

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 7 — An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

Clause 2 (continued)

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman, I've listened to the minister deal with the concerns that he had about the amendment, and I recognize that there are those and . . . I will however say that I still think that there needs to be some discretion on this.

If I point out to you and to the Assembly that there . . . in my constituency alone and yours probably too there's . . . If each of the parties that were running there spends \$35,000, that's \$105,000. Then the party has some that they can spend, and I don't know how much that is. That's not only a drain for the public purse, it's a drain for the candidates who are campaigning, if they're going to have an election one month preceding a month of a general election. And that's the reason why we raised the amendment, to try and prevent that. I guess we'll have to just see how it works out.

If you're not going to do it that way we will . . . we know when you're ahead. However, we really strongly believe that's a function of what we think is necessary. As I said earlier on, we agree with the intent of the Bill but I definitely see that there is going to be some very difficult provisions there, having to deal with it in the context as you suggested. And therefore we will move on.

Amendment negated.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 8 — An Act respecting the Tabling of Documents and Certain Consequential and Other Amendments to Other Acts resulting from the enactment of this Act

Mr. Swenson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. I realize that this is the identical Bill, I believe, to the one that the former government introduced. I would ask the minister though, if they have engaged in any consultations regarding this Bill before its reintroduction.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, my colleague the Minister of Finance is going to be carrying this Bill through committee, and he now being in his seat, I'll refer the question to him.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, my officials are just coming in, so can we wait for them, please?

The Chair: — Would the minister please introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. I've introduced

Bill Jones earlier today. Gerry Kraus, the Provincial Comptroller over here, and Susan Amrud is remaining from the consideration of the last Bill.

Clause 1

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, I realize that this is identical to the Bill that was introduced by the former government. I'm wondering if you have engaged in any consultations before reintroducing this particular Bill.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — From the departmental point of view there has not been consultation. I have met with the Provincial Auditor, as I did with everybody who reports to me or I report to, when I became Minister of Finance. He did ask if this was going to be reintroduced, and I indicated that it would be, because we did believe it was important to have this clear statement about how annual reports should be introduced, and that's why it's here.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the minister might give us the list of documents that the Bill would apply to in its current form, an example of various types of documents that this would apply to.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Yes, if the member would look at the Bill, they are all listed in the Bill itself.

Mr. Swenson: — I've, Mr. Chairman, read the Bill. I just wondered if the minister had and would give us a list of the similar type things.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Yes I would, because I have the Bill before me.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could ask the minister for a copy of the form that would be required by Treasury Board as is referred to throughout the Bill and its references to financial statements.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I am informed that the form that is used is according to accepted accounting practices; that it comes to the Treasury Board and the Treasury Board disposes of it. I do not believe there's a specific form that you can table. There's not a specific form that you can table, but it's something that happens through the process of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the minister has thought about giving the . . . with the introduction of this Bill, about changing the various forms that are out there and coming up with one type of form that would be similar for all areas of government then.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Yes, it's a good idea that the member . . . I agree with the member that would be desirable, and I think there's certainly an effort that's going to be made to try to standardize it.

Really what happens now is that the Provincial Auditor has a big role to play in determining the kind of form that it needs to be presented in, and different organizations have different forms. But as long as they meet the requirement of the Provincial Auditor or the standards of accounting

practices, then it's been acceptable. But to the extent that it can be standardized, I'd be quite prepared to take a look at that and as best as possible try to develop that.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the minister has consulted with the Provincial Auditor and other officers of the Assembly regarding the tabling of documents when the Assembly is not sitting. Have you specifically discussed that with them, sir?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I have not, but I have actually given it some thought. I think there is some desire in looking at that possibility of making some documents that one can under the rules of the House available even when the House is not sitting.

In fact I have thought it might be a useful thing for the Public Accounts Committee to do, to study that and make some recommendations, because I think that's one of the major roles of the Public Accounts Committee. And I'd be quite prepared to refer to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, the opposition has a number of amendments which we will be proposing on this Bill and I believe the Clerk of the Assembly has provided them to the minister. They basically do look to the accountability process in government, certainly the question of the role of the auditor, the nature of the tabled documents when they're tabled, whether the session is in or it's out.

I think these are all fundamental tools that are available to certainly members of the opposition, and to all members, to make sure that government makes good on its commitment to open government and be acceptable to reasonable and thoughtful amendments. And certainly, sir, as we go through this particular process I will be proposing these particular amendments.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to:

Amend section 2 of the printed Bill by deleting clause (a) and substituting the following:

“(a) “document” means:

- (i) a document that is required by an Act to be laid before the Assembly; or
- (ii) a document or information ordered by a Committee of the Assembly by the Chairman of a Committee of the Assembly;

Mr. Swenson: — I think, Mr. Chairman, and to the minister, the amendment changes the definition of a document for the purposes of the Bill to include documents and information that might be ordered by a vote of a committee in the Assembly or a request of a chairman of a committee, fully realizing that in this case all committees that possibly could order this would indeed have a majority of government members on them.

Therefore I think any such order would come by a unanimous vote of a committee. It wouldn't simply be a partisan exercise. And particularly I think this would empower the Public Accounts Committee and the auditor, because often we do see the instance where documents become available and aren't tabled because the Assembly isn't in session.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Well, Mr. Chairman, I know, and I'm interested in how we can improve the system, but I don't think I can support this amendment. For example, this amendment would allow the chairman of a committee to take it upon him or herself to do certain things. I don't think that that is appropriate. I think that's why we have a committee system. The committee should have a role, and it should make that kind of a decision.

And I think that there may be other implications here that this Assembly may not be aware of. As I said earlier, these kinds of questions, I think we would be well advised to take some time to have the Public Accounts Committee consider so we could hear, for example, from the Provincial Auditor and other such officials of the Assembly and have their input before we approve such an amendment.

I'm not rejecting it outright, but I think for the purposes of our consideration here today, unless we have done a thorough study by the Public Accounts Committee, I think we would be well advised not to proceed with that amendment at this time.

(1915)

Mr. Swenson: — Well certainly, Mr. Chairman, I have no problem with the Public Accounts Committee being more empowered to look at these things. I think the minister fully realizes that the chairman, whether he be a government member or opposition member, usually . . .

An Hon. Member: — Chairperson.

Mr. Swenson: — Chairperson . . . only expresses the will of the committee. I don't know of a situation in government today where the chairman would take it upon him or herself to order such a document. I would be prepared to say to the minister, if you wish to, delete the specific on chairman, if you will, but at least allow the committee of the legislature to have the power that is suggested within the amendment.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now I think, Mr. Chairman . . . I don't want to be difficult on this because I don't want to reject the idea outright. But I think the appropriate way would be for having a committee of the legislature consider these kinds of very important changes so that we could hear from the people who can advise on their implications. There may be implications in that that I don't fully understand.

As a minister responsible, I don't want to agree to something that I haven't had the best advice I can have on it. So I still maintain that I think the responsible thing here for us would be not to proceed with that amendment, leave the Bill as it is, let the Public Accounts Committee

consider it, and then if the Public Accounts Committee after due consideration makes a recommendation, we can deal with it.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr. Swenson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would like to:

Amend section 3 of the printed Bill by deleting the phrase “90 days” where it appears in subsection (1) and substituting the phrase: “60 days”.

Mr. Chairman, if I might just speak to the amendment for a moment.

I think, Mr. Minister, you have spent a fair amount of time yourself on the treasury benches of government; I spent a modest amount of time there myself. In most cases, 60 days is not an unusual period of time in order to prepare a document.

One other thing in our particular legislature also in my mind makes sense on this particular amendment, is that we generally have about a 70-day sitting time in this particular legislature. Members of this House are paid for 70 days. And although we do go over that and we do go under that, we often come very close to that 70-day area. And I think it would be reasonable, given that a lot of documents are tabled during the sitting of the legislature that 60 days would ensure that most documents would be into the hands of the various committees and chairmen during that time frame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I have to rely on the advice of the people who deal with this year after year, and they advise that to get the statements audited, to get everything prepared, to get everything printed, 90 days is not an unreasonable amount of time. Sixty days, or as another member proposes 30 days, may in many cases mean that if the Bill requires it to be done, we will be in contravention of what the Bill will say. Ninety days is not unreasonable; it's the way it's done in all jurisdictions. And I think that because of the difficulties with that kind of a time frame — once again, I don't want to be unco-operative — but really I don't think that that's an amendment that's appropriate here.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister . . . Mr. Chairman through you to the minister, I fully realize that that is the normal practice in other jurisdictions. I don't know if other jurisdictions are working around this normal 70-day type of legislative session that we are. Well I know it's, Mr. Minister, close to the norm. Sometimes it's less, sometimes it's more.

In order for those documents to be tabled normally during that time frame, 90 days doesn't allow that. Mr. Minister, most of the documents that we're talking about, the

person responsible knows a full year in advance that they must have that particular document prepared. So if you know a full year in advance whether it's 90 days or 60 days, they're still going to have it done, because most of these people know that they're a matter of course.

And it just would seem that the 60 days would fit closer to how this particular government operates than would 90. And it would also enhance the ability, I think, of members to view reports perhaps when they're more relevant.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'm not sure that that applies because all the reports for 1990-1991 will be prepared within 90 days of the time when the people who are responsible have to get them prepared; so that means when the House sits next in the spring of the year.

There is also provision that they have to be tabled within 15 days of when the House is sitting again. So the government is bound, and ministers are bound, to make those reports available within 15 days, and therefore the argument of the 70 days really is not a relevant argument.

Amendment negated on division.

The Chair: — There is another amendment for Clause 3.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman:

Amend section 3 of the printed Bill by adding immediately after the words “period for which the document is prepared” where they appear in subsection (1) the following:

or within 30 days of the date the document was ordered by a Committee or a Chairman of a Committee.

The Chair: — The amendment is before us. Would the member from Thunder Creek like to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Swenson: — This second amendment, Mr. Chairman, includes provision for a more expedient tabling of the information required by the committee of the Assembly. If tabling is not reasonably expeditious, then the committee well may have already reported to the Assembly and possibly the Assembly would not be sitting.

It, I think, is reasonable in the context of the way that things are done here that 30 days would normally cover most situations.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — The only point I want to make, Mr. Chairman, is that this amendment is consequential to the previous amendment which was just defeated. And because that was defeated, this one — I'm not going to suggest is out of order — we should dispose with it. But because it's consequential, it really has no relevancy and so the House should dispose of it in the same way.

Mr. Swenson: — I would only say, Mr. Chairman, to the minister that I think that the second amendment can stand alone on its own merits. It doesn't necessarily have to have clause 1 or the first amendment agreed to. It's

something that I believe would make this type of information more relevant to the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Just to try to be helpful here, Mr. Chairman. As I commented earlier on the first amendment, this is another matter which I think is really quite relevant to the Public Accounts Committee. And although I'm asking, because we have not considered all of the implications here, that we proceed with the Bill which is a good Bill, but not totally reject some of these ideas.

I think we should once again refer this to the Public Accounts Committee so that the *Public Accounts* can give it due consideration and get all of the experts who are called to the Public Accounts Committee to provide all the information and then give the House a recommendation at another time.

Public Accounts Committee will be meeting with the next session of the legislature. It can do that at that time.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to amend section 4 of the printed Bill by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following:

(3) If the Assembly is not sitting at such time as a document would otherwise be laid before the Assembly pursuant to this Act, the presenter shall deliver the document to the Speaker of the Assembly, who shall forthwith inform Members the document has been delivered and is available to them.

(4) Where the Speaker receives a document pursuant to subsection (3):

(a) the document shall be deemed to have been laid before the Assembly;

(b) the Speaker shall provide copies of the document to any Member Who so requests; and

(c) the Speaker shall lay the document on the table of the Assembly at the earliest opportunity after the Assembly resumes sitting.

A little explanation, Mr. Chairman, to the committee. This amendment provides a mechanism for members to obtain documents when the House is not sitting. This has been a historic problem not only for members but for those who report to the Assembly and by those who rely on information contained in tabled documents in order to do their business.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to disagree with the member on this one because I have for some time had some thoughts on it.

But once again there may be some other legislative changes that have to come along with this in other legislation. And rather than dealing with this in isolation and then having some problems created, I again would ask the House to refer this to the Public Accounts Committee. I just assume that the Public Accounts Committee will deal with it.

So I'm not objecting to the principle. It may very well be a good principle. In fact I believe that some other jurisdictions, in some reports, actually do this. So I'm not objecting to it. I'm just saying we want to make sure that we cover all of our bases, so by simply passing an amendment without knowing all of the facts that we need to know, we don't create a greater problem.

So I think we should defeat this thing, unless the member wants to withdraw it, and let the Public Accounts Committee consider it, consult with the Provincial Auditor so that we can have the benefit of his advice, and then deal with it after the Public Accounts Committee has done its work on it.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the Provincial Auditor would look very favourably upon this particular amendment. I know in my short discussions with him over the last two weeks pertaining to some matters that are occurring today that the auditor would very strongly, I think, recommend this.

And, sir, I think before the Public Accounts Committee begins on a new round, certainly the pronouncements that your government has made to a more open government, one that will do things differently, I would think that this would indeed set the tone for a new Public Accounts Committee going into the next four years. I agree with you, sir, that some of the other amendments that I have been proposed are ones that the Public Accounts Committee can discuss and can come back to this legislature with a report.

But I think this one is absolutely fundamental to many of the arguments that I've heard the member himself make in opposition, and certainly the Provincial Auditor has expressed many times wishes very similar to this amendment, and I think it would serve us well as we began a new session to take this on.

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Once again I'm not going to argue with the member opposite. Certainly this government is very interested in open and accountable government. This government was elected to a large extent on a platform which promised to bring open, and accountable, and responsible government. We intend to carry out that commitment which we made to the people of Saskatchewan.

We are interested in having all the members of this Legislative Assembly involved in bringing that about. That's why I welcome some of the input that the member opposite has made to this process. But at the same time I think it's important that whatever we do in this Assembly, we have to make sure that we fully know what the implications will be, so that along with open government

we make sure that we have effective government. We make sure that we have the appropriate consultation process that brings us to some final conclusions. And that's why I think it's important that we refer this to the Public Accounts Committee. In fact I will write . . . I intend to write the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, sometime soon, in which I will be asking the Public Accounts Committee to consider these things.

But I really do believe that even the legislature, on these kinds of very fundamental issues, should not act in isolation from the people who we should be consulting in order that we can benefit from the advice that they can give us: the Provincial Auditor, others the Public Accounts Committee may choose to call, and look at what other jurisdictions are doing which I think the Public Accounts Committee might do as well.

And so I think we would be well advised to not proceed with this amendment but give it an opportunity to be very carefully and methodically considered so that when we finally come around to some conclusions, we can deal with it appropriately.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I don't wish to be difficult on this particular item, but I think the member knows full well . . . I could ask the minister, for instance, how many times it has occurred that a document would have been tabled except that the Assembly was not sitting. And then in many cases we have had months elapse between the time it would have been tabled and the sitting of the Assembly when it is actually tabled.

And I think, Mr. Minister, this has gone through a long period of time over many different stripes of political party and government.

So I would say to you that — and I heard this criticism so many times from members of your party when I sat on the government benches — that the only reason you wouldn't accept an amendment such as this is if it was interfering with some political motive or timing that might be going on that you . . . And I heard that remark cast many times by members of the now government when they were on the Public Accounts Committee, saying that you have political motives, Mr. Minister, for not tabling this particular document and we can't get at it.

And I can only say to you, sir, after listening to the speeches and the rhetoric of members of your party over the last six and a half years that I've been in this Assembly, where you hit on this point time and time and time again, that you would now not be prepared at the beginning of a new government, a new session, a new Public Accounts Committee where you hold the majority, sir, 7:3, that you would not want to start off on, shall we say, the right foot, and get on with the job of providing public access to the documents; that we don't wait until the Assembly is in session, that these documents be available to all members, all interested parties, and that they be able to proceed with the business of scrutinizing government.

And I find it odd, sir, that after the speeches infinitum — and I mean infinitum — that I heard on this particular document, I thought when someone brought forward such an amendment that you would almost be falling out

of your seat in order to approve it because it was, in your very own words, put into legislation that you so long desired — legislation brought forward by the former government. But certainly these amendments, I think, are a very prudent beginning where you are beginning, sir.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not taking issue here with the principle. I'm taking issue here with the timing. And I want to respond to the member's comments by giving him a little comment on history. I know what has happened in this Legislative Assembly for some time. I'm one of those who's been privileged to be a member of this House now for almost 18 years. And I want the member to remember that the only time, at least in my memory that I've been a member of this House, in which there has been difficulty with late reporting of accounts, of reports, annual reports and other reports of the legislature, that in that period of time the only time there was a problem with late reporting here was in the last nine and a half years.

It never was the case with the former Liberal government before 1971; it never was the case with the New Democratic Party government in the 1970s; it became a serious problem in the 1980s. When I tabled the *Public Accounts* here a couple of days ago, I reminded the House, Mr. Speaker, that the last time the *Public Accounts* were tabled in the month of December were in 1991.

An Hon. Member: — 1981.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — 1981. And then of course the next time was in 1991. And it so happened that I happened to have been the Minister of Finance at that time so I tabled them, but it could have been somebody else. So the problem is one of commitment and the problem is one of showing responsibility to the legislature.

But that doesn't mean, Mr. Chairman, that what the member is proposing here is not a good principle. I accept it. I'm not arguing with the principle. I'm just simply saying that another thing we should be avoiding in governments in the future is a slapstick approach to bringing about policy and bringing about legislation.

I am advising the House that I think it would be far better advised to take an amendment like this, make sure it gets all of the consideration it needs in a committee of the legislature with all of the people who have to do the reporting present so that they can give the members the benefit of their advice, and then deal with it in the legislature when it is reported from the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the minister makes my point. In 1982 the legislature didn't sit till late summer and early fall of that particular year. Most of the documents that were prepared for the 1981-82 year could have been tabled that year before the session came in under this particular amendment.

And the same circumstance may occur again where you would have a budget brought in, a speech, prorogation because of an election call, or whatever. You would then

not necessarily have the House called for a number of months because the government didn't have time to prepare a budget or whatever have you.

And therefore this particular amendment would be in place. Those documents would be tabled on time. And all of those interested parties that would need to deal with them could deal with them without the minister perhaps backsliding on his resolve as time wears on and things become more difficult being Finance minister, for instance.

So I think those tendencies are not above all stripes of government. This particular amendment, I would even be so bold to say if the minister is having a problem with a member of the opposition proposing it, perhaps he could have one of his own members, who was so vociferous on the topic in another day, stand up and make the amendment. I'd gladly second it and we could get on with life.

But obviously the minister wants to shove it off to the side into the Public Accounts Committee. He does have the majority there. And they are, from what I've seen so far, good and honourable members and I'm sure will take the minister at his word that it will be dealt with expeditiously.

But the temptation as time goes on may be to talk and talk and talk and not have action. And I just say to the minister again, the opportunity for him to start with a very, very clean slate as far as the public is concerned, is right before him in this legislature tonight. As I said before, I've heard it over and over and over again. And it was very easy drafting the amendment because I simply listened to the verbatim for the last five years and it was there. And how this minister can now say that he wants more time is absolutely beyond me, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Just a final comment, Mr. Chairman. In order to comfort the member opposite with his new aura of responsibility I can assure him here tonight that all of the reports, annual reports and other reports that the government has to present to the legislature, will be presented in a timely way. He need not be concerned. I'll give him that commitment. I will personally supervise to make sure that that's done, while the Public Accounts Committee considers this proposal, which I have not objected to.

I have accepted the principle, but in the mean time, while that is being responsibly considered by a committee of this legislature, I can assure the member opposite that all annual reports will be provided to the Assembly on time.

The division bells rang from 7:40 p.m. until 7:44 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 9

Muirhead	Britton
Neudorf	Goohsen
Swenson	D'Autremont
Boyd	Haverstock

Martens

Nays — 39

Van Mulligen	Lautermilch
Thompson	Hamilton
Wiens	Johnson
Simard	Trew
Tchorzewski	Serby
Lingenfelter	Whitmore
Teichrob	Sonntag
Koskie	Flavel
Anguish	Scott
Goulet	McPherson
Atkinson	Wormsbecker
Kowalsky	Crofford
Carson	Knezacek
Mitchell	Keeping
MacKinnon	Kluz
Upshall	Carlson
Koenker	Renaud
Lorje	Langford
Lyons	Jess
Pringle	

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6

The Chair: — The member for Thunder Creek has moved the same amendment to clauses 6, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, and 50 of the Bill, and they can be dealt with simultaneously at this time if the member from Thunder Creek would like to move the amendment.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to:

Amend the printed Bill in the sections as set out above by deleting the words "to be in the form required by the Treasury Board" where they appear therein and substituting the words "to be in the form required by the Provincial Auditor".

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This series of amendments, Mr. Chairman, enhances the accountability of tabled documents, and it also enhances the role of the Provincial Auditor. If financial statements are tabled in the form required by the Provincial Auditor, the Assembly can have a much stronger assurance that appropriate and full information is being provided. And the Provincial Auditor can better exercise oversight on behalf of the Assembly.

This amendment provides the opportunity to find out just how serious the government is about opening the books. And I think failure to support this amendment, Mr. Chairman, would represent a repudiation of the government's stated policy of open government and open books.

I think it could be, in fact, a statement that perhaps the Provincial Auditor's forms aren't quite as good as what Treasury Board's are. And I think it would just show a

whole lot of confidence by this new government in the Provincial Auditor, if they took this amendment and changed the way that their financial situations are reported.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, this is another example of where I think there needs to be some careful consideration of this before we can proceed in the committee. And here's the important point to keep in mind.

It is important that the auditor can consider all of the accounting of the government, all of the expenditures of the government, completely independent from the government. That is a principle that we have to always defend and protect in this Legislative Assembly.

What we're talking about with this amendment is two separate functions. One function is the function of government. It is the function of the government and the Executive Council and the officials that work with the Executive Council to prepare the appropriate forms, to provide the appropriate reports, and do so in consultation with the auditor.

It is the function of the auditor to report and comment on whether the government, the Executive Council, has followed the appropriate procedures as prescribed in those forms and those requirements.

And so there are two separate functions which this amendment combines into one and, Mr. Chairman, therefore prejudices to some degree the auditor's independence.

I think therefore, Mr. Speaker, as far as I am able to conclude, having just seen this amendment, we may very well be putting in a principle that is not an appropriate or a correct principle.

Once again, in the Public Accounts Committee, if the Public Accounts Committee wishes to consider this, I think that's the appropriate place to do it, because I for one would think it's extremely important that we have the opinion of the auditor on this kind of an amendment before we proceed with it in order that we do not stand in the way of the auditor being able to independently carry out his functions.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, maybe the minister wasn't listening to closely. I said, to be in the form required by the Provincial Auditor.

And I think one of the things that we often find in the public today is a criticism of the way government works, that government has not kept up the same pace of reform that other institutions have.

And one of the things that's always amazing to people outside of government is the amount of paper, for instance the paper flowing, and all of the different forms and red tape and the various things that occur that many people in the public find quite baffling, actually when they're studying documents and that type of thing, because lots of times there's a heavy dose of legality attached to them.

the language is very difficult to read at times, and many of the reforms that I know that people are talking about today, the Reform Party is very big on these days. And almost everyone of whatever political stripe have talked about streamlining, about making public documents easier to read. And certainly if all of the things that we're talking about here, Mr. Chairman, were in a form that would be easier for the auditor to deal with, that members of the public would find easier to deal with . . . In other words, as the Minister himself said, that he would be looking at making these things more comprehensive in the future; that we didn't have documents *ad infinitum*.

And certainly my recollection of some of the Treasury Board items that I dealt with, they are not a particularly easy document to read. I'm sure they're . . . could be streamlined, if you will.

All I'm asking for the minister is that this type of commitment would once again show that his new government is on the move; that we're looking at change. That we are moving off into the next century and that we simply won't stand pat with the way that things were. That we're not going to refer it off to a committee and we're going to talk it over and over and over and over again.

And I thought that this whole series of amendments, Mr. Chairman, on a topic that has been so near and dear to the hearts of most members in the New Democratic caucus, at least the older ones, would have engendered that type of new fervour that has been talked about so often. And instead I find in each of these cases that the Minister wants to refer and talk and . . . The very things that he criticized the former government for on an almost daily basis.

And I truly do, Mr. Chairman, find this an extraordinary performance, that out of six amendments, all taken almost from the lips of former members of the opposition, and that we now are simply going to study them to death. I find it rather strange.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Not to be argumentative here, Mr. Speaker, but I think probably the most extraordinary performance is the member opposite who sat on the treasury benches while a government was on this side of the House which totally ignored all . . . totally ignored out of all the protocols, all of the requirements for providing a regular reporting to the legislature, never reported on orders for return for as much as two years at a time.

I repeat again, Mr. Chairman, that on this particular motion . . . This one I even questioned whether in principle it is a good motion. Because what the member does not seem to understand is that the auditor and the government are two separate, and should be, two separate entities. It is not the role of the auditor to be a watch-dog. It is the role of the auditor to make sure that all of the prescriptions that are put in place, under which government must operate and under which reports must be made, are being followed. If they are not being followed, the Provincial Auditor then is required to report those things to this legislature.

And if members would look at the *Public Accounts* for the year 1990-91, you will find that the auditor has many

statements in there in which he says that certain procedures have not been followed. That is what the Provincial Auditor is required to do. Our government will be looking at those. And we will be looking at how the appropriate corrections could be made to make sure that that is all done appropriately in the future.

What this amendment does is lumps together the function of government and the function of the Provincial Auditor, which is quite inappropriate. That is not the way it's supposed to work. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think that this amendment is a bad one. And I believe that this Assembly should reject it.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't agree with the minister on this particular item. But that is fair in the light of some of the comments that he's made.

But this minister has made the statement to the legislature that he personally is going to take a hand in making sure that these particular amendments are properly dealt with at the Public Accounts Committee. And this minister says that he has no political agenda to deal with. And yet, Mr. Chairman, I find it very difficult to take the minister at his word. Because this is the minister that is in charge of the Gass Commission. And we've heard in this Assembly many times, Mr. Chairman, the deficiencies with that particular body.

I mean, a government that is committed to all of these things . . . The minister has stood here for the last hour and told us how open and above-board everything is going to be. And yet one of the very first acts that that minister undertakes is a secret tribunal staffed with NDP (New Democratic Party) partisans by and large, behind closed doors, no access to the public, no access to the media. And I'm sure that the report will see a certain amount of political scrutiny by the minister before the public ever sees it. Because at no point in that particular process has the public ever had a chance to verify the votes of the members of the commission, how they dealt with certain items as they did their deliberations — all behind closed doors.

And now this is the minister that when some amendments are brought forward on a Bill that he has fundamentally agreed with for a great deal of time — amendments that simply enhance the process that I've heard about — and he says, I'll take a personal interest in it, I'll make sure that it is guided through the process so that all of these things happen. And yet his first credible move in this province as a minister of the Crown is to set up a tribunal which in fact is everything but what we're here discussing tonight.

It breaks every last rule that we are talking about here tonight. And that minister knows full well what I say is true. Otherwise he would not have designed his hand-picked commission in the way that he has.

So it gives me a great deal of difficulty, Mr. Chairman, to stand here tonight and accept the minister saying that he is going to make sure that these things happen. Because he has given me no evidence that that is the case.

And I think if the minister, as I said, had handled things a little bit differently at the beginning, I could have relied

upon him. I am going to be very surprised, Mr. Chairman, if in fact these amendments all see the light of day very soon. I'm sure there will be a great deal of discussion about them.

I just say I want the minister to be on record tonight as saying that it will get done, and that he in the future will not structure similar commissions as the Gass tribunal to do things behind closed doors in this province in a very partisan way.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I want to reiterate some of the points that are made by the member from Thunder Creek on the matter of the selective amnesia by the member from Regina Dewdney, I believe, the Minister of Finance, on the scope that he uses in telling us here that the auditor should be exclusive to himself as apart from the executive branch of government as possible. And I find that rather striking.

(2000)

As the member from Thunder Creek has pointed out, I find it striking on a number of occasions. He has set down and he has defended in this House the Gass Commission which he wants the auditor appointed to in holding their meetings in secret. And he doesn't even want to have the auditor become involved in a form, printing matter that would be as separate and apart from the executive branch of government as you could possibly get.

Printing a form isn't going to make the difference between the kinds of things that would happen here. And yet you take, sir, the liberty in making political appointments and then turning around and twisting the auditor right into it. And I think that that's wrong. I've always thought that that's wrong. And you are promoting that kind of an attitude with your Gass Commission.

And your tribunal is number one, political. It is exclusive to itself. It's going to vote in secret. You haven't yet presented to this Assembly the guide-lines on conflict of interest that you said that they were going to sign. And, Mr. Chairman, I think that that's ridiculous. I really think it is.

You won't let the media in. You won't let the public in. You won't let any of that in because you said that you were going to do it on your own merit, you were going to open the books. But, Mr. Chairman, what they did is closing. This amendment speaks to opening the books, allowing the demonstration of an open government, and what we have is just shutting the door. And I think, Mr. Chairman, it's wrong.

The Minister of Finance talked about the independence of each arm of government, the auditor, the executive branch, and the legislative branch. Well I agree with that. Then why does he, on the other hand, turn around and turn the auditor into the system again, in the Gass Commission? He wants him there to scrutinize from a distance so that it appears to the public to be the right thing to do. And, Mr. Chairman, from the very first day I heard it as a part of a political process in a campaign and before a campaign, it turned inside me the wrong way. And that, Mr. Speaker, is . . .

An Hon. Member: — Because you're afraid of what it'll say. You've got something to hide.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I don't have anything to hide at all. And, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Chairman — you watch what this committee is going to dig up. We've just talked about the Bill that gives exclusive power to this Assembly and to the legislative . . . or to the executive branch to bring . . . to have defamation of character and all of that. Get that apart. Allow the . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. I will ask the member to come to order. I've listened to the member for Morse's remarks, and I'll ask the member to tie his remarks more closely to the amendment before us. The amendment is really quite specific, and I remind him that it refers to converting the words "to be in the form required by Treasury Board," to the words "to be in the form required by the Provincial Auditor." I'll ask the member to make his remarks and tie them to the amendment.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to respond to the Minister of Finance's observation about the role of the auditor and dealing with the auditor, and moving the auditor to be separate from the executive branch of government. You mentioned it, and you want it separate. So do I. And, Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance said that, and I agree with that. But what I find in his conduct in this Assembly is that it's opposite to that. And I was pointing to the minister that he should get his tribunal the same way as he expects the auditor to be separate, as we point out in this amendment, and as the amendment focuses his attention on streamlining government, not allowing it to become a part of the executive branch nor of the legislative branch, but as an independent agent of the government . . . or of the Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that that is exactly what we need to have.

I don't intend to belabour this point, Mr. Chairman. However I really believe that you are stretching a long bow by putting that connection together with this kind of an amendment.

And as the member for Thunder Creek said, we're going to hold you to bringing this forward, possibly in involvement by the Public Accounts Committee and we'll be asking it more than once in order for you to define what you committed yourself to in this Assembly three or four times already in relating to this process. And we will be asking you, sir, to provide that.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 52 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 1 — An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 5 — An Act to amend The Liquor Consumption Tax Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 6 — An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 14 — An Act to amend The Mortgage Protection Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 7 — An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 8 — An Act respecting the Tabling of Documents and Certain Consequential and Other Amendments to Other Acts resulting from the enactment of this Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

(2015)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

Government Financial Procedure

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Assembly will recall, yesterday I was just about to conclude my opening remarks on this subject and was

about to begin the main text of my speech when the clock ran out. So if you will indulge me a few minutes we will continue to demonstrate to you the reason why we are not in support of the motion for this supply Bill.

Mr. Speaker, it has become apparent to us that as an opposition we will not have the normal opportunity in a budget process to question ministers on the expenditures of money from the taxpayers in this province for the next while. And we need to have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to find out ways of planting into the ministers' minds a sense of responsibility of where they're going to spend our moneys and what they're going to do with it, as well as to determine what the future of our province holds for our different people in different areas of private endeavour, as well as in areas of public responsibility.

Now I refer in the area of public responsibility to things like our hospital systems. We've had no opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in not being able to question ministers on the money supply and the allocations of money to find out whether or not accusations, or implications maybe would be the better word, that have been made in the past few months by various media people supposedly reporting on the attitudes of the members of the NDP . . . that perhaps they would balance their budgets by closing rural hospitals and perhaps closing special care homes and that sort of thing.

We've had various suggestions made that our hospitals would perhaps become more or less day-care centres where they might keep a nurse on staff and be able to put a bandage on something like a cut-off leg or something like that, and then have the patient shipped on to a bigger hospital in Saskatoon or Regina. And of course if the leg wasn't already gone, they could probably still have time to amputate it to stop the gangrene. And that would be the best anybody would hope for.

That's the kind of fear we have, Mr. Speaker, in not being able to ask the ministers the questions about what kind of moneys are going to be made available in this document to keep our hospitals open for the rest of this year.

We've also got that concern about our special care homes. We've got Maple Creek, for example, has a nice hospital. We don't know if there's money enough to run that facility for the winter. We don't know if Gull Lake will have its funding to run its hospital. And then we've got a nice one over in Leader. We just don't know if it's going to be funded or not.

And we've got to have an opportunity to ask of the ministers the questions whether this funding has been placed into place or whether we're looking at a situation where we're going to have down-loading on the municipalities again, and people on the land that are hard strapped for cash right now being asked in the future for more money from taxes to pay for these kinds of services.

And the other suggestion that's being made here is that perhaps the moneys will be in place, but we don't know because we haven't had an opportunity to talk to the ministers and they haven't had a chance through this process to justify what they're doing. And so we have to find out, Mr. Speaker, whether or not the plan to close

facilities is the plan or if they plan on doing something about trying to keep them open.

Education is another area that concerns us very deeply. Through the electoral process, and for the past six months that I'm aware of, or, I guess, probably even more now, we went around to different school units that asked us to come in, and they wanted to discuss with us, as candidates for the election, how we felt about the funding for education.

The NDP candidates came in and, without any exceptions that I'm aware of, they all said they wanted to go to a 60:40 formula of splitting taxation between the provincial government and the property owners and business people in our communities.

And we see that right now the funding doesn't appear to come anywhere close to that kind of a split. And we're wondering if we can ask the ministers in charge whether or not that 60:40 split is going to be achieved, so that there will be some relief on the taxpayers out in the country and people in business. Because they certainly can't keep up with paying a larger and larger percentage of tax load for education if we're going to, in fact, find these businesses and these farms surviving through these critical times.

We need to know whether school boards are going to have to plan for shortages because they have to borrow a lot of money to keep going. I know, for example, that one school unit borrows in excess of \$2 million a year. That's a lot of money and a lot of interest to be paid.

If this split is to take place and if it's written into the new budgeting process that some of this money would be in place, then those folks out there could breathe a little easier, and they could see their way clear not to have to borrow quite so much money. It would be a big help to them all.

One of the problems that we have, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP government is on its way to making history. When the NDP succeed in passing their financial motion, they will be the first government in the history of Saskatchewan to succeed in, one, suspending all of the rules and procedures of the Assembly in an attempt to obtain supply without accountability; number two, refusing to place a budget before the Assembly, effectively suspending the province's constitution; and number three, refusing to table estimates to avoid scrutinizing *en masse* firings of political hirings.

The NDP would be the first government ever to allow an entire year to elapse without passing a budget in this legislature. We in opposition are willing to co-operate and forgo the traditional budget debate of five days. We are not opposed to passing interim supply for spending.

What we insist on is the right to question the NDP ministers on where and how they are spending taxpayers' money. We believe very strongly that these points are of concern to the people of Saskatchewan. And it is with great regret that I am forced to debate this motion. It strips me of my rights as an elected member of this Assembly and of my freedom of speech.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I fervently oppose this motion, and I encourage all of you to take a second look at it and to oppose it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few things about this motion. And, Mr. Speaker, I join this debate with some unhappy memories.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that when I sat on the other side of the House, I participated in what was genuine budget debates. And in debate after debate, Mr. Speaker, the NDP criticized the government for not spending enough on municipal revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, we were not spending enough on hospitals; we were not spending enough on education; we were not spending enough on highways; and we were not spending enough on anything, according to the opposition of the day. Mr. Speaker, you will remember — you will remember, Mr. Speaker — I said in my speeches then, and to the NDP, Mr. Speaker, I said, if you think you have a better way then present your own version of the budget of this House. I said that. I invited them to present a budget and then they refused, Mr. Speaker. So I presented a budget for them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are on this motion. And I guess you know what it's all about. The NDP are now the government and they still do not present a budget to the Assembly. They haven't changed one bit, Mr. Speaker. They have never wanted to present their alternatives. And they have never wanted to take responsibility.

And this motion, Mr. Speaker, is a try by them to avoid the responsibility as government. The government is so cowardly that it is actually suspending the constitution of the province just to avoid presenting a budget to this Assembly.

Why did the Minister of Finance not come to the opposition and say to them, I don't have time for a major budget. I can't get it ready. He didn't feel, Mr. Speaker, that he had to because he had such a large majority over there. He didn't feel he had to consult us at all.

Let me read you some portions, Mr. Speaker, of a newspaper column in the *Leader-Post* by Dale Eisler on December 18, 1991. And I want your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, because I believe it's appropriate to the debate we have here tonight.

It starts up. . . it's in the *Leader-Post* on Wednesday, December 18. The headline says, "Mop-up may take longer".

The sign on the wall in the press gallery at the legislature just about says it all. It reads: "No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session."

And it goes on, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to read. I quote again:

Instead of a budget, Finance Minister Ed Tchorzewski has tabled what is being called a 1991-92 financial report.

That's this document here, Mr. Speaker.

In essence it shows how much has been spent to this point and sets out the NDP's spending plans for the final quarter of the fiscal year, which ends March 31, 1992. For the most part, the spending closely approximates what the Tories had set out in their doomed budget of last April.

The government argues it is too late for it to bring in an amended budget and go through the process of legislative review of the spending estimates for the final quarter.

Mr. Speaker, we don't think that's so. And I quote further:

Rather it wants to have final quarter spending as set out in the financial report approved by the legislature through an appropriations bill.

But the Tories are refusing to co-operate. They say if the NDP gets its way, it will mark the first time in Saskatchewan history that a budget was not presented and approved by the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we don't like that over here. We think it should be done. We think there was time, and I'll carry on a little further, Mr. Speaker:

There is no good reason for a budget not being introduced. Essentially one exists in the financial report and all it takes now is the will of the government to put it in budget form.

This is the first real test of the NDP's commitment to proper legislative process, accountability and respect for tradition. As it turns out, they are being guided by the very expediency they so often condemned.

But this kind of troubling attitude goes beyond the budget. It is being demonstrated in other questionable ways, including some ominous legislation that has been introduced.

We saw yesterday the bill that empowers the government to negate employment contracts inherited from the previous government. Just the name of this bill makes you queasy.

(2030)

Mr. Speaker, I quote further:

It reads: "An act to provide for the public disclosure of Crown employment contracts, to prescribe provisions in Crown employment contracts governing payments and benefits on termination or expiration of those contracts, to void provisions in those contracts respecting those matters and to extinguish any right of action and right to compensation for any loss or damage

resulting from the enactment or application of this act.”

Mr. Speaker, I know that you do not like long quotes but I believe this is pertinent to what we are saying on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your indulgence:

Also introduced yesterday were amendments to the Municipal Board Act. They remove the 10-year tenure for board members and will have them serve at the discretion of the cabinet.

The theory behind the lengthy terms was to ensure the independence of what is a quasi-judicial body that often makes decisions that can be politically sensitive.

By ending that protection, cabinet will have far greater control of the board. In this case, the NDP's motivation is at least partly to get rid of Tory appointments to the board such as the former MLA Larry Birkbeck and one-time candidate Wilma Staff.

And it concludes by saying:

The sign on the wall couldn't say it any better.

Mr. Speaker, that column has some harsh criticism of the previous government. And I say to Mr. Eisler, I acknowledge that criticism without necessarily endorsing it in whole. But the point is, Mr. Speaker, that the previous government did make mistakes. And the cost of those mistakes lies in the fact that I now sit on this side of the House. And the members of the government laugh at the fact, Mr. Speaker. They laugh there.

And we on this side respect the will of the people. We were defeated and we're on this side of the House. But, Mr. Speaker, we are not prepared to give up our responsibility as opposition, while I can't in all honesty say that about the people who are now sitting in government.

It's a terrible sign of disrespect, Mr. Speaker, when they hoot and holler at any member at any time when the opposition recognizes the democratic process. We on this side of the House do recognize the democratic process, and we do respect democracy.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask where, where is the new co-operation that we have asked. Indeed yourself, sir, in conversation have said you would like better co-operation from us and from the members from the government. The government have said they are now in a mood for co-operation. Well, Mr. Speaker, the previous government was defeated, and now the members opposite have the privilege and the responsibility of being the government.

And what do we find, Mr. Speaker? We find in this motion not a commitment to democracy, but a destruction of democracy. We find in this motion a government unwilling to present a budget. And to accomplish its political agenda it uses the excuse that the previous

government has done all the bad things.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the previous government is just that. We are the previous government, and is not the government today. So there can be no excuse for the members saying that they can do evil because others did bad things as well.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is a shameful act. It is a cowardly act and it's a get-even act. And time will show you, Mr. Speaker, it is a get even with Mr. Opposition.

It says the rules of the Legislative Assembly are to be done away with. The constitution itself is to be ignored, simply to make life a little easier for the NDP. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what this motion is all about. The NDP cannot hide from the facts, Mr. Speaker.

The document that the Minister of Finance tabled as part of this motion consists of a budget, estimates, and tax changes. And I would quote from the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance said in the *Leader-Post* Tuesday, December 17, 1991 that:

Although he said the financial report is based on the Conservatives' spending plans, there have been major revisions to revenue and expenditure levels.

Although he conceded he can't answer all . . . He said he would answer all the questions about their spending plans, although he conceded he can't answer specific queries about other departments.

Mr. Speaker, when we see by his own admission that there has been major changes in this document that he presents, we on this side of the House suggest that then we should have the right to question those changes.

I notice in a quick review, Mr. Speaker, there was two changes in the Department of Highways of which is, you know, is part of my responsibilities. And I believe it would be right and fair that I have the right to ask the minister what those changes are; where do they go. Why am I not allowed to ask them questions? I might even agree with him. He doesn't know that.

Mr. Speaker, we would also maybe like to ask where the \$300,000 went that was left in the make-work Saskatchewan program. We may agree that that was moved in a proper manner and the right place. But we do believe we have the right to ask.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there they are. There are tax Bills before this Assembly and those are the facts, Mr. Speaker. All the elements of a budget are in place today, right now as we sit. It is all there except for the rules.

The Finance minister said, well I might have to speak for two minutes as part of the procedure. Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect I say big deal. It has nothing to do with the minister not having time for there not being a budget. It has everything thing to do with the government hiding its cabinet ministers.

Why not talk about it to our leader or to our House

Leader. Why, I ask you, Mr. Speaker? Why? Where is the communication, where is the co-operation, where is this new open and co-operative government? Why don't they have their ministers to be exposed to questions about the minister's own actions? And that, Mr. Speaker, is the only possible excuse, is they want to hide them.

But there is one more thing, Mr. Speaker. The government never intended to do anything. They said they would come in and present a throne speech that wasn't a throne speech. It didn't bother them at all. A throne speech that isn't a throne speech. They admitted it themselves and so that's what we got.

And now they say they can't present a budget unless it's a complete, detailed plan for the next full year. Mr. Speaker, that's nonsense. Why not a mini budget? It has been done before. Then why not use this document. Why not use that document? We were prepared to use that document.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we sent an alternative across and we haven't had the courtesy of an answer. Common courtesy would have said they should come back to us and give us a yes or a no. Or they would maybe discuss it with it.

Mr. Speaker, they're not willing to put up with the inconvenience of democracy, to abide by the constitution and the rules. No, sir, they will not present a budget, and then they will ram it down the opposition's throats. They say they don't have time.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote you a thing that used to be said to me by my father. He used to say to me, you don't have time to do it right but you have time to do it twice. And this is what we're up against, Mr. Speaker. We don't have time to do it right but we're going to have to take time to do it twice. We on this side of the House are going to have to stand here and ask for a budget and we're going to have to stand here until we get a budget. So I say to you, sir, we don't have time to do it right but we've got time to do it twice.

They say, Mr. Speaker, they don't have time yet we have a motion that we move to extended hours. Why did the government move to extended hours, Mr. Speaker? They did it because the Government House Leader believes that he can wear down the opposition. Well maybe he can; we're small in numbers, Mr. Speaker, but we do believe in democracy. We believe in the reason we're here. We're only 10 members and we have limited ability to challenge. But we will challenge this government, Mr. Speaker, and the House Leader is counting on the fact that we are small in numbers.

He has set the tone for the next four years with this motion, and the way he is running the House to try to use force to pass this motion. He will not give us the advance notice of the business of the Assembly, as he promised, and I even believe he promised it publicly on many occasions when he was in opposition. He won't give advance notice because he knows if he can keep the business of the Assembly away from us until the last few hours before he throws it at us, we do not have a chance to challenge the government. He knows that and he has

so little regard for this institution that he's using these tactics against what everyone knows is a small opposition.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill comes before us with threats of extended hours, secrecy on the agenda of the weekly agenda, weekly agenda of the House, suspension of the rules of the Assembly, and who knows what other clever tricks the government has to attack the opposition's ability to do its constitutional duty.

This motion is an attempt by the government to get supply without presenting estimates. Mr. Speaker, you know, I know, we all know that that is not the procedure of this House.

Mr. Speaker, the House Leader announced today that he is going to use his massive majority to force extended hours and he's going to try to wear us down. Well let's get into it, and then see if we can stand up for awhile and deal with this attempt to muzzle the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, this is a procedure motion so let us look at the procedures that it is overthrowing. Mr. Speaker, again with your indulgence, sir, I want to read the provision from Beauchesne's, 5th Edition, on the procedures. And if you'll abide with me a bit, it's small print and I'll have to read maybe a bit slowly, sir.

(2045)

In Beauchesne's . . . and as I say with all respect, we use Beauchesne's almost as our Bible in this Assembly, and on page 168 under "ESTIMATES", 483, (1), it says:

(1) The Estimates for the year are tabled by the President of the Treasury Board submitting them to the House with a message from the Governor General. This message is read by the Speaker as the Members of the House of Commons stand in their places.

Over on page 169, under the heading "Purpose", 484, it says:

The purpose of the Estimates is to present to Parliament the budgetary and non-budgetary expenditure proposals of the Government for the next fiscal year. These Estimates include Votes, which Parliament is asked to approve through the Appropriation Acts, as well as other items called statutory items, for which the required expenditures have already been approved through existing legislation and are included only for information purposes. The proposals with respect to items which the House may vote upon are conveyed formally in these Estimates in the wording and amount of the Votes which, when included in Appropriation Acts, become the governing conditions under which the expenditures may be made.

Now under the heading "Contents of Estimates" on page 169, number 487:

(1) The Estimates are limited to setting out only the

sums which it is calculated will be required in the current year, and do not show the value of assets held or the liabilities outstanding from the previous financial year or to be spread over future years.

(2) The principle underlying the classification of Estimates is that each class of Estimates is designed to correspond to a separate programme; as far as possible, connected services appear together and all the Estimates for the services controlled by a particular department are mainly grouped in the same class.

(3) Each class is divided into a number of Votes, on which the standing committees of the House may decide separately. Votes are units of appropriation and are usually drawn up on a departmental basis.

Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your patience with me but I believe, Mr. Speaker, these are pertinent to the arguments we are trying to make on this side of the House.

And I will go further. Under “SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES”, Mr. Speaker, on page 170, 488, number (1):

Supplementary Estimates may be presented either:

- (1) for the further grant to an existing service, in addition to the sum already appropriated,
- (2) for a new expenditure on behalf of a newly-enacted statute,
- (3) to meet the cost created by an unexpected emergency,
- (4) to transfer funds from one Vote to another, or;
- (5) to extend the purposes of a Vote.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we see in this document changes made to the original document. And this clearly indicates that that is what estimates are for — to examine why those were done. Why were those changes made?

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention then to number 489, “INTERIM SUPPLY”.

Interim Supply provides the Government with money to meet its obligations during the time before the main Estimates are approved. Interim Supply is normally requested in the first supply period for the first three months of the new fiscal year for all departments of government. In addition, Interim Supply is requested for other items in the Estimates depending upon the need in each case. The main Estimates and the bill based thereon are not disposed of until the last allotted day of the Supply period ending June 30.

Mr. Speaker, number (1) in 490 says:

The motion to concur in Interim Supply is expressed in twelfths of the total Estimate for the year, depending upon the number of months for which Interim Supply is needed.

Number (2) says:

Interim Supply is usually granted on the last day of the Supply period ending on March 26.

Mr. Speaker, this whole thing illustrates, in my opinion, the very nature of the Bill that we are debating.

Number 494 on page 171 says, and this is under “PROCEDURE IN COMMITTEE”:

The whole management of a department may be discussed in a general way when the committee is considering the first item of the Estimates of that department, which reads as follows: “Vote 1 — Administration”; but the discussion must not be extended to any particular item mentioned in the Estimates of that department. If, however, the words “General Administration” cover all the expenses to be incurred during the year by that department, it is relevant to discuss every phase of the department totally or in detail.

And, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you, sir, we are being denied that right.

I will go on down to 497 on page 171, amendments. It says . . . The heading is “Amendments in Committee.” Mr. Speaker, amendments in committee gives us the right to offer amendments when it’s sitting in committee, and be discussed. I want to read to you what it says.

- (1) Amendments moved for the reduction of a Vote are proceeded with under the general rules governing amendments. A proposal to reduce an Estimate is expressed in the form, “That (the Estimate) be reduced by (\$)”. The amendment takes the form of the original motion offering, in lieu of the sum thereby proposed, a reduced sum for the acceptance of the committee (Committee of Finance).
- (2) Rejection of the amendment leaves room for the proposal, without limit, of amendments in the same form and of ever-varying amounts.
- (3) The reduction must be of a substantial and not trifling amount.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go over now to page 173 and I want to talk about under the heading “APPROPRIATION BILL” — 509 if anyone is interested to be following this because I think it is very, very interesting. This motion that we’re talking about, I believe, strikes at the very heart, very heart of what I’m talking about in Beauchesne’s, Mr. Speaker. Under “THE APPROPRIATION BILL”, 509 on page 173:

- (1) The concurrence by the House of the Estimates is an Order of the House to bring in a bill, known as the Appropriation Bill . . .
- (2) Because of the guillotine procedure involved in passing the Appropriation Bill, the House has agreed to a departure from its regular practice by distributing copies of the proposed Appropriation Bill to all Members in advance of its actual consideration (which we never,

never received).

510. There is a historical justification for including in a supply bill based upon the main Estimates, and even one based upon Interim supply, a clause which relates to the borrowing power of the Government. An Appropriation Bill based upon supplementary Estimates, however, may not include a clause which gives the Government power to borrow money.

511. Since 1968, some Appropriation Bills have been debated at the second reading stage and in a Committee of the Whole.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention, sir. In Beauchesne's it comes back always to Committee of the Whole, when we're talking about estimates and asking for money.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the provisions of estimates in the procedures of parliament. And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues will be delivering a great historical lesson to the new members of the Assembly over the coming weeks. There is a history of over 500 years that brought us to the important constitutional principle that a government must present a budget and estimates must be presented.

Mr. Speaker, we have in the budget \$1.7 million for fighting forest fires. We would like a chance to ask about that. We want to know if those water bombers have got skis on. We want to know how they're going to dig through the ice to get to the water. We want to know what kind of money it's going . . .

An Hon. Member: — I want to know about the snowblowers.

Mr. Britton: — Snowblowers. Mr. Speaker, that's our fundamental right. And you, sir, I'm sure if you were in our position over here, would not give that up lightly. I have stood in opposition to you, sir, and I have heard you challenge us when we were in government to be sure you had your right. And that's what we're doing.

Mr. Speaker, even the most basic principle of ministerial accountability is being destroyed by this motion, Mr. Speaker. Ministers shall not, under this motion, be expected to stand in the Committee of Finance and answer questions.

Mr. Speaker, we are not here to humiliate any of the new members over there. We are not here to do that.

We have in this proposal, Mr. Speaker, we asked if the Finance minister would present a budget. We suggested that he could use this document. We suggested in this we would be more than willing to co-operate, that we would not in any way try to hold the Bill up. We would facilitate the passing of the budget. We didn't get the courtesy of a reply, sir.

And, Mr. Speaker, that hits at the very basic roots of democracy. And make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, these are questions that are related to the spending by this

government and not the previous government. It is this government, Mr. Speaker, that is paying Donald Gass \$10,000 per month. We didn't pay him that.

It's this government, Mr. Speaker, that's hired at least half a dozen political police in the Property Management Corporation. They did that; we didn't do that. We would like to ask him questions about that. This is the government that is spending millions of dollars on outside lawyers to come up with these immoral and wrong-headed motions. It is this government that has been spending on its political hacks, flacks, and hacks.

Mr. Speaker, we have the right to ask questions, we have the right to ask about that spending, and we insist on that right to ask those questions. Mr. Speaker, we will be presenting amendments to seek those rights in the coming weeks. And I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — I wish today to speak on a very important motion. The issue at hand are the finances of the province of Saskatchewan, more specifically the fact that we have no budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am a new member of this House, as are many of the current members. I came in here believing that on some issues it would be possible to co-operate; co-operation between the governments if the government was also of the spirit.

I am sure something could have been worked out through negotiation. Together we could have worked out a manner. A true budget could have been introduced, debated, and passed — passed without a great deal of time, but within the rules of this House, rules which would have allowed the public to ask questions and get answers.

Instead what we have is a couple of ministers who want to wield a heavy club — the club of the majority, the tyranny of the majority, beating down any opposition. Why? Just to play their petty political games.

(2100)

Well while I am a new member in this House, I have watched the proceedings of this legislature and that of other parliaments for many years. Mr. Speaker, I believe that in all those years neither I nor anyone else have ever witnessed a motion like that presented by the Minister of Finance on December 16, 1991.

The motion presented by the minister is unprecedented. And, Mr. Speaker, I must say that it is a sad day for our democracy and our legislature. It is a sad day when a minister of the Crown would attempt to circumvent the constitution and practices of this House with such a motion — a motion to make himself, the ministers of the Crown, and his government, above the law.

Mr. Speaker, every jurisdiction presents a budget. The type of motion presented which would suspend the rules was the same type of legislation carried out in Germany

during the 1930s and Uganda during the 1970s. This legislation may be within the NDP government's legal right, Mr. Speaker, but it is certainly not constitutional. It is unconstitutional to change the rules, to bend them to suit your own actions — actions which without this new legislation is illegal today and illegal in every provincial legislature of this country and in every parliament of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation can be compared to the old hard-liners' attempted *coup* this past August in the Soviet Union. Those renegades attempted to turn back democracy, democracy which had been developing under Communism for the last six years. Mr. Speaker, in Russia those *coup* leaders were attempting to disregard the rules that had been developing to make the executive and the legislature responsible for their actions and to follow the rules set out in their own parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government of Saskatchewan, under the leadership of the member from Riversdale, is also trying to avoid its responsibility and to avoid the rules of this legislature. They wish to hide their ministers, and are trying to hide the spending practices of their departments. Why do they wish to hide their ministers? Are they afraid the ministers will embarrass the government or themselves?

The ministers and this government should be ashamed of their actions. This province must have a budget or at least the opportunity to question the estimates. They have already tabled a budget document, Mr. Speaker. Why are we not now debating a budget?

The members opposite are the elected government. A government with a 55 to 11 majority. Ministers of the government, your budget would be in no danger of failing to pass this House, unless that is, some of your own members — back-benchers, would-be cabinet ministers — would not even support your undemocratic acts.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are afraid of exposing to the public, the media, and to this House their minister's lack of ability, and the lack of understanding of the needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

They are hiding, Mr. Speaker — hiding ministers and their departments from answering questions concerning spending estimates. If this is not the reason, what is? Are the members trying to hide the number of card-carrying NDPers they have hired? Are they trying to hide the amount they are paying these people, these patronage appointments?

Mr. Speaker, I assure you these are just the tip of the iceberg. For instance, Mr. Speaker, what will the nearly \$2 million allocated to fight forest fires in January, February, and March be spent on? Mr. Speaker, I don't recall any forest fires in Saskatchewan during January. What are they going to do? Rent snowblowers just in case?

Mr. Speaker, December 16, the day this motion was introduced, was the 218th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. The member from Regina North Albert would like to know what this tax action was about. The people of

Boston were protesting the government taxing them in a manner they considered illegal, just as this government is proposing to do in Saskatchewan.

The government of the day passed legislation in London making it legal to tax the colonies without those same colonies being able to question or have any input into those decisions. Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing a similar attempt here in this legislature — an attempt to deny the people of Saskatchewan and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition the rights fought for by those brave, patriotic democrats.

The NDP government is saying, give us the money and when we feel like it some day we will tell you why we needed the money and where we spent it. Mr. Speaker, you know it and I know it. The people of Saskatchewan know it and even the members opposite know it; that is simply not good enough.

The government over there came into this House preaching open and honest government, government with a spirit of co-operation. Mr. Speaker, I want this House to be open and honest. We on this side of the House want this legislature to be open, honest, and co-operative with the best interests of Saskatchewan people at heart. We are prepared to co-operate with the government within the framework of the established rules and practices of the British parliamentary system and the rules and practices of this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the practices of the British system have developed over generations and centuries stretching back to Magna Carta. While the rules evolve and change with time, they are not changed to make illegal actions legal. They are not changed to hide the budgetary process, changed to hide the ministers of the Crown, or to exempt them from the scrutiny of the loyal opposition as they spend the Queen's money, the money of the taxpayers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, on October 21, 1991 there was an election in this province and a government was chosen. The people of Saskatchewan elected the government of their choice. Mr. Speaker, they chose the members across the floor to form that government. However, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the choice the people made was to choose a government which would execute unconstitutional acts. The people did not vote for a government which would change the rules to make unconstitutional acts legal. The people were not voting for a government which would declare itself and its ministers above the law.

Mr. Speaker, the people were voting for a government that promised to be open and honest. But, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say that is not what the people have received. The Saskatchewan people have a government which operates behind closed doors, through committees like the Gass tribunal, without an open access to the people, without open access to the scrutiny of the public and the media.

Why are the NDP replacing government employees with card-carrying NDP members like Jack Messer and Carole Bryant? The members opposite preached often while in opposition of the vicious sin of patronage. Is not the sin as

great no matter who performs it?

This government is not only operated behind closed doors by a small group, but it also wishes to deny the citizens of this province, of this nation, the right to have any wrongs addressed before the courts of this land.

Mr. Speaker, what will be next? Confiscation of our land to give it to other NDP card carriers? And if citizens complained, the government could just pass a law exempting themselves. The NDP government could even make it illegal for us to challenge such a law or such an action. Mr. Speaker, is there nothing sacred to the members opposite? Is there nothing in our legislative tradition which the members opposite feel bound to?

Mr. Speaker, this Bill does not allow us to find out what is being spent or why. We need to be able to ask the ministers questions, questions about the Rafferty-Alameda project.

An Hon. Member: — Oh, that famous one.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes that is a very famous one. It put Alameda on the map, Mr. Speaker. It put south-eastern Saskatchewan on the map. Everybody across Canada now knows where Alameda is at; they now know where Estevan is at. And I am proud to say that we have two very wonderful structures being built there. And I need to know if the Minister of Finance is going to continue funding that program.

There is still a lot of work to be done there. For one thing the valve in the low level outlet has not yet been put in place. We've had good snowfall this winter and we need to know whether or not the run-off from that snow will be allowed to accumulate behind the dams.

We need to be able to question the minister in charge of Sask Water as to whether or not he has any funding in place to complete that. That valve has been paid for by our friends across the line and needs to be put in there to continue to save water.

The members opposite claim that there was going to be no water behind those dams. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have 40 to 50 feet of water already behind the Alameda dam. This is water that is below the low level outlet. If we had been able to complete that project as originally planned, the dam had a good possibility of being half full by now.

We need to be able to ask the minister in estimates whether or not they will continue to fund the court cases that are being carried out to try and stop the project from going ahead.

We need to know whether or not the land acquisition for the wildlife mitigation will continue. There is quite a large portion of land to be purchased to provide for the wildlife mitigation that was demanded in the environmental studies.

There's also one other concern with that land that's being used for wildlife mitigation. Once it goes into the hands of the government, will the RMs (rural municipalities) concerned receive any grants in lieu of taxes? Was there

any money in the estimates, in the budgetary statement, in that financial statement that the minister presented for that? I am hoping that there will be some money provided for that. The previous government was working on providing money for grants in lieu of taxes for that property.

We have another issue down in Souris-Cannington which is a concern and that's our highways.

An Hon. Member: — A new MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

Mr. D'Autremont: — The new MLA has a concern, yes, Mr. Finance Minister. We need to continue our highway projects in that area. No. 8 Highway, under the previous NDP administration, was nothing but an oil-surfaced road. It was a good make-work project in the winter-time. It took a lot of people to keep that oil surface up. We need to rebuild that highway. The previous government has already rebuilt a good portion of it and that needs to be continued. This is an access from the U.S. into our province. It's an access to the Moose Mountain Provincial Park and to Duck Mountain Provincial Park — two very good tourist destinations in this province.

Souris-Cannington also needs good east-west access. We have a good highway on No. 9 going south. But we have a lot of heavy traffic on that road with the potash trucks. And it does need maintenance. It was well built at the time when it was built but that was many years ago and it continues to need maintenance.

We have another issue and this is an issue that affects not only Souris-Cannington but a good many of our rural communities, and that is our telephones, Mr. Speaker. We need to be able to ask the minister in charge of Telephones whether or not they are going to continue to develop the digital switching systems which have started to be put in place but are just starting.

We have one in Alida already, and we need to have the digital switches put in the rest of our area. The reason we need to have this digital switching put in place, Mr. Speaker, is that once it is in there we can combine a large number of exchanges into one large exchange. And I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance and the minister of Telephones have considered that.

(2115)

The member for Regina Albert North was in my constituency back in the spring discussing that very issue. He met with a committee that we have down there, a committee of which I am a part, to find out what the needs were. And what the needs are, Mr. Speaker, is to be able to have larger exchange areas. We have a large number of communities that have to phone long distance to talk to their high schools. They have to phone long distance to get a doctor, to phone a hospital, even to phone the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

We have another telephone issue also . . . is a cellular system. The cellular system is developing quite nicely in Saskatchewan, and I'm glad to say that the previous government's construction efforts has made our area

probably the best covered with cellular system in any of the province. But this system also needs to be expanded.

As I walk outside of this building, I notice that a good many of the members here do have cellular telephones in their vehicles. And they are a great benefit to us. But we need to develop this whole system throughout the province. There are a good many highways, a good many communities that do not have this. I was contacted by a gentleman up in the Neilburg area looking to get cellular service put into his area. I'm sure that the member from Wilkie will be also encouraging the government to try and get cellular service put into that area. It's an area where the oil patch is developing quite nicely. They need communications. The cellular system provides that. It's a good revenue source for SaskTel and I believe it should be encouraged.

And we don't even know if the minister is looking at it, Mr. Speaker. We can't see the estimates. We can't ask him any questions about the estimates as to whether or not he has included that kind of construction in his plans. And if he has included that kind of estimates into his plans, when will this construction be taking place?

Health care is a big issue across this province, Mr. Speaker. It's one-third of the provincial budget and we need to be able to ask the Minister of Health what plans she has for health care in Saskatchewan. What plans does she have to keep doctors in Saskatchewan? What plans does she have to keep our rural hospitals open, Mr. Speaker?

In my constituency we have four hospitals. We have Gainsborough, which is an integrated facility, a new hospital built by the previous government three or four years ago. We have the Oxbow hospital, Mr. Speaker, which is an older hospital but which was approved for construction of an integrated facility this year. I believe the Minister of Health was down there and visited our area and visited that hospital in the last year.

Has the minister included in her budget, in her estimates, the funds to construct that hospital? The sod turning has already taken place. I know that a number of the contracts have been let. Will the money continue to come forward?

We have two other hospitals in our area, Mr. Speaker, Arcola and Redvers. Both of these communities wish to have the integrated facilities built in their area. They have money set aside already for such a project. They have generated through their own efforts more than a half a million dollars in Arcola and close to that in Redvers. They need some sort of an assurance from the Minister of Health that they will be given some consideration, that they will be able to proceed with their integrated facilities. And if we can't ask the Minister of Health any questions, how are we ever supposed to find out? What am I supposed to tell the people in Redvers and Arcola: the Minister of Health won't tell us any answers?

Rural doctors are a major concern, and not just in my area. We have the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg who is a doctor. I'm sure he is well aware of the problems faced by rural doctors. How do we keep our doctors in rural Saskatchewan? They're paid

well. They're paid perhaps even better than those doctors who practise in urban Saskatchewan and yet we seem to have a problem keeping them there.

I notice that the government opposite has proposed some new funding for students, medical students in our colleges, to try and keep them in Saskatchewan. I congratulate them for that effort, but I wonder if it's going to be enough. If they give a grant to those medical students, which would be forgiven over a period of time, there is still nothing that keeps that student in this province. That grant would be payable if they left. But if they can find employment elsewhere in Canada or some other country at a better rate than what they would receive in Saskatchewan, those doctors can still leave and we're still left in the same position that we're at with no doctors in rural Saskatchewan.

The hospitals in my area, particularly Gainsborough and Oxbow, have a real problem at the present time keeping doctors. In Redvers we've been very lucky; we've had two doctors which have been around for a good many years.

But, Mr. Speaker, these doctors are preparing to retire. And where do we get some new doctors? The Minister of Health needs to allow us to question her estimates to find out what she has in plan for rural hospitals, for rural doctors, for our rural medical practice.

We have a number of nursing homes. These nursing homes need to have doctors which come in to visit them. If we don't have the doctors in rural Saskatchewan, will our nursing homes be able to continue operation or will we have to move all of our senior citizens out of their communities and into the larger centres? None of us want to have our families further away than necessary, Mr. Speaker. And we need to continue to provide the funding for the nursing homes to keep our seniors in their area.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance earlier suggested that, as we talk of taxes — the liquor tax along the border — that would be a better place to discuss it than in the motion, the Bill that was presented and read for the third time today. Well the budget process would be the place to talk about that, Mr. Speaker. But we have no budget. We have a financial statement in which we cannot even question the ministers.

We all know what the situation is along the border when it comes to goods coming across. Our tax system is such that it encourages people to shop south of the border. And I don't believe we can really blame those people that are shopping south of the border because they have a limited number of dollars. They have to stretch them as far as they can. And that is one of the methods they are using to do so.

They use our system in Saskatchewan; our social welfare system, our medical system, and yet they pay their taxes in another jurisdiction. If we could change the tax structures along the border it would make a big difference. And that is one of the things that the E&H (education and health)tax synchronization with the GST (goods and services tax) was going to do.

The members opposite don't seem to believe that having the E&H tax collected at the border would make any difference.

Mr. Speaker, if there was an additional 7 per cent tax paid at the border as shoppers came across, it would make our local businesses more competitive because the shoppers that go south would not be able to avoid our provincial sales tax by buying south of the border.

And I keep referring to south of the border, Mr. Speaker, but not all of our shopping is done south of the border. We shop in Manitoba and we shop in Alberta. Those jurisdictions, it's possible to also avoid paying our E&H (education and health) tax.

In Manitoba, if you shop there and if you have the goods shipped to you in Saskatchewan you may avoid paying both the Manitoba provincial sales tax and the Saskatchewan provincial sales tax. We all know that if you shop in Alberta there is no provincial sales tax. And we know that if you shop in Lloydminster there is no provincial sales tax.

The tax on liquor in this province is prohibitive in the sense of people buying here versus buying south of the border. We don't have a lot of tax difference between Manitoba and Alberta on our liquor, but we have a very significant tax difference south of the border with the taxes.

Mr. Speaker, if we could get the answers from the Minister of Finance or the minister in charge of the Liquor Board as to what kind of dollars we are actually losing from purchases south of the border, we would know whether or not it was feasible to change the tax structures along the border to make our businesses more competitive.

If you go across the border to Sherwood, to North Portal, to Crosby — south of the border further west, you can buy American beer, Mr. Speaker, for a significantly less price than what you pay for it in Saskatchewan. You come back across the border, you pay all the duties, all the taxes, and you can still get it across for about half of what you would have to pay at your local hotel. Our local hotels cannot compete with that kind of price competition, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance needs to take a look at that tax structure.

Another tax problem that we have along the border, Mr. Speaker, is with gasoline. Now this one changes from time to time. Sometimes it's more competitive than others. But there are many times, Mr. Speaker, when tank trucks will roll out of the refinery in Regina, drive across the border, dump it into another truck, and that truck turns around and comes right back into Canada; back into Saskatchewan and fills up tanks for farmers along the border at a significant saving to those farmers. It's Canadian gas being used by Canadian farmers at a lot cheaper rate because it comes back through the U.S.

And it's not just gasoline, Mr. Speaker. I know people that have bought cement — cement in Minot, North Dakota, cement that was loaded onto a truck in Winnipeg, hauled across the border, transferred to another semi, and brought back into Canada at a very significant savings.

And all of this tax avoidance is hurting our economy. It's hurting Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to ask the Minister of Finance, and those ministers responsible for those departments, what amount of tax we're losing and what amount . . . what their plans are to change that so that we no longer have that tax avoidance.

Simply jacking up that tax along the border though, Mr. Speaker, is not the whole answer. All that will do is encourage the people who wish to go across the border and bring it back illegal to do more so.

We have a very open border — very open, Mr. Speaker. We have many miles between our border crossing points and it's very easy to cross. In fact, in our area, we have a crossing point that we call the east Elmore crossing and customs sits there once a month and catches a few people once in a while. And everybody knows it's there, but we simply do not have the capacity to continuously monitor that.

We need to provide a tax structure, Mr. Speaker, that will take into account the price differences north and south along the border, to make our businesses more competitive, to allow them to compete with the people across the line. On the retail end, in most cases our businesses, if they want to, Mr. Speaker, can compete.

I was talking to a clothing retailer in Redvers one day about it and he said he has no problem at all with people shopping in Minot because he can compete with them, with the merchants in Minot. It's a matter of marketing, it's a matter of buying, it's a matter of going out there and getting his customers in the door. And this man is able to do so. He runs a very successful business. He has no fear of the competition from across the border. But when we tax our businesses to such an extent that they cannot compete, Mr. Speaker, we are harming our own industry.

The tax on tobacco is the same problem as that on alcohol and gasoline. We need to take a look at that. We need to adjust that tax in some manner to allow our businesses to be more competitive.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to question the minister for Parks and Recreation on the recreation grants that the previous government had in place. There are a number of these grants out that are still due, that people are on a three-year program to collect money on. And is there any money in the budgets to pay for this? Is there any funding in place to continue to make those payments to those facilities? There are a number of people out there who, over the last year or two, took these grants that would be paid out in three portions. And we need to find out, Mr. Speaker, whether or not those will continue. We need to ask the minister responsible whether or not that money is in the estimates, in their financial statement.

(2130)

Mr. Speaker, we have a very good program in this province called SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres) and SARCAN. I'm sure the

Minister for Community Services is well aware of this program. This organization is a recycling depot using people who are handicapped. This is a very good opportunity for these people to participate in the work-force and to get out and be amongst the rest of the community. And it gives the rest of the community the opportunity to meet and to get to know these people.

We have a SARCAN depot in Redvers, Mr. Speaker, and they do a very good job. But, Mr. Speaker, the SARCAN program is running into some financial difficulties. And we need to be able to ask the minister whether or not there is any funding in their financial statement to help continue this program.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to ask the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy and Mines what are their plans for mining, for the oil and gas industry in this province. We need to know whether or not there is going to be any oil and gas or mining industry in this province. Exploration in northern Saskatchewan or any part of Saskatchewan in the coming year — true exploration, Mr. Speaker — will range in the 15 to \$20 million area. That compares with Chile, Mr. Speaker, where there is going to be \$500 million spent in the coming year for exploration, and 90 per cent of that will be spent by Canadian companies.

If that money was to be spent in Canada, a portion of that would be spent in Saskatchewan and that has the potential to generate a good number of jobs, Mr. Speaker, for northern Saskatchewan.

And northern Saskatchewan, as the members from that area, the members from Athabasca and the member from Cumberland are very well aware, is an area of high unemployment, Mr. Speaker. And if we could generate the industry in that area along with all the infrastructure needed to support mining, the exploration in that area would create a good number of jobs.

The member from Maple Creek, Mr. Speaker, brought up the issue of the oil and gas industry, and we need to be able to talk and ask the Minister of Energy what his plans are — whether he plans to tax the oil and gas industry as it was taxed in the '70s, whether he plans to continue the programs put in by the previous government.

And those were very good plans that were brought in by the previous government, very good policies, Mr. Speaker. We generated a large amount of new drilling, a large amount of new oil production, a large amount of new gas production.

In south-eastern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, this past year we have generated record amounts of oil shipped out of that area. I believe the last figures that I heard were somewhere in the neighbourhood of fifteen and a half thousand cubic metres a day through Producers Pipeline system. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of oil, and that compares to probably 10,000 metres in 1980. That's an increase of 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker, by the previous government's policies.

And we need to be able to talk to the Minister of Mines and Energy to ask him questions as to whether or not the

type of policy that generated that kind of income, that kind of employment, that kind of wealth for the landowners, will continue.

The oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker, is not just generated overnight. In hog production you can buy yourself some hogs and go into production in short order, have some production — a couple of litters in a year, and be back out of production again if that was your desire. You wouldn't sell very many hogs perhaps, Mr. Speaker, but you could sell a few. But in the oil industry you cannot proceed that fast. You need to be able to plan long-range for this, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not a hog producer so I may be somewhat in error on that. My knowledge of hogs, Mr. Speaker, comes on my plate in the morning.

But I do know a little bit about the oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker. And we do need some long-range plans in that industry. We cannot allow the members opposite, the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy and Mines to tax those industries out of existence. Those create a large amount of wealth as I'm sure they're very well aware. I'm sure they wish to continue that wealth coming into the taxpayers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to co-operate with the members opposite in the budgetary process. We would like to be able to debate a budget, to ask questions on estimates, but not to be obstructionists, Mr. Speaker.

We need to be able to ask questions of the Minister of Rural Development. Such questions as: are grain bins still being measured by Crop Insurance, and if so, where is the money coming from? The Minister of Rural Development has said that there would be no longer any grain measurements but if that is indeed . . . if grain measurement is indeed continuing, then where is the money for this?

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to ask questions to the Minister of Labour as to why he feels that union contracts only for government work would be better. And I'd like to read you a few quotes, Mr. Speaker, if I might. This is from the *Star-Phoenix*. And I'm quoting from Mr. Jim Chase, the president of the Saskatchewan Construction Association.

Chase said the projects reveal the opposite.

"The Co-op project (this is the Co-op upgrader, Mr. Speaker) was over-budget and they found a lack of quality in the work," he said. "Some of it had to be redone, and they had a lot of problems for most of a year."

As comparison:

As for Shand, Chase said it had been a "tea party" compared to the generating stations built on a union-only basis at Boundary Dam and Coronach under the former NDP government.

"They were just horror stories in terms of productivity and continual illegal walkouts and so on," he said.

We need to be able to talk to the Minister of Finance about his plans to hire only union contractors, and whether or not that is going to be economical to the Government of Saskatchewan. Mr. Bill Stewart, executive director of the Merit Contractors Association, said the following:

“One has to wonder what the policy objectives are here,” he said. “What is broken, and what needs to be fixed?”

It’s well documented that (labour) competition in the industry works. It has resulted in lower costs for purchasers of construction, which includes the government.

Another quote, Mr. Speaker. Tom Baxter, president of Graham Construction & Engineering — and Graham Construction, Mr. Speaker, is one of the contractors that is working on the Rafferty-Alameda project.

(Mr.) Baxter said the taxpayer will ultimately suffer if the government adopts a union-only policy for government projects.

In bidding on union-only jobs, Baxter said, a contractor must consider lower productivity of union-only labor and charge more.

“In general, if we pay the same wages, your labor cost is about 30 per cent more on a major project to do it all union for the type of work we do.”

I think that’s an indication, Mr. Speaker, of some of the problems that we can run into if we hire only union contractors. And we need to know, is the minister taking that into account in his estimates? Is he taking into account the time factor involved, the cost associated with that? Is he taking into account, as Mr. Baxter says, the unproductivity of the labour unions?

An issue that seems to be quite a concern across this province, Mr. Speaker, is tax relief for property taxes from school boards. We need to talk to the minister to ask questions of the Minister of Rural Affairs and the Minister of Education as to if they have considered any tax relief on property from school board taxes. We all know that taxes based on property taxes for schools are based on their assessed value. A farmer can have a large amount of land which has a fairly good assessment, and he’ll pay a major portion of the taxes within a school district.

On the other hand, you may have a lawyer or any other professional which may generate a large amount of income from a small asset base. Now I’m sure the members opposite that have a few lawyers over there know what I’m talking about by generating a large amount of cash flow out of a small asset base. Well we on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, are not afflicted with any lawyers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D’Autremont: — Lawyers and other professionals seem to be able to generate a good amount of income from a small asset base on which they pay very little

property tax. And this puts the burden of the school system on the large property holder in rural Saskatchewan and that tax base falls mainly on the farmers.

We would like to be able to ask the Minister of Education or the Minister of Rural Development whether or not they have considered taking any measures to alleviate that problem.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to close now with saying the actions of the Minister of Finance on this motion as well as the Minister of Justice, obviously a hypocritical title, who has brought forward similar legislation before this House, is reprehensible and is absurd.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting to oppose this unconstitutional Act and demand on behalf of the people of Souris-Cannington and the people of Saskatchewan, that the Minister of Finance follow accepted practice and that the minister present and debate a budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to participate in the debate on this motion as well. I think this motion will go down in history. It’s unprecedented in our province. It’s a motion that effectively is part of the reason why I am here today. It strips me of the right of freedom of speech. Mr. Speaker, what is happening in Saskatchewan is that this motion has been allowed . . . I’m surprised it has been allowed to hit the Assembly floor.

Was it right for this government to introduce this motion? Was it reasonable? Was it ethical? Was it moral? I say not, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps their motives are honourable. They have introduced a motion requesting appropriation approval. This in itself is fine, Mr. Speaker. The common concern that my colleagues and I share is their approach to this request. The NDP are not following the rules. Rather, Mr. Speaker, they want to break the rules.

They are not representing this House with . . . presenting this House with a budget. Never in the history of Saskatchewan has a full year gone by without a budget being passed in the legislature. The minister from Regina Dewdney states that he has not had time to prepare a budget. But, Mr. Speaker, he has had time to present a budget document. Mr. Speaker, I’ve taken the time to study this so-called budget document. And funny thing, Mr. Speaker, this document certainly contains all of the elements that a full-blown budget would contain.

Mr. Speaker, essentially this document is . . . or builds on the budget that was presented in the spring. As a matter of fact, this motion we are debating today states, and I quote:

. . . the Minister of Finance shall table a . . . financial report . . . which shall be based upon and shows changes to the estimates first introduced in the Legislative Assembly on April 22, 1991.

Mr. Speaker, for all intents and purposes, this document is indeed a budget. It is a budget that the NDP want to pass without question.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not concerned about the budget debate primarily. We're willing to forgo the six-day budget debate. That's not important. We're willing to approve interim supply. But what we're not willing to forgo is the opportunity to question the ministers opposite on their department spending.

The NDP should allow us the opportunity to ask questions of their Minister of Finance, as well as all of the other ministers responsible for their various departments.

Well, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, we don't want to ask the Minister of Finance a great deal of questions. And again, no offence intended, but the Minister of Finance will not be able to answer what we consider very specific questions that only the ministers of the various departments themselves should be able to answer.

We want to ask these ministers very, very specific questions on what is happening in their departments. For example, we would like to know what is happening to the \$300,000 that should have been remaining in the Saskatchewan Works budget, a budget that the Minister of Social Services said has been depleted.

(2145)

How can the Minister of Finance answer that type of a question that is so specific, only the Minister of Social Services should be the one that answers a question of that nature. The Minister of Finance I don't think could answer that type of specific question.

Mr. Speaker, I think what the NDP is trying to accomplish is maybe a couple of different things. They want to hide behind the Finance minister's ignorance on all the department goings on.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP want to pass their document without giving the opposition members the age-old tradition of questioning it. This is clearly stated in their motion, and I quote:

And that the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, and the usual procedures for tabling, referral and consideration of estimates for the presentation of a budget and the budget debate shall not apply . . .

Seeking approval for interim supply is right, Mr. Speaker, but breaking the rules and procedures of this House is wrong. A government bullying a motion through the House like this, abusing their majority, is reprehensible.

The opposition has always been granted the right to scrutinize government spending. The Financial Administration Act requires the Minister of Finance to submit the estimates for the legislative approval for appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government's motive for introducing this motion? They claim they didn't have time to prepare a budget. But here it is; we have it here — a budget. What really is their motive then? They want to pass this motion because we are all in the middle of the

Christmas season? I'm sure they all want to go home and prepare for Christmas with their families. I'm sure they would; I know that I would.

Is that the reason they're pushing this motion through the House, so that they can have more time for Christmas shopping? Or is the real motive for this fear? Does the NDP government fear what their ministers will reveal through estimates? Is the NDP government afraid to subject their ministers to close scrutiny?

Which is it? Was there not enough time? Is it Christmas shopping or is it that the ministers are not ready to answer detailed questions?

Mr. Speaker, this opposition is not being, I believe, unreasonable at all. We're asking the members opposite to sit through . . . we're not asking the members to sit through Christmas. We do not want to sit through Christmas, but we're prepared to if we have to, Mr. Speaker. We are prepared to sit through Christmas if that's what it takes to force this government to adhere to the rules of the legislature. Change the name on the budget document, present it to the House, and we will forego the six-day debate and will immediately go into estimates.

Mr. Speaker, we ask the NDP government to save their place in history books for later. I don't think that they want to be known as the first government in Saskatchewan to suspend all rules and procedures of the Assembly in an attempt to attain supply without accountability.

Do the members opposite want to be known as the government that refused to place a budget before the Assembly, the government that effectively suspended the province's constitution, the government that refused to table estimates in order to avoid scrutiny on mass firings and political hirings?

This government will go down in the history books as the government who used the Assembly to target individual citizens; the government that placed this Assembly in direct personal conflict with individual human beings. This government is so caught up on its Tory bashing that it has lost sight of reality.

Mr. Speaker, reality is that the NDP has formed government, we accept that. You people are responsible in government to provide a budget. The reality is that the NDP government has become so caught up in its new-found power that they are willing to push through any legislation that suits their needs. Right now they need to pass a budget that they've clearly disguised as a financial report by breaking the rules. They need to do this to protect their new ministers. I think so.

Mr. Speaker, I feel for the ministers opposite. It must be a humiliating experience to be forced into silence because your colleagues do not trust you to answer the questions in this House. Mr. Speaker, I also feel for the NDP back-benchers, perhaps more so than I do for the ministers. They, Mr. Speaker, are being led down the garden path and I think they know why.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a new member in this legislature as well. But I think I should have the right to be able to question

the various ministers on their departments. I don't want my rights to be taken away before I have a chance to exercise them. I want the opportunity to ask the ministers opposite what they are doing with my constituents' tax dollars.

And, Mr. Speaker, the constituents in Kindersley have given me this opportunity and I'd like to be able to exercise it. My constituents voted for myself. They wanted me to look after their best interests.

There are a number of concerns in agriculture, for example, that I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture about in the supply Bill. But the NDP government simply won't let me, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the questions are relevant. They're all of a very specific nature, and they all should only be directed to the Minister of Agriculture. In our constituency, we have an ongoing and serious problem with soil erosion.

How does this new Minister of Agriculture plan on dealing with this problem which is very serious? What is the cost of this? How it could be addressed is the question. One of the possible solutions is a move to a more conservation-related style of agriculture, things like zero tillage.

For the benefit of the members opposite, I'd like to explain what zero tillage is. It is a farm management practice which leaves as much trash cover, which is the residue from the previous crop on the land, to keep the land from blowing. It has the potential to sharply reduce soil erosion, but it has a cost associated with it.

And I'd like to discuss that cost with the Minister of Agriculture. The two largest cost components in zero tillage are the cost of machinery and the cost of the burn-off chemical. There was a good, solid group of producers in this province that tried to solve the high cost of the chemical. The group was called Focus on Inputs. In estimates, I think we have some very valid questions to the ag minister. Would have been . . . Has he given any consideration to helping this group start up again and produce a generic chemical?

The people at Focus on Inputs — and I was very proud to be a member of Focus on Inputs — tell me that they could sharply reduce the cost of this chemical. It has the potential for a very widespread use, for soil conservation. Generic glyphosate would have, I believe, would gain very fast acceptance and usage, would sharply reduce soil erosion.

Excessive cultivation of farm land has led to this problem and I think this could possibly help.

Other new technology that are coming along that the Minister of Agriculture should be aware of — that he should be aware of — are a few of these that I'll mention. In the last couple of weeks ago in the edition of *Grainews*, a publication that's put out by the United Grain Growers, I noticed a new product that was being introduced into this country from Australia that could sharply reduce the cost of chemical application in Saskatchewan. Ministers of Agriculture should be aware of this product.

I'd like to ask him about his estimates of spending for new technologies. This is one of those new type of technologies. It essentially consists of a unit that would enable a farmer's spraying unit to have the capability to distinguish between a green plant and the bare ground. So it would help the spraying unit to essentially seek out the weeds compared to the bare ground in a chemical fallow operation. All of those type of measures, I think, have significant benefits to agriculture and should be explored at great length.

Some of the other areas that I think should be given a great deal of consideration are some concerns that I have as well with Crop Insurance. We see in the next few weeks Crop Insurance is going to be . . . January 1, about, Crop Insurance is going to be looking for a significant premium from people to be brought in. There will be because of the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program, January 1 is when the premium is due. We are looking at that. In a lot of farming operations it will be anywhere from 10 to \$20,000 premium that will be due on January 1, with no real way of paying for it. No one seems to be able to come up with any way of doing anything like that.

I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture has taken into any accounts of what percentage of that premium he expects to be coming in, as well as what percentage of the premium doesn't he expect to be coming in. All of those things have significant ramifications for the amount of revenue that this government will be arriving at in the early new year.

Also, I think that there's some concerns with other soil conservation related things that I'd like to mention. I received a letter here from a crop club, and a rural development group out in my constituency that I'd like to enter into the record here today, Mr. Speaker. It was directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The concern came from one of my constituents.

Honourable Berny Wiens

Dear Mr. Wiens: At our November 14th District 17 ADD Board meeting we spent some time discussing publications which provide agricultural information to agricultural producers.

Board members felt strongly that publications play an important (part) role in the technology transfer and we're concerned that budget cuts may result in limiting the production of written information.

Our board, by way of this letter, would strongly encourage that production of these publications receive top priority when budgeting for various projects, to ensure that research and agricultural extension information finds its' way to the farm level.

It's signed by one of my constituents, and it's also signed by other members of that board. One of those members that I think would be of great interest to the members opposite, Mr. Lorne Johnston from Eston. And they might remember who Lorne Johnston from Eston is. He was the NDP's candidate in the recent election, in Kindersley, the man that opposed me for the NDP Party. And I find it

interesting that he feels that the budgeting process should be looked at very closely right now — not just an estimate of what's going on right now, but a full budgetary process so these type of concerns can be dealt with.

The Minister of Agriculture responded to this letter, and I appreciate his response to a constituent of mine, and I'd just like to read it into the record as well.

Thank you for your recent letter encouraging our department to continue making agriculture publications a top priority.

I respect your group's position that these publications are an effective means of transferring research and technology to the farm level.

Please be assured that the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture and Food will consider your request carefully during future budget planning sessions. (And it was signed) Yours sincerely, Bernhard Wiens, Minister of Agriculture and Food.

And I think that there's a great deal of concern out there right now, that with no budget being presented, that these type of concerns won't be addressed.

Out in our area, as I was saying earlier, soil conservation is of great concern. And that's why I continue to be bringing it up here. I'm a member of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association and very proud of it. I think, I'm not sure, but it's my understanding in talking with some of the folks with the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation that I am the only member of the Assembly that is a member of that group. And I'm very proud of that.

It essentially is a group that looks into soil conservation concerns all across Saskatchewan and indeed Canada. They have representatives from all over various regions within the provinces. And I think they do a lot of good work on soil conservation. And they've asked me to be asking the minister constantly about those type of concerns.

And some of the things that I think really help with soil conservation are new crop varieties that are more drought tolerant, things like straight cutting of crops, and the aeration of grain, getting the crops off the land as quick as possible. All of those types of concerns, I think, have a great deal of relevance in Saskatchewan today.

We also have some other . . . a great number of other concerns relative to various ministries within the government right now — the hospital situation for example in various towns around my constituency. Currently they're building a new hospital in Eatonia. It was started under the previous administration and it's of a great deal of concern to me and my constituents. They are just going to be finishing it. I think they're going to be opening it here in the next few weeks.

I'm sure that members would be interested in knowing a little bit about the hospital. It's basically an integrated facility. There's 12 beds; eight of them are going to be dedicated to level 3 and 4 long-term type care. Those

people contacted me. The board members contacted me a little while ago to raise some of the concerns to the Minister of Health about their facility. They have some concerns in regard to staffing . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It now being 10 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.