1988, travel to a number of the larger centres in the province in an effort to reach as many of the citizens of Saskatchewan as possible, and to inform them as best as we can of the various areas where we might be able to assist them in their dealings with the bureaucracy.

On April 22, the *Leader-Post* printed an article and I quote, and I'm quoting the Ombudsman, and I quote:

Loss of money this year will force the office to cut back on telephone and travel costs, meaning the Ombudsman will be less visible in outlying areas of the province.

This is a quote that was attributed to the Ombudsman.

This is contrary to your . . .

An Hon. Member: — By who?

Mr. Pringle: — By the *Leader-Post*.

An Hon. Member: — Oh well, I don't believe them and never have.

Mr. Pringle: — Well you don't believe the *Leader-Post* either, well then I'll refer you to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll refer you to the Ombudsman's report then, Mr. Minister, where he talks about . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay. It's more credible? Okay . . . where he talks about any further reductions to the budget will make it very difficult to travel around the province, and I don't mean that as a direct quote, but that was the gist of his remarks. And of course we've seen a budget cut, and so I know that the restricting of the Ombudsman's ability to travel around the province is contrary to your desire that he should do that because you said a year ago that was a priority of this government. It's certainly contrary to what the Ombudsman would like to do. It's contrary to what we would feel the Ombudsman should be doing; and I would say it's contrary to the public's desire for that

office. I think this is another example of a cut in service, lack of accessibility of the Ombudsman to rural Saskatchewan.

You like to talk about your support to rural Saskatchewan. I think this is another example of a cut to an office that is able to address grievances of the government.

And I guess my point is, how do you expect the Ombudsman to travel around the province in light of the comments about having to cut back?

From 1987-88 budget year to 1988-89, in terms of the operational funds of this office, it was a 10.8 per cent decrease from \$103,600 to \$92,400 — that's leaving as constant the 70,700 that was transferred from the property management corporation. In other words, the Ombudsman was given \$3,600 less to travel with.

Mr. Minister, my question is: how can the Ombudsman fulfil his mandate for the public if he travels less and is less visible? And do you find this inconsistent with your comments of November 5, 1987?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The question is accessibility and travel to the outlying areas. I freely admit that the budget that the Ombudsman's office is a tight budget, and that it can't be tightened any more and still have the Ombudsman office function as it ought to function.

Having said that, while they are operating in rather tight circumstances, they are still visiting in rural Saskatchewan and in the North. Yesterday the Ombudsman was in Nipawin; today the Ombudsman is in Prince Albert. They have a regular schedule for the rural visits. There are four of them planned this spring in the North, for instance, and I expect others planned in other parts of the province throughout the year. But, you know, I appreciate fully what you're saying as it relates to the tight budget.

The budget is tight right across government, and the Ombudsman doesn't escape that. You can be assured that when the next budget cycle comes around that I will be arguing for more support for the Ombudsman's office.

Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm pleased that the Ombudsman is able to be out in northern Saskatchewan like you say he is.

I guess what my concern was that we continue to see cut-backs each year, by and large, over the six-year period, and at some point there's got to be a point where the service is deteriorated. The Ombudsman himself said, in his report of '87, "Any further funding cuts would make it very difficult to provide the service." He has experienced a cut in these estimates, and I guess I'm reinforcing that we continue — when you consider inflation and increased office costs that he talks about, increased travel costs — that this office continues to fall further and further behind. And I stress my earlier point, that the ability to perform the service as required under the Act is severely in jeopardy, in my view.

(2130)

I'd like to turn, if I could for a few minutes, to the contents of the report itself. And I see that the areas of social services, corrections, SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and Workers' Comp still have the highest number of complaints from the population. And I feel pleased to see that one of those has come down; the Workers' Comp complaints have come down.

Regarding the child care report of the previous ombudsman — that is, *The Rights of Children: The Urgent Need to Improve a System in Crisis* — I'm troubled by the report of the Ombudsman where he says that there's been no formal response by the Minister of Social Services to that report which stressed that children are in crisis. And I find that somewhat disconcerting because I thought the process was that ministers were supposed to respond on formal complaints of the Ombudsman's office. And of course I'm not surprised because the Minister of Social Services does not think he is accountable to anybody, not even an office of this Assembly.

At any rate, a concern I have is that I'm not satisfied — I don't know if the public is satisfied — to be told that there are encouraging signs that things are turning around in Social Services. And I guess I would feel better if, first of all, there was some response to the Ombudsman's office. And I would like to know, are there any plans, specific plans to monitor the concerns raised in that report and any concerns about the 146 recommendations that the Ombudsman's office made to the minister? What are the plans of the Ombudsman's office to monitor the child care situation that we were told a year ago was in crisis?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Under the former Ombudsman there were several complaints received in this particular area, and based on the complaints, the decision was made by the former Ombudsman to monitor . . . and investigate and monitor for some period the complaints that came in in that particular category. And even under the . . . and that decision was made by the former Ombudsman, not this one, to monitor and make assessments ongoing. And even under the former Ombudsman, it was determined that based on their investigation and advice to the departments, there had been significant progress made. And the Ombudsman of the day . . . Ombudsman of today, additionally reports that he will continue to monitor what the previous Ombudsman had already set out to monitor, and he, as I understand it, reports progress as well.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you. One more question in relation to this particular area and this particular report that we were talking about. The Ombudsman's office, as I understand it, expresses some concern in this report about corporal punishment in foster homes, and goes on further to say that staff in the department and foster parents would like some direction, some clear direction in this regard. And I wonder if it's still the position of the Ombudsman's office that corporal punishment in foster homes is not appropriate.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — This is an issue that arose under the previous Ombudsman as well. And I think he characterized it as an unacceptable form of punishment, the question of corporal punishment.

I can't tell you whether the current Ombudsman would accept that as an unacceptable form of punishment or not. I suspect that he would. I don't know; I've never asked him. But the fact of the matter is, there has not been a complaint of this nature lodged with the Ombudsman, certainly in the memory of the assistant Ombudsman in recent months. So it's a decision they haven't had to take. It's not something that they've had presented to them.

Mr. Pringle: — Well, I'm still a bit uneasy about that, Mr. Minister, and I appreciate that you're not able to advise me of that tonight. I would like to know, if I could, though, if you could advise me at some time as to whether or not it's still the official position of the Ombudsman's office that corporal punishment in foster homes is not appropriate. If you could advise me of that at some point, I'd be happy to receive it.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I'll attempt to do that, Mr. Chairman. I think the previous Ombudsman, in fact, was looking for some direction on that, and it may well be that this Ombudsman, if asked the question, would be looking for some direction on that, but I'll attempt to do that.

Mr. Pringle: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

In conclusion, Mr. Minister, in light of what I've called this evening the erosion of the budgetary requirements of this office, and indeed the other watch-dog offices such as the Human Rights Commission and the Provincial Auditor — and, of course, my concerns about legal aid in terms of people not being able to access legal aid services — in light of the reductions in staff to the Ombudsman's office over the last . . . well, not only over the last six years, but from '87 to '88 two positions, and in light of the fact that at least some people are experiencing delays in the investigations getting under way, and in light of the fact that the Ombudsman reports to this entire Assembly, I wonder if you would consider next year having prior discussions with the opposition before setting the budget of this office for next year and subsequent years. And I think that that way the health of that office would not be left to the whim of your government, in this case, or any government. But that particularly with the kind of cut-backs we've seen to that office, I wonder if you would consider consulting and involving us in the setting of the requirements of that office, in consultation with the Ombudsman, by, say, an all-party committee in the next fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, that hasn't been practised in the province of Saskatchewan. It may well be in other jurisdictions, I don't know. I would be surprised if that were the case in other jurisdictions as it relates to setting the budget. I know that there are other jurisdictions where an all-party committee sits to make the appointment of the Ombudsman, but I'd be surprised if that were the case as it relates to the Ombudsman.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would have a little difficulty in committing to that particular process here. I don't rule it out of hand, I mean, because I haven't given it 30 seconds' thought, but my initial reaction is that I would not recommend it to my colleagues.

Mr. Pringle: — Well that is disappointing, Mr. Minister. It may not have been the practice in the past and it may not be the practice anywhere else in Canada, but I think we've seen a lot of cuts in this province over the last year and a half that haven't compared with anywhere in Canada either. And so that's my point.

I personally don't have confidence that you're going to protect the commitment, the funding commitment to this office to make sure that people can access, in a timely fashion, grievances that they may have with the government. So that's the reason for making the request and I would be pleased if you would think about that.

An Hon. Member: — I'll think hard.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you.

Item 13 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank Mr. McKeen and all of the people in the Ombudsman's office for their dedicated service to the people of Saskatchewan. And I want to thank Mr. McKeen for making me looking reasonably knowledgeable about the Ombudsman's office tonight.

Mr. Pringle: — I would like to join with the minister, Mr. Chairman, and say thank you very much for coming.

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Provincial Secretary Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 30

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

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, on my left is Bill Clarke, deputy provincial secretary. On my right is Elizabeth . . . Elizabeth, that's a difficult name — Smith, and Elizabeth Smith was formerly responsible for the administration of the Provincial Secretary, but has recently gone to another job. The new person responsible for administration is Bill Huber, who is sitting directly behind me. And so I have the whole crew here tonight, Mr. Chairman, to guide us through the estimates of Provincial Secretary.

(2145)

Item 1

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome your officials here this evening, Mr. Minister. We'll try not to keep you very long, and thank you for coming and your co-operation.

My questions are primarily of an informational nature here. I note that in the increase in total budget, the 10.9 per cent, and I note that the person-years is remaining the same at 8. And I'm wondering what the \$20,200 increase is in personal services. There's no increase in staff.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The vast majority of that is, I recently . . . I was going to say acquired, but that's not

quite the way to say it, but I have a deputy that is a senior deputy from government who is costing me more than the previous deputy that retired, and that makes up for the vast majority of that.

Mr. Pringle: — Well in terms of the budget, I note that the increase in other expenses is 17.6 per cent, and I'm wondering what the increase there is.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — You will recall there was a move in Saskatoon. The former cabinet office in the Sturdy Stone Building was ... I'm having trouble with words, I was going to say abandoned it, but what really happened is we opened ... We opened a new store-front office, if you like, at street level and that is the additional cost for that, what is now called the Premier's office in Saskatoon.

Mr. Pringle: — Just to clarify, so that's where the amount, that increase, is going — towards that office? Is your department paying for all of that office, the new Premier's office, or just part of it?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The Premier's office in Saskatoon is the responsibility, budgetary responsibility, of the Provincial Secretary.

Mr. Pringle: — Well it is interesting that you chose the word "abandoned" the Sturdy Stone Building, because I wanted to ask a couple of questions related to that. I spent eight years there. That's not a bad place. It's very accessible to the public. And I'm wondering why that decision may have been made to move there, if that's appropriate to as you that.

Secondly, is the space that the cabinet office vacated still vacant? Is that part of the empty office space that we're talking about in terms of the \$8.4 million that we're spending a year? Is that part of the vacant space or did someone else move into that space?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I have no idea whether that space is vacant or not. We're not paying for it because we're not in it, and it's my colleague, the Minister responsible for the property management corporation, could answer that question.

But the activity, and the interest, and the accessibility of the street-level office — or the ground-level office downtown, had incoming traffic quadrupled in a demonstrated interest in stopping in to see the people at the Premier's office that might be able to handle some difficulty or problem that the people may have.

The 10th floor of the Sturdy Stone Building, I think you will admit, is not the most accessible place in the world. I wasn't there for eight years, I give you that. But SMDC (Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation), a Crown that I'm responsible for, is in that building, and I didn't find that it was all that easy to find SMDC where ... on 22nd Street East in Saskatoon at street level. I think you will admit that's far more accessible and easily identifiable than the 10th floor of the Sturdy Stone Building.

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Minister, could you tell me what is the total amount that the Provincial Secretary pays for the

Premier's new office on 22nd Street?

An Hon. Member: — Yes I will. Are you talking space or the whole ... (inaudible) ...

Mr. Pringle: — I guess I'm interested in what is the total budget that the taxpayer is paying for. The Premier moves out of the government building that's there already, moves in across the street under the rationale of being more accessible. And I would like to know: what is the total budget that that office is costing the taxpayer, broken down by salaries and operating costs.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Okay. The administrative cost of the space is ... Not the space. The administrative cost of the office is \$246,000 and a bit, 246,000 rounded.

Mr. Pringle: — So, Mr. Minister, you've moved the Premier's office. The cabinet office then has moved from a space that was government office space across — that cost nothing — moved across the street to the tune of, in the space alone, \$246,000, and you're not sure whether the space back in Sturdy Stone is still vacant or not. In other words, it doesn't appear as though the Premier was pushed out of there because the space was needed for someone else.

I'm wondering, at \$246,000 a year, why wouldn't the Sturdy Stone 10th floor be acceptable. I think that's a tremendous amount of money when everybody else is getting cut back, like the Ombudsman's office. And I'll have some more questions in terms of that office, but I'd like to make the point that, why would you go from the space he was in across the street and spend almost a quarter of a million dollars? And is there a long-term lease on that space?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — We're not sure if the member understood what I meant when I said the administrative cost of that office is about \$246,000. That is ... (inaudible interjection) ... No, that's for the administration of the office. That means telephones; that means people; that means power bills, I expect; that means whatever it costs to run the office. That does not include the space. This cost would have been there if we were on top of the Sturdy Stone Building.

Now if you're asking me what the cost of the space is, my answer will be the same as it has been all along. My colleague from the property management corporation has indicated that for commercial and competitive reasons he's not about to give that information.

Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Minister, I would like to know: last year you indicated in estimates that there were two employees in that office. I wonder if you could tell me how many there are today, please.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — There are two positions on the payroll of Provincial Secretary and one person under contract, as opposed to employee, of Provincial Secretary in the office of the Premier in Saskatoon.

Mr. Pringle: — Who are they, Mr. Minister, and what are their salaries, please.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Okay. Dianne Kimmerley, clerk steno 2, annual salary of \$19,500 rounded. Peddie, Susan Peddie, administrative assistant, annual salary of \$22,000 rounded.

Mr. Pringle: — And who's under contract, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Lyall Watt, director of the office of the Premier, is on a contractual arrangement.

Mr. Pringle: — I wonder if you could tell me at what salary and what's the nature of the contract.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, it's a personal services contract at the rate of \$4,000 a month, rounded.

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Minister, you indicated to me that, if I heard you correctly, that the other expenses would have been the same had the office still been over in Sturdy Stone as it is now.

An Hon. Member: — I didn't say that. I said those expenses would be paid. Administrative costs would exist no matter where the office . . .

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, sorry. Okay. That administrative costs would have existed whether in Sturdy Stone or where they are now.

An Hon. Member: — Or on top of the Sturdy Stone . . .

Mr. Pringle: — Or on top of Sturdy Stone. Right, okay.

Would you provide me with the costs, the administrative costs over the last five years in Sturdy Stone? Would you do that? You may not have those tonight, but would you provide those for me?

An Hon. Member: — I'll give it to you in writing.

Mr. Pringle: — I'm sorry, I . . .

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Okay. I can go back with very little difficulty to when it was transferred to the Provincial Secretary, which was two years ago. To go beyond that is a little more difficult, but if you'll be happy with going back two years, I'll provide that for you.

(2200)

Mr. Pringle: — Okay, thank you. I'd be interested to see that. I guess the point I would like to raise, or I'd like the people of the province to know though, is that here is a Premier who is the first to cut back on all the other services in the province, and I've outlined earlier how he has cut back on the watch-dog, so-called watch-dog agencies of the province to the point where it's very difficult for them to even operate, yet the tenth floor at Sturdy Stone in Saskatoon, which has been good enough for previous premiers and cabinets, is not good enough for this Premier, and so he moves across the street. And I would be very interested to know later in the estimates just what the cost of that space is.

Mr. Minister, could you, in terms of looking at *Public Accounts* for '86-87, it lists two people under other

expenses in the schedule of payments. I wonder if you could tell me what kind of work Don Richardson does for the Provincial Secretary and what his salary is?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Don Richardson is now Lyall Watt. Don Richardson is no longer there.

Mr. Pringle: — Okay, thank you. Glen Caleval is listed as being paid \$27,109, and for what period was he employed with the Provincial Secretary?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, Glen Caleval worked in my office from April 23, 1986, to April 30, 1987. That same Glen Caleval proved to be such a talented young fellow that I persuaded the caucus to take him on as a research officer, and he is still in our very caucus doing excellent work, and I'm very glad that we were able to attract such a bright young fellow to our caucus office.

Mr. Pringle: — A couple of more questions, Mr. Minister. I see the provincial inquiry centre increase of 32.6 per cent on other expenses; I'm just wondering what that is?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Long-distance telephone calls.

Mr. Pringle: — Someone here says, those inquiring about the drug plan. Is that right?

An Hon. Member: — No, that's not quite right. They were my constituents wondering where I was.

Mr. Pringle: — Okay. One more question: I note subvote 9 — a program advisory branch, personal services, other expenses, total of \$262,500 . . . five person-years, that appears to be something new. If it is, I wonder if you can tell me what that division is? What's its purpose?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, when my new deputy came over . . . remember my old deputy operated . . . when my previous deputy operated, or was my deputy, she operated by and large out of my office with support people from . . . like Elizabeth Smith from Finance, and so on. When my new deputy came over, we set him up in the department because he took on additional responsibilities as deputy provincial secretary. And there were five positions set with the new deputy and only three of them are filled. So that explains the additional sums required there.

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Minister, it appears you've got so much staff that you can't keep everybody straight. And I know that you've — you and your colleagues have really increased the number of staff around you very substantially.

Three of the positions are still vacant. Is the intention not to fill those?

An Hon. Member: — Which one?

Mr. Pringle: — You said three of the positions are still vacant. Maybe those could be transferred to the Ombudsman's Office.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Did you say opposition office?

They could use the help.

No. In fact these are projected requirements and the people that we've been able to attract are, of course, regular people and the work-load has been handled by these people.

The total authorized complement, if you like, in the Provincial Secretary is 21. Throughout the whole organization we have seven vacancies. And if we can continue to function with those seven vacancies, obviously we will be looking at deleting those positions as we get into the next budget cycle.

Mr. Pringle: — As it stands, of these five positions you've only got two filled, is that correct?

An Hon. Member: — Three . . . (inaudible) . . .

Mr. Pringle: — Three filled. Would you be able to provide me with the names of those people and their job descriptions and their salaries?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Okay. First one is Robert Hersche, project co-ordinator, \$4,301 per month . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. Background: he's a Master of Arts, director of research of Sask Housing, director of research, Culture and Youth, manager of research and budgets, Parks, Recreation and Culture.

The second one is Diane Tucker, \$3,606 per month; Master of Arts, assistant to Deputy Minister and a consultant at Culture and Rec prior to coming to this office.

Third one is Audrey Wall, and she is office manager in the Deputy Minister's office, and her monthly salary is \$2,205, obviously per month, and that's redundancy.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. chairperson. Mr. Minister, as I understand the Provincial Secretary's department, it is the keeper of the great seal of Saskatchewan, and it issues all of the letters, patents, commissions, and other documents requiring the seal.

And as I understand it, it issues the provincial certificates authenticating the appointments and signatures of notaries, and it . . . also certain other officials, and it prepared the proclamations bringing Acts into force. It also grants permission for organizations to use the province's coat of arms, great seal, and floral emblem. That is the function of the Provincial Secretary.

That being the case, Mr. Minister, how do you explain the decision by your government to move many of the functions of the Premier's office out of the Premier's office and over to the Provincial Secretary's office? Is it simply to hide the expenditures that have been allocated by your government, the political expenditures for the Premier's office, get it out of those kinds of estimates and bury it over here, when you're supposed to be the great keeper of the great seal?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Well, there are a couple of reasons, Mr. Chairman. Number one . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — Is this the political office?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Number one, and . . . I like to think so. But having said that, I am also the Deputy Premier, and we have a Premier who has more than just Executive Council and those functions that go with Executive Council. He's also Minister of Agriculture and does that job very well.

So those things that you would argue that a premier would ordinarily be responsible for, sometimes it can legitimately be argued that the Deputy Premier would take up some of that load in the event that the Premier has additional loads, as compared to other premiers.

Now, to go back a little bit. I remember in the previous administration when the department of intergovernmental affairs was in the department of the attorney general and the responsibility, in those days, of the Leader of the Opposition today. That is not the case any more, Mr. Premier, or Mr. Speaker — I'll get you straight yet — Chairperson, tonight; that's fine. I'm in a conciliatory mood. That is not the case today, Mr. Chairman.

The department of intergovernmental affairs today is now in the Office of the Premier, and so each, I mean, each to his own. We have decided, in our wisdom, that the Premier's office shall be responsible for these things, and the Provincial Secretary's office, who happens to also be the Deputy Premier, shall be responsible for the great seal, in addition to the inquiry centre and a few other things.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Minister, the only problem with your explanation is that the Premier's office that is on 22nd Street in Saskatoon does not, and the expenditures for that office does not fall under the Premier's estimates. They fall under the Provincial Secretary's estimates, and the Provincial Secretary is supposed to be the great keeper of the great seal of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, earlier my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview asked you about the administrative function of the Premier's office in Saskatoon, and you led us to believe that there was \$246,000 spent on administration and this includes things like telephone and people and power, and those kinds of things. Well, I've added it all up, Mr. Minister, and it looks as though we've got about \$100,000 in salaries. And I'd be interested in having a further explanation by yourself as to how this \$246,000 is being spent by your government, money that really is the property of the people of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I just want to point out, the member gets a little testy because I, as Provincial Secretary, pay the rent on the Premier's office in Saskatoon, and I just wanted to point out to her that the Provincial Secretary also pays the rent for that member's office here in the Legislative Building. And I'm sure that you wouldn't want me to be delinquent in those payments.

So you know, I mean, that just happens to be where the responsibility is, that's all — budgetary responsibility, as it relates to . . . Okay. Telephones, advertising,

automobiles assigned by CVA (central vehicle agency) will make up the vast majority of that.

Ms. Atkinson: — So you're telling me, Mr. Deputy Premier, in charge of the Premier's main street office in Saskatoon, that there's \$246,000 that is being spent for the administrative function of the Premier's office in Saskatoon, and \$100,000 would go to salaries for Lyall Watt, the kingo cowboy, Robert Hersche, Diane Tucker, and Audrey Wall, and the rest of the money would go to telephone, advertising and automobiles.

Mr. Minister, I'd like a further explanation. I'd like you to break it down and give me a description of how much you spend on telephones, utilities, advertising, contractual services, legal services, all of those kinds of items that one would normally find in a statement of operations that would be available to the public. Let's break that down a little further, Mr. Minister.

(2215)

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I'll break it down. Mr. Chairman, I'll break it down at least a little bit, but before I do that I want to point out to the member that when she talks about Robert Hersche and the other names that I associated with the office of the deputy provincial secretary, they are not the king of cowboys that you are talking about when you allude to the Saskatoon office. They are people who are long-time civil servants — probably here long before I was — and they are loyal support people to the deputy provincial secretary. And I point this out only because I believe that you believed that you were talking about different people, and I wouldn't want you to go through life carrying that embarrassment.

Now as it relates to the breakdown ... As it relates to the embarrassment, we pay \$100 ... Okay, in our budget for this year we pay \$100, and that's for rent of grounds, buildings, other, and that's under code 0231.

An Hon. Member: — That's the Premier's office in Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — It's the Premier's office in Saskatoon.

In code 0234, for the rental of other equipment and material, \$360; rent of photocopiers, \$1,800; advertising development costs, \$10,000; advertising and ... I expect this abbreviation means advertisement placement, \$50,000.

Okay. Printing and publishing, that's under code 0243, nothing; sign writing services, \$100; printing and publishing, non-promotional, \$500 — 500 ... (inaudible interjection) ... And I'm half blind. I can't see all this.

Repairs to office equipment and furniture, \$300; employees' meal costs, \$200; employees' transportation in-province, \$1,000. I'll take you to a big one. Central vehicle agency charges, \$11,000 — \$11,200; telephone rentals, \$12,000, another big one. Miscellaneous computer and word processing, \$2,000. And that's some indication of the kind of breakdown that exists there, Mr.

Chairman.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Minister, can you tell me whether rent is included in this administrative function? Can you tell us that, whether occupancy fees are included in this administrative ...

An Hon. Member: — What fees?

Ms. Atkinson: — Occupancy fees are included in this administration item for \$246,000, or is rent and occupancy fees another budget item that you haven't yet told us about?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — As you call it, occupancy fees are not part of what I've just set out. Rent NOE.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So, Mr. Minister, where is the rent? Is the rent possibly in the item no. 5, payments to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, which in this year, if you look at 1987-88 in comparison to 1988-89, has gone up practically \$600,000. Is this where the rent on the Premier's little office on 22nd Street is located? And, Mr. Deputy Premier, is the \$600,000 the amount that you're paying to one Ken Achs, a loyal Conservative Party supporter?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Did you say Ken Achs? He's a terrific guy and a great Tory, but I know of no contract that the Provincial Secretary has with Ken Achs.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, you know, we shouldn't let the fox in charge of the chicken coop, because, Mr. Deputy Premier, it seems to me that you're trying to be foxy tonight, and you know, Mr. Deputy Premier, it's just not working, it's just not working.

Now, Mr. Deputy Premier, everybody in Saskatoon knows the following. The Premier's office and the cabinet office used to be located in Sturdy Stone. Sturdy Stone was paid for a long time ago, Mr. Deputy Premier. Your government paid no rent to Sturdy Stone to have the Premier's office and cabinet office located there. But some few months ago, it became obvious to everyone in Saskatoon that Ken Achs was having some difficulty, some difficulty, Mr. Deputy Premier, in occupying the development that he had been involved in on 22nd Street and, I believe, it's 4th Avenue.

And what happened shortly after that, Mr. Deputy Premier, was that the Premier's office was moved from the Sturdy Stone Building over to 22nd Street, and we now see a nice, big, blue sign on 22nd Street that takes up much of the front of this new development, and it's called "Office of the Premier," in nice blue letters, or nice blue signage. Some people have wondered, Mr. Deputy Premier, what you're paying Mr. Ken Achs, who is a loyal Conservative Party supporter, to rent the space that is located in his building on 22nd Street.

I shouldn't say some people — a good number of people — because they don't believe it makes any sense to have space vacant at Sturdy Stone, space that is already owned and paid for by the provincial government, and move across the street and pay large sums of money to rent Ken Achs's building when you are cutting back on

prescription drugs to people, you're cutting back on the school-based children's dental program, you are cutting back on social services, when you were cutting, cutting, cutting.

And I want to know, Mr. Deputy Premier, how much money is being paid to one Ken Achs? And I'd like to know, Mr. Deputy Premier, how long you have agreed to lease that particular space for the Premier's office in Saskatoon.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, those decisions are made by the property management corporation. We pay, at the Provincial Secretary, \$1,513,600 to the property management corporation for accommodation. That accommodation includes rent, operation and maintenance charges, office furniture rental, space improvements, telephone co-ordination and management, any taxes associated with the following properties, **Mr. Speaker:** — the Legislative Building except for the space used by the offices of Executive Council; the Legislative Building; the Legislative Library storage at 3211 Albert Street; the Legislative Library satellite office, the Walter Scott Building; the Provincial Inquiry Centre, first floor of the T.C. Douglas Building; Office of the Lieutenant Governor at Government House; SEDCO Building in Regina for storage of bulky building materials for the Legislative Building; program advisory branch, 6th floor, 1855 Victoria; the electoral office storage, Rollo-Flex Building; electoral office, school trustees' building; and Office of the Premier in Saskatoon at 315-22nd Street. Mr. Chairman, the total that we pay, or expect to pay to the property management corporation for all of that, is \$1,513,600.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Deputy Premier, you've just told me that you do have arrangements through Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation to rent the Premier's office in Saskatoon on 22nd Street. And I'm asking you how much are paying to rent that space? And I'm asking you how long you ... what sort of term you have with Achs, Ken Achs, your loyal party supporter, for the rent of that space? Is it 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 10 years, or 25 years? And I think, Mr. Deputy Premier, you should be forthcoming tonight with that information.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The member will put her own interpretation on to whatever I say, in any event. But I'm telling you that we do not have a contract with anyone but the property management corporation. The property management corporation will decide and make the decisions as to who occupies what space. And it has been the policy of the government since November — get this, Mr. Chairman — since November of 1976, since November of 1976. In order to minimize any impact on market conditions, it has been government policy not to disclose any rental rate information for government properties, and so that information isn't even known to me, Mr. Speaker.

On a line-by-line basis we have ... Like, we get the bill, you know, from property management, and we pay the bill. The bill this year is going to be \$1,513,600.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well it's odd that the bill's going to be

\$1.516 million when item 5 on page 70 in your blue book says that the payments to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation is going to be 2.1 million, Mr. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Deputy Premier, I haven't finished.

An Hon. Member: — Oh, I'm sorry.

Ms. Atkinson: — It seems to me whenever we start to talk about some of these little deals that you've entered into ... and I'm thinking of the deal at Rosetown with Doug Friend in the Department of Highways, and I'm thinking of the Parkridge deal, and Wolfe and Gloeden, and I'm talking about the Parkridge nursing home in Saskatoon, and Wolfe and Gloeden.

(2230)

We now talk about this other little deal that you have with one Ken Achs, a loyal Conservative Party supporter. You use the excuse that, oh no, I can't tell you, it's the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation's function; talk to the minister of privatization when his estimates come before this House. You use the excuse, oh we can't let that information out because it might hurt people commercially.

And, Mr. Minister, our position on that, Mr. Minister, is that that is total and utter nonsense. The real problem, Mr. Deputy Premier, or Mr. Minister, is that you don't want people to know, you don't want people to know what kinds of money is rolling out of the provincial treasury to reward your loyal Conservative Party friends who just happen to be real estate developers. That's the problem.

And I'm serving notice now, and you can get the minister of privatization geared up for this, that we will want to know how much money is being paid by the Provincial Secretary, through the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, to Ken Achs, through Mid-West Development. We'll want to know that. We'll want to know how much money is going from the Department of Highways, through the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, to one Doug Friend, who's taken off to Kelowna. And we'll want to know how much money is being paid out by the Parkridge nursing home in Saskatoon to Wolfe and Gloeden, through the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation.

So, Mr. Deputy Premier, I would ask you to ask your friend, the minister of privatization, to get all the information together because we have the right to know that information and you can't hide behind your excuse of, we can't let that information out because it might hurt people commercially. That's nonsense.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, this is not an original idea, and I don't take credit for it. I happen to think that it's a good idea, but this has been government policy since 1976. That was the year after I sat in that very chair, Mr. Chairman, that the Leader of the Opposition sits in now ... (inaudible interjection) ... Oh, that's right; I sat over there — right. That's right, I'm sorry.

Now, the policy since 1976, Mr. Chairman, is as follows:

that in order to minimize any impact on market conditions, Mr. Speaker, that it has been government policy since 1976 not to disclose rental rate information for government properties.

I would also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the building that her and her colleague have been talking about in Rosetown, that they claim to be sitting there vacant and gathering dusty, has in fact not existed for some time, Mr. Speaker. It's been rezoned for residential, and I understand that there's streets being built and houses being built and the new building, Mr. Speaker, is serving the province very well. And Doug Friend, who happens to be a business man in Rosetown and, I suspect . . .

An Hon. Member: — A good, loyal supporter.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I expect, I hope he is — I hope he is. But in any event, Mr. Chairman, the final question, or the — maybe it's not the final one that she asked, but it's at least part of the question that she asked. The total paid to the property management by the Provincial Secretary, you're right, is \$2.1 million. Of that 2.1, 1.5 and bit is for rent; postage is 10,700; photographic services 2,000; photographic services subsidy is 87,000; and renovation and capital projects is, rounded, a half a million.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Item 6 — Statutory

Vote 30 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates (No. 2)
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Provincial Secretary
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 30**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 30 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank my officials. I would particularly like to thank Elizabeth Smith for her dedicated service over the last few years, and wish her well in her new position in Social Services, and naturally thank the critic for the very cordial way in which estimates were handled this year. Thank you.

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Chairman, I would also like to thank the minister's officials for coming, and for their co-operation tonight. Thank you.

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
The Local Government Board
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 22**

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Mr. Oren Wilson, the chairman.

Item 1

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions to ask of the minister dealing with the Local

Government Board and also dealing with the Local Government Finance Commission, which I hope the minister will be prepared to give some answers on.

Mr. Minister, earlier this evening we dealt with The Municipal Board Act, and I indicated that although there are some merits in the legislation, there clearly are some problems that one may need to address as time goes by. One of the things that I am concerned about is: what role will the function of the Local Government Board play under the new organization, the new super organization which you're putting together and which you're amalgamating three different agencies and which may result in a huge organization in the name of efficiency?

My experience in the past has shown that simply making something bigger does not necessarily make it more effective. It may improve the inter-agency communication, but in that process I would hope that some assurances can be given, and some explanations to those assurances provided on how the role of the Local Government Board will not be diluted to the point where it is less effective than it is now. Can you provide some explanation and give some assurances on that effect?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I was hoping that what we could do tonight would be the estimates of the Local Government Board as they appear in the blue book and leave the legislation to the proper time when it's in committee. And you know, if we're going to do the committee legislative work now, then I suppose I could say that that's all right with me, but at the end of the day we're not going to approve the legislation, we're going to approve this estimate. So all I can do is tell the member that when we get into the debate on the legislation, I'll provide all those details.

Right now, to give you some degree of comfort, I suppose all I can say is that the latter part of your statement is correct. We see a very efficient operation coming out of this, and I think that it's fair to say that if the total board operating in one unit knows what each other are doing, they can effectively avoid a lot of problems as it relates to the future. I see the streamlining of this board as being very efficient and continuing with the same work.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well since these estimate are going to be providing the money and the resources for which you will pay for the operation of this board, Mr. Minister, you're going to have to answer some of the questions in your estimates. And I simply ask you: can you tell me how the Local Government Board will fit into the new structure and organization for which we're going be approving some money here today? Is it going to be a separate entity within the larger organization, or is it going to still remain . . . or is it going become part of the whole thing, with one director running the thing and trying to have three different agencies answer to this person? Can you at least give us that explanation?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that probably the best explanation has been heard by the member as he attended the SUMA regional conferences when Mr. Wilson explained the new operation. The Local Government Board will be operating the same way as it does today, and it will be doing the same functions as it

does today, but it will be doing them in conjunction with the other two boards so that the left hand will know what the right hand is doing, and in a lot of instances, hopefully avoid some controversy that can come up the line because they will then be able to truly recognize that as they make decision in one area, it could be conceivably impact in another and avoid that situation. But the role of the LGB (Local Government Board) will continue to be the same.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — It's interesting to have you say, Mr. Minister, that until this board is established, the left hand has not been knowing what the right hand is doing. Can you then tell us what the problems have been, and give us some examples where there has been obviously something gone awry? I've not been aware of any problems that way, but you obviously are. Can you tell the House what they are?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Hopefully, Mr. Chairman, one of the major ones that the member would be familiar with, I'm sure, is the assessment appeal board, where we ended up with quite a backlog. And the backlog was primarily due to the fact that we couldn't get a quorum in place for the hearing. Well this way we could take a member from the core board, supplement the appeal board, and away we go, and the hearing could be accomplished without delay.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, these assessment appeal board members which you couldn't get enough of to attend a quorum, how are they remunerated? Are they on a retainer of some kind, or they get paid only on a daily basis?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — They receive pay on a per diem.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Strictly per diem and expenses, so that if they attend a meeting, they remunerated; if they don't attend the meeting, they don't get remunerated? And secondly, how long has this problem of not being able to get a quorum existed?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — What you indicated about the per diems and everything is accurate. And if they don't work, they don't get paid; if they work, they get paid.

We ran into a problem with the chairman who had a health problem, and the quorum was five. The new Act of the quorum will be three, and with the provision of substituting, and I believe that it'll go a long way in assisting us to operate effectively.

(2245)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, you have board members who you appoint now, you will be appointing new board members, and some of the money that we're providing for this legislation, we'll provide for you, will have to pay for that.

Can you tell this House what your intentions are about the existing board members on the Local Government Board? Will they be part of the new organization, or are they all up for grabs and will have to resubmit their resumes to you and then you will decide whether they get

reappointed? Or do they have some kind of tenure because they have been appointed — in some cases, I understand, they have been appointed for a term. Does that term expire with the legislation, or do they have some assurance that they will be part of the new organization?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, in all cases they are appointed for a term by order in council, I believe. And as far as I know at the present time, the majority of the board is going to be transferred to the new board, for continuity sake and all the rest of it.

Certainly I'm not in any position to say what's going to happen in the future as these boards are moved around. Everybody knows that this board in particular requires expertise to it, and they're going to be dealing with things that they're going to have to be very familiar with. So I would suspect that you'll see the majority of the existing members included in the new board.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I hear you say, Mr. Minister, the majority of the board members. Should that lead me to conclude then that not all of the board members will be appointed to the new board and that some of them will not be?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, at this point in time I think I can honestly say that I haven't given any discussion at all to the make-up of the new board.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, I wish you would, on behalf of the municipalities out there, because the legislation was going to pass in this session. And I know you don't have to implement the legislation immediately, but I happen to know also, in talking to many municipal people, that there is some concern about where this is all going to fall into place. And instead of the process you used with some of your other legislation, Mr. Minister, dealing with ward systems and store hours, where you pretended to consult — you asked SUMA to deal with it at their convention, and they dealt with it at their convention, and they clearly said to you what they did not want you to do and they wanted you to do, and then you went out and did something altogether different. This has led municipal people to worry about what your intentions and your plans are here. So I simply will say to you I hope that you will inform them rather quickly, so that they know where they're going to stand — not saying that having informed them they can rely on you to keep your word to them; that's another question.

I simply will leave it at that because — and I say it on behalf of those municipal people who have spoken to me about it, that although they, in general, favour the Bill, there is some concern about the continuity, in spite of the assurances they've been given, because they don't know what's going to happen. And when you say some, or the majority, or part of the board will be appointed, that signals to them that maybe there is some danger to what's going to be the final result.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to ask you one more question on this. There are going to be employees that are going to be affected in all of the three agencies. What assurances can you give here in this estimates review that all of those employees will be able to retain their employment?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all, I think it would have been presumptuous if I would have come in here and said yes, there's this board change and that board change. You very well know that this Act has been on the drawing board for over a year now, and I didn't know whether you were going to pass it again, or pass it or not, or whether in fact it was going to be there. So we know that we have to co-ordinate a lot of things if this Act is indeed passed, and not the least of which are the hearings, along with the board. There's several different things. That's why the Act is written in the way it is, with a date at some time in the future so that everybody has some degree of comfort as it's processed.

With regard to staff, the Act provides that all of the existing staff will be transferred to the new board, and the staff will have nothing to fear.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Do you anticipate, and I read that portion of the Act, but maybe I didn't phrase my question correctly. Do you, then, can you give an assurance that in this transfer there will not be reductions in pay or reduction in benefits, or demotions?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I understand that there is nothing along that line contemplated at all.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm glad that we have got that on the record, and I will take your word for it, believe it or not.

I have no further questions on the Local Government Board as such. As I said in the debate on the Bill, we will be watching carefully on how you put it together, the appointments of the people you put onto the board, to see whether they have the kind of expertise that they must require to have, and whether we'll have another Mr. Morgan, like the one who was appointed to the Legal Aid Commission and the whole reams of other people who have been appointed, unfortunately, only because of political expertise rather than expertise in the field to which they are going to have to apply their talent. And I will leave it at that.

I want to ask you some questions now, Mr. Minister, about the Local Government Finance Commission. And I know that you're going to get up and you're going to say, oh, but that's in the realm of the Minister of Finance.

I have here Hansard which you made some statements in the last estimates that were considered, Mr. Minister, and you said that although the Minister of Finance will be the lead agency on the total review of the finance commission, all of the work — and I paraphrase here — will be done in consultation with the main players that the finance report deals with. In other words, SUMA, you were suggesting, would have been involved in this review process, which I submit to you has not taken place at all. And what you said last year has not happened.

Can I ask you then, as the minister responsible to SUMA, what role, if any, SUMA has played in this review process since the last estimates that you were in here about a year ago.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, as the member knows, SUMA withdrew from being a part of that report, and as a result of that withdrawal I suppose that would have indicated that they really didn't have too much interest in it. I can't say that.

Nevertheless our discussions with SUMA continue on a whole array of financial matters as it relates to municipalities. And you know, one of the typical examples I suppose that we could say this year is the revenue distribution formula that was used, that SUMA asked us to use. And so our discussions with SUMA continue regularly, and that's about all I can tell you about that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I guess I'm not surprised that that's all you can tell me, Mr. Minister, because there has been absolutely no follow-up made on the Local Government Finance Commission report. Some . . . I believe it was something like \$500,000 or more was spent on this report. It was a massive study, I thought very well done. There is some great recommendations in it that any responsible government would be considering. You have not considered one single one of those recommendations, after expending that kind of money, of significance.

So, Mr. Minister, can I ask you then: why has there not been in this part year the review of the local government commission report, as you said in this House there was going to be, because the Minister of Finance yesterday was not able to say what review there was, and you're not prepared to tell us in this House what role SUMA has had, and you should know that.

Am I to conclude then, Mr. Minister, that there has not been this review done of the Local Government Finance Commission report?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I think it's fair to say that, although my colleague has not, perhaps, issued a formal statement on the review that has occurred, that some of the recommendations that were made by that commission have indeed surfaced and have been accepted. And others, as it relates particularly now to the areas of restraint that must be shown, we haven't been able to proceed in other areas, if indeed the government chooses that that would be the direction that it should take. So I think in that regard, if you're looking for a formal statement, I believe that that would be the Minister of Finance, and whether he chooses to make one or not would be within his jurisdiction.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Indeed, Mr. Minister, except he wasn't able to make one. You're the minister in charge of Urban Affairs. You ought to have an interest in those aspects of that Local Government Finance Commission report which affect your portfolio. I don't think it's unreasonable for us to expect that of you.

So I simply ask you another question, Mr. Minister. Can you report to this House, under your jurisdiction, those parts of the Local Government Finance Commission report which you say the Minister of Finance has considered and has implemented; under your particular jurisdiction, which of those recommendations have been

reviewed, considered, and recommended and implemented? Can you give that to this House?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I think it's fair to say, because most of the recommendations involved new financial dollars, new funding, that that's under the area of the Minister of Finance. I think that's understandable. But one of the major recommendations that was initiated that the members opposite are familiar with was the formation of the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, this is getting to be a bit of a joke. Are you saying to this House that the Minister of Finance will have made some decisions on the financing aspect of that commission report and implemented them, and you wouldn't even know as the Minister of Urban Affairs? Is that what you're trying to tell this House? Or can you tell us which of those financial decisions were decided on and have been implemented in the area for which you are responsible? Were any of them implemented, Mr. Minister, or are you prepared to be honest with this Assembly and say none of them were?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I think, Mr. Chairman, I very clearly indicated that the only one, because of the involvement of new dollars, was the implementation of SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency).

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Isn't that fascinating. Oh, is it \$500,000 you spent on this report commission?

An Hon. Member: — Probably more.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — More than \$500,000 spent on this commission, and all that you have been able to do in putting it into effect is establish SAMA, which was being discussed and promoted before you even thought of the idea of a municipal finance commission.

Mr. Minister, this is ridiculous. It is just another example of how your government is operating. You have set up study after study after study in order to try to buy yourself some political time, and then when you've got this massive expenditure of taxpayers' money and you've got the report — and in this particular one an awfully good one because you had some good people in it — you put it on the table and then on the shelf and you let it pile up with dust.

How in heaven's name can you call that being responsible? You have implemented one recommendation, which was not new because it was considered even before you set up the commission, and that is the establishment of SAMA. And you almost bungled that one; not you, your former colleague in that position who tried to exclude the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and only brought it in because the members of this side of the House made it happen, and the school trustees protested so loudly that you had to include them.

Now, Mr. Minister, in light of the fact that you have given the answer that you have, can you provide some explanation why that's the only recommendation that you have been able to implement?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Sorry, I didn't catch the question.

(2300)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well I think being that it's almost 11 o'clock, we're going to have to shut this down, but soon. But I want to ask him a question, this: can you explain why, after having this single most comprehensive report on municipal financing that has ever been done in Saskatchewan — if not in Canada — you have been able only to implement one recommendation, and that is the establishment of SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency)? Can you say why you've been able to handle only that one and not deal with some of the other very significant and important aspects of that report?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I've said it before and I'll say it again: in spite of some of the good recommendations that are in there, our basic problem is clear. This is a time of restraint. The report was completed just when the government had to start addressing the spending. Basically most of the recommendation included new dollars, and the government just simply didn't have the new dollars to cope with those recommendations.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Minister, but you certainly had, you certainly had something like \$3 billion to give to the oil companies. You got \$3 billion to turn over to the oil companies and tax royalty holidays, but you've got a report that gives you some good advice. And you say to urban governments, we're not going to give you a cent, because we want you to sock it to the property taxpayers and get it off the backs of those people who are trying to raise their families out there, because we've got to spend this money on our friends in the oil industry who are already making multi-billion dollars of profits.

Now, Mr. Minister, that is no kind of a responsible answer. I'm not surprised at that. I'm not surprised that we're not getting any answers, because I don't expect to get any answers from this minister, in the same way as the chambers of commerce, and the SUMAs, and the local governments of this province have given up in frustration and know that they're not going to get any answers from you as well.

You ram your way around and you try to impose on them the wishes of your government when they give you advice after you ask for it. You stick them in the eye and you say you don't care, and you're going to do what you want in spite of what they say. And if you don't think that's true, you better spend some time talking to some of those people, because that's what they're saying, and that's what they're saying all over Saskatchewan.

Now I don't think it's worth the time of this House at this time of night to pursue any more questioning when we can't get any answers. For half an hour we've asked questions, and not one answer were you able to provide, except the odd one with the municipal board that was being established, and even that is doubtful whether you were able to provide full and qualified answers.

And I think, in light of that, Mr. Minister, we need to give you some time to do some briefing with your officials, and so, Mr. Chairman, I would like to call it, being it's way past 10 o'clock, 11:04.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 11:05 p.m.