

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to the members of this legislature through you, Mr. Speaker, five special people in the west gallery. My wife Alma is up there for. . . to come and listen to that excellent document going to be delivered later on this day by the Minister of Finance.

And I further would like to introduce to you Mrs. Helen Teichroeb, Mrs. Anne Friesen, Mrs. Tina Sawatzky, and Mrs. Rita Guenther. Those last four mentioned happen to be my sisters and I would appreciate it if all members of the legislature could give them a warm Saskatchewan welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Funding for Universities

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and it concerns university funding or lack of university funding by your government.

Mr. Minister, I am sure you are well aware that the University of Regina has recently announced a 17 per cent increase again, once again, on student university tuition fees. But even worse, Mr. Speaker, the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) has announced a 40 per cent increase in tuition fees in some of their programs and that it will lay off 85 staff this year.

Mr. Minister, the future of young people is at stake and is adversely being affected by the lack of commitment by your government to university education.

Mr. Minister, when can the students and the universities of this province expect adequate funding from your government so that tuition fees do not have to increase again, so that universities don't have to cut programs, and finally, Mr. Minister, so that enrolment quotas can be eliminated? When will you make that commitment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that we have increased the operating grants to the universities this year by some 3.5 per cent, and I think that everyone feels that under their present economic circumstances, that that is a fair increase.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that for each and every year that this party has been in power, that we have increased the operating grant to the universities. We fully understand that there is responsibility on the part of the students to pay a fair share of the costs of their education.

I think that if you take a look at the tuition fees that are

being paid by our students here in Saskatchewan, that they're on a par with what students in other provinces are paying. And, Mr. Speaker, we would certainly like to give more money to the universities, but under the present circumstances we feel that a 3.5 per cent increase is fair.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — A new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, the recent Provincial Auditor's report clearly indicates that you had much more than 3.5 per cent in polling, in advertising, in patronage jobs, in ministerial travel — much more than 3.5 per cent.

Mr. Minister, I want to remind you also that tuition fees here in Saskatchewan are some of the highest in all of western Canada.

Thirdly, Mr. Minister, you have to be reminded that your operating funding, your operating funding for universities is one of the lowest in all of Canada — one of the lowest.

Mr. Minister, I'm asking you again: when are you going to have any influence at all in that government to get adequate funding for our universities so that our university students don't have to go to another province in order to get their education. They want it here, Mr. Minister. We need a commitment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Mr. Speaker, to suggest that the fees that the students here in Saskatchewan are paying are far out of line with other western universities is inaccurate. When he suggests that per student, that we're paying less here than any other university in Canada, I think that the member opposite likes to use his own sets of figures, figures that we would not use.

And at the same time, for him to suggest that we have a lot of our students that are leaving this province to go to university elsewhere — that is not accurate either, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that we do have some students who go to universities in other provinces because they want to take specialized courses that are not offered here.

Mr. Speaker, we hear the member opposite talking about changes that we need to be making here. We haven't to this point in time seen any plan, any changes, that that party would bring into being if they in fact were the government.

They talk about advertising. Does the member opposite think then that there shouldn't be any advertising or any information going out with regard to core curriculum, with regard to the student loan plan, and that sort of thing? He makes these comments but does not have any suggestions at all as to changes that could be actually taking place.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the Premier. Mr. Premier, I have before me a letter dated October 15, 1987, and it concerns the funding of the new agricultural building. And in it you state the following:

I would like to confirm that the Government of Saskatchewan, through its Department of Advanced Education, has explored fully the operating costs of this new building in consultation with the university and that sufficient funds will be provided in the grants to the university to properly operate and maintain the facility.

Mr. Premier, the university wants to know if this is another one of your broken promises, or are you going to stand by that commitment and make another \$2.5 million available to the U of S in order to pay for the increased costs of the new agricultural building. Are you going to make that commitment, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased that the member opposite has raised the new College of Agriculture Building issue because I would point out that this is a project that had been asked for, for some 25 years which that party over there failed to do anything about.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that this government has built many major projects on the University of Saskatchewan campus during the last nine years. And I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that in each case, when one of those new buildings was opened, additional money was not provided for the operating of those new buildings.

I have also, Mr. Speaker, seen all of the correspondence with regard to the College of Agriculture Building. There has never been any solid indication given that there would be increased funding as far as the operation was concerned. And I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that this year we are allowing the University of Saskatchewan some \$3.9 million in their operating grant. And the feeling is that from that they can find the \$1.5 million dollars that is needed to operate that new building this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Premier, I direct my question to the Premier again. Mr. Premier, do you think it is fair to the U of S when you make a commitment that you will provide adequate funds for the operating cost of the university in the agricultural sector — you said that you would make adequate funds available — do you think, Mr. Premier, that it is fair for you to ask the U of S to have only increases of 1.5 per cent and provide all the programs available, and you will not stand by your commitment?

Mr. Premier, does your commitment not mean anything at all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Mr. Premier, I would point out to you and to the members opposite again that it was this government that built the new College of Agriculture Building, a building that was very, very badly needed. There have been many discussions that have gone on with the President of the University of Saskatchewan, and

those discussions will continue.

But the fact is that the University of Saskatchewan is receiving an additional \$3.9 million this year in their operating grant. The feeling is that from that they can use \$1.5 million of that for the operation of the new college building for this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Funding for Health Care

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, I have just met with the nurses outside, and I must say, Mr. Minister, that your absence was noted. Mr. Speaker, the nurses are saying that the health care system in this province is facing a crisis because of the government's inability to organize and co-ordinate health care services in the province. On the one hand, they pour millions into building facilities, and on the other hand they close hospital beds and cut staff, Mr. Speaker.

Hospitals in four Saskatchewan cities — Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Yorkton — have announced the closure of approximately 279 care beds in the past weeks. Dr. Kuling, the new president of the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) notes that there is uncertainty with respect to the availability of services for people with heart pains, women with lumps on their breasts, or elderly stroke victims who can't be treated at home. For these people, he says, I'm not sure what lies ahead. And that's a sad commentary, Mr. Minister, on your ability to deliver health care services in the province.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has asked that the government undertake a full inquiry into the issue of hospital funding in this province. Mr. Minister, are you prepared to hold such an inquiry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises questions of a demonstration by nurses here in front of the Legislative Building today, obviously a very significant part of collective bargaining that is now going on. Collective bargaining is going on, as I think all citizens of the province will know, between the nurses and the hospital associations of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the hon. member, on that particular point, if the hon. member is suggesting that I as Minister of Health should inject myself into that collective bargaining process, or if I should not. I'd be interested in hearing what her position is on that.

As it relates to the choices made in developing this year's budget and going back to February when the Minister of Finance announced three and a half per cent increases for the institutional side of the health care sector — this being hospitals and special care homes — we were very clear with those homes and with those hospitals at the time — and in February — and very up front in telling them the reason for the announcement early was because they would need to develop their individual plans within their

individual institutions for the upcoming year.

They have done that. There are some beds that are closing in some of the hospitals, yes, Mr. Speaker. They have done a good job of their planning. Three and a half per cent increase to those institutions in a time when the changing emphasis in health care must go from institutional care to community-based care, and you'll see more of that in the budget later this day. So, Mr. Speaker, all I can say to the hon. member who likes to grandstand . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Minister, my question to you was: will you hold an inquiry into a . . . a full inquiry into the issue of hospital funding in the province, yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — What the union of nurses requested in a letter to me was that I inquire into, and they cited a section of the Act, and that section provides for a . . . not a full public inquiry in the sense that the hon. member I believe is referring to, and perhaps the nurses would refer to, but that involves the Minister of Health having responsibility for the delivery of health care in its broadest sense across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken that responsibility seriously in the amount of money that we have allocated to the institutional care across the province. We have done that, Mr. Speaker. That's an ongoing process for the Department of Health officials, inquiring into the availability of funds, if those funds are appropriate. All of that is going on, on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, that's pure rhetoric on the part of the minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — It's obvious, it's obvious he doesn't want to conduct a full inquiry because he knows he'll be very uncomfortable with the findings.

Mr. Minister, we know that there are other hospitals which will soon announce bed closures. We know that Pioneer Village in Regina has closed 60 beds and that other care homes will make similar announcements in the near future.

Your government, Mr. Minister, had choices. You could have done your duty to health care or you could continue wasting taxpayers' dollars on sweetheart deals to Cargill, on self-serving advertising to prop up your image in health care, on patronage and perks and on political expediency.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is how many sick and elderly people will have to be denied care before you realize that you made the wrong choices? How many beds and jobs must we lose, Mr. Minister, before your government realizes it's made the wrong choices?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has said the government has choices. The hon. member has said that there are choices, and I have reiterated that. The government has choices and must make choices during the period of time of fiscal restraint and the period of time that our economy . . . that is real for everyone except the socialist members on the opposite side of the House here.

Mr. Speaker, the member says, conduct an inquiry. Mr. Speaker, the same member at the time of the commissioning of the Murray report to look into all of health care in this province, a blueprint for that, was against that inquiry or that report.

Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatoon Health Services Authority was put in place to look in a rational way, in a reasoned way at the three hospitals in Saskatoon and broaden that to delivery of full health care beyond the institutional sector in Saskatoon, the hon. member was very silent about that and in fact was in the background against that process as well. That's an inquiry that is reasonable, done by the Department of Health and by this minister.

The Atkinson report as it relates to hospitals in Regina and the role of each of those hospitals and their relationship with each other — all of those, Mr. Speaker, were done in a reasoned way and an ongoing basis by this department because those are choices we made knowing the reality of the health care system and the reality of the economy of this province. Mr. Speaker, those choices . . . and I say to the hon. member, she has a choice as well. What is it? What's the choice? Is it 20 per cent? Is it 25 per cent? Is it 15 per cent? Is it 8 per cent? What is it, Mr. Speaker? Let her stand and say so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, what the nurses are talking about is an inquiry that takes action and where action will be implemented, not an inquiry like the Murray Commission that's sitting on the shelf a year later and collecting dust, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Minister, the bed closures in the four cities will mean the loss of more than 400 health care jobs. Considering that in 1985 there were 448,000 people employed in Saskatchewan and in 1990 there were 449,000, we can see that your government has been able to create a total of 1,000 new jobs in five years. And now almost half of those are being lost in the health care area.

Who knows what the total will be when we hear from all of rural Saskatchewan with respect to closures, Mr. Minister. Why should Saskatchewan people believe you when you promise to move thousands of jobs to smaller communities, when your policies cut the jobs that already exist there?

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member once again, as I have outlined, when we have developed plans which are long range . . . and that's what's been going on. And all of those . . . and the members opposite even now, even now the hon. members on the opposite side, because they're into one of their days when they think they've got their teeth into a medicare issue. Well, Mr. Speaker, all I say to the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. Order, order. I can see that there are a great number of people who'd like to answer the question but the Minister of Health has been asked to do so.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been against — all through a number of years now, and the record will show, has been against . . . Each time there's been an attempt. Each time there's been a plan put forward, and all of these things that I mentioned in an earlier answer are part of an overriding plan. That's true in a very significant enterprise in this province, the health care system. Very complex and changing, changing significantly, Mr. Speaker, despite what the hon. member says, despite the lack of plans that they have, despite whatever . . . (inaudible) . . . will come for. Mr. Speaker, this system is changing here and across Canada. There's no question that's true. The things that I've outlined in the earlier answer speak to that change, Mr. Speaker; you bet they do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Annual Report of SPC

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. Now, Mr. Minister, the annual report, this glossy document which you tabled late Friday, shows some interesting numbers. In fact a quick look at those numbers reveal why it is that your government went out of its way to table this annual report under the conditions of the least possible scrutiny.

Now, Mr. Minister, given that the company, SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation), made a profit of \$118 million last year, why did your government find it acceptable to strip a dividend of \$291 million? Is that your idea of a business-like approach to SaskPower, or are you simply robbing Peter to pay Nancy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — First of all, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. member, the critic of the Power Corporation on the NDP (New Democratic Party) benches to suggest that the Sask Power Corporation under present management has not been operating in a business-like and reasoned way is almost laughable, Mr. Speaker. It is. It's laughable and the record shows that it's . . . (inaudible) . . .

As it relates to the tabling of the document, Mr. Speaker, which way do they want? They've said you've tabled the document in a way in which they wouldn't be able to scrutinize it or whatever. I can't remember just exactly what he's saying, what he's talking about. On the other hand they've been running around the province saying,

open the books and put the reports out and so on. Well, Mr. Speaker, the books were put on the table. The hon. members can look at the reports if they would like, and I'm glad to see that the hon. member is reading the report. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. A new question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you've said that you're operating SaskPower in a business-like manner. I agree, you're operating it in a PC (Progressive Conservative) business-like manner, because once again those numbers revealed that we have a mounting debt problem. That's the kind of business, Mr. Minister.

That report pointed out that the Power Corporation's debt last year increased by some 288 million, while you stripped the dividend into the Consolidated Fund in the amount of 291 million. In essence, Mr. Minister, SaskPower's debts would have declined this year, not increased, had you not taken out that dividend.

Now, Mr. Minister, my question is that given that the people of Saskatchewan know what you're doing with the money — that you're transferring it from the Crown corporation into general revenues so that it will go straight into the black hole of waste and mismanagement which you characterize as a business-like approach — would you tell the people of Saskatchewan by what right, Mr. Minister, do you have to rape, rob, and pillage arguably the most important Crown corporation in this the last year of your sorry mandate?

Mr. Speaker, tell us all that.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — The operation of Saskatchewan Power Corporation under this administration, Mr. Speaker, will stand up to anything ever presented by members who belong to that party. Mr. Speaker, SaskPower Corporation is a profitable and well-managed corporation under this administration and the record is there to show it.

There are no rate increases, Mr. Speaker, in the last year; no rate increases in the coming year, Mr. Speaker, and that's been announced to the public of the province. Mr. Speaker, manufacturing and processing, a very important aspect of economic development and diversification in this province, enhanced by Saskatchewan Power who finally, under this administration, recognizes the need for diversification and for manufacturing and process in the province. That recognition in SaskPower, The way that SaskPower has managed its affairs under this administration, Mr. Speaker, speaks very well for itself, and the record is there to show it regardless of what the hon. member from Rosemont might say here or anywhere else.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. A new question to the same minister. May I begin by prefacing my remarks, Mr. Minister, that when we have an opportunity in the Crown Corporations Committee, we will see in fact precisely how the books of SaskPower are balanced and

what part of those books were jiggled. But that's not my question, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, on page 22 of this finely printed glossy report, there is a brief mention of the economic performance of Saskatchewan Energy for the year 1989, but there are no corroborating documents. Mr. Minister, you did not make the 1989 annual report of SaskEnergy available, and you've not made the 1990 annual report of SaskEnergy available. Mr. Minister, so much for open and accountable government from your side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — My question, Mr. Minister, to you is this. If you're going to make claims like this, as you've made on page 22 in this annual report, don't you think that you and your government have an obligation to make available the annual reports of SaskEnergy so that you can back up your claims and so that the people of Saskatchewan can scrutinize those claims and put it in the proper perspective. Won't you open the books of SaskEnergy, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, in all of that there may have been a question. But I would say to the hon. member, picking up on what he had said in his earliest remarks in that last question, were that he looks forward to scrutiny of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation in Crown Corporations Committee. Mr. Speaker, so do I.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Mr. Speaker, a very short and succinct question to that minister. Mr. Minister, we've heard a lot of political rhetoric out of you today. Will you table the annual reports of SaskEnergy for 1989 and 1990? And if you won't, will you tell the people of Saskatchewan precisely what it is you're hiding? What kind of jiggy-pokery . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — What kind of financial jiggy-pokery are you guys up to now, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, to reassure the hon. member, the government is hiding nothing — we are hiding nothing. Make it very clear.

And, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has said, as I said earlier, we'll discuss all of this in the Crown Corporations Committee, and I'll look forward to that day. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Earth Day

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I would like to make a brief

statement respecting Earth Day, and at this time I'd like to provide the opposition with a summary of my brief comments.

Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day, and this is a day in which people all over the world are joining together in recognition that the planet we live on is our planet to manage. The responsibility for a healthy environment does indeed belong to each and every one of our citizens. Governments at all levels, communities, businesses, institutions, and individuals must all work together and we must create partnerships for action.

And that responsibility, Mr. Speaker, falls on people of all assorted ages. And I am very encouraged to see the young people of Saskatchewan who are acting as leaders in environmental activities on this Earth Day. School projects, community activities, individual actions — hardly a day goes by in which you don't open a newspaper and read about young people who are taking real action on our environment. These young people I feel, Mr. Speaker, are an inspiration to all of us in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that this government has also been active and committed in its handling of environmental matters. A few days ago I announced a review of some five proposed uranium mines, a review that is ground-breaking in Saskatchewan, a review that is the first time federal and provincial governments in the province have worked together, a first assessment of such a large scale, the first assessment that will deal with cumulative effects of such proponents, of such proposals.

In the month before, Mr. Speaker, we've introduced many other initiatives: blue box pilot projects in the cities of Lloydminster and, as well, Swift Current; a land-use strategy for The Great Sand Hills in the south-western part of the province; the second year of a third-year agricultural chemical collection program — 30 tonnes of dangerous unused chemicals collected around rural Saskatchewan; new publications and reading materials such as the recycling directory that I have distributed as early as today, Mr. Speaker, where citizens all across the province can find out where, how, what you may or may not recycle in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that that directory will be of benefit to people all over this province. I invite the opposition to read and research and review that publication as well as all of the other educational publications that we have sent to our people in Saskatchewan.

And I ask the opposition to join with the government on this Earth Day to recognize the activities and encourage all Saskatchewan citizens to join in those activities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the members of the opposition, I want to say we are certainly most happy to join with all of those people inside the legislature and outside of the legislature who are recognizing Earth Day today.

I want to say that and also at the same time say, Mr. Speaker, that we also on this side of the House want to reiterate what we have been saying for years to the members opposite, and that is that it's not enough to simply recognize these events, whether they're pitch-in weeks or earth days, on the days in which this is happening. It is more important to make sure that this kind of thing continues 365 days out of every year, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And it takes commitment on the part of government of any political party, no matter where the governments are and what jurisdiction, to make sure that that happens. We recognize the important role that individuals have played in dealing with the questions of the environment. I think the public, individuals, from school children to university students to people living in communities and their homes, have actually been ahead of the government of the day when it comes to environmental protection, Mr. Speaker.

I just bring to your example . . . for your example to your attention, the school children and the teacher at Chaplin, Saskatchewan who established, Mr. Speaker, a blue box recycling program a long time before the government opposite did. I recognize that finally we have some pilot projects in Saskatchewan, and that is good. But I really regret that it took two years for the minister opposite to institute that pilot project after the government announced that it was happening.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, again to reinforce my comment that it's an effort we need to put into place 365 days of the year, and not only when it's politically opportunistic or when we have a day which we recognize, such as Earth Day.

We need to stop, Mr. Speaker, on the part of governments, from ignoring the environmental laws when it's convenient politically for the government, as was the case with the Rafferty-Alameda situation, as was the case with the fact that there was no environmental review process with the Cargill Saferco fertilizer plant, and the list goes on and on.

When governments begin to turn that around — and I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker — when governments begin to turn that around and begin to obey the laws of the environment in the same way as they expect the public to obey them, we will finally be doing an adequate job in protecting the environment. And that is what the members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, are committed to doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POINTS OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I rise to raise a question of privilege in accordance with the rules of the Assembly and in accordance with the parliamentary authorities. In conformity with these rules of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I've provided to you earlier today advance notice of my intention to raise this matter. I

would like now to state the matter to the Assembly.

On Friday last, Mr. Speaker, the government gave first reading to a Bill respecting a right of access to documents of the Government of Saskatchewan and a right of privacy with respect to personal information held by the Government of Saskatchewan. This freedom of information Bill is one listed on today's order paper as Bill No. 70.

Mr. Speaker, against the customs of the Assembly, the government provided copies of the Bill to the press and select interest groups on Friday morning prior to the proper tabling of the Bill here in the legislature. Instead of waiting until this Bill is properly printed and tabled for all members to see, the Minister of Justice invited members of the press and some members of the public to a special press conference and information session. Those who attended were provided with an embargoed copy of the said Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I contend that this constitutes an even greater departure from the custom of the Assembly than all previous incidents where Bills were released to the press prior to tabling here in the House. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that by distributing copies before the Bill was tabled in the Assembly and available to all members, the minister committed a breach of privilege.

I refer, Mr. Speaker, to Beauchesne's, 5th Edition, article 16, which defines privilege as:

. . . the sum of peculiar (particular) rights enjoyed by each House collectively . . . and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions . . .

He states further:

The privileges of Parliament are rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers". They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan elected all the members of this Assembly on both sides of the House to consider Bills of public importance. There can be no such consideration if the Bills are not first tabled in the Assembly and given to the members. I submit that by giving copies of the Bill to the press and some members of the public before providing any copies to members constitutes a breach of privilege.

I am aware of the appropriate role and the important function played by the Speaker in such cases pursuant to Beauchesne's article 84, rule 2 of this Assembly. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully urge you to find that there is a case of *prima facie*, a case of privilege, after which I will move a motion along the following lines:

That this Assembly censure the Minister of Justice for having breached the privilege of the legislature by having provided copies of the Bill to certain members of the press and the public before having

tabled it in the legislature and before providing copies to the hon. members in the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — I welcome the hon. member from the Quill Lakes back. I notice that his health has improved dramatically, and I certainly welcome him back.

I, Mr. Speaker, would indicate that it certainly wasn't any intention. We had been forwarding advance copies of the Bills to the opposition. And my understanding subsequently that an advance copy was not given to the opposition, on this at least I've been, as I say, advised subsequently. So if that being the case, I'll certainly apologize to the hon. members and to the House.

The practice has been of course the technical briefings on complicated Bills prior to . . . Let me assure the hon. members and, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member said, that they were put and placed under embargo until first reading in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And I gather that's been a fairly common practice in the past. And as I say, if it . . . what I did, I apologize to the hon. member. I was under the assumption, as had been the practice earlier this session of giving advance copies to the opposition, if that didn't happen, I will apologize to the hon. members. It would be my error.

The Speaker: — I have listened to the hon. member from Regina Elphinstone and the question of privilege which he is raising, and I've listened to the response of the Minister of Justice. Now I wish to make a statement.

I received a notice of a question of privilege at 11:35 a.m. this morning from the hon. member, for which I thank him. Matters which relate to the ability of members to perform their duties are of serious concern.

It has been the custom of this Assembly that when a minister is going to make an important announcement or indeed introduce legislation while the House is sitting, he does so in the Assembly before making the announcement outside the Assembly. The development of this practice was based on the fact that members should be advised of new policies before the public generally. This practice has usually applied to the distribution of Bills.

The point raised by the hon. member is not a new circumstance. The rules and precedents on this very point do not require that Bills be kept confidential until introduction in the Assembly. Indeed precedents indicate that although it is a courtesy to the Assembly for a minister to release information in the Assembly before releasing it to the press or public, it is not a breach of privilege of this Assembly if such release of information is not initially made to the Assembly.

I refer hon. members to some Speaker's rulings on this point. You will find the rulings as follows: December 4, 1975, on page 63; April 5, 1976, on page 63; June 2, 1988, on page 142 of the Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

I therefore rule that the hon. member for Regina

Elphinstone, while he may have a grievance, does not have a point of privilege, but I do caution all members that the usual courtesies to the Assembly should be maintained.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again pursuant to the rules of the Assembly to raise yet another point of privilege. I raise this question of privilege further to my letter to you last Friday, and in accordance with my letter to you earlier today.

The issue is the Government House Leader's failure to provide accurate and timely information to all members of the Assembly regarding the daily agenda for business here in the legislature. More specifically, the issue is the sudden, unannounced, and arbitrary changes to that agenda made here last Friday.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that all members of the government caucus and all members of the opposition caucus realize that there are agendas that exchange between members of the cabinet, and there is agenda around that is not being shared with members of the opposition.

More specifically, Mr. Speaker, if members of the Legislative Assembly are to fulfil their responsibilities to the public by active participation in the public's business in the legislature, then members must know what the agenda is going to be for the day. The failure to provide accurate and timely information to members regarding House business agenda, particularly in circumstances such as last Friday, interferes with the ability of members to fulfil their responsibilities on behalf of the people they represent.

I submit that it constitutes a breach of privilege. I would therefore ask for your ruling on this question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. And if you find that there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege, I would propose a motion along the following lines:

That the Assembly censures the Government House Leader, the member for Melfort, for having breached the privilege of the members of the Legislative Assembly by having failed to provide accurate and timely information to all members regarding the daily agenda for House business.

Mr Speaker, I ask for your ruling.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — As the hon. member has indicated, he has informed my office this morning of the question of privilege which he has just raised. I've had the opportunity to consider the previous question but not the current one; therefore I reserve my decision and bring it back at the earliest possible opportunity.

(1445)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 58 — An Act to amend The Statutes Act

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Statutes Act sets out provisions respecting citation and publishing of statutes. The proposed amendments clarify the citation provisions and allow for more timely publication of new legislation.

Under the existing Act the Queen's Printer must wait until the session is prorogued before the legislation is passed during that session, can be printed in a bound volume or as an update to the loose leaf. This amendment will alleviate the attendant delay when sessions last through more than one calendar year by allowing the printing of annual volumes of statutes. I move second reading of an Act to amend The Statutes Act.

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, the amendment is not controversial. The amendment is an improvement to the law, and we are not opposed to it.

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

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. member from Regina Lakeview is on her feet.

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, could I please have leave to introduce some guests?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, I notice that in the galleries are some nurses from SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) who were present today at the rally and also Pat Stuart in the gallery facing me, the president of SUN. And I wish to welcome the nurses here today in the legislature and point out to them that during question period we were asking the Minister of Health questions on hospital bed closures and job cuts. So those questions were put to the Minister, Mr. Speaker. But I understand both galleries have nurses in them this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — As well I'd like to say a word of welcome on behalf of all members of the legislature, and as Minister of Health, to nurses who are in the gallery today. All citizens in the province will know full well that the nurses are involved in a collective-bargaining process, and that process while at times is difficult . . . and the nurses, as everyone will understand, are on the front lines of some difficult times in the health care system. I welcome them here today and I'm glad to see them here to watch democracy in action.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 59 — An Act to amend The Interpretation Act

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Interpretation Act sets out rules to be used in interpreting

all statutes of Saskatchewan. There are two amendments to these rules proposed in this Act.

Firstly, to facilitate their use in legislation, tables of contents are added to the list of reference aids that are inserted for convenience of reference only. This is consistent with the fact that for the most part they consist of a list of the headings and marginal notes. This amendment will facilitate the use of tables of contents in legislation.

Secondly, references to regulation of Saskatchewan statutes and regulations from other provinces and territories and federal government will be deemed to be references to those statutes and regulations as amended from time to time. This will eliminate the need to add the words "as amended from time to time" after each of those references is now done.

I move second reading An Act to amend The Interpretation Act.

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, we will not be opposing this Bill, either.

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

Bill No. 70 — An Act respecting a right of access to documents of the Government of Saskatchewan and a right of privacy with respect to personal information held by the Government of Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to move second reading of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This Bill is part of the government's legislative package of democratic reforms. It will ensure that the Government of Saskatchewan continues to operate in the climate of openness and accountability.

The Act will provide a right of access by the public to documents held by the provincial government. The Bill will also provide for protection of privacy respecting personal records held by the provincial government.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is consistent with legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions. I am confident that it will effectively balance the public right to information and the personal right of individual privacy.

The Bill has been introduced in the spirit of open government that we have been told by Consensus Saskatchewan and others that the people of Saskatchewan desire. The Act will make available much government information that has historically not been available in Saskatchewan.

For example, the salaries and employment responsibility of the employees of government will be releasable under the Bill. As well, the details of all personal service contracts entered into by the government will be releasable. So will the expenditures of people travelling at government expense. In addition, the names of individuals receiving discretionary licences, permits, and financial benefits from the provincial government will be

available.

The government will have to release the results of environmental testing and product testing. It will have to release statistical surveys including polling results. Background papers of a scientific or technical nature will also be available. The reasons for discretionary decisions by government will be releasable. Government guide-lines and policy statements will be releasable.

The Bill provides for the protection of privacy, Mr. Speaker. People will have the right to see their own personal information. They will be able to ask to have the information corrected if it contains errors.

Mr. Speaker, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will also restrict the government in its collection, use, and disclosure of personal records. The Bill will require direct collection of personal information. It will require the government to ensure that personal information in its possession is accurate and up to date.

The Bill will require that information be used for the purpose for which it was collected, or for a consistent use. It will allow the disclosure of such information other than to the relevant individual only in limited circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, this Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act also creates the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The commissioner will be able to review government decisions made pursuant to the Bill, and there will be a further right of appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Speaker, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will ensure the government remains accountable to the people it serves. And I'm very pleased to move second reading of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to make a few comments on this Bill with regard to just two or three responses to the minister. The minister makes the point that this Bill is very similar to the kinds of legislation provided in other jurisdictions. I would say that that's partly correct, Mr. Speaker.

It's correct in a sense that we have a freedom of information Bill, so to that extent it's true. In the other jurisdictions the freedom of information Bills are focused on providing additional government information that had not been available up to that point. So the focus in the other jurisdictions has been to increase the access to information, that is, the way in which the government conducts public business.

The difference is this Bill . . . the focus is on the exemptions. It gives the flavour that there's going to be more openness, but there are eight pages, eight pages of exemptions in this Bill as to the kinds of information that will not be available, Mr. Speaker.

That is the major difference between this Bill and, I would say, the Bill that was on the order paper that we introduced almost a year ago. That Bill, by the way, that had the support of groups like the Association of

Saskatchewan Taxpayers, the Saskatchewan federation of independent business. Our Bill, which was on the order paper, had the support of those groups plus many other groups in the community. And I would say that it was not a restrictive Bill, it was a Bill to open up the records and the financial affairs of the Government of Saskatchewan. And what we have here is a Bill that restricts access.

For the minister says with some pride that this Bill is going to be providing information like . . . which I quote here from his — well he repeated some of those comments today — but I quote here from his press release.

He said that this Bill, this new wave of freedom of information, is going to provide information regarding salaries of employees of government institutions. It's going to provide details of personal service contracts. It's going to provide information in relation to costs of individuals travelling at government expense. It's going to provide results of statistical or polling surveys and results of environmental polling and so on.

Mr. Speaker, this is information that should be provided in this Legislative Assembly on a regular ongoing basis. This is nothing new. The only reason this is new is because this government has been withholding information from these areas up to this point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — So for the Minister of Justice to give us much faith from this Bill and from this statement that the public of Saskatchewan, which is concerned, very concerned about the secrecy of this government over the last nine years and their record of being closed and intolerant with the public, and an auditor that wants access to public expenditures, this Bill, with these very limited provisions, is not going to satisfy the auditor, it's not going to satisfy the public.

So that's the other major response I have to the minister, is this is a Bill that puts restrictions on access to information, not one that increases in any substantial way the kinds of information that is going to be available to the public of Saskatchewan.

And as my colleague from Saskatoon Centre says, this makes a mockery of this Bill which is badly needed in the province of Saskatchewan and has been promised some six or seven times by this government and they've not delivered. I mean if this is the best they can come up with, Mr. Speaker, after promising this Bill for some six or seven or eight, nine years, if this is the best they can come up with, Mr. Speaker, this is a very weak version.

And I guarantee you this is the weakest Bill, this is the weakest freedom of information Bill in the entire country, including the federal freedom of information Bill. This is not going to satisfy anybody.

The minister also talks about, with Consensus Saskatchewan, there's a sense that the public has a sort of new expectation of openness. That it took Consensus Saskatchewan, it took over \$100,000 of public expenditures to come to the realization that the public

wants open, accountable documentation of its expenditures.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know and I know and everybody in Saskatchewan knows that the idea of their government's being accountable and open with the public is not anything new. The Premier's *New Realities* paper, where he says that the public is expecting their governments to be open and accountable and expecting their governments to involve the public in decision making is nothing new in Saskatchewan. That's been the strength of the Saskatchewan governments over many years up until 1982, is the partnership with the people of Saskatchewan and their governments, whether that be local governments or school boards or small business. It's been this government, Mr. Speaker, that has so badly jeopardized the notion of democracy in this province that the reality is new for them that the public wants Saskatchewan people to be open and accountable. But that's nothing new — that's nothing new.

(1500)

This government has betrayed and broken a trust of the public of Saskatchewan. Now they're trying to scramble at 10 to midnight in their mandate. Now they're trying to scramble as they did four and a half years ago to project this image that they are somehow open and democratic and accountable. And, Mr. Speaker, this is too little too late, and it simply won't work.

As an indication of just how open they are, Mr. Speaker, I came in to sit down this afternoon to some 90 annual reports, 90 annual reports that this government has been sitting on. Now I just started leafing through those, and I notice that there's a report for the fiscal year ending 1987-88 for the prescription drug program, '87-88, an annual report, very timely report. What's that, three years overdue? Well I haven't gone through them all because there are some 90 annual reports that had been filed.

Now we're looking today at the annual report for the 1987-88 annual report of the prescription drug program, Mr. Speaker. My colleague in question period, from Regina Rosemont, talked today about the fact that we're still waiting on the SaskEnergy annual report for 1988-89, 1989-90. In the spirit of openness that the minister just talked about . . . I mean this is an important public document, Mr. Speaker.

Not only did the government illegally split SaskEnergy from SaskPower, according to the Provincial Auditor, but I know that they're saying that the auditor is not right. They attacked the last auditor. They're saying, well this new auditor isn't right either; this is just a dispute. I know if they had the option to get another auditor, I assume they would do that, until they could get one that would agree with them. But, Mr. Speaker, the idea of accountability and following a law, no auditor with credibility is going to legitimize the government's ability to break the law, and sanction it.

And so there are all kinds of inconsistencies on a daily basis that reveal the true nature of this government's way of operating. And I might say, the minister indicating today that it's been his practice to forward these Bills to us

prior to the legislature . . . prior to them being tabled in the legislature, is simply not correct.

For example, The Referendum and Plebiscite Bill, that also was . . . there was a press conference at 10:30 or 11 in the morning. I tried to get a copy of that Bill about 11:30 in the morning and was not able to do that. I was told that there was an embargo on that and we were not able to access that.

Finally at 1:15, at 1:15 of that day — because I assume the minister knew that I would raise this as a concern — at 1:15 that day we had a copy delivered to our House Leader's office. And then of course, as was brought up today by the House Leader and which you certainly indicated was improper as I understood your ruling, Mr. Speaker, when the government talks about wanting to be open and accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, in the face of that we find the Minister of Justice, of all people, the one putting forth . . . putting the new face on this government, or trying to, about how democratic and open they are, this new mask, this new façade, he calls together the media to release the Bill and release his public statement.

Then he invites selected individuals, selected interest groups of his choosing, friends of the government — invites those people and gives them the Bill before he gives the people of the province, the members of the Assembly, 26 members here who represent hundreds of thousands of constituents in Saskatchewan. Special interest groups get that Bill in briefing before we do, and that is undemocratic, and that says something, Mr. Speaker, about the disregard this government has for this Legislative Assembly and about the disregard this government has for the public of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Kevin Avram who happened to be there, and I quote from the *Star-Phoenix* on Saturday, April 20, that Mr. Avram says, and I quote just a brief couple of sentences here:

(Mr.) Avram, who attended at Lane's invitation, says he was "embarrassed" when he discovered that the Opposition had not been invited to attend (this briefing).

(Mr. Avram says) "I found it highly, highly inappropriate."

And I say further:

"I think that the government owes the Opposition an apology. It shows a complete disrespect for the legislature."

It shows a complete disrespect for the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, despite this façade that the government has of putting this new face of democracy on its nine-year record of complete disregard for democratic practice in this province, the public will not be fooled. This is a deathbed repentance that simply will not work because they continue, as they bring these Bills forward, to make it very clear that they have no regard for democracy or for

the Legislative Assembly and the practice of this Assembly.

This is the same minister who said on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) that, well I know it's been nine and a half months since we've been in the legislature, but the place doesn't work anyway. You know, we would rather be making decisions as a cabinet in dealing with problems and real issues. That's what the public wants us to do.

Well I think we saw, Mr. Speaker, with some 50 or 60 people in the gallery the day we opened, that the 45, 50,000 people or voters — maybe 75 or 80,000 people in Saskatchewan who have no representation in this legislature. Well Kindersley for over 16 months, no representation in this Assembly.

This is budget day tonight. This is the second time, the second budget in a row, Mr. Speaker, where the citizens of Kindersley and Indian Head-Wolseley have no representation in the Legislative Assembly. That's an absolute disgrace, Mr. Speaker, and I know that you agree with that. It's an absolute disgrace.

The citizens of Souris-Cannington and Turtleford also have been eight or nine months without representation, Mr. Speaker. That is just despicable. And for a government that says it's interested in democracy and openness and accountability, this simply is a contradictory statement and shows the true colours of this government Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, again just with regard to this new interest and openness in democracy, and I won't quote extensively, but just to draw your attention to another article that was in the *Saturday Leader-Post*, April 20, and the *Star-Phoenix*, by Mr. Dale Eisler, the editor of those papers . . . not the editor of the paper, but the political columnist.

Basically he's making a bit of a mockery of after nine years of showing no regard, virtually no regard for democratic practice and accountability and openness and public access to information and participation — after nine years of showing little interest or regard for the public in these areas, he is somehow trying to put a face of democracy on their mandate at the tail-end.

What Mr. Eisler says is that while the government might like to talk about their new democratic initiatives, they might not like to hear about it, but that doesn't change the fact that they've too often simply ignored democracy. And he mentions of course the fact that there are the four vacancies. He also mentions that no other government in the history of the province has been more lax in releasing annual reports, financial statements, than this government.

He also points out that in 1987 this government acted for over three months illegally — special warrants by cabinet illegally, outside the legislature. What he could have added is that they've also done that this year — some \$350 million which they approved prior to the legislature

coming into session.

But of course he says — the last thing I'm quoting — Mr. Eisler says that:

No party has abused the democratic traditions of the legislature and created the need for laws compelling governments to follow some rudimentary democratic principles than the Tories.

Now that is a scathing indictment, Mr. Speaker, when for many, many years . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's an accurate indictment.

Mr. Pringle: — It's an accurate indictment, too. For many, many years, when this Legislative Assembly operated with a sense of convention and history and democratic practice, a lot of unwritten rules, where this government has so badly, has so badly jeopardized the credibility within this place, it's almost . . . it's bastardized its ability to function.

They have to bring in laws. I mean, those weren't required in the past. They're bringing in laws to require governments to share information, share financial statements, table reports on time, and all of the things that used to be done as a matter of course, Mr. Speaker. I would say . . . I could be wrong but I would say that never ever before have 90 annual reports and financial statements been tabled on the same day, some of them up to three years old, Mr. Speaker, as my colleague says.

I would also say that never before — before last Friday — never before has a government given the opposition an agenda just before the House opened and then completely changed the agenda just as the orders of the day began, and then sat there and laughed about it and said, well that's a good one on you.

Mr. Speaker, if this government has resorted to that, if that's what they have resorted to, this place becomes unworkable, Mr. Speaker. And they can bring in all the laws they want, but unless there's a will to co-operate, unless there's a will to make this place work, then the situation is simply going to deteriorate, Mr. Speaker.

So I would say that . . . The one final example I would give, before I make a few specific comments on this specific Bill, of a lack of sincerity, a real lack of sincerity to be open, is that in the boundaries Bill, which of course they've had to do a couple of times now. But in the boundaries Bill that we saw last week, the government did not even . . . They're so used to making decisions in cabinet and they're so used to not thinking about consultation with the public that they left out of that boundaries Bill that there shall be public forums.

They left out of that Bill that the public shall have input into their boundaries report. Now what else does one have to say, Mr. Speaker, about the lack of interest by this government in openness and participation by the public. What else does one have to say?

Now I would say, as I said earlier, the distinguishing

feature between this Bill and Bill 20 that we introduced last June and the freedom of information Bills introduced by other legislatures and passed by other legislatures, is that those Bills open up the kind of information that would be available to the public about government business and the conduction of public business by government, and whereas this Bill restricts, places major restrictions on the public about the kind of information that they can access.

So this is another rushed Bill, obviously to again try and put a different face on a government that has many, many years of running roughshod over the public and many years of undemocratic behaviour. And when they rush these Bills, of course they become bad Bills. They're drafted badly. In some ways you might say they've been drafted according to their agenda too, because they're drafted not with the public view in mind but with their own cabinet agenda.

So this is the fifth or sixth commitment we've had on freedom of information. And when you consider that, when this government has been promising since 1982, freedom of information, they couldn't have done — I say this with respect — they could not have drafted a Bill any worse than they've done in this one, Mr. Speaker.

Quality is suspect of the Bill. The major flaw, Mr. Speaker, are the seven pages of exemptions as I had referred to. Related to that, there is another safety valve, you might say, for the Premier, for the cabinet, and for the heads of departments and Crown corporations, designed to make sure that if there are not enough exemptions to sharing information, that the Premier can intervene, the cabinet can intervene . . .

An Hon. Member: — Just in case there was a . . . (inaudible) . . . of getting some information.

(1515)

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, in case the cabinet decides that there should have been a ninth or a tenth page of exemptions, of secrecy exemptions here. This Bill gives the power of the Premier or the cabinet or the departmental head to define the areas in which the public has access to information.

As I read this Bill, as we read this Bill, the commissioner — which is an initiative, by the way, that I do support — but the commissioner's powers are limited to dispute powers rather than to suggesting to the government areas where information should be provided.

It's a very, very restricted role for this individual, for this office. And it's in many ways similar to what they did with the Boundaries Commission of 1989. And that is that they tied the hands of the Boundaries Commission in 1989 in the same way they've tied the hands of the Privacy Commission office and allowed the Premier and the cabinet, consistent with the power that this cabinet has when Bill 5, the reorganization Bill, allowed the government to organize and reorganize government departments and Crown corporations without coming back to the legislature.

So this Bill and all of the others, like the referendum Bill as well, are geared to make sure that cabinet does not lose any of its authority, does not lose its ability to continue making decisions outside this legislature, Mr. Speaker, which is a very, very democratic practice that the public of Saskatchewan is concerned about.

The other flaw in this Bill, in my view, in our view, is that the Bill is geared more, Mr. Speaker, to you or I or some member of the public getting access to information about them that may be on government records. And while that is important, we want to know what government has on their files about us. And that is very important so I don't mean to minimize that, but that doesn't make up for the fact that what people really want from this government are some basic answers.

You know the sweetheart deal with Saferco, what is that arrangement? The sell-off of the Saskatchewan Potash Corporation, what are the details of that arrangement? The financial affairs and records of SaskEnergy, what has happened with SaskEnergy? Many legitimate questions. Where has all the money gone? That is the information that the public of Saskatchewan wants from this government. They want to know where has all the money gone.

The member from Morse says, to pay for Senator Berntson's severance package. Well that's fine. Mr. Speaker, they want to know where all the money has gone because what we're facing tonight are more tax increases: the provincial goods and services tax, a regressive consumption tax on the average and low income family of this province. And this tax will not pass, Mr. Speaker. We guarantee you that this will not pass.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — That being aside, that is what the public is concerned about. They're concerned about not being provided with the information concerning salaries, travel expenses. You know, the Don Adams commercials, the *Get Smart* commercials — the public wants to know that information. True, but they want to know a lot more information. They want to know about SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) deals.

You know, this government that claims to be open and wants to be open, they continue to refuse to give a list of the names. They continue to refuse to give a list of the names of SEDCO loans, loans that have already been approved. Well, people want to know who's got loans in the past, how much money, where that money has gone.

We're still waiting for information relating to the GigaText fiasco. They're still waiting for that information. The deputy premier at the time who said, well as a matter of integrity, I will take full responsibility for this. Well when it became clear that this was a major fiasco, he didn't even have the decency to resign. So what does taking full responsibility mean, Mr. Speaker? There's no sense of integrity on that side of the House when it comes to sharing information. That's why the public is a little sceptical about this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, from our point of view, we did not place the restrictions. We placed some legitimate restrictions. Obviously there have got to be some privacy protections in any freedom of information Bill. They've got to be reasonable. Citizens have to be assured that their rights will be protected and information about them will not be shared openly with other people. But we had a list of some seven or eight or nine exemptions. They've got a list of seven or eight pages of exemptions, Mr. Speaker, and that's the difference — with the power to add. With the power to add, Mr. Speaker. A safety valve with the power to add if they hadn't deal with enough exemptions.

And as my colleague says, they would save a lot of paper if they just indicate the areas which would be included where information could be provided.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are some principles here. There are some principles that aren't evident in this Bill. There's a principle of honesty, the principle of openness, the principle of accountability, the principle of respect for the public and of access to information.

Everybody respects the fact that there have got to be some exemptions and that there has got to be an independent review, an independent panel, whether that be the Ombudsman as we suggested, or the Privacy Commissioner. We're not going to get hung up on that.

But the main thing is that there be the ability of the public to take issue if they do not agree that the information that they feel they have the right to receive has not been provided.

I understand Mr. Avram said on Friday that he understands under the provisions of this Bill that he would not be able to access the details of the Saferco deal. Well that's exactly the kind of deal that he wants the detail to, Mr. Speaker, as do the public of Saskatchewan. And so if that third party information is not going to be available, then this freedom of information Bill is just a sham.

Mr. Speaker, I think that there are many other areas in which I could go on and on about how this government . . . the record of this government in the face of this Bill. Because let's face it, this Bill, when you look at the exemptions in this Bill . . . but this Bill has got to be looked at in relation to nine years, in relation to nine years of blatant disregard for openness, to a government that has never been more secretive, a government that has never been more closed. And what the Premier does is he preserves the right to be even more closed by that one section in the Bill that I'll refer to in the committee.

An Hon. Member: — Like a dictatorship.

Mr. Pringle: This is a government that is like a dictatorship. There's no question about it. This government thinks it's beyond the law. There are many examples where this government has broken the law. SaskEnergy is not the first example. They tried to separate SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Fortunately the courts stopped them on that. But they have been . . . they're in court on the boundaries, they're in court on Rafferty, they're in court on Principal Trust — this government is in court all the time. They're spending

millions of dollars, millions and millions and millions of dollars on lawyers, fighting citizens' initiated concerns in the court, Mr. Speaker, defending all of their actions for breaking the law.

A government that's been in court on seven or eight issues in the last year, Mr. Speaker. That says something about how a government functions, when citizens have got to take them to court on every issue.

Now they've only designated \$740,000 to hungry children in this province. Now there could be millions and millions of dollars that they're wasting in court, by breaking the law, that they could be providing to hungry children or to support small-business people, Mr. Speaker.

They are providing \$740,000 to Chuck Childers and wasting millions and millions of dollars in the court system, but \$740,000 for hungry kids. And the Minister of the Family said on Friday, so what. That was his response to this. The Minister of the Family.

So the record of this government, Mr. Speaker, has got to be looked at in relation to this last 10 to midnight Bill, which is very, very weak, and the record of withholding information from Crown Corporations Committee. Mr. Speaker, I know that you know that if the government wants to be open, they would not be restricting over 50 per cent of the provincial expenditures, which they now do, in the Crown Corporations sector.

Even the auditor is expressing concern that the government has privatized the auditing function, even the auditors, even the private auditors, and I say that with respect. The private auditors are doing a good job, but they're taking issue with the way this government conducts its business and does not share financial information.

But the Provincial Auditor wants the ability to have the private auditors work for him under his scrutiny, not under the scrutiny of the cabinet, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Auditor can't get information. The Provincial Auditor says the government acts illegally. The Provincial Auditor is obviously going to be upset about 90 annual reviews, annual reports and financial statements to be provided in one day.

The Provincial Auditor and the public of Saskatchewan want details of megaprojects which they've not had available to them. They want the details of the sell-offs, Mr. Speaker, Sask Potash Corporation being a good example, basically given away; Saskoil, another good example, basically given away. We've not had the details there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan wants details about tendering. Another major cloud over this government has been their shady dealings around the tendering — no fair tendering policy. Millions and millions of dollars going out to friends, to patronage friends, to parties who donate to the Tory party, but no details being provided on those patronage deals, Mr. Speaker.

The lack of fair tendering policies and patronage is one of the biggest concerns of small-business people in Saskatchewan. You're either in the select group that's in with this government or you're out, Mr. Speaker. And of course the average small-business person with this government is on the outs.

Where is their legislation on fair tendering that they promised? Where is the legislation on conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker? We only hear about conflict of interest when there's another scandal, and that's not good enough. That's what the public is saying about this last minute deathbed repentance on democratic reform — it's not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

When are they going to start answering questions, orders for return, if they're serious? When are they going to start answering questions in Crown Corporations Committee? When are they going to start . . . call by-elections? They've been promising for one year now that an election is around the corner and so there's no point having a by-election because the public doesn't want them to waste money.

What the Premier didn't say is that six months ago he got a letter from the mayor of Kindersley, asking for a representative for that area. The people of the Kindersley constituency don't know where to go. They've got no representative to talk to, so . . .

An Hon. Member: — And what did the Premier say? He said, so what.

Mr. Pringle: — Basically the Premier, as the message has been, so what.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm saying, what we're saying on this side of House — and some feedback we've had over the weekend on this Bill, this 40-page Bill, mainly filled with exemptions — is that nothing is going to change.

The information that the public was hoping to get will still be restricted. In case they've forgotten any exemptions, the Premier still has the ability to add a few more exemptions, a few more amendments. The power of the cabinet will not change by this Bill. This is window-dressing, Mr. Speaker. At best this is window-dressing.

And, Mr. Speaker, what the public is looking for is straightforward openness, consistency, accountability. They want to participate in decisions, not just through cabinet-controlled referendums, but on their daily lives, the daily opportunities. There are many forms there.

(1530)

If this government was really interested in the public's views for the last four or five years we would have had the all-party Agricultural Committee touring the province to seek the views of farmers and small-business people in rural Saskatchewan and other people across the province to get their views on a very serious agricultural crisis.

That shows the forms, the mechanisms were there and they did not use them. That shows that they're not

interested in public input, Mr. Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I've got many more things that I want to say on this Bill because there are many concerns about this Bill. And a lot of other people have indicated to us over the weekend that they have got a lot of concerns about this Bill. They want to meet with us on those concerns. They know it's pointless to meet with the government because they're really only interested in the optics of this at the end of the day. And they know that the government is basically going to say, so what, anyway.

So with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to beg leave to adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill 71 — An Act respecting a right of access to documents of local authorities and a right of privacy with respect to personal information held by local authorities

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Bill, like The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is part of the government's package of democratic reforms. It was introduced to enhance the spirit of open and accountable government at both the provincial and local levels.

The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will provide a right of access by the public to documents held by local authorities. They will also provide for protection of privacy respecting personal records held by local government. It is similar in form and substance to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It effectively balances the public right of access and the personal right of privacy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill will cover urban, rural, and northern municipalities, and library boards. It will cover educational bodies such as the boards of education of regional colleges, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and the universities. And finally, health care by a health body such as hospital, home care boards, special care home boards, and ambulance boards are subject to the Act.

Like The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the local authority Bill will make available information that has not until now been available in the province.

For example, the salaries and employment responsibility of employees of local authorities will be releasable under the Bill. As well, the details of all personal services contracts entered into by local authorities will be releasable, as will the costs of people travelling at the expense of local authorities. The names of individuals receiving discretionary licences, permits, and financial benefits will be available.

Like the Bill affecting provincial government bodies, this Bill provides for the protection of privacy. The people have the right to see their own personal information held by local authorities, and they will have the right to request

that their personal information be corrected if it contains errors.

The Bill will also restrict local authorities in their collection, use, and disclosure of personal records. Like provincial government bodies, local authorities will be required to collect personal information directly from individuals. They will be required to ensure that personal information in their files is accurate and up to date.

The Bill will require that information be used for the purpose for which it was collected or for a consistent use. It will allow the disclosure of such information other than to the relevant individual only in limited circumstances. And it contains a right of review by the Information and Privacy Commissioner appointed pursuant to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. And again there will be a further right of appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Speaker, The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act helps ensure that Saskatchewan has an open government at the local level as well as at the provincial level.

Mr. Speaker, there will be further talks with those involved in the health care field before implementation of the Bill affecting them.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll keep my comments very, very brief because I understand that we want to adjourn to get ready for tonight, but I'll just make a few initial comments.

Mr. Speaker, again we see the inconsistency by the minister which is reflected by the inconsistency of the government where he talks about the spirit of openness and consultation. Mr. Speaker, the inconsistency is, as was evident in today's *Star-Phoenix* by the city commissioner in Saskatoon, no consultation with the municipalities about this Bill. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? He says, the minister says, we'll have more consultations with the health care officials and others. What they're looking for is initial consultation with their government, Mr. Speaker, some consultation. So to say more would almost be misleading. And I'm not suggesting the minister is being misleading, not intentionally. But they're looking for initial consultation.

I won't quote today from the city commissioner's concerns, but he basically says that this announcement caught the city of Saskatoon and the municipalities off guard. They obviously were not consulted with, the implication being that, like the provincial government, the municipal levels of government are also not open and are undemocratic.

And I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that the local governments provide a lot more detailed information than the provincial government of Saskatchewan currently does. And Mr. Irwin from Saskatoon says this: that the information that the minister's talking about

making public in his press release is information that is already available in the city of Saskatoon, and I assume in other municipal jurisdictions as well. He talks about consultation and openness but then doesn't involve the municipalities on a Bill which actually will affect them.

I had a couple of calls over the weekend, and I'm told that there may even be some constitutionality concerns about this Bill. Therefore it requires further study and discussion on our part, very careful consideration and consultation with some legal people as well.

But the point is, this is another façade on wanting to be open and democratic. The Bill again like the other Bill . . . And the minister is correct. It resembles the other Bill in many ways. It's poorly drafted. It raises many questions and is complex, and it raises potential concerns in many sections, Mr. Speaker. But it's a case of imposing legislation on another level of government. It imposed taxes on another level of government. They've phased out the ward system even though local governments wanted the ward system. They abrogated their responsibility on store hours even though the municipalities wanted them to take some leadership there.

It's been the kind of consultation or lack of that they've had regarding capital works programs with local governments — the transportation programs and systems. They certainly didn't consult with the local governments about whether or not the local governments supported the goods and services tax, federally nor provincially.

And that's why the public views these Bills with a high degree of suspicion, Mr. Speaker, because their record, the other hand doesn't match. There's no consistency. The other hand of day-to-day practice by this government doesn't match their intent and thrust and commitments in these Bills. And that's why the public is very concerned about double messages.

And the only thing that you have to go back to as to how the government's going to behave is their past record. And I would say that 99 per cent of the public will put their faith in the city commissioner of Saskatoon about his concerns, and in the Provincial Auditor, before they'll put their faith in this government saying it's going to redeem itself by these new rules.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, I've got many concerns about this Bill and the major concern I have about it is that it reflects a continuation of this government's lack of interest in sincere co-operation with the local levels of government and gives the message that local governments are not sharing information and co-operative and accountable, which isn't true. They've done very well — very, very well in that regard when compared with this government.

Given that we're pressed for time, Mr. Speaker, today, which I respect, I would like to beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.